

Healing Shiitake Starter

Shiitake mushrooms are an important immune stimulant, sweet, neutral and traditionally said to tonify *Qi* and blood, and benefit the stomach. They are ideal at any time of year to combat seasonal colds and help strengthen the liver. They're also good for soothing chest inflammations — common in autumn and winter — and can help lower high cholesterol levels to counter a seasonal surfeit of rich puddings.

Spring onions (*Cong Bai*) are anti-bacterial and used in China to dispel “wind and cold evils” as well as invigorate yang *Qi*. Coriander is an important detoxificant, while the addition of ginger makes this dish just a little more warming to ease winter chills.

Serves 4

400g/1 4 oz fresh shiitake mushrooms
2 tablespoons sesame seed oil
115g/ 4oz spring onions, sliced
½ teaspoon fresh root ginger, peeled and chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon orange peel vinegar
1 tablespoon chopped fresh coriander

Trim the stalks and wash the mushrooms, then pat them dry. Leave them whole. Heat a thick-based pan, add the sesame oil, spring onions and ginger and fry for 1 minute.

Add the mushrooms, cook them for 2-3 minutes on one side, then turn them over and cook for a further 2-3 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Transfer the mushrooms to a warmed serving dish and keep warm. Add the vinegar to the cooking juices and use to deglaze the pan.

Pour the sauce over the mushrooms and sprinkle with coriander. Serve as a starter or light lunch.