

taste buds chef Larry Janes

Shitakes just one of many

With all the hoopla over this year's poor bounty of morel mushrooms, I couldn't help but notice all the other assorted, upscale mushrooms appearing on my grocer's shelves.

Venture into any major suburban restaurant and you will notice the likes of shitakes and oyster mushrooms, wild mushrooms, enoki and creminis, resounding from the waitperson's lips as he or she reads the daily specials.

With their subtle flavor and distinctive texture, coupled with a beautiful appearance, today's mushrooms have a magical ability to transform even the most mundane ingredients into truly extraordinary fare.

BEFORE THE commercial cultivation of mushrooms, which began in France at the time of Louis XIV, they were so rare a delicacy in many locales that they were reserved for the ruling classes. Nowadays, with such bounty at hand, it is a culinary challenge to explore the whole range of mushroom cookery from garnishes and sauces to soups and main courses.

Not the least of the mushroom's benefits is the fact that it is unusually low in calories, rich in vitamins and low in sodium. Four large mushrooms contain just about three calories, most of which are consumed just by chewing them alone.

THE MOST notable variety readily seen in all markets includes the moonlight white and button varieties. When purchasing these, look for ones that are firm, without blemishes and with caps that are tightly closed so that the gills underneath the cap are not visible. In the East and Midwest, most varieties are white or a light cream-colored but in California and other Western states, whites, cream-colored and brown varieties are readily available.

When purchasing exotic mushrooms such as the shitakes and creminis varieties (two of the more common market varieties), again look for unblemished specimens that are firm and have no visible sign of mold or sliminess.

To store mushrooms, place them unwashed in a plastic container that is open at the top or in a paper produce bag open at the top to allow them to breathe. Plastic bags should not be used for storage because mushrooms tend to give off moisture and they will become soggy and mold more easily. If you purchase the freshest mushrooms, expect them to keep for no more than one week in this fashion in the fridge.

Mushrooms should be cleaned just before cooking and/or eating. If you are certain the mushrooms haven't been treated with chemicals, a simple wipe with a damp paper towel or soft-bristled mushroom brush will suffice. If you are not certain, a good rinsing and quick drying on paper towels will do nicely. It is not necessary to peel mushrooms. Simply trim off a thin slice from the stem and they are ready to use.

NOW, A WORD on mushroom brushes. A few years back, mushroom brushes were de rigueur and all good kitchens had them prominently displayed. At about \$4 each, these were a marketing strategy that soon went bust. Nowadays, good cooks keep a soft toothbrush in the gadget drawer, ready to lightly brush off any dirt that ordinary rinsing won't remove. If you are neurotic about cleaning the little beauties, you probably wouldn't be interested in knowing what they grow in so we will leave that info for a later story.

The temptation to gather wild mushrooms can be very strong, but unless you are an expert on the subject, it is almost impossible to be sure which fungus are

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Jo Mondro, RD clinical dietitian at Providence Hospital in Southfield, shows meat for cancer patients that adds calories and protein without adding volume. It includes tuna salad, fresh

vegetables, hard-boiled egg, crackers, fresh strawberries with whipped cream and a croissant with butter. Ensure supplement drink is high calorie and high protein.

In sickness or in health, eating right is essential

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By Janice Brunson
staff writer

THE OLD SAW, "You are what you eat," is perhaps never more true than when one is ill.

Good nutrition, a necessary ingredient for healthy living, is even more essential during bouts of major life-threatening illnesses such as cancer.

"Disease and treatment can cause medical problems that result in dietary problems for patients," said Sandra Remer, a Farmington Hills nurse who supervises the care of cancer patients seeking outpatient services at Southfield's Providence Hospital.

Depending upon the type of cancer and where it strikes, patients may be unable to eat or digest food properly. Tumors, for example, may alter the patient's ability to maintain nutrition, according to Remer.

Patients also may suffer loss of appetite as a result of complications or side effects from surgery, chemotherapy, radiation or other medical treatments.

"Treatment can adversely affect the nutritional status of patients, and a negative nutritional balance can even become a matter of day-to-day survival," Remer said.

Overt malnutrition is present in an estimated 40 percent of all patients hospitalized for cancer, Remer said.

"EATING HINTS," a booklet produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for cancer patients, offers tips reflective of good common sense to ensure better nutrition during cancer treatment.

- Try ice cream mixed with ginger ale or a milk shake, frozen yogurt or eggnog.

- Eat small meals more often.

- Keep snacks handy for nibbling.

- Try eating snacks before bed-time.

- Rely on food you really love.

- Concentrate on making meals more enjoyable.

A balanced diet helps prevent body tissues from breaking down and can help rebuild normal tissues that have been affected by the treatment, according to the booklet.

Research, the booklet said, indicates that cancer patients with good eating habits may have fewer infections and be able to be up and about more.

The booklet also emphasizes that diets high in fiber and low in fat, while recommended by the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society, in no way "prevent" cancer. There is no evidence at this time that changes in your diet will

prevent cancer or a recurrence of it, the booklet said.

"For individuals under treatment for cancer, the highest (nutritional) priority is a balanced diet adequate in calories, protein and vitamins," it also said.

"NUTRITION IS really important as a part of therapy. If all patients they must think of it that way. Good nutrition helps them fight infections and tolerate treatment better," said dietitian Jo Mondro of Providence Hospital.

Mondro, who works exclusively with cancer patients, said her advice includes "eating exactly opposite as you would if dieting."

When appetite is up, "pack it in" and eat as much as possible. Try to add calories without increasing volume, cream instead of milk and lots of butter and dressing.

Make food more appealing by experimenting with different ingredients and new recipes. Combat fatigue by eating small amounts frequently.

Patients at Providence Hospital also receive diets rich in supplements like Ensure, Enrich or Carnation Instant Breakfast.

LIKE MONDRO, Jo Ann Naumoff is also a dietitian for cancer patients at an area hospital. By observing the eating habits of the seriously ill,

Naumoff has come to certain conclusions or "tumor humors," as she calls them.

Patients "across the board" dislike red meat, regardless of how it is prepared — broiled, baked, ground or pureed.

A diet supplement called Isocal, described as "bland, mild and flavorful" by those who are well, is universally favored by the sick.

Ice cream, Jell-O, applesauce and other pureed foods are generally considered refreshing and other acid juices can create intestinal burning and individuals on chemotherapy need twice the sugar to make things taste sweet.

"Patients who aren't feeling well don't like talking about food," Naumoff said.

The challenge to the hospital dietitian is "coming up with ways" to promote and maintain normal weight.

HOSPICE PATIENTS who are critically ill are encouraged to eat whatever they want in order to maintain strength, according to Mary McGregor of Southeast Michigan Hospice in Southfield. Last year, the facility offered services, including dietary advice, to approximately 1,000 patients.

"We encourage soothing foods," cuisine that is easy to chew, swallow and digest."

Pub-style warmth earmarks Rugby Grille

It was a special occasion, so we looked for a special new place to meet friends for a farewell dinner.

We found a great spot for an intimate, delicious meal — the Rugby Grille, Birmingham's new British pub style restaurant in the Townsend Hotel.

Its English theme is carried out in cherry paneling and tables and deep green Carrara marble, which is used throughout for table tops as well as for a fireplace mantel and accents.

It almost feels like a study, with its hunter green plaid draperies and striped wallpaper in deep green, blue, rose and gold tones.

The grill seats just 42 at present, but will expand to 75 in a few weeks when eight tables are added in the colonnade off the hotel lobby. That means more activity near the lobby, which already encourages visitors and guests to stop for a genuine English tea time.

The wine list met with our critic's approval. It is extensive and features a nice selection of wines sold by the glass. However, it is difficult to find a moderate-priced wine on the list — which is also true of the menu.

Dinners range from \$14 for a

vegetarian pasta to \$24 for char-grilled lamb chops. Many entrees are char-grilled and those that aren't are prepared with a light touch — sauteed, steamed or broiled with care. No deep-fried foods here.

THE DINNER menu leads off



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

David St. Germaine supervises lunch hour sandwich buffet at the Rugby Grille in Birmingham's Townsend Hotel.

with filet mignon (\$21) and New York Strip Steak (\$19), and includes char-grilled veal chops (\$22.50), salmon (\$20), chicken (\$15.50) and broiled halibut with lemon caper butter (\$18).

We ordered from the evening's specials, which included sauteed soft-shell crabs (\$22) and lightly breaded and sauteed lake perch (\$18), served with cute little mushroom redskins (redskins cut into mushroom shapes). A terrific, crispy salad accompanied our meals.

Intriguing specials also included sauteed baby halibut with hazelnut crust (\$19) and char-grilled medallions of beef with wild mushroom sauce and bearnaise (\$22).

WHILE THE main entrees are tasty, the baked goods are unforgettable, right down to our whole wheat dinner rolls. The pastry chef, Don Palmer, prepares all the breakfast and dinner rolls and wonderful pastries and desserts — even cakes for weddings held at the hotel.

In the heart of downtown Birmingham, the grill draws most of its clientele from area businesses, retailers and residents, as well as Townsend guests.

Lunches are quick and good. Mainstay of the lunch menu is a sandwich buffet (\$8.95) featuring four differ-



ent selections each day.

Details: Rugby Grille, Townsend Hotel, 100 Townsend, Birmingham, 642-9200. Hours: Breakfast, 7-11 a.m. Mondays-Saturdays, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays; lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays; dinner, 4 p.m. to midnight Mondays-Thursdays, 4 p.m. to 1 a.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 2 p.m. to midnight Sundays. Dinner reservations recommended.

Prices: Breakfast: \$1.95-\$1.95; lunch: \$2.95-\$2.95; dinner: \$14-\$24. Visa, MasterCard, Diner's Club, American Express.

Value: Good, expensive.