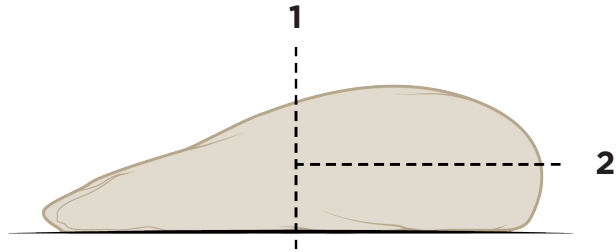


## DINNER CLASSICS FOR TWO

### A New Way to Cut Cutlets

Because a chicken breast is unevenly shaped and has a thick and a thin end, it can be tricky to turn into uniform cutlets. Our novel method makes the process foolproof: Cut each breast in half crosswise (**1**); then cut the thicker piece in half horizontally (**2**). Place the pieces between two sheets of plastic wrap and gently pound them ½ inch thick.



### Dried Mushrooms 101

Be sure to look for large, thick pieces of mushroom—and don't forget to smell the bag. Many supermarkets now carry several varieties of dried mushrooms—porcinis, chanterelles, morels, and shiitakes are among the most common. Here are a few tips on purchasing and handling this potent ingredient.



#### Purchasing and Storing

When purchasing dried mushrooms, avoid packages filled with small, dusty pieces or those labeled “wild mushroom mix”—they are often older and of lesser quality. Dried mushrooms should have an earthy (not musty or stale) aroma. Store dried mushrooms in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for up to one year.

#### Preparing

Dried mushrooms are typically gritty and tough, so they should be rinsed thoroughly to remove any dirt and grit and then microwaved, covered, with at least twice the volume of water or broth (alternately, they can be soaked in hot liquid for about 5 minutes) until they become pliable enough to chop. Don't throw the soaking liquid away—once strained (we use a fine-mesh strainer lined with a single paper towel or paper coffee filter), it adds a meaty, earthy flavor to soups, stews, and rice dishes.

### When—and When Not—to Rinse Rice

Rinsing white rice removes surface starch that would otherwise absorb water and swell, causing the grains to stick together.

**DO** rinse for pilaf, steamed rice, and rice salad, where you want separate, distinct grains.

**DON'T** rinse for applications such as risotto or rice pudding; we found that rinsing compromises the desirably sticky, creamy consistency.

**DON'T** bother rinsing brown rice. With the bran layer intact, there is no exterior starch to wash away.