

## Amazing Mushrooms

What did you do to survive Covid lockdown? My friend grew mushrooms. This brought back childhood memories of mushroom hunting with my grandmother and her tasty recipes which inspired me to learn more.



*Photo by Sr. Pat Garrahan, sndusa*

Mushrooms have long been the source of mythical intrigue, healing remedies and even magical fairy rings. Puffballs are still used for healing wounds and today a fungus called *Aspergillus tubingensis*, has the ability to break down certain plastics. What more surprises will the amazing mushroom hold for the well-being of human kind and the planet.

Mushrooms are part of the large fungi kingdom. Did you know that the mushroom we see is actually the reproductive body of fungi, known as the fruit body which produces microscopic spores so the fungus can spread?

Underneath the mushroom there is a vast network of hair like filament threads known as mycelium which spreads over acres. These threads are part of the networks that allow plants and fungi to exchange nutrients and resources with each other in symbiotic relationships. They even enable trees to communicate with one another. Some trees will not survive if their fungi companions are not present. What a truly amazing web of life.

Mushroom appeal has spanned from the artist attraction to their beauty to medical researchers seeking new drugs and even scientists considering how fungi might break down asteroids making rich soil for food cultivation for space travellers.

Ontario has 5,000 varieties of mushrooms. Identifying these is a skill as they often have poisonous lookalikes. If you are interested in learning more about identifying and collecting mushrooms seek out your local Mycological Society.

Mushrooms are a source of 15 vitamins and minerals including vitamin D that is absorbed easily by the body – all good immune boosters. Commonly used white button mushrooms contain the highest amount of potassium, 300 mg per serving, which has been shown to reduce anxiety while cremini and portobello mushrooms have the most antioxidant properties. Portobello and shiitake mushrooms with their firm texture can be used as a meat substitute. They are prebiotic and stimulate healthy gut bacteria. Their nutrient value is preserved during cooking or when canned or dried.

A serving is about 1 cup of raw mushrooms, 1/2 cup of cooked. 2 servings a week has been shown to decrease the risk of mild cognitive impairment.

And of course, there are magic mushrooms, that naturally contain a hallucinogenic psychoactive compound called psilocybin. There is some indication that this might benefit people suffering from certain mental health issues such as depression. Ingesting too much can lead to death.

**Have I interested you enough to try some recipes?**



### ***What to do with a Giant Puffball?***

With their white flesh and sponge-like texture, they are quite similar to tofu and can be: fried, grilled with rosemary and garlic, burgers, hummus, lasagna, used in soups, stews and stir-fries, and more:

#### ***15 Recipes for Puffballs***

<https://wonderfulcook.com/puffball-mushroom-recipes/>



And Christmas is coming. There are very easy recipes for stuffed mushrooms which make wonderful tasty appetizers.

Try this one: <https://www.inspiredtaste.net/37349/easy-stuffed-mushrooms/#itr-recipe-37349>

And here is one for portobello 4 ingredient steaks: <https://www.mydarlingvegan.com/portobello-steaks/#wprm-recipe-container-19437> – gluten free, vegan, vegetarian



***BON APPÉTIT!***

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Photos of Giant Puffball at Villa St. Joseph, Sept. 2022, by Sr. Janet Speth CSJ

1. Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms of Canada, Agriculture Canada 1981
2. The Newsletter of the Mycological Society of Toronto: Summer 2022, vol 48-no 2
3. Kayleen Devlin; <https://www.bbcearth.com/news/the-surprising-world-of-mushrooms>
4. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/space-travels-most-surprising-future-ingredient-mushrooms/>