

The Savory Connection



The Greatest Thing in Sandwiches Since Sliced Bread

It started with the now ubiquitous Portabella burger, and today mushrooms are appearing on the menu as a significant part of the sandwich category. In fact, 21% of mushroom menu mentions are in this category. From wraps to focaccia melts, mushrooms are making great flavor available "to go." For example:

- **Honey Dijon Chicken Focaccia**—Grilled chicken breast, Swiss cheese, **sautéed mushrooms** and onions with honey-mustard sauce, \$6.99—*Baker's Square*
- **Grilled Portobello Wrapini**—Grilled **Portobello mushroom** marinated in Leo's Italian dressing, fresh avocado spread, homemade pico de gallo, fresh spinach and Asiago cheese pressed between olive oil-basted wrap bread, \$6.50—*Jason's Deli*
- **Big 'Shrooms 'n' Onions Chicken Sandwich**—Char-grilled chicken breast with melted mozzarella cheese, sautéed onions and **mushrooms**, \$6.99—*Big Boy*
- **Grilled Portobello & Fontina Melt**—Fresh grilled **Portobellos**, spinach and melted fontina cheese topped with honey balsamic tomatoes and onions. Served on fresh focaccia with rosemary mayonnaise, \$8.79—*Rock Bottom Brewery*



Mushroom of the Month

CRIMINI



Crimini mushrooms are also known as baby Portabellas since they're a young version of the larger Portabellas, they are similar in appearance to white button mushrooms. They are light tan to rich brown and have a very firm texture.

Criminis can be substituted or used in combination with any recipe calling for white buttons, and vice versa. Their hearty, full-bodied taste is deeper and denser than white buttons, and makes them an excellent addition to beef, wild game and vegetable dishes.

From the Chairman

Dear Foodservice Partner,
On behalf of mushroom growers in the United States, we hope that you're finding our newsletters informative and pertinent to your business.

Consumers are getting the message that mushrooms are delicious and healthy, and they're buying them when they're grocery shopping. Chefs can't get enough of them either. A recent survey from the National Restaurant Association found that exotic mushrooms were in the top 15 rated "hot" items and in the top five rated vegetables. Better still, mushrooms scored high on the list of ingredients that are "perennially hot."*

We invite you to "visit" a mushroom farm. Log onto our Web site at mushroominfo.com and take a virtual tour. You'll see the entire process from start to finish. While you're there, check out our delicious recipes and tips for handling and proper storage.

*Source: National Restaurant Association, "What's Hot...What's Not Survey," 2006



Curtis Jurgensmeyer
Chairman
Mushroom Council

Lower Food Costs and Increase Margins with Fresh Mushrooms

Pound for pound, fresh mushrooms are less expensive than most protein entrees. Reducing the protein portion and enhancing it with savory accompaniments such as fresh mushrooms helps keep costs down and customer satisfaction up, especially as health-conscious consumers seek high-quality meat in smaller portions.

According to a Food Beat, Inc. survey of the top 200 chains, menu mentions of “fresh mushrooms” were up 10% in 2006 from the previous year. Added to entrees at breakfast, lunch and dinner, more operators than ever are cashing in with mushrooms in center-of-the-plate items. A few examples:

- **Pasta Florentine Alfredo**—Penne pasta with spinach, **fresh sliced mushrooms** and garlic herb seasonings sautéed in olive oil, covered with creamy Alfredo sauce and sprinkled with Parmesan cheese and parsley, \$6.99— *Big Boy*
- **Mushroom Omelet**—Four farm-fresh Grade AA large eggs, oven baked to a light fluffy soufflé texture, filled with **fresh mushrooms** and featuring **mushroom sherry sauce** on the side. Served with three buttermilk pancakes, \$8.00— *The Original Pancake House*
- **Down Home Meatloaf**—Two thick slices topped with **fresh sautéed mushrooms** and hearty beef gravy. Served with warm rolls and choice of two sides, \$7.99—*Perkins*
- **Veal Marsala**—Veal topped with **fresh Portobello mushrooms**, roasted garlic and Marsala wine sauce. Served with capellini pasta, \$12.99—*Romano's Macaroni Grill*



Building Flavor with Umami

NOTES AND QUOTES FROM CHEF ALEX GUARNESCHELLI

Q. How do you describe umami to the uninitiated?

A. When you take a forkful of food, umami is like a pinball all over your tongue. It's a combination of flavors, textures and aromas that creates an explosion of rounded, balanced and dramatic flavors.

Q. How do you know when you've "got" it?

A. Umami is elusive. It's like searching for the "perfect storm" of flavors. Sometimes you don't know it until it is already upon you.

Q. Do your customers notice/respond?

A. When I see someone's eyes close briefly as they are eating something, that can be a cue for the presence of umami. An empty plate, perhaps with the sauce wiped clean with bread, is another telltale sign that something went right.

Q. What's an example of a dish loaded with umami?

A. Slow-roasted white button mushrooms and toasted yellow corn with seared scallops, fresh lime and lentils.

Q. You've said that you like to cook light but robustly flavored food. How do mushrooms play a role in that?

A. Mushrooms can either be the star of a dish or a supporting character. Portabella's are meaty with a satisfying bite; especially roasted and quickly grilled to bring out the earthy, slightly charred aromas. Button mushrooms and oysters are more delicate; I like to cook them slowly to draw out the liquid and concentrate the flavors. Then, with just a touch of nut oil and a bit of acidity, you can achieve great umami and full, round flavor.

Chef Alex Guarneschelli is executive chef of Butter Restaurant in New York city. She recently won the Mushroom Council's "Top Chef: U-Bomb Challenge" against 2005 Top Chef Harold Dieterle. Alex's dish, Mushroom and Basil Shrimp Roll with a White Mushroom Sauce, Glass Noodles and Lemon, reigned supreme as the one with the biggest "u-bomb" (umami) effect.