

Marinated Shiitake Mushrooms with Chilled Vermicelli

FROM THE INN AT LITTLE WASHINGTON

Having three shiitake mushroom farms in our area has inspired us to create ideas for using them in quantity. Cooked in a marinade and served chilled or at room temperature, the mushrooms work well as a first course on noodles for a warm-weather dinner, make a wonderful buffet dish, and are perfect to take on a picnic. The mixture will keep for a good while refrigerated and is great to have on hand as a condiment to enhance anything from steak to hamburger. **Serves 6 as a side dish.**

MUSHROOMS

- 2½ cups** peeled, seeded, and cubed fresh or canned tomatoes
- ¼ cup** tomato paste
- 1** tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- ½ cup** red wine vinegar
- 2½ tsp** dried thyme
- ½ tsp** Herbes de Provence (optional)
- 1 cup** extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups** thinly sliced onions, loosely packed
- 2 tsp** minced garlic
- 1¼ lbs.** shiitake mushrooms

NOODLES

- 4 oz.** vermicelli
- 2 Tbs** extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbs** finely chopped scallions or fresh chives
- ½ Tbs** sesame oil
- 1 tsp** soy sauce
- ¼ tsp** minced garlic
- ¼ tsp** grated fresh ginger
- ¼ tsp** five-spice powder

PREPARE THE MUSHROOMS

1. In a 6-quart saucepan over medium heat, combine the tomatoes, tomato paste, balsamic vinegar, red wine vinegar, thyme, Herbes de Provence (if using), sugar, salt and pepper, and Tabasco. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to a simmer.

2. Meanwhile, heat ¼ cup of the oil in a heavy skillet over medium heat and add the onion slices. Cook, stirring constantly, until wilted.

3. Add the onions to the tomato mixture and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 30 minutes, or until the sauce is quite thick. Stir in the garlic and remove from the heat.

4. Remove the stems from the mushrooms and slice the caps into strips about ½ inch thick. There should be about 10 cups.

5. In a heavy skillet over medium heat, sauté the mushrooms in two batches in the remaining oil for 4 to 5 minutes, or until crisp. Add to the tomato mixture. Let stand at room temperature.

PREPARE THE NOODLES

1. Bring a large quantity of salted water to a boil in a large pot. Add the vermicelli and cook until al dente, about 3 minutes. Do not overcook.

2. Drain the noodles and run under cold water until chilled. Drain thoroughly.

3. Pour the noodles into a large bowl. Add the olive oil, scallions or chives, sesame oil, soy sauce, garlic, ginger, and five-spice powder. Toss to blend well.

SERVE

Make a nest of the noodles on a platter and place a mound of the marinated mushrooms in the center. Serve at cool room temperature.