

THE LIVING ROOM

THE FACT SHEET

FOOD WITH MIGUEL MAESTRE



MUSHROOM TUNNEL

Miguel visits the amazing underground crops of the famous Mushroom Tunnel in Southern Highlands. Built in the late 1800's the old railway tunnel is now owned and operated by microbiologist Dr Noel Arrol who grows an extraordinary variety of mushrooms in the dark, dank environment. Miguel picks and cooks some of the finest fungus to create a barley risotto feast to die for!

FAST FACTS

- The tunnel was built in 1866 and sits in the hillside between Mittagong and Bowral, alongside Mt Gibraltar.
- Mount Gibraltar is thought to be the rim of an ancient volcano. It's locally known as 'the Gib', and rises to an estimated 868 metres.
- At the time of its design the tunnel was considered one of Australia's greatest engineering feats.



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- The tunnel is a whopping 650 metres long. It took two years to excavate and a further year to fortify with masonry blocks.
- The tunnel was disused in 1918 when the double rail track opened.
- During WW2 the Royal Australian Air Force used the tunnel to store explosives in addition to being as a bomb shelter for the locals.
- In the postwar years the tunnel began its new life as a mushroom growing business, as did many other similar tunnels around the country.
- The tunnel offers the perfect growing conditions for mushroom production, low temperatures and high humidity,

LI SUN EXOTIC MUSHROOMS



A microbiologist, Dr Noel Arrol bought the tunnel from its original owner in 1987. As an established mushroom producer, Noel focused the business on exotic mushrooms and created Li Sun Exotic Mushrooms. The tunnel maintains a steady temperature of 16°C with humidity at around 80%. This environment mirrors the natural growing conditions in the mountainous regions of countries like China, Japan and Korea where exotic mushrooms are prolific. Li Sun produces over 1500 kilograms of mushrooms per week with shiitake mushrooms the largest cultivar. Other mushroom varieties grown in the tunnel are chestnuts, enoki, king brown, nameko, oyster, shimieiji, Swiss brown and wood ear. Li Sun was the first grower to supply Swiss brown and shiitake mushrooms commercially in Australia. Li Sun supply to major supermarkets and restaurants.

Li Sun Exotic Mushrooms offer public tours all year around.

<http://www.li-sunexoticmushrooms.com.au/tours>



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MIXED MUSHROOM & BARLEY RISOTTO

Once referred to as 'meat for vegetarians', mushrooms are now popular with everybody from high-end chefs to home cooks, whether you eat meat or not. Famed for their unique umami flavour, mushrooms are extremely versatile adding depth and complexity to a wide range of dishes. Mushrooms are at their best when tender but not soft and mushy, so treat them gently and you'll be well rewarded.



Ingredients

- 2 x 30g packet dried porcini mushrooms
- 250g pearl barley
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 40g butter
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 300g mixed mushrooms, plus extra to serve
- ¼ cup cream
- 100g grated parmesan, to serve
- baby rocket, to serve
- lemon wedges, to serve

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Method

1. Bring 1 litre of water to the boil in a saucepan. Add the dried mushrooms, pearl barley and thyme and season well with salt. Reduce the heat to a steady simmer and cook for 15 minutes until the barley is just tender. Strain, reserving the barley and stock separately.
2. Heat the butter and olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until soft and starting to caramelise. Tear three quarters of the mushrooms into pieces and add to the frying pan. Cook, stirring regularly, for 2–3 minutes or until the mushrooms begin to soften. Add the barley and enough of the stock to almost cover the mushrooms. Simmer for 2–3 minutes until the mushrooms are cooked and the liquid has reduced and thickened. Add the cream and simmer until heated through.
3. Remove from the heat, stir through the parmesan, remaining mushrooms and season to taste. Spoon into bowls and top with rocket. Serve with lemon wedges.

WEBLINKS

For further information on – Li Sun Exotic Mushrooms take a look at the following website:

<http://www.li-sunexoticmushrooms.com.au/>