Creamy Mushroom Soup



20 ounces mixed fresh mushrooms, cleaned and dried
1 clove garlic
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and pepper
1 1/2 T butter
1 small onion, thinly sliced
1 3/4 cup chicken broth (14 ounces)
1/2 cup white wine
1 1/2 cups (12 ounces) half-and-half
Croutons for serving (homemade or store bought)

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Place whole mushrooms and garlic clove on large baking sheet with shallow sides. Drizzle with olive oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Toss to coat. Roast in oven 10 minutes, then toss in remaining small mushrooms and roast for another 10 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool for a few minutes.

While mushrooms are roasting, melt butter in sauté pan and sauté onion over medium low heat until soft and golden brown, about 10-15 minutes. Remove from heat.

Remove half of the mushrooms from the baking sheet; chop into small bite sized pieces and set aside. Place remaining mushrooms and the garlic clove, onions, and chicken broth in a blender. Use a rubber spatula to scrape all of the butter from the onion pan and the drippings from the mushroom pan into the blender. Puree until very smooth. Pour into medium soup pot.

Add white wine to soup pot (hint: use your wine to "rinse" the blender so you get all the mushroom-y goodness from the bottom!) Simmer gently for 15 minutes.

Stir in the chopped mushrooms and half-and-half and simmer gently for another 15 minutes (do not boil). Thin with a little extra half-and-half or milk if necessary. Add salt and pepper to taste.

To serve, ladle soup into bowls and float a few croutons on top.

Makes about 5 cups of soup.

This recipe calls for mixed mushrooms. Don't stick to just the white button variety, try some portabellas, shiitake, oyster, and other varieties as well- they have more flavor and will make your soup more interesting. I used 8 ounces of large white mushrooms (whole), 8 ounces of baby portabellas (also whole), and 4 ounces of an "exotic" blend from the produce department of my local grocery store. The white and portabella mushrooms are quite a bit larger and "meatier" than the other varieties and will need a little extra cooking time. When roasting your mushrooms, start with the largest ones and then toss in the smaller ones a little later so that they all cook evenly.