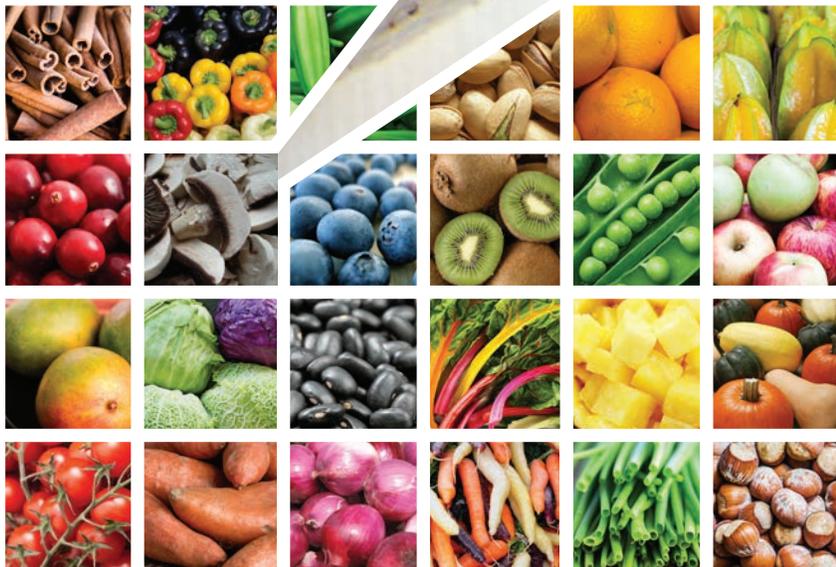




# COMMON MUSHROOMS

**Ingredient  
of the Month**



Presented by ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation

There are thousands of varieties of cultivated and wild mushrooms all over the world. The most popularly consumed varieties, white button, cremini and portobello, belong to the *Agaricus bisporus* mushroom family and are known as “common mushrooms.” Although mushrooms are treated as a vegetable, they are part of the fungi kingdom and do not require soil or light to grow. Mushrooms are available year-round and are cultivated in specially designed buildings where temperature, humidity and ventilation can be controlled. China is the largest producer of cultivated mushrooms. In the U.S., the majority of cultivated mushrooms are grown on the East Coast, with Pennsylvania as the top-producing state.

Common mushrooms have a smooth, rounded cap that darkens from creamy-white to light-tan to dark-brown as the mushroom matures. The underside consists of soft, brown gills that are covered by a soft ring that connects the edge of the cap to the stem. As the mushroom matures, the cap becomes flatter and the gills darken. Common mushrooms have a meaty texture with an earthy flavor that intensifies as they mature.

Common mushrooms are an excellent addition to any meal to boost nutritional value. Low in fat and cholesterol, they are excellent sources of selenium and ergothioneine that act as antioxidants and anti-inflammatories. They are a good source of energy-producing vitamins and minerals, such as riboflavin, niacin, copper and pantothenic acid.

## Healthy Ingredient Contribution

*Values from NutritionData.com based on cremini mushrooms, raw, sliced, 1 cup (72 grams)*

**SELENIUM:** One serving of mushrooms provides 27 percent of the daily recommended value of selenium, a trace mineral that helps regulate inflammation. It also works as an antioxidant to protect cells from damage.

**RIBOFLAVIN:** Mushrooms contain 21 percent of the daily recommended value of riboflavin, an essential vitamin that is important in the body for energy metabolism of carbohydrates, fat and protein. It also helps protect the body from free radicals.

**COPPER:** One serving of mushrooms supplies 18 percent of the daily recommended value of copper, a mineral that helps produce energy in cells, builds strong tissue and supports iron absorption.

**PANTOTHENIC ACID:** Mushrooms provide 11 percent of the daily recommended value of pantothenic acid, a vitamin that uses fats, carbohydrates or proteins as energy sources. It supports the adrenal glands to help prevent fatigue.

**ERGOTHIONEINE:** Mushrooms contain a powerful nutrient called ergothioneine that acts as an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory.

## Types and Varieties

**WHITE BUTTON MUSHROOMS** are harvested at an early stage of growth. They have a creamy-white to beige cap and closed gills. Their mild taste blends well with other ingredients.

**CREMINI MUSHROOMS**, also known as brown mushrooms, baby bellas or portobellini, are harvested later than white button mushroom, but prior to reaching the maturity of portobello mushrooms. They have a light-tan to tan-brown cap with gills that just barely show. They have a firmer texture and a heartier flavor than white button mushrooms.

**PORTOBELLO MUSHROOMS** are mature mushrooms with a dark-brown cap that measures up to six inches in diameter. They have a meat-like texture and a deep, savory flavor making them a tasty vegetarian alternative to meat.



## Selecting and Storing

- Never pick wild mushrooms without the help of a certified expert. Many wild mushrooms look similar to edible mushrooms, but are poisonous.
- Look for mushrooms that are firm, smooth and dry. Avoid ones that have wet, slimy spots.
- For longer freshness, remove pre-packaged mushrooms from container. Store mushrooms loosely in a paper bag in the refrigerator for 3-7 days.
- Try to avoid contact with other mushrooms, or layer with paper towels.

## Culinary Uses

- Wipe mushrooms with a damp paper towel and trim bottom of stems, if necessary.
- If cooking with Portobello mushrooms, scrape off gills before cooking to keep sauce from turning black.
- Substitute cremini mushrooms for white button mushrooms for more flavor.
- Mushrooms have a hearty, full-bodied flavor that pairs well with beef, wild game and vegetarian dishes.
- Mix into wild rice or quinoa dishes or add to stews and casseroles for a deep, earthy flavor.

## Interesting Facts

- Ancient Egyptians thought mushrooms granted immortality. Only the pharaohs were permitted to eat them.
- Many cultures believed that eating mushrooms could give that person super-human strength.
- People who collect mushrooms from the wild are called mycophagist.
- There are more than 30 species of wild mushrooms that glow in the dark.
- The common mushroom should not be confused with the very poisonous destroying angel mushroom. Both look similar, but the common mushroom has pink or brown gills, whereas the destroying angel mushroom has snow white gills.



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