

Mature mushrooms have the earthy taste reminiscent of spring's glorious smell. Mushrooms are rich in copper, potassium and antioxidants, but lack major nutrients like protein and fat. When paired with a protein, however, they create memorable and very quick meals. Portobellos can turn grilling, whether outdoors or on your stovetop, into a fine adventure. Their high *umami* content—the glutamates that provide the succulent, meaty mouth-feel that omnivores, vegetarians, and vegans alike enjoy—also makes them satisfying as the centerpiece for sandwiches and a fine, hearty tart made from phyllo.

Portabello Banh Mi
Grilled Portobellos with Vegetables and Chicken or Tofu
Portabello and Cheese Tart

Because portobellos have such a high water content, you don't want to add to that by plunging them under the tap; just dust them off with a small brush—they've been raised on soil and sawdust and needn't be rigorously cleaned.

Marinating the Portobellos

You can toss thick slices or entire caps of portobellos in the marinade and keep them in it, covered, until you're ready to prepare one of May's quick mushroom feasts. Makes enough marinade for 2 pounds of portobellos.

Ingredients: 2 lbs. portobellos, stems removed, caps thickly (1/2") sliced
 3/4 c. extra-virgin olive oil
 1/2 lemon
 Sea salt to taste
 Freshly ground black pepper
 1 shallot, finely minced

- Remove stems from portobellos; keep these in a freezer bag to use when making a stock or broth, because it will contribute wonderful flavor. Slice mushrooms 1/2 inch thick.
- In a shallow glass container, combine the olive oil, lemon, salt, black pepper, and shallot. Add portobellos; stir and toss to completely coat the pieces.
- Cover container. (You can use mushrooms after 15 minutes for grilling; otherwise, store them in the fridge. They'll keep for about 5 days.)

Day 1: Portabello Banh Mi

The banh mi is Vietnam's glorious contribution to world sandwichery. This impressive fusion of Vietnamese foodways and French breadmaking has produced what I consider the hands-down winner among tasty sandwiches. To make a toothsome banh mi, you'll need to prepare a quick pickle—and nothing is easier. It's also terrific in green salads.

Makes 2 sandwiches

Ingredients: 1 juicy spring carrot
 1/2 lb. daikon radish
 1/2 tsp. sea salt
 1/4 c. light brown sugar
 3/4 c. rice or distilled white vinegar (with the latter, you'll need a bit more sugar)
 1/2 c. room-temperature water
 1 tsp. peanut oil
 1/2 lb. marinated portabello mushrooms
 1 tsp. soy sauce
 1/2 tsp. toasted sesame oil
 2 New French Bakery stirato rolls, warmed
 3 Tbs. mayonnaise mixed with 1 tsp. Sriracha sauce
 1/4 c. thinly sliced cucumber
 1/4 c. pickled carrot & daikon
 3 oz. fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced
 1/4 c. spring-mix salad greens

- Finely grate carrot and daikon. Put them in a bowl, sprinkle them with salt, and allow the salt to leach out their liquids (about 10 minutes). Rinse to remove their salt, then squeeze them dry and place them in a small bowl.
- Combine sugar, vinegar, and water until sugar has fully dissolved. Pour over the carrot & daikon. The pickle will be ready to use in about an hour; you can store it for future *banh mi* in the fridge for about a month.
- Heat heavy skillet on medium-high, then add peanut oil, and when it begins to shimmer, add mushrooms. *Do not crowd them in the pan.* As they begin to brown, add soy sauce and toasted sesame oil. When they have become pliant and savory-smelling, remove pan from heat.
- Split stirato rolls and anoint the inside of one half with mayonnaise-Sriracha mixture. Pull out some of the inner crumb from the other half of the roll, and tuck in sliced cucumber, carrot-daikon pickle, and slices of mozzarella.
- Place sautéed portabello slices atop cucumber and pickle, add salad greens, slice sandwiches in half diagonally, and serve.

Day 2: Grilled Portobellos with Vegetables and Chicken or Tofu

Because portobellos are big and thick, they're ideal candidates for grilling, whether out- or indoors. Pair them with the brilliant vegetables flooding Mississippi Market this spring, a protein—chicken or pressed tofu are especially suitable candidates—and a small green salad, and you have a meal that celebrates our very welcome return to spring.

Makes enough for 2

Ingredients: Herb oil (see below)
 3/4 lb. marinated portabello slices
 1 large red bell pepper
 1 large yellow bell pepper
 2 young, tender zucchini
 1 large red onion
 1/2 lb. fresh asparagus
 1 head garlic
 3–4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of their fat, or pressed firm tofu

- Heat the grill to medium-high. Place vegetables in large bowl and add enough herb oil so that all vegetables are coated. Depending on your grilling method/surface area, grill the portobellos and the vegetables until they are tender. Swab them with the herb oil as needed. Allow the individual vegetables and mushroom pieces to sit long enough on one side to sear before turning them over.
- As individual vegetables become cooked, remove them to a platter.
- Add chicken or tofu; again, do not busily move it around but instead allow the pieces to sear fully on one side, then turn over. When the chicken juice runs clear yellow, the meat is done.
- Remove chicken; cut into smaller pieces. Heap vegetables, mushrooms, and chicken together and serve with a green salad and rice.

Herb Oil

This marvelous all-purpose oil also anoints 3 Days, 3 Ways' pizzas and works beautifully in omelets and other stovetop preparations. The amount of salt used here may seem off-putting—if you taste the oil, as you should, you will find it somewhat oversalted—but this is all the salt your food will receive while cooking, hence the slight oversalting in the oil.

Ingredients: 1/2 c. extra-virgin olive oil (highly flavored, early-harvest oils work best for this)
 2–3 cloves of garlic, minced
 Chopped fresh parsley
 Chopped fresh basil
 Minced fresh rosemary
 Chopped fresh thyme leaves
 Dried oregano
 Red hot pepper flakes
 1/2–3/4 tsp. sea salt

- Combine all ingredients and allow the oil to sit and become suffused with its many flavors for about 1 hour.
- Place chicken pieces or tofu in a 1/4 c. of the herb oil and allow to marinate for at least 15 minutes before grilling.

Day 3: Portabello and Cheese Tart

This is a scrumptious and very easily prepared tart because it is made with phyllo dough. Vegans can make the dough with extra-virgin olive oil or virgin coconut oil. Omnivores may prefer butter. It's all good. If you've not worked with phyllo dough before, you will want to thaw out the frozen dough (available in Mississippi Market's freezer) overnight in your fridge. Remove the rolled lump of dough from its

box just before you are ready to use it, and carefully peel off one sheet at a time. (Keep the rest of the roll covered with plastic or a towel, for it dries out almost instantly because of its extreme thinness.) You can refreeze what you don't use. Phyllo is terrific for making savory and sweet strudels too.

Makes 1 tart for 2 people

Ingredients: 5 sheets of phyllo dough, thawed
 1/4 c. melted butter, extra-virgin olive oil, or virgin coconut oil
 2 tsp. oil or butter
 1–2 shallots, minced
 Fresh thyme
 Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
 1–2 cloves of garlic, chopped (*optional*)
 Remaining marinated portobellos
 1/2 c. Taleggio, Camembert, or Daiya nondairy cheese, cut into small pieces
 1 tsp. butter or oil

- Preheat oven to 425° F.
- Grease a baking sheet with the oil or butter you're using with the phyllo dough.
- Place the first sheet of phyllo on the pan; if it breaks up a bit, that's okay. Work quickly, lest the dough dry out too much. Using a small brush, coat the top of the phyllo sheet lightly with fat or oil.
- Add a second sheet and coat it; add more sheets until you have coated and layered five.
- As neatly as you can, turn in a one-inch edge around the four sides of the stack of phyllo to build a raised border. Cover the tart shell with plastic so it doesn't dry out.
- Heat a heavy skillet on medium-high, then add 2 tsp. oil or butter, and when it starts to shimmer (or the butter stops bubbling), add shallots; cook until they become translucent and begin to brown.
- Add thyme, salt, pepper, and mushrooms; cook until they become softened and start to brown.
- Scrape mushroom-shallot mixture into tart crust. Tuck cheese pieces in among the mushrooms and shallots.
- Deglaze skillet with a bit more butter or oil; scrape that mixture from skillet over the tart.
- Bake until tart smells wonderful and phyllo layers have puffed up and become beautifully browned.
- Serve with a simple green salad.