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Secrets of a raw culinary artist

From cooked to raw. Cherie Soria with insider tips for recreating your favourite foods, raw style.

When I first returned home from the Ann Wigmore Institute 16 years ago my goal was to take raw and living foods mainstream. I wanted to create foods that would satisfy the senses and nurture the spirit, as well as nourish the body. I had been a cooked vegetarian chef for 19 years prior to witnessing the miraculous healing benefits of the living foods lifestyle of Ann Wigmore, so I knew I had the skills to create great-tasting raw living foods that anyone could appreciate.

I told Dr. Ann, as we lovingly called her, that my goal was to make familiar comfort foods that taste better than cooked, without cooking. She told me I would be a beacon of light for her teachings – and I went home filled with missionary zeal.

After several months of experimentation and sharing recipes and raw food preparation classes with friends and students, I began teaching gourmet raw vegan foods at conferences for organizations like the Vegetarian Union of North America, the American Vegan Society, and the North American Vegetarian Society.

These organizations were skeptical in the beginning, thinking that people would not be interested in eating raw foods. Of course the idea of “gourmet raw foods” was unheard of then, so I had a lot to prove. But once they saw that my recipes were not only familiar and delicious, but also had broad public appeal, they were convinced.

Getting started

How does one go about creating raw dishes that mimic cooked ones? At Living Light, we teach students to consider three important factors: flavour, texture, and appearance. In other words, foods must look, feel, and taste like the foods we are familiar with. (In past issues of *Get Fresh!*, we explored flavour, texture and binders, so refer to those in addition to the guidelines opposite.)

To translate cooked recipes into raw favourites, begin by

thinking of a cooked dish that you love and miss. Unless you are a highly experienced raw food chef, it is best to start with a recipe that typically contains no more than 50% meat (ie. no prime rib or fried chicken). If it is a recipe that includes meat, think of how you can create the texture of meat.

Say you want to create beef stroganoff: first think of taste, then texture, and finally, appearance. For flavour, we need rich, meaty, deep flavours – like crimini and porcini mushrooms, intensified by the addition of powdered shiitake mushrooms, along with dark miso and onions, to provide the depth of flavour and provide “umami”, a flavour element similar to meat that induces a sense of comfort.

Mushrooms also provide a meaty texture and the nut gravy satisfies the contrasting creamy consistency. The dark miso provides depth of flavour as well as colour, making the gravy look and taste even more “beefy”. To deepen the colour so it looks like beef gravy, warm it in a dehydrator and it will turn brown. To create the texture and appearance of egg noodles, cut peeled zucchini into long wide ribbons using a vegetable peeler. Serve it warm from the dehydrator on a warmed plate to further add to the comfort of this traditional Northern European favourite. (Recipe overleaf.)

Cooking removes liquid and intensifies flavour through evaporation. To achieve that without cooking, salt or marinate high water content vegetables to make them “sweat” and lose their crunchy, raw texture. Marination also adds flavour while removing excess moisture and making the product more tender and palatable. Remember to consider flavour, texture and appearance when translating cooked recipes into new raw favourites.

Overleaf are more guidelines to use in creating cooked textures without cooking and a few raw ingredients that can replace cooked ones in recipes. Most importantly, don't think you have to give up your favourite family recipes – experiment and have fun translating cooked recipes into raw favourites! ➤➤

Substituting Raw Ingredients for Cooked

COOKED/DEVITALIZED/ UNHEALTHY PRODUCT:	REPLACE WITH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING: *Not raw
Binders, thickeners, and emulsifiers	Psyllium powder, flax, chia seed, Irish moss, agar agar*, coconut meal, nut cheese, avocado, dates, lecithin*
Breads, tortillas, crepes, and flatbreads	Sprouted, ground grains or nuts, seasoned, shaped and dehydrated; lettuce, collard, or cabbage leaves; flax-vegetable or psyllium-vegetable wraps/tortillas/crepes
Bouillon, consommé, broth, stock	Miso, tamari, shiitake mushroom powder, vegetable juice, blended vegetables/fruits, thickeners
Cream/eggs	Avocado, nut/coconut cream, psyllium powder
Butter or shortening	Coconut butter, avocado, nut butter, cacao butter
Canned coconut milk	Fresh or desiccated coconut blended with water or blended fresh young coconut meat
Chocolate	Carob, cacao, cacao powder
Chips and crackers	Dehydrated crackers and chips made from flax or chia seeds and other seeds, vegetables and/or sprouted grain
Cooked onion/garlic	Onion or garlic powder*; dried onion or garlic; well-rinsed and marinated onion
Cooked tomatoes	Soaked or ground sun-dried tomatoes, seeded tomatoes
Cooked vegetables	Dice, julienne, or chiffonade finely, marinate in salt/acid brine and/or warm in sun or dehydrator
Dairy milk or cream	Nuts, seeds, coconut or grains blended with water and strained
Dairy cheese or yogurt	Nuts, seeds or fresh coconut blended with probiotics or rejuvelac and allowed to ferment (or add lemon)
Flour	Ground nuts or seeds, dried ground vegetable matter, mesquite powder, ground buckwheat
Ice cream	Frozen nut or coconut cream, bananas or other fresh fruit
Mayonnaise	Blended young coconut, nuts or seeds; tahini, avocado
Meat	Ground nuts or seeds, marinated mushrooms, ground, seasoned root vegetables (can use a binder to give the right texture)
Pasta or rice	Spiralized zucchini, squash or minced vegetables
Peanut butter	Raw nut butters, puréed wild peanuts
Roasted nuts/seeds	Seasoned, dehydrated nuts and seeds
Salt	Solar dried sea salt, Celtic salt, or Himalayan crystal salt, tamari, miso, sea vegetables, celery powder
Vinegar	Citrus juice, tamarind paste, berries, pineapple
White sugar	Agave nectar, dates, dried or fresh fruit, maca, stevia evaporated cane juice*, maple syrup*

Creating cooked flavour and textures in raw cuisine

To create a "cooked" flavour and texture in vegetables:

- Salt softens and breaks down the cellular structure of vegetables and leafy greens, forcing the liquids to be released. In most cases, the natural juices that are released would dilute the flavour and thin the sauce
- Acids such as citrus or tamarind can be used in marinades to soften vegetables
- Massage vegetables to soften them
- Pungent flavours like garlic, onion, chillies and ginger need to be used judiciously when used raw. Pungent powders, like onion powder, and garlic powder, permeate the dish more than raw onions and garlic and add a cooked flavour to the recipe
- Ferment cabbage to soften
- Ferment nut and seed paté using probiotics to make cheese (read more about cheese making in my books, *Angel Foods* and *Raw Food Revolution Diet*)
- Dehydrators warm casseroles, sauces, and vegetable dishes
- Dehydrators remove liquids and create firm/crisp/crunchy textures
- Food processors help to create textures that simulate the texture of cooked foods like pie crusts, breads, flour, patés, soups and purées
- Spiralizers are used to create a pasta-like consistency
- High-powered blenders are used to make foods smooth, luxurious and creamy
- Juicers are used to create beverages, broths and ice creams



Mushroom Stroganoff Serves 6

- 1/2 cup dried porcini mushrooms (adds a "meaty" texture, colour and flavour).
- 1 1/4 cups water

Marinated Crimini Mushrooms

- 3 cups crimini mushrooms, sliced 1/8" thick (adds a "meaty" texture, colour, and flavour).
- 2 tablespoons red onions, minced (flavour element that brings out the "best" in mushrooms)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (adds to the meaty texture)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons wheat-free tamari (naturally "cooks" and intensifies the "meaty" flavour of mushrooms)
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder (provides a cooked, pungent flavour that permeates the mushrooms without the "bite" of fresh garlic)

Zucchini Noodles

- 12-16 medium courgettes (zucchini), peeled (about 2 lbs) (used to create the texture and appearance of egg noodles)
- 1 teaspoon crystal salt (softens zucchini noodles and removes excess moisture)

Cream Sauce

- 1 cup reserved mushroom soaking water (used to intensify the meaty, mushroom flavour)
- 1 cup almonds, soaked for 8 to 12 hours (replaces the dairy cream that is traditionally used)
- 2 cups reserved zucchini centres, chopped (see direction 3, below) (supplies more nutrients than plain water and adds more body to the sauce)
- 2 tablespoons dark miso (adds a deep, salty, wine-like flavour, and darkens the colour of the sauce)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons shiitake powder (thickens and intensifies the mushroom flavour)
- 1 teaspoon vegetarian support formula nutritional yeast (flavour and nutritional element)
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika (traditional flavour element)
- 1/2 teaspoon crystal salt, or to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder (powder is gentler than raw garlic)
- 1/8 teaspoon ground pepper
- fresh ground black pepper (optional)



1. Soak the porcini mushrooms in the water until soft – about 1 hour.
2. In a shallow bowl, whisk together the onions, olive oil, tamari and garlic powder. Add the crimini mushrooms and toss until all the mushrooms are thoroughly coated. Set the mushrooms aside to marinate for 30 minutes.
3. Using a vegetable peeler, shave the peeled courgette lengthwise, rotating the courgette a few degrees each time, to form thin planks resembling wide egg noodles. Once you reach the seedy centre of the courgette, stop and reserve the core for the sauce. Sprinkle the “noodles” with salt. Gently toss and set aside for 30 minutes.
4. Drain the water from the porcini mushrooms and roughly chop. Retain the mushroom soak water to use in the recipe.
5. Put the almonds and the soak water in a blender and blend to form a smooth, thick cream. Pour the cream into a mesh bag and gently squeeze the mixture to remove the pulp. Only the strained cream will be used. Refrigerate or freeze the pulp for another recipe.
6. Drain the liquid from the crimini mushrooms and put one third of the mushrooms into a high-speed blender, along with half the cream, all the soaked drained porcini mushrooms, the leftover chopped courgette centres, the dark miso, shiitake powder, nutritional yeast, paprika, salt, garlic powder and pepper, and blend until smooth and creamy. Add the remaining almond cream and pulse to blend. Do not continue blending the gravy once the remaining cream has been mixed in, or it will become frothy. It should just be mixed in.
7. Rinse the noodles and gently pat them dry, to remove the salt and excess moisture (otherwise the moisture will thin the sauce and it will not cling to the noodles). Toss the noodles into the cream sauce.
8. Put the mixture in a shallow rectangular glass baking dish approximately 8 1/2-inch by 13-inch (lasagna-type), top with remaining marinated crimini mushrooms, and place it in the dehydrator set at 135 degrees for 1 hour.
9. Serve warm from the dehydrator, on a warm plate, topped with a sprinkle of fresh ground pepper.



Cherie Soria

is the founder and director of Living Light Culinary Arts Institute, the author of *Angel Foods: Healthy Recipes for Heavenly Bodies*, and coauthor of *The Raw Revolution Diet: Feast, Lose Weight, Gain Energy, Feel Younger!* She has trained many of the world’s top raw food chefs and instructors, and is often referred to as the “mother” of gourmet raw vegan cuisine. Visit RawFoodChef.com or write to info@RawFoodChef.com.