

Wholesome Foods: by Laura Mancuso

Maitake mushrooms

It is kind of strange to have fungus be one of your favorite foods. I'm talking about the mushroom of course, and it's that time of year when many of you are out picking matsutake mushrooms. But the matsutake is not the only mushroom found here in the Illinois Valley, you can also find chanterelles, morels, oysters and maitake. Today, I'm going to talk about the maitake. Not only are maitake fun to pick, they are a great source of nutrition

Wild maitake mushrooms can be found in autumn forests around the base of large deciduous oak, maple, pine and other conifer trees and

stumps. Maitake mushrooms have a rich woody taste, crisp texture, and an excellent aroma. Maitake are also known as "Hen of the Woods," "Dancing Mushroom," Grifola frondosa and sheepshead. This is a very popular mushroom. You can sauté them in olive oil and a little butter and they are good to add to stews, spaghetti sauce, and stir-fries.

Here is some more information about the maitake mushroom:

Storage: You should store fresh mushrooms in your refrigerator wrapped in a paper bag.

Seasons/availability: Maitake mushrooms are available year-round.

Nutritional Value:

Not only are mushrooms a good source of Vitamin D, researchers isolate antibiotic properties from mushrooms every year, and the maitake is the first mushroom with anti-HIV activity to be confirmed by researchers in the United States and Japan. Maitake mushroom extracts have also been shown to demonstrate protection against diabetes and consumption of maitake with its naturally occurring antioxidants, may be a wise strategy in protecting the body against diseases associated with oxidation. And in China, it is ingested for an immune system stimulant.

My favorite way to use mushrooms are to add them to other foods as a topping

on pasta, soups, burgers, wraps and sandwiches. The following recipe is a fun way to do this.

Maitake Bacon

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 TB olive oil
- 1 TB toasted sesame oil
- 1 tsp liquid smoke
- 1/2 tsp salt (reduce to 1/4 tsp if you want it less salty)
- 7 oz. fresh maitake mushrooms and a few pinches of smoked paprika

Before cooking, clean maitake gently with a damp paper towel to remove dirt. Do not soak them.

METHOD:

Preheat oven to 350.

Line a baking sheet with a silpat (non-stick baking sheets) or parchment paper. Set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk together the olive and sesame oils. Add salt and liquid smoke and whisk again.

Slice off the base of the mushroom (I used two, 3.5 oz. maitake for this). Discard or reserve and freeze the base for making stock later, if you wish.

Separate the fragile spoon-shaped petals with your hands into a large bowl. Pour the liquid over the mushrooms and toss well to coat. Transfer to the silpat or parchment and distribute in an even layer.

Place into the oven to bake for 20 minutes. Remove

from the oven, stir around and redistribute into a single layer. Bake for 10 minutes more.

Remove from the oven and transfer to a paper towel. Sprinkle with a few pinches of smoked paprika, if desired. Once cooled, they will crisp up nicely. Keep at room temperature and serve within the hour.

The information for this issue of Wholesome Foods comes from Laura Mancuso, olivesfordinner.com and wildfoodism.com.

***Warning: Some mushrooms are poisonous. Never eat a mushroom unless you are 100 percent positive you know what you are eating.**

Weed is winning, but the train could still go off the tracks

By Kristen Wyatt
Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Weed is winning in the polls, with a solid majority of Americans saying marijuana should be legal. But does that mean the federal government will let dozens of state pot experiments play out? Not by a long shot.

The government still has many means to slow or stop the marijuana train. And President-elect Donald Trump's nomination of Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions to be the next attorney general has raised fears that the new administration could crack down on weed-tolerant states 20 years after California became the first to legalize medical marijuana.

"We need grown-ups in charge in Washington to say marijuana is not the kind of thing that ought to be legalized. It ought not to be minimized, that it's in fact a very real danger," Sessions said during an April Senate hearing.

The Controlled Substances Act

bans pot even for medical purposes. A closer look at some of the government's options for enforcing it:

TAKE 'EM TO COURT: The government rarely invokes its authority to sue states, but it's the quickest path to compliance. The Justice Department could file lawsuits on the grounds that state laws regulating pot are unconstitutional because they are pre-empted by federal law.

Something similar happened in 2010, when the Justice Department successfully sued Arizona to block an immigration law that conflicted with federal immigration law.

Federal courts can also compel action, not just block it, as in Kentucky last year, when a county clerk was ordered to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples following a landmark Supreme Court ruling.

Twenty-eight states and Washington, D.C., allow marijuana for medical or recreational purposes. The government has yet to sue any

of them.

RAID POT BUSINESSES: The government could avoid court entirely if it doesn't mind a more expensive option: law-enforcement raids.

The Drug Enforcement Administration retains the legal ability to shut down anyone selling or growing pot, but there has been no coordinated federal attempt to close pot producers in multiple states. The agency has said repeatedly that it does not have the resources to pursue ordinary pot users.

Any change in that approach would likely require more money from Congress, which just saw many of its constituents vote in favor of legalization. And a federal agency probably will not spend limited resources busting people growing pot for personal use, said John McKay, a former U.S. attorney in Washington state.

"Who is going to stop people from smoking pot in a residence in Denver? Federal agents?" he said. "They are going to stop doing

terrorism investigations and start arresting people for pot? That, to me, is crazy."

Still, a series of raids could upend the marijuana landscape and chill investment in the fledgling industry.

FINANCIAL HURDLES: It's the biggest complaint in the weed business: taxes.

Businesses selling marijuana cannot use tax breaks or incentives offered to other small businesses, and some of them say they pay 80 percent or more of every dollar on taxes and fees. They have limited access to banking because many financial institutions are leery of the paperwork they are required to file on clients working with marijuana.

Colorado officials tried last year to ease the banking burden by setting up a special credit union to safely handle pot-shops money, only to see the Federal Reserve Bank and federal courts block the effort.

As long as Congress and the new administration leave those hurdles in place, the marijuana

business will grow haltingly. Voters may generally support pot legalization, but few have sympathy for a pot entrepreneur unable to become a multimillionaire because of banking obstacles.

STRICTER REGULATIONS: Government officials who are skeptical of marijuana but also leery of going against public opinion can use regulation and red tape to slow commercial pot.

Legalization opponents frequently decry the strength of today's marijuana, an argument that provides political cover for pot skeptics who once used the drug themselves and gives legalization opponents a backdoor route to blocking weed.

In Colorado, for example, marijuana skeptics nearly succeeded earlier this year in getting state lawmakers to cap commercial pot potency. The proposal would have banned some 80 percent of the pot products on shelves.

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