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Ask Aunt Daisy

THE MAGICAL MUSHROOM



FOR New Zealanders, mushrooms grow wild. They spring up mysteriously overnight, and are to be had for the gathering. People who know of paddocks where mushrooms usually flourish watch out for the right kind of weather and make good money from marketing them, for fresh, well-packed mushrooms fetch very high prices in towns. Country people generally manage to keep the family supplied with the tasty delicacy without any outlay. In America, of course, they are extensively cultivated, and include button mushrooms. All are delightful, canned, in soups, broiled in butter, sliced and so on.

If your mushrooms are fresh and tender, you need not peel them, just wash and scrub carefully with a soft brush. Cut a thin slice off the stem end and use the rest. A few mushrooms added to steak and kidney pie or pudding make a nice change.

Mushroom Soup

Half a pound mushrooms, 1 cup water, 1½ cups milk, butter size of walnut, pepper and salt, 1 dessertspoon cornflour. Skin or peel mushrooms and break in small pieces. Put in saucepan with the water, and simmer till tender, about 15 minutes. Then add milk, butter, pepper and salt, and cornflour previously mixed with a little milk. Bring to the boil, letting it thicken, and stirring to prevent it sticking.

Sautéed Mushrooms

One pound fresh mushrooms, 2 tablespoons minced onion, ¼ cup butter, a teaspoon lemon juice, ½ teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon pepper. Cut the washed, whole mushrooms into ¼-inch slices. Meanwhile, sauté (lightly fry) the onion in the butter in a covered pan over a low heat for 10 minutes. Add the mushrooms, cover, and continue to sauté over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes. Turn off the heat and let stand, covered, about 5 minutes to absorb the juice in the pan. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and lemon juice, and toss lightly. Good on toast, or with steak, chops, etc. If preferred, leave mushrooms whole, and cook them 12 minutes instead of 10. For very special occasions, omit lemon juice and stir in 2 tablespoons sherry, then one-third cup of cream.

Stuffed Mushrooms

Wash a pound of fresh mushrooms and drain well. Remove stems and chop these finely. Heat ¼ cup butter in a flat saucepan (skillet), and put in chopped stems, ¼ cup finely minced onion and ¼ cup finely minced celery. Simmer until celery is tender. Add a teaspoon Worcester sauce, ½ teaspoon salt and speck of pepper, and blend all well. Brush mushroom caps with melted butter and fill them with this mixture. Arrange stuffed caps in same skillet and simmer about 5 minutes or until slightly browned, covering for first 2-3 minutes. Serve with steak, chops, chicken.

Mushroom Soufflé

Melt 1 tablespoon butter in saucepan, gradually add 1 tablespoon flour and blend; then add slowly ½ pint milk, stirring all the time. Cook gently until sauce thickens. Cool. Then add beaten yolks of 3 eggs and 7-8 large mushrooms peeled and chopped. Season with

pepper and salt. Then fold in stiffly-beaten egg whites turn into well-buttered piedish, and bake about ½ hour. Serve immediately (as with all soufflés). A very good light lunch dish or supper dish.

Dried Mushrooms

These are very useful for flavouring soups or stews. Before using just soak for a few minutes in warm water. To dry: First blanch by steaming for 8 minutes (don't let them touch the water and see that they are fresh). Then dry in oven at 150 degrees (Regulo about 1) with door ajar to allow for circulation of air. Stir occasionally while drying and change trays round from front to back. When dry and shrivelled, place in paper bags, tie up and hang in dry place.

Creamed Mushrooms

Remove stems from 1 lb. mushrooms, and wash, but do not peel them. Melt 3 oz. butter in saucepan and cook mushrooms, adding a little lemon juice. Simmer slowly, then take out and keep warm. Add about 1 tablespoon flour to the butter in saucepan, stirring with wooden spoon. Add ½ cup milk, then slowly 1 teacup cream. Season with salt and pepper, replace mushrooms and serve hot.

Mushroom Ketchup

Gather mushrooms freshly in morning. Put in earthenware basin, sprinkle with salt. Leave overnight, or longer. Bring slow to boil, simmer 30-40 minutes. Strain through muslin. Put liquid on again, boil another 30-35 minutes, having added seasoning of black pepper, a little cayenne pepper, cloves and a little mace. Strain all and bottle when cold. Should keep about 2 years.

FROM THE MAILBAG

Python Handbags

Dear Aunt Daisy,
I have just returned from a trip to the Old Country and on the way there, at Port Said, I bought a python skin handbag which I used during the time I was away. On the return trip, while nearing New Zealand, I found the bag very damp; but since my arrival home a kind of perspiration just pours from it on every damp day! It is so bad that I have to rest it on paper! It is like bubbles of water all over it. Naturally the metal work is getting very tarnished. It is a beautiful handbag, all lined with suede, and it is quite evident that the skin is real, but it evidently hasn't been cured correctly. Can you or any listener help? Could you answer through *The Listener*, please?

"Hairini," Tauranga.

I discussed this most distressing matter with a leading leather and bag expert here and have no good news for you. He tells me he has had several other bags bought at Port Said brought to him during the last few months in exactly the condition you describe. As you thought, the python skin is not properly cured. It seems that these skins come mostly from the Dutch East Indies, and from Egypt they are sent to England, after being treated a little with salt in the meantime. In England they are expertly and properly finished by the use of alum and an accepted process. However, when once in Egypt, many skins do not get

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 24, 1953.