



SOY-SIMMERED MUSHROOMS

椎茸の旨煮

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.

Yield: enough to garnish 6 portions of *Chirashi-Zushi* (scattered style sushi) OR cold noodles OR combine with other fillings in 6 plump sushi rolls.

INGREDIENTS:

- 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 tablespoons *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.



Slice the caps into thin julienne strips (or keep them whole). Re-soak these strips for 5-10 minutes in the strained liquid (the slices should be fully reconstituted BEFORE cooking them). Strain the liquid again, this time into a small saucepan you can use for cooking the mushrooms. Add the saké and bring the liquid to a simmer.

Cook for 10 minutes maintaining a steady but gentle simmer. Use an *otoshi-but*a (dropped lid; **see below**) for best results in cooking. Skim away froth before adding the sugar and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the *shōyu*; cook for 4-5 minutes until the *shiitaké* become slightly glazed. Allow the *shiitake* strips (or caps) to cool in the cooking pot. When completely cool, transfer to a clean glass jar or other non-reactive container; seal tightly. Unused portions may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

落し蓋 **OTOSHI-BUTA** (dropped lids): Old-fashioned technology still useful today!



酒飯論絵巻 kitchen scene from a 16th century scroll (*Shuhanron Emaki*)



Because *otoshi-but*a 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.

Choose one that is slightly smaller in diameter than the pan or pot with which it will be used.