

Wood Ear Mushroom Stir-Fry



Wood Ear (*Auricularia auricula-judae*) mushrooms are often found in cool to cold weather from mid fall to early winter and again in the early spring and throughout the winter in southern climates. It only grows on wood, living or dead. They resemble ears and may be found growing in overlapping clusters.

If you like Chinese cuisine you should get familiar with Wood Ear mushrooms. Similar cultivated species are usually available in Asian markets both fresh and dried. It is also called ‘black fungus’, ‘cloud ear’, and ‘mu er’ in Chinese. They have a jelly-like texture and thin edges, but usually hold their form, yet fold easily. This is the classic ‘black fungus’ in hot and sour soup.

To get that crunchy texture, cut the mushroom into thin strips, like matchsticks, and dry them. Drop them into the soup still dried and they will only partially reconstitute as the soup cooks. In traditional Sichuan Chinese cuisine Wood Ears are used in salads that many people prefer this way.

It doesn't have a strong taste but takes on the taste of whatever sauce it is cooked with and adds a rich aroma and texture to a dish. If you buy them dried or dry them yourself, they have a long shelf life and make many recipes taste better. To prepare dried Wood Ear, simply soak them in water until rehydrated. You can also hunt for them in the woods yourself.

One of the secrets to making this recipe is to freeze the meat and fresh wood ear mushrooms for about 30 minutes before slicing them. This works so much better than trying to slice them fresh.

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1/4 cup Bulgogi Korean BBQ sauce (found in Asia markets)

2 cups ribeye steak, thinly sliced in 2-inch lengths

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 tablespoons salted butter

2 cups yellow onion, chopped

2 cups Shitake mushrooms, chopped

1 cup carrots, julienned

2 cups Wood Ear mushrooms, chopped

2 cups Oyster mushrooms, chopped

3 cups baby bok choy, chopped

2 tablespoons salted butter

1 teaspoons salt

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

2 tablespoons Japanese toasted sesame oil

3/8 cup Bulgogi Korean BBQ sauce

1/8 cup spicy Bulgogi Korean BBQ sauce

2 tablespoons Sriracha hot pepper sauce, or to taste

1/2 cups green onions

1/3 cup plus 1/8 cup Crème fraiche

Thai basil, chopped, and use for garnish

In a large frying pan use 2 tablespoons vegetable oil on medium heat. Once the oil is hot, add 1/4 cup Bulgogi Korean BBQ sauce and brown the beef on both sides. Drain and set aside.

In a wok heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil and sauté the yellow onions, Shitake mushrooms, and carrots. Once they have softened a bit, add the Wood Ear (rinse first and remove any remaining stems) and Oyster mushrooms, baby bok choy, and 2 tablespoons butter, and continue to stir-fry until they are soft. Add the salt and black pepper, toasted sesame oil, Bulgogi Korean BBQ sauce, and the Sriracha hot pepper sauce. Add the green onions. Cover and stir often until all the ingredients are done. Add in the beef and blend for another few minutes.

Remove from heat and add the Crème fraiche. Cool and refrigerate overnight to meld the flavors. Heat and serve over rice or mix with egg noodles, and garnish with Thai basil. Additional soy sauce and Sriracha hot chili sauce may be added to tolerance

Serves: 6