



Mushroom Gastronomy

Krista Towns

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Fungi are the resplendent stars of Krista Towns's cookbook *Mushroom Gastronomy*, a treatise on an alluring variety of edible and medicinal mushrooms.

Alongside beguiling food photographs and unusual recipes, the book includes exuberant advice on buying and foraging new varieties of fungi and on their ultimate consumption. There are suggestions to eat only small amounts of unfamiliar mushrooms at first—and never to eat most mushrooms raw. There's a primer on cleaning, cooking, and storing mushrooms, with instructions for drying, smoking, and pickling too, and a guide to stocking the kitchen with a small but specific array of tools and pantry ingredients, like mushroom brushes and delicate oils, to bring out the best fungi flavors.

Following this thorough foundation, twenty-five mushroom varieties are examined in nutritional and gastronomic detail, with notes on their best flavor pairings. Button mushrooms, baby portabellas, and portabellas are introduced as part of the same common mushroom species, just at different stages of growth; there are suggestions for cooking these ubiquitous mushrooms in distinctive and delightful new ways as well, as in umami-rich vinaigrettes or pastry-wrapped Mushroom Wellington.

A parade of more exotic mushroom varieties is included, as with the bright orange, alien stalks of cordyceps, the pine-scented matsutake, and the lion's mane, a shaggy triffid lookalike and lobster tastealike that Towns downright swoons over. While one could stick with classic mushroom preparations, like simple sautés with butter and aromatics, the book's wide range of recipes involves cocktails, desserts, kimchi, jerky, and medicinal teas too. One could prepare an entirely fungal feast from these creative alternatives, from maple-perfumed Candy Cap Martinis to Chanterelle-Apricot Galette, with plenty of mushroomcentric mains and sides in between.

Elegant in its culinary presentation, *Mushroom Gastronomy* is a mycophilic delight that inspires broader and more playful kitchen experimentation with edible mushrooms.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (May / June 2024)

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