Zinnia Stook's From the Larder Hobbit Cuisine



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Mushrooms!

Hobbits have a passion for mushrooms, surpassing even the greediest likings of Big People.

- J.R.R. Tolkien, **The Fellowship of the Ring** "A Conspiracy Unmasked," p. 112

Stuffed Acorn Squash with Wild Rice and Mushrooms

This is a delicious vegetarian main course, but nonetheless solid farmhouse fare. Few hobbits will complain of the lack of meat when they catch the scent of these mushrooms! This recipe will make six servings, which should be enough for two (or possibly three) hungry hobbits!

Bring 2 cups vegetable broth, 750 ml (25 ounces) dry red wine and 2 tablespoons sugar to boil in a large saucepan. Reduce heat to medium; simmer until reduced to 2 cups, about 25 minutes. (Sauce can be made one day ahead; cover and chill.)

Bring 4 cups vegetable broth, 1 cup wild rice, and 3 tablespoons butter to boil in another large saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low. Partially cover; simmer until tender and some of the rice is split, about 45 minutes. Drain; reserve broth. (Can be made one day ahead; cover rice and broth separately; chill.)

Preheat oven to 350 F. Halve and seed **3 large acorn squash**. Trim 1/2 inch off rounded side of squash to flatten. Divide squash halves, cut side down, between two rimmed

baking sheets and roast until tender, about 45 minutes.

Peel **2 pounds russet potatoes** and cut into 2-inch pieces. Place potatoes in another large, heavy saucepan. Cover with cold water, Sprinkle with **salt**. Bring potatoes to boil, reduce heat to medium, and simmer until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain; mash. Bring **8 tablespoons butter**, **1/2 cup whipping cream** and **2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage** just to simmer in small saucepan, stirring to melt butter. Add cream mixture and **4 ounces soft**, **fresh goat cheese**, crumbled (room temperature) to potatoes; mash to blend. Season with **salt** and **pepper**.

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in heavy large skillet over medium-high heat. Add **1 pound sliced, assorted wild mushrooms** (such as oyster, chanterelle and stemmed shitake) and sauté until soft, stirring often, about 8 minutes. Stir mushrooms into potatoes. Arrange squash halves, cut side up, on same two rimmed baking sheets. Divide potato-mushroom mixture among squash halves (about one cup each). (Can be made 2 hours ahead. Let stand at room temperature.)

Preheat over to 400 F. Place stuffed squash in oven and bake until heated through, about 15 minutes. Bring sauce to simmer. Whisk **2 tablespoons butter** into sauce. Keep warm. Combine rice and reserved broth in heavy medium saucepan. Bring to boil. Keep warm.

Melt **3 tablespoons butter** in large pot over medium heat. Add **1 pound fresh spinach** (remove tough stems first) and stir just until spinach wilts, about 3 minutes. Drain any excess liquid.

Divide spinach among six plates, arranging in center of plate. Divide rice among plates, placing atop spinach. Place squash half atop rice on each plate, pressing to nestle. Ladle sauce around squash and serve.

Remember: A good hobbit kitchen has lots of pots and pans available! And the total count on butter was 18 tablespoons - about a half pound!

For the meat-eating hobbits among us, here's another savory mushroom dish. This makes four servings, just right for a romantic dinner for two hobbits!

Marinated Roast Beef with Mustard Sauce and Roasted Green Onions and Mushrooms

Whisk 1/3 cup dry red wine, 2 tablespoons soy sauce, 3 garlic cloves (minced), and 1 teaspoon dry mustard in a large glass baking dish. Add 1 1/2 pound beef roast, turn to coat with marinade. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes, turning meat occasionally.

Meanwhile, whisk 2 tablespoons honey, 2 tablespoons water, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 2 tablespoons dry mustard in small bowl to blend; set sauce aside.

Preheat over to 450 F. Remove beef from marinade; pat dry (with paper towels). Place roast on large rimmed baking sheet; sprinkle with **salt** and **pepper**. Take **3 bunches of green onions**; trim root ends, cut off and discard dark green tops. Arrange green onions and **1 pound baby Portobello mushrooms** around meat; drizzle onions and mushrooms with **2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**. Roast 12 minutes. Turn meat, onions and mushrooms over; roast until vegetables are tender and instant-read thermometer inserted into center of meat registers 125 F for medium rare, about 12 minutes longer.

Place mushrooms and green onions on platter. Cut meat into 1/4 inch-thick slices; arrange atop green onions and mushrooms. Pour any pan juices over. Drizzle lightly with mustard sauce. Serve, passing remaining mustard sauce alongside.

This recipe works very well with venison or almost any sort of wild game.

Next time, we'll plan on a mushroom main course for those hobbits who are not satisfied with this sort of dish!

(freely adapted from recipes in Bon Appetit magazine, 2006 - 2007)