

Meera Sodha's vegan recipe for mushroom shawarma with sumac cucumbers

The classic spicy Levantine sandwich is made meat-free with hearty baked mushrooms

Reviews and ratings are very much a part of our daily lives. Most of them I disregard, but occasionally something cuts through and it feels as if people have truly voted with their hearts. That was the case when I stumbled across [Sam Sifton's New York Times recipe for chicken shawarma](#) with 19,624 five-star ratings. I had to try it, but there were two problems: I didn't want chicken (I wanted mushrooms) and, being a serial tinkerer in the kitchen, I tinkered with it. With thanks and apologies to Sam, I'm happy to report that I'd give this five stars, too.

Mushroom shawarma with sumac cucumbers

You need king oyster mushrooms in the mix to get the right texture – the ideal split is a third of each type of mushroom; you'll also need two large baking trays (mine are 30cm x 40cm). The hot smoked paprika adds a good hit of heat, so if you prefer something a bit friendlier, use sweet smoked paprika instead.

Prep 10 min

Cook 55 min

Serves 4

1kg mixed mushrooms – equal quantities of oyster, king oyster and chestnut, ideally

2 red onions, peeled and cut into 1cm wedges

1 tbsp smoked hot paprika, or sweet smoked paprika

1½ tbsp ground cumin

2 tsp ground cinnamon

6 garlic cloves, peeled and minced (25g)

100g olive oil

3 lemons, 2 finely zested and all 3 juiced, to get 6 tbsp

2 tsp fine sea salt

250g cucumber (ie ⅔ of a large one), thinly sliced

1½ tsp sumac

20g picked flat-leaf parsley, chopped
4-8 pittas, split open
Vegan garlic mayonnaise, to serve
Pickled green chillies, to serve

Heat the oven to 240C (220C fan)/475F/gas 9, and line two large baking trays with reusable paper or greaseproof paper.

Pull the oyster mushrooms into ½cm-wide strips, score the king oyster mushrooms deeply with a fork and use your fingers to tear them into strands, and break up the chestnut mushrooms into 2cm pieces. Put all the mushrooms and the onion wedges in a large bowl.

To make the marinade, put all the spices in a small bowl and add the garlic, oil, lemon zest, four tablespoons of the lemon juice and a teaspoon and three-quarters of salt. Mix well, pour over the mushrooms and onions, then toss with your hands to coat. Tip the mushroom mix on to the baking trays, and make sure everything is sitting in a single layer. Bake for 20 minutes, stir, then bake for another 10 minutes, until some of the mushrooms are turning crisp at the edges.

While the mushrooms are roasting, make the cucumber. Put the cucumber, sumac and a quarter-teaspoon of salt in a bowl, stir in the remaining two tablespoons of lemon juice and the chopped parsley, and set aside.

To serve, spread the insides of each pitta with garlic mayonnaise, add the mushrooms and pickled chillies, then wedge in a little cucumber and eat.