

Roasted Mushroom Orzo: The Perfect Accompaniment

By Susie Iventosch



Roasted Mushroom Orzo on a bed of arugula with a side of glazed carrots Photo Susie Iventosch

We were all set to grill pheasant one night, but I was struggling with what to serve with it. We had just done potatoes the night before, but still, I wanted some kind of starch to go along with the pheasant. So, I was thinking of making our Mexican-style orzo casserole, but it didn't seem to be a good fit. Then the lightbulb went on as I was looking at a package of mushrooms in the vegetable drawer. Why not make an orzo casserole with roasted mushrooms and

caramelized shallots instead? And I had some of that amazing Trader Joe's triple cream, soft ripened cheese, which was almost jumping out of the refrigerator, saying, "Pick me! Pick me!" So I did. This dish turned out to be the perfect accompaniment to the pheasant and then, the next night, we had the leftovers as our main meal along with some delicious rosemary bread. Though I didn't add it, a little grated Gruyere would be a nice touch to this dish, too!

INGREDIENTS

1 16-ounce package of Orzo
1 yellow onion, coarsely chopped
1 shallot, coarsely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
2-3 cups sliced cremini mushrooms
6-8 dried porcini mushrooms, reconstituted in boiling water, drained and cut into bite-sized pieces
½ cup Trader Joe's Le Delice De Bourgogne Triple Cream Soft Ripened Cheese (Use about ½ of the package; save some to use with crackers another time. I used the skin and all.)
½ cup plain low-fat Greek yogurt or sour cream
½ cup freshly-grated Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS

Heat oven to 425 F. Toss sliced mushrooms and pieces of reconstituted porcini mushrooms with 1-2 tablespoons olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place on a sprayed or oiled baking sheet. Roast in hot oven until just beginning to brown, approximately 7-8 minutes. Remove from oven. Lower oven temperature to 350 F.

In a sauté pan, caramelize chopped onions, shallots and garlic in 2 tablespoons olive oil. Set aside.

Cook orzo according to directions. Drain and place in a large bowl. Add caramelized onion mixture, roasted mushrooms, Trader Joe's Le Delice De Bourgogne Triple Cream Cheese and Greek yogurt. Mix well.

Turn out into well-greased baking dish. You can choose either a 9-by-13 or 9-by-9 inch dish. It will be taller in the 9-by-9, and be a bit moister, but the 9-by-9 offers a crunchier cheesy topping. Sprinkle top with grated Parmesan or Gruyere, and bake at 350 F for approximately 25 minutes, or until top is nicely browned and cheese is bubbly. Bon appetite!

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com.

This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



Lynn's Top Five

Savvy Tips When Helping Your Parents Financially

By Lynn Ballou, CFP®

Most parents hope to avoid becoming a financial burden to their children. But increasingly, adult children are being called upon to help not just organize their parents' affairs and hire care managers, but also to

step up with real financial support as well. There are ways you can provide this assistance while being government benefits aware as well as tax and estate planning adept. Here are five for your consideration:

1) Check available assistance opportunities. You're busy so it's tempting to just write a check to help Mom and Dad. But before you do that, get up to speed on the current laws, regulations and government assistance benefits and programs that your parent's might find advantageous but not qualify for if you increase their income by providing financial support. Your Certified Financial Planner professional can work with you to find the most knowledgeable care manager, benefits specialist, and/or attorney who specializes in elder law, and who are a good fit in your family's unique situation.

2) Buy long term care insurance for your parents, or set up a sibling/family member funded trust. If you and your siblings see that your folks have limited means and won't have enough assets if they need care later in life, perhaps you pitch in and purchase a long-term care policy while they are in good health to protect your assets later on. If that's not a viable option for you, and you and other family members who are providing assistance have the means, you may wish to consider setting up a mutually funded trust for your parents' benefit. Paula Goodwin, a tax and estate law attorney who lives in Orinda and practices law with Schiff Hardin in San Francisco, believes in the importance of protecting the assets for future possible need while at the same time ensuring that if you or other donors pass away before your parents do, any unused assets are returned to your family or other appropriate heirs, and do not become part of your parents' estate (and thus be distributed via the terms of their will or trust).

3) Consult with a tax advisor. If you are providing income support, it

might be a high enough amount that you can claim one or both as a dependent. Also, if you have choices of how to provide support, think about paying their medical expenses so that you aren't limited to the \$14,000 annual gifting rules. Paula also notes that when monetary support for parents is needed "a great planning tip is to gift appreciated assets to your parents and let them sell in their tax bracket, if lower than your own."

4) What if your parents live out of state? Paula also reminded me that parents often reside in different states of residence than their adult children. While you may be very knowledgeable about benefits available to California residents and California tax laws, consult with pros where your parents live before making financial planning decisions. And these long-distance relationships really lend themselves to care managers, since you aren't local enough to really supervise the actual care providers who are helping in your parent's daily lives.

5) Protect what your parents own. Sometimes the best advice is the simplest: Be sure copies (if not the originals) of all of your parents' financial statements come to you, and review them in detail! Of course, being the trustee or co-trustee with your parents and/or siblings may be the approach you use. But if you are not a listed trustee, your parents can still request that institutions send you copies of statements.

As you can imagine, this column just scratches the surface of the complex issues that come into play when we step in to assist our aging parents financially. The best advice is to communicate with your parents and

other family members as much as possible to learn what your folks really need and what resources the family has available. Bring pros who specialize in these areas of planning into the conversation as early on as possible. As you go forward and implement your parental assistance plans, be sure to review regularly how things are unfolding, how resources and needs may be changing, and the ever evolving tax and estate planning laws. From my own experiences and my heart, I wish you the very best on this challenging journey.

Paula Goodwin and Schiff Hardin are not affiliated with or endorsed by LPL Financial or Ballou Plum Wealth Advisors, LLC.



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