

Happy Holidays!

And pass the mushrooms please!



Krista Towns



Wherever and however you celebrate there's just something about the Holidays that fills people with optimism and unites us to celebrate with food, friends and family. The history of foraging, growing and sharing food has long been a focal point of the Holiday Season. Even the traditional Christmas ritual of bringing a green tree into the house, borrowed from the Pagan Yule Holiday, was celebrated during the solstice to ring in the new year and bring prosperity to its crops.

Whether gathered from our forests, growing rooms or the local store, we fungi lovers welcome the idea of bringing our beloved mushrooms into our homes and enjoy adding them to our meals throughout the year. So why not make them the stars of our Holiday dinners?

I'm sharing a few of my favorite recipes featuring mushrooms; cultivated and wild, fresh and dried, from cocktails to desserts—that will hopefully fit perfectly on your Holiday menus.

Happy Holidays and Cheers!
Krista

Mushroom Wellington with Stilton and Sherry Demi-Glace

A twist on the classic, sure to wow your guests! This recipe uses portobello caps but any large cap will do—wine caps would be a perfect substitute. The caps are briefly roasted then filled with a spinach and walnut, mushroom duxelles around a Stilton cheese center, wrapped in prosciutto and puff pastry, baked and served with the sherry wine demi-glace.

The mushrooms can be stuffed and the sauce made a day ahead. You can leave off the prosciutto for a vegetarian option.

Divide the filling in half and exchange portobellos for shiitake or smaller caps for an elegant appetizer.

Serves two as a main course, double or triple the recipe for a larger crowd.



4, 5" portobello caps, stems and gills removed (Scoop out with a spoon)

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 cup duxelles, see below

1/4 cup ground walnuts

1/4 cup finely chopped fresh spinach

2 tablespoons brandy

2, 3/4" squares Stilton cheese

4-6 thin slices prosciutto

One egg

2 sheets puff pastry

Serves 2

Preheat oven to 425 F (400 F if convection). Brush the mushroom caps on both sides with one tablespoon of the olive oil, sprinkle with salt and roast for 5–6 minutes or until the caps are just tender. Remove from the oven and blot any liquid released from the caps, you'll want them to be dry when you stuff them.

Add the duxelles to a saucepan over medium heat, stir in the walnuts, spinach and brandy, cook stirring often for 3–4 minutes or until the mixture is cooked and dry. Season with salt and pepper, remove from heat and cool.

Spread 1/4 cup of the duxelles mixture in the "cup" side of two of the mushroom caps and add a cheese portion on each. Cover with the remaining duxelles, and place the remaining caps on top, gently pressing down to close completely,

remove any excess duxelles. Wrap each filled mushroom with the prosciutto slices and refrigerate until ready to cook.

Make an egg wash by whisking the egg with one teaspoon of water. Roll out the puff pastry and cut into two 7" squares. Center a filled mushroom on each square, fold the pastry over to fully enclose, and cut off any excess dough. Turn over and pat down to form a nice round shape. Place on a parchment lined baking sheet—smooth sides up, and brush with the egg wash. Decorate the tops with half circle cuts using the metal end of a pastry bag, or designs from leftover pastry. *An additional lattice of pastry is a nice touch and can be easily made with a lattice roller; available online or in most cooking stores.

Bake for 20–25 minutes or until the Wellingtons are a nice golden brown. Plate and serve with a drizzle of the sherry demi-glace.

Duxelles

Duxelles (duk-SELL), are useful in many dishes, they freeze beautifully and are one of the very best methods for preserving fresh mushrooms. Pull some out of the freezer and use in a ragu, a soup, on burgers or crostini, over pasta, on baked potatoes, or in a vegetarian lasagna. Endless possibilities!

Use only fresh mushrooms, any kind you like, and keep the seasoning simple,



you'll then be able to alter the taste to suit intended dishes later. A little bit of extra fat helps shield the duxelles from freezer burn. Store them in air tight freezer bags or ice trays.

Hand mince or pulse your mushrooms in the food processor, don't chop too fine, keep to about 1/8–1/4" pieces for best results.

This recipe makes about one cup, double or triple the recipe of course if you have mushrooms you'd like to store.

3–4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 pound assorted mushrooms
1 shallot, minced
3/4 teaspoon salt
Fresh ground pepper

Heat the oil in a sauté pan over medium heat, add the shallots, cook until translucent, then stir in the mushrooms, salt and pepper. Stir and scrape until the mushrooms have given up and reabsorbed their liquid, and are golden and almost dry. Remove from heat, use in a recipe, or stir in an extra drizzle of oil or butter and freeze in an air tight container or ice trays when the mushrooms have cooled.

Sherry Demi-Glace

Butter or oil
1 shallot, halved lengthwise
1/2 cup medium dry sherry
1 1/2 cups prepared store bought demi-

glace or low sodium veal or chicken stock

1–2 thyme sprigs

2 teaspoons cornstarch

2 tablespoons water

Salt and pepper

Makes about one scant cup

Lightly glaze a saucepan with butter or oil and place over medium heat. Add the shallot and cook for 5–6 minutes.

Add the sherry and simmer until reduced to one tablespoon. Add the thyme sprigs and stock, reduce by half. Taste and adjust seasoning, remove the shallot and thyme.

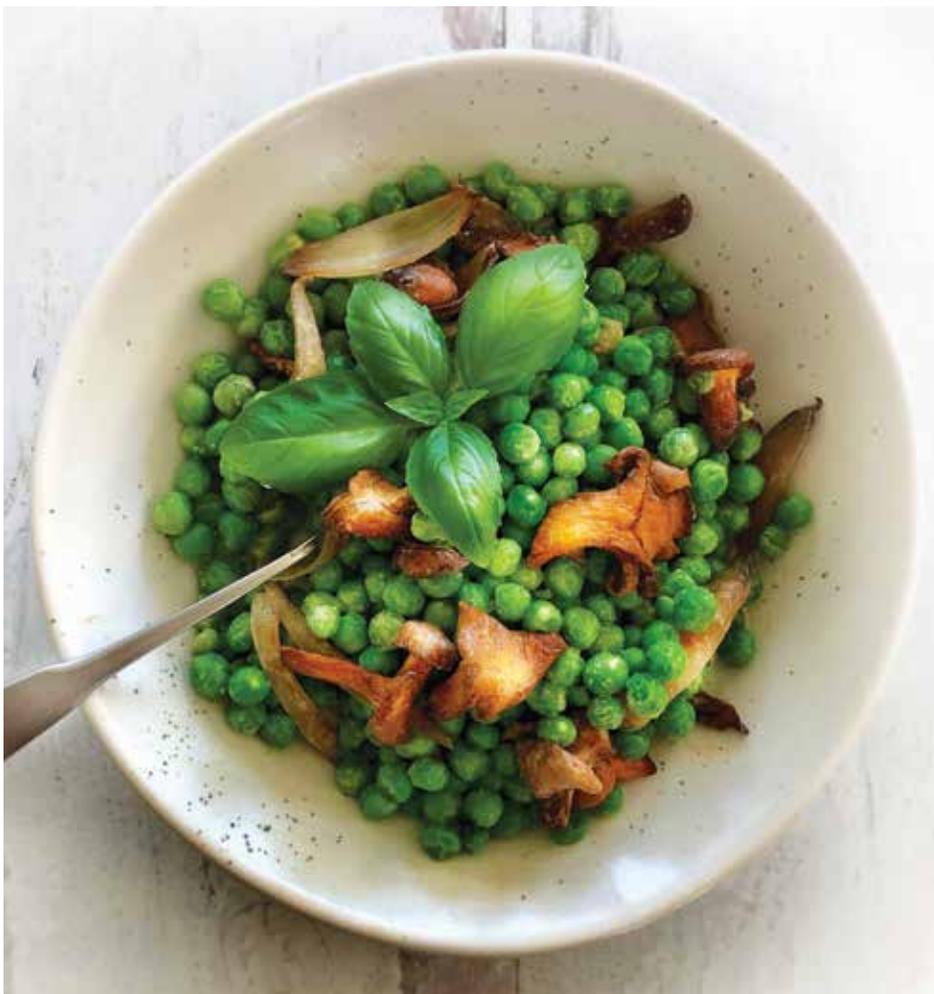
Whisk the cornstarch with the water until smooth and add to the sauce, turn up the heat to medium high and

continue to cook and whisk until the sauce has thickened, about 2–3 minutes. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Note: the sauce can be held off heat for a few hours. To reheat, add a little water and whisk over low heat.

English Peas with Chanterelles and Shallots

Peas and mushrooms are a classic combo, here golden chanterelles replace the usual button mushrooms, and caramelized shallots add a sweet note to the dish. Finish with a couple tablespoons of cream for a further indulgence if you like. Add an additional pinch of sugar to the peas if needed, use fresh peas if you can find them.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 large or 2 medium shallots, trimmed and sliced 1/4" thick lengthwise
Salt



Pinch sugar

1 1/2 cups cleaned, trimmed and thinly sliced chanterelles

2 cups fresh peas (fully cooked and drained) or thawed frozen peas

1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil

2 tablespoons heavy cream (optional)

Salt and pepper

Serves 4

Heat one tablespoon of the butter in a skillet over medium low heat. Add the shallots, a pinch of salt and sugar, cook for 10–12 minutes or until caramelized and tender. Remove from the pan and set aside.

Add an additional tablespoon of butter or oil, turn up the heat to medium, add the mushrooms with a little salt and sauté until fully cooked.

Stir in the peas and basil, cook for 1–2 minutes, add the reserved shallots and mushrooms. Toss together and drizzle in the (optional) cream. Stir and cook for 3–4 minutes or until the peas are cooked through. Be careful to not overcook. Adjust seasoning and serve!



Candy Cap Simple Syrup and Candied Candy Caps

This super easy, simple syrup will be a sweet addition to most any dessert or even a cocktail; whenever you want to add that intense maple-burnt caramel flavor that only Candy Caps provide.

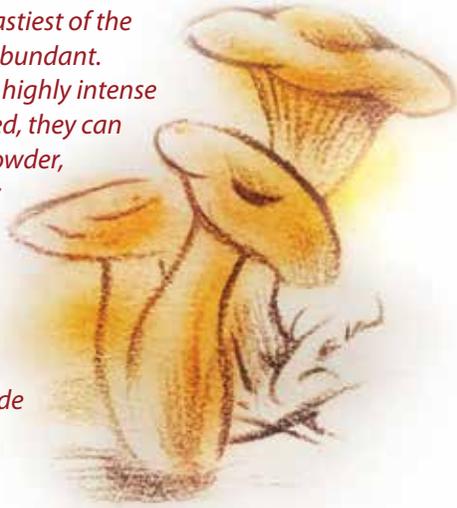
As delicious as the syrup is, my favorite part of this recipe is the dried mushrooms remaining from the syrup. Once strained, they bake up into crunchy candy that can be sprinkled whole on ice cream for instance, or ground to add to cookie recipes or to sprinkle on desserts.

1 1/2 cups water
5 grams (approx 1/4 cup) dried Candy Cap mushrooms
1 cup brown, Muscovado, maple or white granulated sugar
Makes 1 cup



Candy Caps Whoever heard of a maple flavored mushroom? Candy Cap mushrooms are small species of Lactarius or milk caps (so called because they leak a milky fluid when cut or broken).

The Candy Cap is the tastiest of the genus and often very abundant. Prized for their unique, highly intense maple flavor when dried, they can then be made into a powder, or steeped in cream for flans or brûlées, or in stock to create a glaze or sauce for savory dishes including game, pork or duck. A sweet syrup can easily be made to add to cookies and cakes, ice cream or even cocktails.



from the oven.) Cool and store in a sealed container.

Cranberry Candy Cap Manhattan

A Manhattan cocktail with a Candy Cap twist! Intense, maple flavored Candy Cap simple syrup is delicious with Bourbon and cranberry. You're going to love sipping and toasting!

4 ounces Bourbon whiskey

2 teaspoons Candy Cap simple syrup (or more to taste)

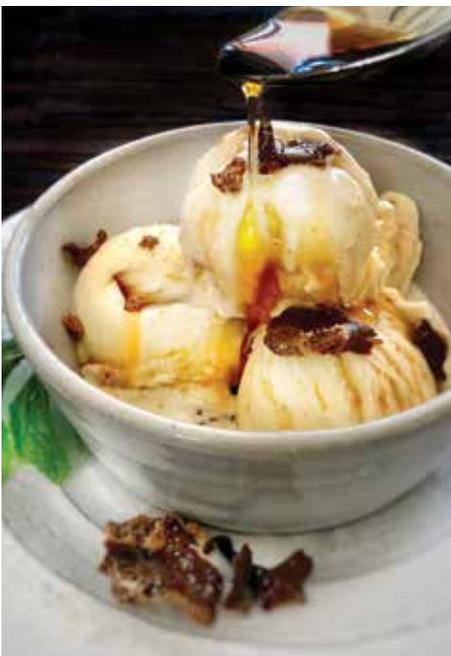
1 ounce cranberry juice

3–4 drops bitters

A squeeze of fresh lemon juice

Makes two cocktails

Combine all the ingredients in a mixing glass filled with ice, and stir stir stir! Strain the mixture into into martini or your favorite “up” glasses, garnish with a lemon twist or fresh cranberries steeped in Bourbon, sugar, cinnamon and allspice. †



Add the water and dried mushrooms to a saucepan, simmer on low heat until reduced to one cup, about 20 minutes.

Stir in the sugar, bring back to simmer and continue to cook for 8–10 minutes or until it coats a spoon, remove from heat and strain well.

Do not discard the mushrooms! Place the mushroom pieces on a baking sheet and toss with a sprinkle of additional sugar. Bake at 350 F (for convection oven set to 325 F) for about 12–15 minutes or until crisp. (They will continue to crisp up after removing

