

Maple-Baked Mushroom 'Ham' | Plant-Based

Swick

Makes 1 to 1 1/2 cups | Active Time: 30 minutes | Total Time: 4 hours

Step 1: Making the Brine

- 3 bay leaves
- 1 tbsp sea salt (or pickling salt)
- 1 1/2 tsp mustard seeds (brown or yellow)
- 1 tsp whole pink, white, black peppercorns
- 1 tsp whole allspice
- 1/2 tsp coriander seeds
- 1/4 tsp fennel seeds
- 3 to 5 whole cloves (1/8 tsp gr)
- 1/8 tsp ground ginger
- 1/8 tsp (pinch) gr cinnamon (or 1 sm stick)
- 3 tbsp maple or palm sugar
- 3 cups water

Place all of the ingredients into a pot and bring to a gentle boil. Then reduce the heat to low and let the mixture steep for approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Then turn off the heat and let the mixture cool to room temperature.

Note: For the peppercorns, we like to do a mix of all three (pink, white, and black); however, you can just do any one of them if that is all you have.

Step 2: Preparing the Mushrooms

- 1 1/2 lb (680 g) sliced trumpet mushrooms (also called King oyster mushrooms), cleaned
- 1/4 tsp liquid smoke, optional

To prepare the mushrooms feed them through the slicer of a food processor. Alternatively, you can use a manual countertop slicer, which is what we used.

Once done, strain the cold brine over the mushrooms and gently toss to combine — pushing the mushrooms below the liquid. For a more 'smoked' ham-like flavor, add a bit of liquid smoke. Place the mushrooms into the refrigerator for at least 4 hours, overnight, or even for a couple of days.

Step 3: Cooking the Mushrooms

- 1 to 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, optional
- sea salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).

Next, strain the mushrooms and then pat them dry. It's important that they are good and dry, otherwise, they will steam and look pale in color. You can even place the mushrooms into the refrigerator overnight to air dry.

To cook the mushrooms, toss them with the oil (omit for oil-free) and season with a bit of salt and pepper. Transfer the mushrooms to a parchment-lined baking tray. Spread the mushrooms out flat, leaving a bit of room in spots so that the mushrooms have space to bake (and not steam). Bake the mushrooms for 15 to 20 minutes, or until they have just started to brown around the edges — tossing as needed.

Alternatively, the mushrooms can be fried. To do this, heat a large frypan over medium-high heat. Once hot, add the oil, followed by the mushrooms. Do not touch the mushrooms for the first few minutes, let them begin to cook and release their juices before tossing them as this will help them brown better. It will also help to prevent them from sticking. When ready, the mushrooms should be a nice golden color with little crispy bits around the edges of some of the mushrooms.

Lastly, taste for seasoning, add a touch of salt, if needed.