



Vegan Xmas Menu: Delicious Caesar Salad as a Starter

⌚ Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 40 minutes
Total time: 60 minutes

👤 Portions: 4

Ingredients (serves 4-6)

- 400-450 g (14.10 - 15.8 oz) oyster mushrooms
- 1-2 tbsp. potato starch (or cornstarch)
- 1 small garlic clove
- 1 tsp. sesame oil
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- A pinch of salt & pepper
- 200 g (7oz) black kale/dinosaur kale (3-4 big leaves) or simply more romaine lettuce
- 2 heads of romaine lettuce (300 g/10.5 oz)

For the dressing

- 100 g (3.5 oz) cooked and rinsed chickpeas (z.B. 1/4 can or glass)
- 1-2 tsp. medium hot mustard
- 1 small peeled garlic clove
- 1 tbsp. capers (can be omitted, but taste delicious in the dressing)
- 1 tbsp. soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. yeast flakes
- Optional: 1-2 tsp. Sherry (optional but delicious)
- 1 tbsp. cashew paste/cashew butter (or almond paste)
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 150 ml (5 ounces) plantbased drink (such as oat milk or almond milk)
- Lemon juice or apple vinegar for seasoning to taste

For the vegan parmesan

- 35 g (1.23 oz) sunflower seeds
- 35 g (1.23 oz) pine nuts
- 15 g (0.52 oz) yeast flakes (3 big tbsp.)
- 10 g (0.35 oz) hulled hemp seeds (1 big tbsp)
- Optional: a pinch of garlic powder

Instructions (40 minutes for drying the mushrooms (optional) + 25 minutes preparation)

Short explanation of the use & preparation of oyster mushrooms: A classic Caesar Salad is traditionally served with roasted chicken. Of course this is out of the question in vegan cuisine. Therefore I decided to use oyster mushrooms as delicious "meat substitute".

Oyster mushrooms are cultivated all year round in large halls on tree trunks, so they are always available seasonally and regionally. They have a great, firm consistency and a strong, pleasantly hearty taste without tasting too much of "mushroom". You can get oyster mushrooms in organic markets or in well-stocked supermarkets. They are simply perfect for this recipe. I cut the mushrooms into slices and let them dry lightly in the oven for about 40 minutes before further cooking. This gives them a nice firm to the bite consistency. If this is too much work for you, you can skip this and fry the oyster mushrooms directly (just skip working steps 1+2+3 in the recipe). But I think the consistency of the slightly dried mushrooms is really great for the recipe. But it is important that you only "dry" them, not cook them too hot in the oven, otherwise they will get muddy. If you want to try it out, please follow the first three steps exactly. It's worth it.

1. Preheat the oven to 70 °C/ 158 °F fan/circulating air (not hotter!).
2. Clean the oyster mushrooms, remove the stalk and cut the mushrooms into small pieces.
3. Place the sliced mushrooms on a baking tray lined with parchment paper and let them dry lightly in a preheated oven at 70 °C/ 158 °F circulating air

for about 40 minutes. Open the oven door once every 10 minutes and let the steam escape. Then remove the mushrooms from the oven, mix and carefully cover with some kitchen paper and press dry slightly.

4. Dust the dried oyster mushrooms with 1-2 tablespoons potato flour (or cornstarch) and mix. Peel 1 clove of garlic and chop finely. Heat 1 tsp sesame oil and 2 tbsp soy sauce in a deep pan or wok. Add the chopped garlic and the mushrooms and fry for about 3-4 minutes. Season the mushrooms with salt and pepper. Set aside.
5. Puree all the ingredients listed for the dressing to a deliciously creamy Caesar dressing in a mixer. The consistency of the dressing can be extended as desired with water or a plantbased milk. The dressing can be individually seasoned with apple vinegar and salt.
6. For the vegan parmesan, fry the pine and sunflower seeds in a pan without additional oil/fat until they take on a light color and have a pleasant aroma. Keep on tossing them and make sure they don't burn. Crumble the roasted pine nuts/sunflower seeds, peeled hemp seeds, yeast flakes and salt into "Parmesan" in a mortar or "pulsate" in a blender. I add a little garlic powder.
7. Shorten the stalk of the romaine lettuce slightly, wash and chop or pluck into small pieces. Wash the kale, remove the leaves from the hard stalk and cut into small pieces. Mix kale and finely chopped salad in a large bowl.
8. Mix the salad with plenty of dressing, sprinkle with lots of vegan parmesan and serve topped with oyster mushrooms. At the very end add a little more vegan parmesan and dressing.

Here's another tip if you're making the Caesar salad for Christmas: You can prepare both the salad and the dressing very well. Just wash the lettuce and put it in the fridge or in cool place, covered with a damp cloth. You can do this the day before. Also the dressing keeps fresh covered in the fridge for 3-4 days. If you like, you can also prepare the mushrooms and then heat them briefly in a frying pan before serving. So you don't have to stand in the kitchen for too long at Christmas eve. But the mixing of dressing and salad should only be done shortly before serving.