



Stuffed Mushrooms ala Isabel



Because I love mushrooms so much, I made up this recipe turning and tasting possible ingredients in my head first. Italians consider "fungi" one of the five essential elements of life. Whether in Branford, CT, or their farm in Lyndonville, VT. Nonno Enrico was a master mycologist, and often went foraging for them for Nonna's Sunday Supper Risotto.

One fall when the mushrooms were and still are all over the place around our cabin in Taos Ski Valley, NM, Bob and I were on an up-huffer hike to the old mines that are above the huge gray slag piles that tumble and streak down 2,000 feet into the valley. When, climbing deeper into the forest on a game trail above the mines, we stumbled onto a motherlode of peach-colored Chanterelles, that looked for all the world like little dwarfs with ruffled, jaunty hats. We knew that they went for maybe \$50 a pound in the outside world. After referring to the mushroom book I had in my pack that warned "There are old mycologists, and bold mycologists, but there are no old, bold mycologists," we opted for their legitimacy when they gave off that unmistakable fragrance of apricot. While harvesting, we mused over our anticipated profit when we brought them to Tomas, who runs the Bavarian Restaurant way up in the valley. We could taste the free dinner and the great wine he'd give us because we'd brought him the illusive gold of the mountain. Standing in the entry of the busy place an hour or so later, a very apologetic Tomas explained that he couldn't buy mushrooms from anyone unless they had a mushroom-hunting license. BaDaBoom.



End of the profit and dinner story. Later at Anima, we gently sauté'd them in butter, had our wine and rare nosh on the deck, and on successive days ate them in dishes, shared with other cabin residents, and brought the final hoard home to Albuquerque. I froze them, but they turned to slime fungi. We're going up to Anima again, and it's Chanterelle hunt season.

- two boxes mushrooms - I like the baby bellas**
- 2 Tbs fresh basil, parsley and chives - but to taste really - careful with the Basil as too much can turn dishes bitter**
- 1/2 C Panko Bread Crumbs - any really, but these are best**
- 1/2 square of butter**
- shot olive oil**
- capers**
- 2T Sweet Vermouth, cream sherry, or port**
- Ground sea salt and ground pepper**
- Little shot sugar**
- Couple cloves garlic minced fine or use the chopped stuff you can buy in the jar - to taste, I like 2Tbs**

Good grated Reggiano Parmesan Cheese - no junk stuff

Place butter and olive oil in a frying pan - heat on medium

Wash the mushrooms and pat dry while gently removing the stems.

Chop all together, the stems, basil, parsley, garlic and chives. Add to the frying pan and sauté gently until you love the smell! Maybe 5 minutes. Add salt and pepper, sugar, capers, and then fold in the bread crumbs. Add more butter or olive oil if necessary. Toss gently. Last, add the sherry or Vermouth, or port. The taste will be different with each, and I much prefer the Vermouth as it is the taste of my childhood.

Remove from heat, and using a tablespoon, begin to stuff the caps. If it doesn't clump add a bit more breadcrumbs.

Add about ½ c. Parmesan cheese

Place stuffed mushrooms, stuffing side up, on a cookie sheet that has been drizzled with olive oil

Broil for maybe 5 minutes, watching - until the mixture starts to bubble and crackle

Remove and serve hot. They work at room temp - I've done this lots of times. If bringing to a party, simply pop them into your hostess's oven for a bit - or microwave. Bring them on a glass serving plate because that way, the busy hostess won't have to stop to get what you need.