

'Shroom at the Inn

It's hard for Jeff Stanford, owner of Stanford Inn by the Sea in Mendocino, California, to recall the exact evolution of most of the recipes in his new vegan cookbook, *Dining at The Ravens* (Perseus Distribution, 2016). What he can recall is visitors inquiring about recipes ever since he cooked them breakfast back in the early 1990s, when the Inn first opened. "I would write out the recipes and file them away. In 2005, I self-published my own cookbook, thanks to customer demand and a Xerox machine!" he laughs.

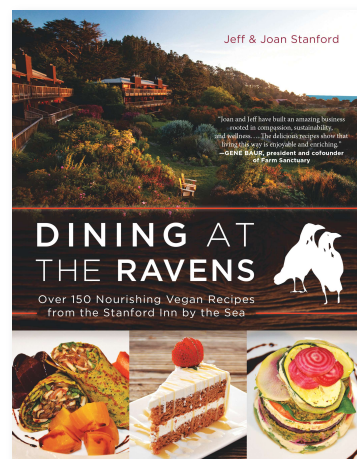
The desire to publish a more robust version always remained, but Stanford and his wife Joan were dedicated to the notion that it couldn't be printed until their Inn's restaurant, The Ravens, had gone entirely vegan. The eatery had been vegetarian initially—and in 2007 all recipes became vegan, though eggs and dairy were available upon request. "In 2012, going completely vegan was the Christmas present I gave myself," he recalls.

Stanford is especially proud of The Ravens' collaborative kitchen: "It's so cool to be a part of, to have fostered this melding of ideas and food innovation," he says. And innovation certainly becomes necessary when you're running a full-service kitchen that uses not a single animal product or byproduct. He and his wife Joan worked tirelessly to perfect all 150 recipes in the new cookbook, which was published in February. The book's "Pantry Basics" are what one might consider the building blocks of their vegan recipes. The section includes recipes for everything from Flax "Egg" and Vegan Cashew Cheese to this delectable shiitake "bacon."

A nutritious meat alternative, shiitake mushrooms are frequently referred to as one of the world's healthiest foods for good reason: They're excellent sources of fiber, iron, vitamins B₂, B₃ and B₆, copper, pantothenic acid, selenium, manganese and zinc. Shiitake mushrooms have been found to be effective in extending survival of select cancer patients, lowering cholesterol levels, stimulating the immune system and treating infections.

Although this recipe calls for oil (it wouldn't be a bacon replacement without *some* fat, right?), Stanford suggests using a spray version to coat the 'shrooms instead, which will significantly reduce the greasiness. The key to their bacon-like flavor? Plenty of smoked paprika.

Chefs at The Ravens serve these delicacies on salads, atop roasted veggies, or just in a bowl for guests to snack on. "People really love the smokiness of bacon," says Stanford. "This recipe definitely delivers on that." —Rachel Kossman



Shiitake Bacon

8 cups fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed
½ cup olive oil
2 tsp. salt (approx.)
Smoked paprika

Preheat oven to 350° F. Toss mushrooms lightly in oil and sprinkle with paprika and salt to taste. Spread out on a sheet tray. Bake until crispy, approximately 30 minutes. ■