

Maitake Mushroom Souffle



**Miette Culinary Studio
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INGREDIENTS:

- 6 eggs
- 4 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp finely and freshly grated
Parmesan or Asiago cheese
- 3 tbsp flour
- 1 cup milk or light cream, warmed (a perfect use for the microwave)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup maitake mushroom, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp freshly grated pepper, preferably white
- 2 tbsp finely chopped chives
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely grated Gruyere, cheddar, or other melting cheese of your choice

PROCEDURE

Preheat the oven to 375 degree.

Separating the eggs: Put all the egg whites in a perfectly clean, grasefree large bowl. Put 4 of the egg yolks into a smaller bowl. You will have 2 egg yolks left over. (If you are new to separating eggs, the easiest way is to crack the shell firmly, then pull the halves apart over the egg whites bowl, catching the yolk in one half and letting the white run out. Rock the yolk back and forth between the two shell halves, letting as much of the white run out as possible. Drop the yolk into the yolk bowl. It is very important not to get any yolk into the egg whites-they don't beat up if you do. But it doesn't matter if there's white in with the yolks-there always is.) Set the 2 bowls of beautifully separated eggs aside.

Preparing the baking dish: With your fingers, lightly rub a tablespoon or so of the butter all around the inside of the dish. Sprinkle the Parmesan inside the dish and roll the dish around in your hands to lightly coat the entire inside-the bottom and all the way up the sides. Set the dish aside in the refrigerator to chill a bit. A chilled dish seems to keep the butter in suspension better as the soufflé bakes.

Preparing the sauce base: Melt the remaining butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour and cook, stirring, for 2 – 3 minutes without letting it brown (this step cooks the flour so that it doesn't have a raw "floury" taste). Slowly whisk in the warm milk, a little at a time. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring constantly, and cook for 3 – 4 minutes. The sauce will be very thick. Stir in the nutmeg, salt, and pepper and remove the pan from the heat. What you've made here is a white sauce, or béchamel. Beat a little of this warm base slowly into the egg yolks. This "tempers" or gradually warms them so that they are less likely to scramble. Whisk this mixture back into the rest of the base and set aside.

Beating the egg white: In a clean bowl, with a hand or stand mixer beat the egg whites just until stiff but still shiny and moist looking. This means that the fluffy egg whites should stay in standing peaks when you lift out the beaters. (If the whites are no longer shiny and start to "clump," they have been over beaten.

Folding the egg whites and finishing the soufflé: Sprinkle the chives over the sauce base and with a rubber or silicone spatula, stir a quarter of the whipped egg whites into the base. Do this quickly. This lightens the mixture so that you can fold in the remaining whites. Here's a little lesson in folding: Scoop the rest of the whites onto the top of the sauce base. With the edge of the spatula, cut down into the whites, drag the spatula along the bottom of the bowl toward you, and bring the sauce mixture over the top of the whites. Turn the bowl a quarter of a turn, and sprinkle on some of the grated Gruyere. Cut down through the whites, drag the spatula along the bottom, and bring the sauce mixture over the top. Repeat until the whites, cheese, and sauce are just combined.

This is one of those techniques that's harder to describe than to demonstrate, but it's worth trying to do it right. What should be going through your mind is that you are doing everything you can to thoroughly and evenly mix the egg whites, sauce base, and cheese without deflating the egg whites. Stirring will deflate them.

Spoon the mixture into the prepared dish, gently smoothing the top and bake for 25 – 30 minutes or until the soufflé is puffed and golden brown. Keep the door closed for at least the first 20 minutes so that the soufflé can set. If your oven doesn't have a glass window and you're tempted to peek, don't! When done, serve immediately. To maintain as much of the puff as possible when serving, plunge an upright serving spoon and fork straight down into the center of the soufflé and then pull the crust apart and scoop out a serving.

(Serves 4 – 6 people)