

The Nutrition Magic of Mushrooms

These newly discovered health benefits might move mushrooms to the top of your grocery list.

By Janis Graham From [Reader's Digest](#)

It's spring, and mushrooms are popping up all over, including in your local produce aisle. You don't have to be a top chef to prize the lush, earthy flavor of exotic mushrooms. But whether you pick smoky morels or the familiar buttons, you'll get some newly discovered health benefits:

They safeguard against cancer. Mushrooms are rich in disease-fighting phytochemicals, and eating them regularly has been linked to a lower risk of breast cancer in studies of Chinese and Korean women. Mushrooms also prevent prostate cancer cells from multiplying in mice -- and might do the same in men.

They supply hard-to-get nutrients. One medium portobello mushroom supplies 21 percent of the recommended daily intake of selenium and one third your need of copper; it also has as much potassium as a medium-size banana. Other varieties are just as rich in minerals, a recent analysis found. What's more, mushrooms retain their nutrients when stir-fried, grilled, or microwaved.

They help you cut calories. When ground beef was swapped out for mushrooms in lasagna, sloppy joes, and chili, adults consumed 400 fewer calories per day, according to a Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health study. Researchers estimate that if you sub mushrooms for ground meat in one meal every week, you can lose five pounds in a year. Just don't sabotage this fringe benefit by preparing mushrooms with loads of butter. Instead, toss them into a nonstick pan that's been lightly sprayed with oil, then sauté on low heat until they soften.

3 Recipes to Try

- [Mushroom-Pepper Pizza](#)
- [Spinach-Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms](#)
- [Kasha with Onions and Mushrooms](#)