



SOY-SIMMERED MUSHROOMS

Hoshi Shiitaké no Umani

Dried *shiitaké* mushrooms are a pantry staple in most Japanese kitchens. Softened before being cooked, the mushrooms appear in a myriad of dishes. One of the most frequently encountered are *shiitaké* slowly simmered by the **Sa, Shi, Su, Sé, So** method: *saké* and sugar are added to the simmering liquid early, while soy sauce is held to the very end. Soy-simmered mushrooms made this way will remain flavorful and plump for about 5 days if refrigerated after they cool naturally. Quantities listed here make enough savory soy-simmered *shiitaké* mushrooms to garnish 6-8 portions of *Chirashi-Zushi* (scattered style sushi) OR cold noodles OR combine with other fillings in 5-6 plump sushi rolls.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4-6 dried *shiitaké* mushrooms
- 1 cup warm water (for soaking; this also produces stock)
- 1 cup *dashi* (basic sea stock OR *sankai* mushroom-and-kelp stock)
- 1 tablespoon *saké* (rice wine)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 tablespooons *shōyu* (soy sauce)

PROCEDURE:



Remove and set aside the *shiitaké* stems. These can be used for stock when making other recipes that do not use the caps. When cooking the caps, they alone will provide ample flavor.

Soak the dried *shiitaké* caps in warm water for at least 30 minutes (several hours or even over-night, is preferable). The *shiitaké* should be soft and plump. Strain the soaking liquid and reserve it to use as stock.

Slice the caps into thin julienne strips. Re-soak these strips for 5 to 10 minutes in the strained liquid (the slices should be fully reconstituted BEFORE cooking them). Strain the liquid again. Combine 1/4 cup (about 50cc) of this liquid with the *dashi* and *saké* and bring it to a simmer in a small saucepan. Froth (scum) will appear in large clouds; skim away.



Add the softened *shiitaké* slices and cook for 10 minutes maintaining a steady but gentle simmer. Use an *otoshi-buta* (dropped lid; see notes at the end of this recipe) for best results. More froth is likely to appear; skim away froth before adding the sugar and cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the soy sauce (*shōyu*) and cook for 4-5 minutes until the *shiitaké* become slightly glazed. Allow the *shiitaké* strips to cool in the cooking pot. When completely cool, transfer to a clean glass jar and cover with clear plastic wrap to tightly seal. Unused portions may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

落とし蓋 OTOSHI-BUTA (dropped lids):

Old-fashioned technology still useful today! Below, a kitchen scene from a 16th century scroll (Shuohanron Emaki) 酒飯論絵巻+ a variety of sizes of *otoshi-buta* + lid in pot



Because *otoshi-buta* lids drop down to sit directly on the food (not the rim of the pot), bubbling liquid recirculates as it hits the underside of the lid. Quicker, more even distribution of heat means less energy is needed to prepare food. Lids come in various sizes. Chose one that is slightly smaller in diameter than the pan or pot with which it will be used.