

# Boost your health and happiness with Mushroom magic!

From the humble button to the exotic oyster, mushrooms are prized for their rich, earthy taste. But flavor isn't the only thing that distinguishes the delicacies: Scientists are finding the fungi are packed with amazing anti-aging benefits, says Paul Stamets, author of *Mycelium Running*. And since they're as close as your local supermarket, health-food or specialty-foods store, it couldn't be easier to make these health-boosters a mainstay of your meals!

**Did you know?** Mushrooms soak up vitamin D from the sun just like people do—and after just five minutes of sun exposure, they absorb enough to give you 100% of your RDA!

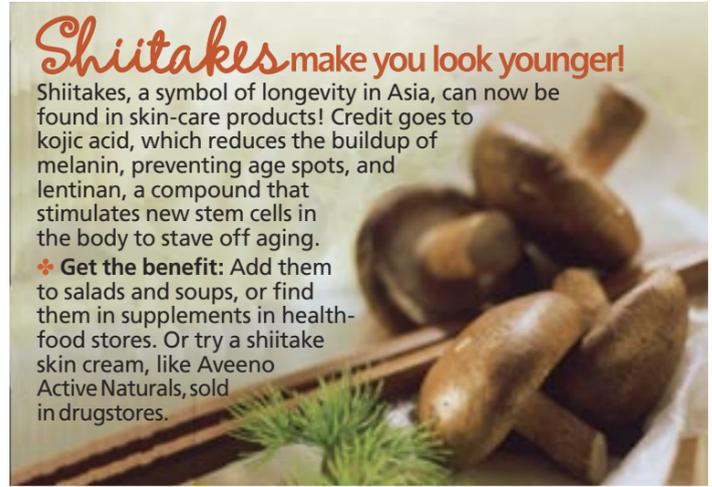
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**Maitakes fight diabetes!**

"Maitakes contain a complex sugar called X-fraction that regulates glucose levels and makes cells more sensitive to insulin," says Stamets. In one study, a maitake extract lowered blood-sugar levels 22% in four weeks.

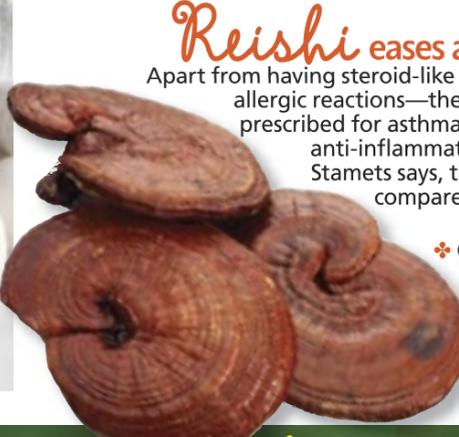
❖ **Get the benefit:** Slice them into thin strips, grill and sprinkle over a salad, or find maitake supplements at health-food stores.



**Shiitakes make you look younger!**

Shiitakes, a symbol of longevity in Asia, can now be found in skin-care products! Credit goes to kojic acid, which reduces the buildup of melanin, preventing age spots, and lentinan, a compound that stimulates new stem cells in the body to stave off aging.

❖ **Get the benefit:** Add them to salads and soups, or find them in supplements in health-food stores. Or try a shiitake skin cream, like Aveeno Active Naturals, sold in drugstores.



**Reishi eases allergies and arthritis!**

Apart from having steroid-like compounds proven to inhibit allergic reactions—the reason reishi extract is often prescribed for asthma, allergies and bronchitis—its anti-inflammatory properties are so potent, Stamets says, that "in one study, the extract compared favorably with prednisone, with few if any side effects."

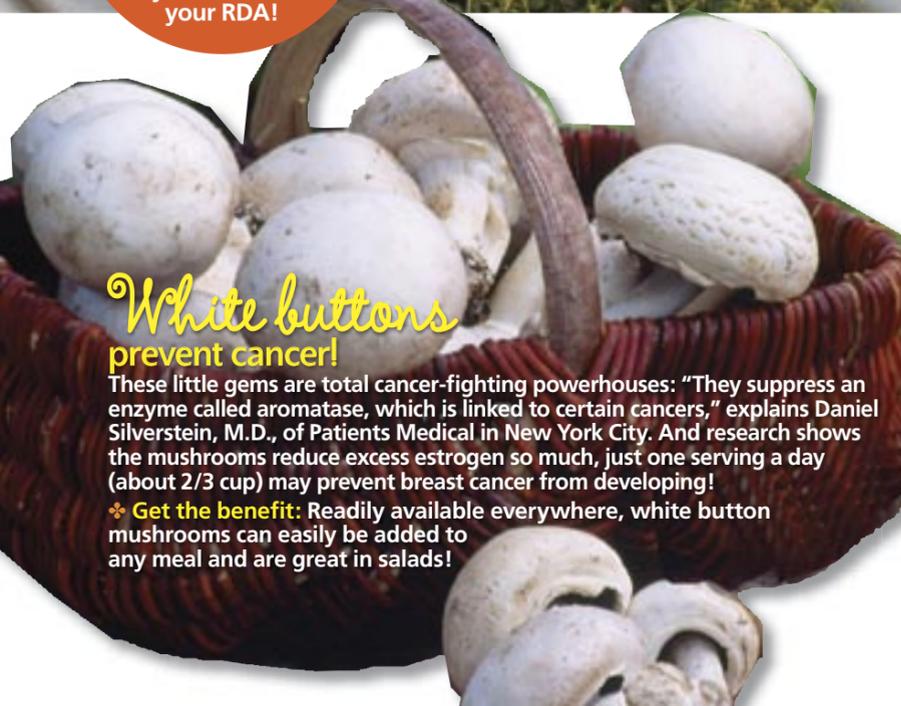
❖ **Get the benefit:** You can add them to soup, but since they can be tough, experts recommend supplements—found in health-food stores—instead.



**Portobellos help you slim down!**

Move over, tofu! The hearty flavor and huge size (up to 6 inches across!) of portobellos make them the perfect meat substitute and, according to the latest research, a great way to lose weight. Preliminary findings by researchers suggest that by substituting a 4-oz. portobello for every 4-oz. grilled burger eaten over the course of a year, the average person could save more than 18,000 calories and nearly 3,000 grams of fat—the equivalent of five pounds! They're also packed with tension-taming potassium—just one medium portobello has more than a whole banana!

❖ **Get the benefit:** For a yummy portobello burger, brush the cap (top) with olive oil, some garlic and salt, and grill until tender, about 10 minutes. They're also delicious grilled and served sliced over a salad!



**White buttons prevent cancer!**

These little gems are total cancer-fighting powerhouses: "They suppress an enzyme called aromatase, which is linked to certain cancers," explains Daniel Silverstein, M.D., of Patients Medical in New York City. And research shows the mushrooms reduce excess estrogen so much, just one serving a day (about 2/3 cup) may prevent breast cancer from developing!

❖ **Get the benefit:** Readily available everywhere, white button mushrooms can easily be added to any meal and are great in salads!



**Lion's mane improves memory!**

This mushroom has compounds called erinacines that help neurons grow and strengthen the brain's "white matter," which allows you to process info faster, Stamets explains. "In research, dementia patients given lion's mane extract had milder symptoms," he reports.

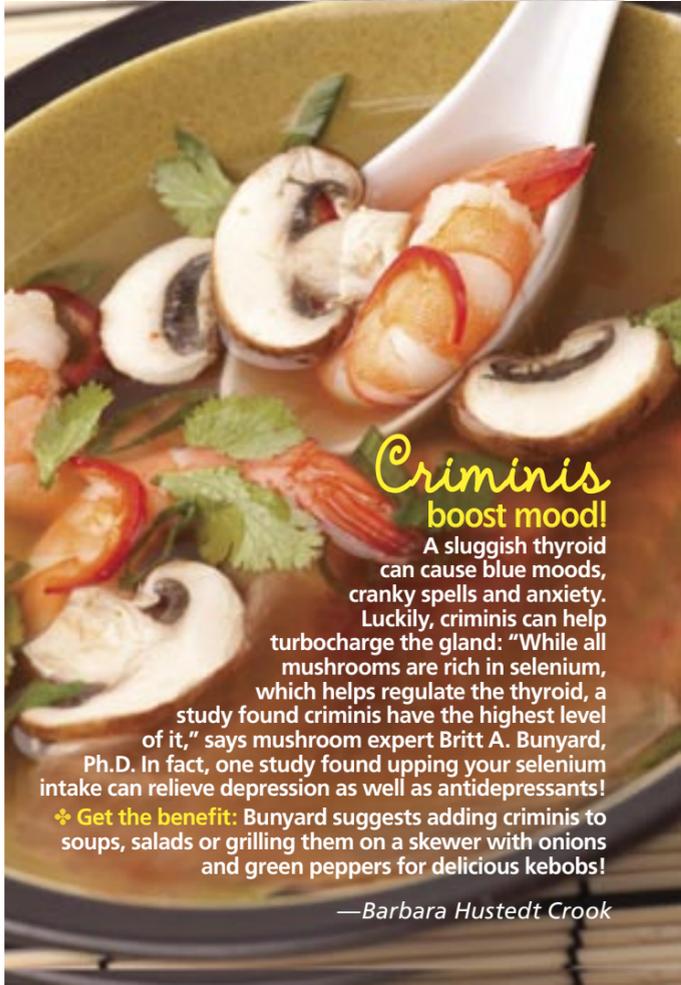
❖ **Get the benefit:** Lion's mane makes a good substitute for seafood in recipes. Find them at health-food stores, or take a supplement and follow package directions.



**Oysters lower cholesterol!**

Cholesterol a little high? Consider oyster mushrooms. They're packed with ergothioneine, a potent antioxidant that reduces plaque buildup in the arteries. Plus, oysters are rich in lovastatin, a compound that blocks the absorption of cholesterol. No wonder eating just a half-cup a day for a month has been study-proven to slash your total cholesterol by nearly 30%; indeed, lovastatin is also a common cholesterol drug available by prescription!

❖ **Get the benefit:** You can find oyster mushrooms in supermarkets; add them to sauces, soups, risottos and stir-fries.



**Criminis boost mood!**

A sluggish thyroid can cause blue moods, cranky spells and anxiety. Luckily, criminis can help turbocharge the gland: "While all mushrooms are rich in selenium, which helps regulate the thyroid, a study found criminis have the highest level of it," says mushroom expert Britt A. Bunyard, Ph.D. In fact, one study found upping your selenium intake can relieve depression as well as antidepressants!

❖ **Get the benefit:** Bunyard suggests adding criminis to soups, salads or grilling them on a skewer with onions and green peppers for delicious kebobs!