

ASPARAGUS & SHIITAKE MUSHROOM STRUDEL

This is an elegant vegetarian dish that we served often at Esalen while I managed the kitchen. This recipe originated on the shores of Lake Constance, where the countries of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland share a border. This dish is usually served at Esalen with Porcini Mushroom Sauce (see page 177).

Serves 4 to 6

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound shiitake mushrooms, cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- $\frac{1}{4}$ pound button mushrooms, cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- 1 pound asparagus
- 12 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1 cup grated Asiago cheese
- 3 tablespoons chopped parsley
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 (1-pound) box puff pastry (2 sheets)

Heat the oil in a sauté pan over high heat, add the onion, and sauté until golden brown. Add the mushrooms to the onions, lower the heat to medium, and cook another 8 minutes. Trim the asparagus stalks, and then cut asparagus into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces and steam for 5 minutes or until the stalks feel tender, but slightly crunchy.

Place the onions, mushrooms, and asparagus in a mixing bowl and add the ricotta, Asiago, parsley, pepper, and salt. Mix until everything is blended.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out one sheet of the pastry dough to a 9- x 11-inch rectangle. Fold the rolled dough into fourths and lay it on a clean kitchen towel that is bigger than the unfolded dough. Unfold the dough onto the towel. On the third of the dough that is closest to you, place half of the filling, leaving a 1-inch border along all edges. Lightly wet the upper edge of the pastry dough with water. Roll the strudel away from you in a tube or jellyroll shape. Continue to roll until you have reached the wet edge and pat the seam with your hands until the strudel sticks together. Fold the ends and press to seal them. Repeat for the second sheet of pastry dough and the remaining half of the filling.

Take both ends of the kitchen towel and gently roll the strudel off the towel and onto a baking pan lined with parchment paper. Bake in a preheated oven at 350 degrees F for 40 minutes. Remove from oven, slice, and serve. This recipe will make 2 strudels.