

An Unusual Culinary Column: Morel Season is Here

By Karen Kain

One of my favorite things to do in the springtime is go mushroom hunting. There is something magical about hiking in the forest with the sun shining through the trees and finding my first morel. I know that once I find one there is a great chance that there will be more treasures nearby. I was lucky this year to have been gifted a nice quantity of morels. After my morel picking adventure I found myself at the asparagus truck grabbing another one of my favorite vegetables. This week I decided to combine the two delicacies and I think I have some nice recipes to share with you.

I usually try to steer away from frying foods, but this fried mushroom recipe looked pretty tempting and when combined with the mustard dipping sauce it just sounded delicious. After I fried up a bunch of morels, I had a visitor stop by. Together we decided that this recipe was pretty yummy and ate them all, except one. For a long time we just left it sitting there until we ended up splitting it between us because it was just that good. I definitely think the mustard dipping sauce was the perfect addition. You could also fry up asparagus using this batter which would be equally fabulous. This recipe makes a nice appetizer for any meal.

The more I cook with morels the more I love them. The second recipe I tried was the Morels & Asparagus Sauce over Pasta. This dish is really quite simple to make but elegant in flavor and display.

I added just a little bit of cream and sherry, which I think gives it a fabulous touch.

Keeping with the morel and asparagus theme, for breakfast the next day I made this Morel & Asparagus Over Toast recipe, twice. It is quite possible that this may be my favorite recipe of the week. Although it looks complicated it is quite simple to make. I love the ricotta along with the sauce drizzled on top, which reminded me of a lighter version of béarnaise sauce. This breakfast is delicious and would make the perfect brunch dish for guests. I loved the unique combination of ingredients. Have fun with your mushroom hunting folks.

Fried Morels

Ingredients:

- 1 Cup all-purpose flour
- ½ Teaspoon salt
- 1 Cup broth or dry white wine
- ½ Pound fresh morel mushrooms, or other mushrooms, or both
- Vegetable oil for frying



Directions:

I soaked the morels in water to clean them for a few hours, and let dry on a clean towel, this may take ½ a day. Make sure that there is no water inside the stems; once you put it in the oil it will pop. I dried them with the stems down so any water could drain out. Whisk together the flour and salt. Slowly whisk in the broth until the batter is smooth, add more broth if needed, the batter should be a bit thicker than pancake batter. Using a dry brush or soft towel, brush away any dirt trapped in the crevices. Line a rimmed baking sheet with paper towels and set a wire rack on top. Fill a heavy skillet with about 2 inches of vegetable oil and heat up on medium high heat to a temperature of 350°. Whisk the batter again then gently add the morels one at a time to the batter making sure to fully coat the mushrooms. Fry in the oil one at a time, turning frequently, until crisp - they cook quickly. Using tongs or a slotted spoon transfer the morels to the wire rack to drain. Serve once cool enough to eat with mustard dipping sauce.

Mustard Dipping Sauce

Ingredients:

- ½ Cup sour cream
- ½ Cup mayonnaise
- 3 Tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 Tablespoon wholegrain mustard
- 1 Tablespoon chives, chopped

Directions:

Mix together and put into the refrigerator for 30 minutes for the flavors to combine.

Morels & Asparagus Sauce over Pasta

Ingredients:

- 12 Ounces asparagus
- 3 Tablespoons butter
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1 Shallot, finely chopped
- 1 Cup of morel mushrooms, sliced
- 1 Tomato, chopped
- ¼ Cup heavy cream
- 1 Tablespoon cream sherry
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Hot pepper flakes
- Cooked pasta

Directions:

Bring a large pot to boil, put the asparagus in the water and boil for 2 minutes. Remove and immediately submerge into an ice water bath to stop the cooking. Cook your pasta in the boiling water. In a sauté pan on medium high melt the butter, add the oil and shallots then sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté for an additional minute. Add the mushrooms, asparagus and tomato and sauté. Add the cream, sherry and salt & pepper. Let the sauce cook down for about 8 minutes. Add the hot pepper flakes and serve the vegetable sauce over cooked pasta.

continued on page 11



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