



Talking Mushrooms

The Cheesecake Factory

Executive Chef Bob Okura



Executive Chef Bob Okura of The Cheesecake Factory

Bob Okura joined The Cheesecake Factory in 1988 as vice president of culinary development and corporate executive chef.

Ever since, he has kept very busy with developing The Cheesecake Factory's 200 menu items and the three-unit Grand Lux Café's 150 menu items. Packing both menus with delicious and creative mushroom dishes, Chef Okura is a true mushroom aficionado. Here's what he had to say about the role mushrooms play at his restaurants:

In the past, we have spent a considerable amount of time during certain research and development periods creating meatless dishes. Some of these dishes have become top sellers like our "Wild Mushroom Burger" at the Grand Lux Cafe. With only 13 stores, we sold over 35,000 Wild Mushroom Burgers in 2008. In general, we're finding that more and more of our guests are responding strongly to standard menu items like pizzas that are vegetarian.

Even though we offer a number of menu items that already contain mushrooms, so many of our guests still ask for mushrooms to be added to whatever they may be having for their meal. More than 250,000 guest requests for either extra mushrooms or mushrooms in place of meat were made companywide during 2008.

From a chef's perspective, mushrooms are a culinary gift, offering more creative potential and versatility than just about any other vegetable. They add flavor, texture, and enhance the overall visual appeal of whatever food they are paired with. And in doing so, they increase the inherent level of "cravability" of the dish. When done correctly, this can make the difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary.

Mushroom Mania at The Cheesecake Factory

Corporate chefs consider The Cheesecake Factory the foodservice innovator to watch, and The Cheesecake Factory has taken to mushrooms like no other restaurant chain. The Cheesecake Factory offers 34 mushroom menu items.



Living proof of mushrooms' versatility in the kitchen, mushrooms can be found across Cheesecake Factory's appetizers, entrees, sandwiches, burgers, pasta, pizzas, breakfast and Asian menu items. These dishes include white button, shiitake and Portabellas among other varieties.

Selected Cheesecake Factory menu items include:

- Grilled Portabella Burger with Lettuce, Tomato, Red Onion, Cheese and Mayonnaise
- Hibachi Steak with Sautéed Shiitake Mushrooms over Onions, Bean Sprouts and a Soy Steak Sauce
- Southeast Asian Caramel Chicken with Spicy Vietnamese Caramel Sauce, Mushrooms, Green Beans, Onion, Red Chile Peppers, Garlic and Ginger
- Pan Seared Salmon Served with Sautéed Spinach, Mushrooms, Angel Hair Pasta and Lemon-Caper Sauce

The Cheesecake Factory's new small plates menu emphasizes high value at a lower cost. Out of the 14 small plate menu items, three have mushrooms:

- Stuffed Mushrooms with Cheese, Garlic, Herbs and Wine Sauce
- Fresh Baked Mushroom Pizette with Garlic, Shallots and Fresh Herbs
- Wild Mushroom Crostini with Garlic, Herbs and Madeira Cream Sauce (Pictured below)



Talking Mushrooms is a publication of the Mushroom Council. Please visit mushroominfo.com/foodservice for more information and call Katy Pankau at 312-233-1575 with any questions.

