

Easy Chicken with Lion's Mane, peppers & potatoes

Thinly slice or dice a medium onion and a largish clove of garlic.

Lightly cook in a frying pan in oil. We greatly like a blend of Avocado oil and roasted garlic olive oil.

Add 1/2 dozen baby bell peppers cut into quarters.

When the color of the onions and the peppers begins to change, turn over and add 1-3/4# organic boneless chicken thighs, approximately 2 cups of (four medium sized) potatoes or the equivalent in small potatoes, roughly same amount of *Hericum* as potatoes (cut into 1/2 inch sections; or if large the slices should be resliced into 1/2" wide strips) approximately two cups once chopped. I like to add one or two slices of butter at that point as well.

Cover and cook on medium-low to medium heat until the chicken is done. Usually 15-20 minutes.

Salt and/or pepper to taste, if needed.

Hot peppers may be added with the bell peppers if heat is desired and the chicken may be omitted if a vegetarian dish is desired.

If the chicken is omitted more monitoring is required and a few tablespoons of water may be needed in order to prevent scorching of the vegetables.

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Cooking with the Lion's Mane mushrooms

1) Cut into 1/2 inch slices or if solid and very large the slices also get re-sliced into 1/2" wide strips. Some people prefer to tear them into pieces. Try both approaches to discover which you like best.

Wild harvested mushrooms will usually go into a dry fry pan at the beginning to 'sweat out' a lot of liquid (and flavor), which will then take a few minutes to reduce and be re-sorbed back into the mushroom (usually 6-8).

Cultivated hericiums usually need a few tablespoons of water to be added at first to prevent scorching.

If oil is used it should be only enough to prevent sticking. Too much results in frying the mushroom and making it soggy with oil. Ideally just small bits of water should be used at this point.

In either case, the mushrooms should be started on a medium high heat and cooked for around 1-2 minutes with stirring -- just to get them completely hot quickly, then the heat should then be reduced to medium low or low and they should be cooked covered for another 15 minutes with occasional stirring. Halfway into the cooking add a small amount of butter or a 2:1 mixture of olive oil and butter. Wine or other optional liquid seasonings should be added only towards the end of the cooking process or they can obscure the delicate flavor of the lion's mane.

2) Start out the same as above but add the butter and/or oil much sooner, as soon as liquids have been resorbed by the mushrooms. (be sure that all excess liquid has been resorbed before adding butter/oil) and cook over moderate heat until the edges and teeth begin to get golden-brown and crunchy. This will require a bit more oil than the first method plus very close monitoring towards the end, to avoid scorching.

Cooking with Shiitake mushrooms

Cook them in good oil such as butter, olive-oil:butter (2:1), avocado oil, etcetera until the slices are limp.

Shiitakes are versatile. They can be stir fried, baked plain or stuffed, marinated and grilled, added whole to the vegetables that get cooked along with a roast or in an earthen oven, added to soups, stews or meat dishes, or they can be cooked alone and enjoyed as dish. Precooked shiitakes can also then be combined with other foods such as omelettes, vegetables, soups and salads. It may be convenient to cook enough mushrooms for adding to 2 or 4 meals. Cooked shiitakes freeze acceptably.

Butter, garlic & a little salt may compliment shiitakes' distinctive flavor.

Stems of shiitakes are most often fibrous and very tough. They should be removed before cooking.

Thicker stems can be very thinly sliced and fried until golden brown in butter or butter and oil for a crispy-to-chewy treat. Thinner, tougher stems can be dried and ground into a powder for later use as a thickening agent in soups, stews, stock reductions and many types of sauces. Or stems *can* be discarded.

Shiitake 'bacon bits' with sea-palm fronds

Slice shiitakes thin but not too thinly. A couple to several (2-4) mm is fine. Try to slice them evenly.

Place the slices into a bowl and add a minimum amount of your favorite cooking oil then gently stir extremely well. A variant of this is to spread the slices out on a cooking sheet and lightly mist with a light spray of oil before tossing to coat all surfaces. It is important to not use too much oil.

The goal is to get a bare minimum but thorough coating of oil on all of the mushrooms. A special touch can be created by adding a drop of liquid smoke to the oil and shaking very well before oiling the mushrooms.

Once this is done lightly season with sea salt and again mix thoroughly. Other seasonings can also be added but keeping it simple has great results.

Spread the shiitakes out into a single layer on a foil or parchment paper lined baking sheet. Sprinkle the top with coarse sea salt.

Bake in a preheated 350°F oven, checking frequently, especially towards the end.

You want them to cook completely dry, turning brown with some golden parts. This takes a few minutes (15 or more minutes is common; the hotter the oven the faster it goes but monitor them carefully as rotating the pan may be required in some ovens. The last few minutes of this goes very fast so it requires a close eye to prevent burning.

Using care, transfer the baked mushrooms from the hot sheet into a bowl. Let it cool. You now have a bowl of shiitake bacon.

Break some crunchy dried sea palm fronds into smaller pieces & toss with your shiitake bacon. Enjoy.

If you are an optimist this can be packed into a jar and placed into a refrigerator for storage. If you are a realist you will probably leave it available on the counter knowing it will be consumed very quickly.

Caution: this food item may be found to be compulsively addictive.

It is important to always cook shiitakes thoroughly. Approximately one in 50 or more people appear to have a sensitivity to uncooked or undercooked shiitakes. Most shiitakes consumed in the world are dried and then rehydrated; drying is not the same as cooking and a thorough cooking is still needed.

In those individuals, consuming undercooked or raw shiitakes may result in a skin rash resembling poison oak but characterized by scratch-like lines. If there is an allergic reaction, a rash begins 24-72 hr following ingestion and can last for up to 14 days. It resolves without any treatment.

Most people are not allergic. Thoroughly cooked shiitakes appear to be OK for everyone.

Mushrooms freeze well once cooked. They can be prepared when available, packed into half-pint jars, and frozen for use at another time.