

Lion's Mane

Would you put something called lion's mane on your dinner menu? It may look like a large ball of fluff or a lion's mane but in reality it is quite a meaty textured mushroom. Lion's mane is one of the new gourmet mushroom varieties available around Melbourne farmers' markets, along with coloured oyster mushrooms, nameko, shimeji, shiitaki and king mushrooms. I was very intrigued to find the lion's mane mushroom at the Melbourne Gourmet Mushroom stall at Gasworks on Saturday. Lion's mane is very high in antioxidants and much is made of its disease averting capabilities but vegans also love the texture which lends itself to meat or fish substitution in various recipes. Think fritters and fish or crab cakes. It is supposed to have a slight flavour of lobster but having recently enjoyed Portland lobster over the summer I found the resemblance a bit too subtle for my taste. However, I did enjoy the adventure of cooking something totally new that was locally and sustainably produced and in all likelihood will be a food on plates in a resource-constrained future. I started with the *keep it simple* approach and just sauteed thick slices slowly in olive oil and fresh thyme until it was tender and golden and served it with confit cherry tomatoes and salad.



It was very pleasant but with no obvious mushroom flavour and no, it wasn't a bit furry. A bit like a mass produced chicken breast I think a lion's mane mushroom is a chef's delight, lending itself to added flavours and cheffy tricks. I plan to maintain my explorations with lion's mane and other exotic mushrooms and will keep you posted. These exotics are grown in the Melbourne suburb of Reservoir, so local that food miles hardly count, and are freshly harvested a couple of hours before they appear at market stalls. \$5 for 100 grams.

