Sides / Russia

Mushroom Stroganoff

A vegetarian riff on the Russian classic — wild mushrooms sautéed hard in butter until their edges char and their liquid has cooked away entirely, then brought together with shallots, thyme and brandy, finished with sour cream into a rich, pale brown sauce that clings to every strand of egg noodle.

Time 30 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 700 g Mixed mushrooms (cremini, shiitake, porcini), thickly sliced
- ☐ 100 g Shallots, thinly sliced
- ☐ 10 g Garlic cloves, minced
- ☐ 50 g Unsalted butter
- ☐ 30 ml Brandy or Cognac
- ☐ 200 ml Vegetable stock
- ☐ 200 g Full-fat sour cream
- ☐ 10 g Dijon mustard
- ☐ 4 sprigs Fresh thyme sprigs
- ☐ 15 g Flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
- ☐ 300 g Egg noodles or tagliatelle, cooked to serve
- ☐ 8 g Fine sea salt and black pepper

Let's make it.

01 This is the most important step and the most commonly botched. Heat a wide, heavy skillet — cast iron ideal — over high heat until it smokes. Add half the butter. When the foam subsides and the butter begins to brown, add the mushrooms in a single layer. Do NOT stir. Do not add all the mushrooms at once if they crowd the pan — do them in two or three batches. Let them sit and sear, undisturbed, for 2–3 minutes until a deep brown crust forms on the underside, then turn them. Initially the mushrooms release a large amount of liquid; this is normal. Stay on high heat and let that liquid evaporate completely. The sound in the pan changes from a steam-hiss to a sizzle when the moisture is gone — that is your cue. The mushrooms should be deeply browned, about 70% reduced in volume, their edges slightly crisped. Season with salt and pepper and transfer to a plate.

02 Reduce the heat to medium. Add the remaining butter to the same pan — the brown fond on the base will immediately begin to release into the butter, darkening it beautifully. Add the shallots and thyme and cook, stirring regularly, for 5–6 minutes until the shallots are soft and golden. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more. Pour in the brandy — step back as it may flame briefly if the pan is hot enough. Scrape the base of the pan vigorously as the brandy reduces to almost nothing in about 1 minute. Pour in the stock and return the seared mushrooms to the pan. Simmer for 5 minutes until the stock has reduced by about half and the liquid is slightly thickened and glossy.

03 Reduce the heat to the absolute lowest setting — sour cream must never boil or it will split and curdle into grainy, broken lumps. Add the Dijon mustard to the pan and stir through. Spoon in the sour cream and fold it gently through the sauce in slow, wide strokes. Let it warm through for 1–2 minutes, barely simmering — the surface should shiver gently but never bubble actively. The sauce will turn from brown to a warm, pale buff colour as the cream is incorporated. Taste and adjust salt and pepper carefully — the reduction will have concentrated the saltiness already. The finished sauce should be creamy, tangy from the sour cream, warmly savory from the mushrooms, and bright from the mustard.

04 Add the cooked, drained egg noodles directly into the pan with the sauce and toss to coat every strand. If the sauce is too thick to coat the noodles freely, add a splash of pasta cooking water to loosen — it emulsifies beautifully with the cream. Divide into warm bowls and shower generously with freshly chopped flat-leaf parsley. Serve with nothing more than a grinding of black pepper and a simple green salad. The noodles should be enrobed, not drowning; each strand should carry a visible, creamy coating.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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