



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Shiitake (she-TAH-kay) mushrooms are the world's most flavorful cultivated (not wild) mushroom. Their intensity—estimated at 10 times that of white button mushrooms—is the very definition of umami.

Umami is often referred to as the fifth taste—the first four being sweet, salty, sour, and bitter. Japanese for “delicious taste,” umami is the savory taste sensation you long for and may seek without even thinking about it.

For centuries, Asian cuisine has valued shiitakes for their umami. Dried shiitakes have been available for years in the US as Japanese or Chinese dried mushrooms. Fresh shiitakes are relative newcomers in the US.

Dried shiitake mushrooms can be stored indefinitely in your pantry. To reconstitute, place the amount you need in a small bowl and cover with water; microwave on high for 30 seconds, and let steep for 5 minutes. Use both the reconstituted mushrooms and the soaking water, but strain the water through a paper towel first. While the texture of reconstituted dried shiitakes is not the same as fresh, their flavor contribution is greater.

Fresh shiitake mushrooms have umbrella-shaped caps that are dappled in brown tones with creamy-white undersides and a woody smell. The stem looks too small to support such a wide top, and it would be if not for its woody texture. A package of shiitakes will have a variety of colors, shapes and sizes. Avoid shiitakes that have bulbous stems, broken caps, yellow undersides, or ammonia-like odor. Keep up to 2 weeks in the refrigerator. To prepare, wipe with a damp cloth, remove the stem, chop or slice the caps, and sauté. The stems are too woody to eat, but don't throw them out! They add delicious flavor to stocks and sauces.

Chef's combination of seaweed (kombu), shiitakes—both fresh and dried, and several key vegetables amp up the umami in this month's delicious consommé. Prepare yourself for a flavor explosion!

RECIPE for health

OCTOBER 2016

featured food:

SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS

Shiitake Mushroom Consommé

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services

Serves 6

- 8 oz. fresh shiitake mushrooms
- 10 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 1/2 oz. dried kombu, rinsed well
- 1 c. small diced onion
- 4 cloves of garlic, smashed
- 3 qt. of water
- 2 T. butter
- 4 T. olive oil
- 1/4 c. of thinly sliced shallots
- 1/4 c. finely diced carrots
- 1 T. minced ginger
- 1 clove of garlic minced
- Salt to taste
- 2 T. chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 T. thinly sliced green

Snip off the stems of the fresh shiitake mushrooms; slice mushroom caps and set them aside. In a stockpot, combine the stems, dried shiitake mushrooms, kombu, onions, smashed garlic cloves, and water; simmer for about an hour. Line a strainer with a coffee filter; pour liquid through pressing on the solids. Set the liquid aside.

In a sauce pot over medium heat, melt butter; add 2 T. of oil. Lightly sauté sliced mushrooms, shallots, and carrots for 5 minutes. Add garlic and ginger and sauté for another minute.

Deglaze pot with reserved mushroom liquid. Keep consommé warm until ready to serve. Add salt to taste. Add cilantro. Ladle into bowls and top each with a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of green onions.

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