The recipe for Mushroom Cups With Tofu Ssamjang Sauce, above, features produce from six Hawaii farms. It was created for the Grand Taste at Maui AgFest 2019.

Seared mushrooms star in Korean-style lettuce wraps

Chop Abby Ferrer draws inspiration from her international travels and the traditional Filipino cuisine she grew up with to create her signature menu items and dining experiences. The native New Yorker living in Hong Kong as a young child and her career brought her to Maui in 2013.

Ferrer said, "I love mushrooms, and they're such a versatile vegetable. The Hawaiian alii and oyster mushrooms stand up well to grilling, marinating and sautéing. For the Korean-style ssamjang sauce—a thick, spicy paste used with food wrapped in a leaf—I added firm tofu to give the lettuce cups a little more bulk and protein. Ferrer also added more green onions and roasted white sesame seeds for texture, and lots of garlic—because who doesn't love garlic?"

Chef’s tips

1. "I'm a big fan of Korean smoky grilled meats, banana and melon, and roasted white sesame oil is a must. You get a nice deep texture and nuttiness. You can also soak black rice for an hour. Then mix it with your white rice (equal amounts) and roasted white sesame seeds for texture, and lots of garlic—because who doesn't love garlic?"

2. "For the Korean-style lettuce wraps, I like using a white sticky rice like Thai or Japanese. I have also used Gen-Ji white rice, which gives a nice texture and nuttiness. You can also soak black rice for an hour. Then mix it with your white rice (equal amounts) and roasted white sesame seeds for texture, and lots of garlic—because who doesn't love garlic?"

3. "Extra sauce. The recipe makes more tofu ssamjang sauce than you need, so it can be saved to be used for another dish. The extra sauce can be served on the side of lettuce cups. It's great with grilled meats or with a bowl of steamed rice. You can also share and send some home with friends."

4. "I’m a big fan of Korean mushrooms, Panazela Pro-dance edible fungus, and Lactarius cropproona. Nupli Fly Farm mushrooms, Uka’s Farms radishes and Hamakua Heritage Farms mushrooms. I’m a big fan of Korean food and love the freshness of lettuce wraps paired with smoky grilled meats, but I also love all the sauce."