Garnish this delight with whatever berry graces your garden—or farmers' market.
I owe my awe of mushrooms to Hollyhock Centre on Cortes Island, BC. It was there, in a four-day workshop, co-led by mushroom aficionados Paul Stamets and Dr. Andrew Weil, where I began to awaken to the enchanted world of mycelium.

Stamets, the author of several mushroom books, including his most recent *Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World* (Ten Speed Press, 2005), instantly infects everyone with his passionate love of mycology—the science of mushrooms. He describes the underground world of mushrooms as an organized intelligence network capable of healing and restoring our sickly planet.

**MUSHROOMS TO THE RESCUE**

According to Stamets, microscopic superheroes called mycelium (the underground network of fungal threads that produce mushrooms) have supernatural powers that include recycling carbon, creating rich new soil, and digesting toxic wastes and pollutants.

Mycelium do all of this and more—naturally, without human intervention. But Stamets >
"ARE MUSHROOMS AN ORGANIZED INTELLIGENCE NETWORK CAPABLE OF HEALING AND RESTORING OUR SICKLY PLANET?"
Prevent the discomfort of overeating.

**DIGESTIVE ENZYMES**

**BREAKS DOWN FOODS INTO NUTRIENTS THAT YOUR BODY CAN READILY ABSORB.**

DIGESTIVE ENZYMES improve digestion, increase energy, stop bloating and gas, reduce enzyme deficiency and lower stress for the liver, kidneys and pancreas.

DIGESTIVE ENZYMES are ideal for those suffering from impaired fat digestion (i.e.: no gallbladder) and high protein diets. For help with foods that are hard to digest, trust New Roots Herbal’s DIGESTIVE ENZYMES.

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believes we must actively participate in this magical process by cultivating mushrooms and creating systems that maximize the ecological benefits of this natural process he calls “mycorestoration.”

**MEDICINAL AND YUMMY**

Dr. Andrew Weil was one of the first natural healing proponents to integrate the use of mushrooms into his prescribed health programs. While most people are only familiar with the common button (Agaricus bisporus) mushroom, he introduced us to an exotic range of medicinal and culinary mushrooms.

Eating a variety of mushroom species not only positively benefits our immune system, but it also provides our taste buds with unique flavours and textures to savour. Give them centre stage on your dinner plate.

Low in calories but high in nutrient values, mushrooms are rich in protein, fibre, B vitamins (especially niacin), and selenium. If they are exposed to sunlight in the growing process, they can also be a significant source of vitamin D.

**COLLECT YOUR OWN**

Mushroom collecting is an art and a ritual. There are rules of etiquette, too. Performed mainly in spring and fall, mushroom stalkers can be seen strolling along roadsides, in meadows, and through the woods. You can spot them easily. They carry paper or cloth bags and rarely look up.

Obtain a book with coloured pictures and descriptions of the mushrooms in your region. Learn to take a spore print. Never, ever, eat a mushroom until it has been positively identified—beyond a shadow of a doubt—as edible.
Our fascination with mushrooms is nothing new:
- In ancient Egypt, mushrooms were thought to be the sons of gods, transported to earth by thunderbolts from the sky.
- The Irish, in medieval times, were quite certain that the function of mushrooms was to serve as umbrellas for the leprechauns.
- The English loved to eat mushrooms but only if they had been harvested under a full moon to ensure their safe edibility.

GROW YOUR OWN. I DO!
In the middle of last December, a birthday gift from my son arrived in the mail. The large cardboard box was labelled “Mushroom Spawn—Perishable. Do not delay. Do not freeze.” I probably did both.

I certainly delayed—and I might have let them freeze at some point, too, for all I know. But by the middle of January my shiitake (Lentinus edodes) and oyster mushroom (Pleurotus ostreatus) babies began to fruit, pushing their way out of the pressed sawdust substrate they call home. They grew steadily. In fact they "mushroomed" and before long we were feasting on homegrown mushrooms.

Let me tell you, there is nothing like the smell and taste of sautéed shiitakes to make you believe that mushrooms can indeed save this old world of ours.

Lucretia Schanfarber is a dedicated gardener who has recently added mushrooms to her harvest. She resides on an island off the coast of BC.