Wild things
Mushrooms do more for you than just taste good.

A grilled portobello is its own reward. But there's more to mushrooms than great flavor. They're fiber-rich, low in fat and calories, and heart-healthy, too. A University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign study found that six mushroom varieties—raw and cooked white button, crimini, portobello, maitake, shiitake, and enoki—are rich in chitin, a compound that may help lower cholesterol and is most concentrated in raw mushrooms. And reports from Japan suggest that shiitakes may play a role in lowering blood cholesterol. Try these tasty ways to add mushrooms to your diet.

- The best way to capture their depth of flavor is to oven-roast them on a cookie sheet, or sauté them in a pan large enough to caramelize them, says Eve Felder, associate dean for culinary studies at the Culinary Institute of America.
- Sauté creminis (baby portobellos), and toss with whole wheat pasta and just-wilted arugula. The bitterness of the greens plays up to the mushrooms' earthiness.
- Felder grinds dried porcini and uses the powder to dust steak and firm-fleshed fish like halibut or bass. She then pan-sears the fish in oil, or roasts it in the oven with shallots and white wine; the steaks are great grilled or sautéed. If you want to save time, use a mushroom seasoning blend like FungusAmongUs ($5.19, available nationwide).
- Felder suggests combining shaved, fresh, firm porcini, grated Parmesan cheese, salt, pepper, and olive oil. "It's the most elegant, wonderful salad in this world," she says. —Alexandra Zissu

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