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Mushrooms

At any American dinner table, the appearance of mushrooms as a side dish or in a mix of vegetables is likely to divide the group in two: people who like mushrooms, and people who intensely dislike them. If you are in the latter group, I'm asking you to stay open-minded for a few moments, and you will likely find some reasons to learn to love this often misunderstood food. Hundreds of scientific articles in the past 20 years have solidified the role of mushrooms in preventing and treating some very serious health conditions. Perhaps the greatest interest is in their role in cancer treatment and prevention. Many different species of mushrooms have active medicinal properties, and they act on many different types of cancer. Of specific interest today is their role in breast cancer prevention. An article in *The Journal of Nutrition* in 2001 discussed the effect of the lowly white button mushroom on lowering aromatase activity in breast tissue, thus decreasing high estrogen levels which can promote tumor growth. Articles in 2003 and 2004 discussed the ability of Ganoderma (the Reishi mushroom) to prevent cancers generally, and specifically to inhibit the growth of invasive breast cancer cells. There is a huge amount of science supporting the anticancer effect of a compound called Lentinan from the Shiitake mushroom; a compound called beta-D-Glucan has been isolated from the Maitake mushroom and accounts for much of its anticancer effect. These work in many ways, not the least of which is to strengthen the body's own natural immune response.

So, can you eat these things? Experts in the field recommend cooking all mushrooms, as they are otherwise undigested and you may miss health benefits. Some like Reishi are so tough and woody that they are usually taken as a supplement and not eaten as food. But many of the other common and exotic mushrooms are easy to chop into soups and stir-fries. And when you think of all the good they are doing for your health, you may be surprised at how good they taste!

Shiitake mushroom soup

Take a large soup pot, and sautee a few slices of onion until translucent in a little olive oil; add a sufficient amount of chicken or vegetable broth for your soup, with a tablespoon or two of finely chopped ginger. Bring to boil; reduce heat to medium and simmer 5 minutes. Add a 2 to 4 ounce package of shiitake mushrooms sliced into bite size lengths (remove the hard stems). While that simmers, chop some of your favorite vegetables, such as cabbage, green onions, broccoli, or carrots; cook until vegetables are tender but not too soft. Season with a little salt, soy sauce, or pepper. Serve and enjoy!

To your health,

Robert Pendergrast, M.D.

www.realfoodsthatheal.com

P.S. Your family and friends deserve to know how to reduce their cancer risk by food choices. Please forward this e-mail to them using the link below.

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