

# Meet the Mushroom Madame



**Mushrooms star in this meat-free take on the classic comfort sandwich.**

The first time I had a chanterelle mushroom was in ninth grade at my best friend Lily’s house. My own childhood didn’t include luxury fungi, but Lily was an only child and an adventurous eater. She held up the ocher-colored, trumpet-shaped specimen and explained to me that chanterelles were the mushroom equivalent of gold. She confidently sautéed a few in butter (14-year-old-me was impressed) and served them alongside an over-easy egg. “Chanterelles go very well with eggs,” she told me. One bite of the earthy mushrooms dunked in golden runny yolk proved her right.

Nobody else has ever echoed the chanterelle-and-egg pairing to me, yet I have taken it as fact all these years. Every September—peak chanterelle foraging season in my home state of Washington—I find myself whipping up some fried eggs to go with my chanterelles.

To make it extra fancy and satisfying, I take inspiration from the croque madame—a classic French sandwich featuring ham, cheese, creamy béchamel sauce, and a fried egg on top. In my mushroom version, which I have dubbed “Mushroom Madame,” I spread open-faced toasts with béchamel sauce, add Gruyère cheese, and melt everything under the broiler. Then I top off my toasts with sautéed mushrooms and a sunny-side-up egg.

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Béchamel sauce is creamy and rich, providing the perfect backdrop to garlicky mushrooms and gooey cheese. If you’ve never made a béchamel sauce before, there’s nothing to fear! It starts with a simple roux of butter and flour. Whole milk is added, and the mixture is cooked until thick and bubbly, then seasoned with freshly ground nutmeg for a hint of fragrance.

Chanterelles are available in most of the United States in late summer and early fall, but if they prove hard to find or are prohibitively expensive (they’re nearing \$40 per pound at my local store), I feel no shame in mixing in other varieties of mushrooms or substituting them completely. Shiitakes have a similar tender texture and woodsy flavor, but portobello and even cremini mushrooms taste equally delicious. Whatever looks freshest at the store is usually a safe bet, and autumn brings a bounty of mushrooms no matter where you live.

These dressed-up toasts should not be reserved for breakfast. A fresh green salad and a glass of chardonnay make a fine meal of this mushroom madame. It’s the perfect way to showcase any mushroom—from special seasonal varieties to whatever you have lying around in the refrigerator—and indulgently meat-free.

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## **RECIPE: Mushroom Madame**

*by*

ZOLA GREGORY

Zola Gregory is a writer and recipe developer based in Seattle. Having previously worked as a pastry chef and baker, she now enjoys helping others find success in their own kitchens through her stories, recipes, and baking classes.