

SFORMATO DI FUNGHI (MUSHROOM SOUFFLÉ)

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 pounds fresh mushrooms, sliced*
1 shallot, finely minced
2 cloves garlic, finely minced
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon fresh oregano, finely minced
1 teaspoon fresh thyme, finely minced
salt and pepper to taste
1 ounce dried porcini mushroom, ground to a powder

3 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons all purpose flour
1 cup milk, warmed to just above room temperature
1/3 cup freshly fine grated parmesan
3 egg yolks
4 egg whites + a pinch of salt

* Ideally, using small porcini mushrooms would be perfect, however, porcinis are almost impossible to purchase commercially. Instead, I used a combination of crimini and shitake.

For this recipe, you will also need 4 small ramekins and a baking dish with sides at least an inch and a half high.

DIRECTIONS

Break the eggs and separate yolks and whites – allow the whites to sit at room temperature while you prepare the soufflé base (this is surprisingly important).

Heat the olive oil in a skillet and heat until shimmering. Add the shallots and cook until translucent and starting to get golden. Add the garlic and cook until just fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the mushrooms and sauté until they release all their liquid and it completely evaporates. It is important to have the mushrooms without excessive moisture. Season with the oregano, thyme, salt and pepper just before removing from the heat. Transfer to a plate to cool slightly, spreading them out as much as possible to release steam. Take 1/3 of the mixture to a blender or food processor and puree until a paste forms. Add the porcini powder to this mixture. Reserve.

Prepare the sauce by melting the butter in a saucepan, adding the flour and cooking for a few minutes, stirring constantly. Add the warm milk all at once, season with salt, pepper and cook until it thickens (about 5 minutes on low heat). Add in the mushroom puree. Remove from the heat, let it cool slightly, then add the egg yolks, one at a time stirring constantly until fully incorporated. Reserve.

When it's time to bake the soufflé, add the remaining sautéed mushrooms to the sauce, mix well. Add the grated parmesan, a little at a time, mixing to incorporate.

Prepare your ramekins by greasing the insides with butter and coating with parmesan cheese (a "gritty" baking dish makes it easier for the soufflé to climb the sides). Preheat oven to 425F. Prepare your baking pan to hold ramekins and boiling water.

Beat the egg whites with a pinch of salt using an electric mixer until they form soft peaks. Add 1/4 of the egg white mixture to the mushroom/cheese base, and mix well. Now, working gently, incorporate the rest of the beaten egg whites, carefully folding it, trying not to lose too much volume. Ladle or pour the batter into the prepared dishes and place in baking dish. Pour boiling water around the ramekins to about half-way up their sides. Turn oven down to 375F right when you place in the oven and bake for 20-25 minutes.

Remove from the oven and serve right away with crusty bread. Note: the soufflés will collapse quickly, but they still taste great!