TRENDING: MUSHROOMS

Mushrooms:
Mushrooms Cast a Healthy Spell

Named one of the top health trends for 2017, mushrooms are magic. They are plant-based, loaded with nutrients, have unbelievable health benefits, and can bring umami to a dish faster than you can say abracadabra. Not to mention, mushrooms are easily accessible for most consumers, especially when you consider the entry level button mushroom or the more exotic shiitake. Join us as we uncap what's going on with one of our favorite ingredients to cook with: the mushroom.

SPOTTED & SEEN / Mushrooms by the Numbers

- Any plant labeled "The Plant of Immortality" by ancient Egyptians deserves some serious attention. Not a plant or a vegetable, mushrooms are in fact a fungus and it is estimated that there could be as many as 2,000 edible varieties and at least 14,000 species of which science only knows 10%. There are 10 varieties grown commercially but scientists are studying the health benefits of over 100.[1]

- Among the 10 varieties that consumers love, the button or champignon mushroom might be considered the backbone of the culinary basket. This classic mushroom is still on trend by boasting the lowest caloric content (18.5 per serving) of all varieties and 15% of the daily recommended intake of niacin.

- Shiitake mushrooms have health properties that have consumers taking notice. Any ingredient that has the ability to challenge cancer cells, increase satiety to fight obesity, support both immune function and cardiovascular health has our attention.[2] Also notable, shiitakes are copper-rich, giving consumers 40% of their suggested daily target.[3]

- The popular maitake mushroom is a polypore (no gills) and is found in the US and Canada as well as parts of Japan, China and Europe. Its 236% of the daily recommended intake of vitamin D pleases the most health conscious consumer.[4]

- Easy on the planet, a pound of mushrooms uses 1.8 gallons of water, 1.0 kilowatt hours of energy, and generates only 0.7 pounds of CO_2 equivalent emissions. And because mushroom beds are stacked vertically, 1 million pounds of mushrooms can be produced on just one acre.[5]

Food or Medicine?

Recognized for their cancer fighting properties, specifically breast cancer,[6] their impact on heart disease and their adaptogen ability in stress relief, mushrooms are being continually studied by scientists as much as chefs. Mushrooms are the only plant source of Vitamin D, which is linked to lower obesity, diabetes, heart disease and more.[7]

This truly medicinal food is about to go beyond the health food store as manufacturers add mushrooms to everything from tea to burgers to snacks to cocktails.

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SPOTTED & SEEN / Retail & Restaurant

COFFEE: Four Sigmatic's coffee and hot chocolate mixes depend on proprietary mushroom blends bringing 500 mg of extracted mushrooms per serving. Talk about a cup of health.

SNACK BARS: Granola favorite, Purely Elizabeth is counting on the power of mushrooms for its new line of Wellness Bars. A functional granola bar, this snack will have consumers "glow from within."[8]

SNACKS:

- Vegan Rob's Wild Mushroom Chips feature wild mushroom powder for a plant based savory crunch.
- Uncle Andy's Boise's Mushroom Blue Cheese Beef Jerky –so popular it's hard to keep in stock. Get them while you can.
- Pringles had a wildly popular mushroom soup flavor in 2016 that was only offered in Japan. We hope these make it stateside!

BEVERAGES:

- Blending powerhouses of immunity, Choice Organic Teas is introducing four Mushroom Wellness Tea blends. Two of the teas feature the shiitake paired with mate' or turmeric. Talk about drinking to health.

- Umami-rich shiitake does things to cocktails that'll blow your taste buds. Consider Honolulu watering hole, Bar Leather Apron where mixologist Justin Park whips up a Japan Old-Fashioned featuring dried shiitakes. The mushrooms add a layer of umami to the 12-year-old whiskey altering the nose and flavor splendidly.

FROZEN ENTREES: NoBull Burger offers an umami packed Savory Mushroom and Roasted Garlic veggie burger that is lentil and barley based containing tamari sauce along with button and shiitake mushrooms. No one will be asking "where's the beef?"

ON THE MENU: The Mushroom Chorizo Tacos at King's Highway in Palm Springs' Ace Hotel are challenging diners' memories of childhood favorites with a major twist. Chef Carlos Salgado creates a mushroom "chorizo" that stars in this Bon Appetit lauded dish.

HOW TO 'SHROOM YOUR APPLICATIONS

SODIUM REDUCTION AND SATIETY: In 2016, The James Beard Foundation launched The Blended Burger Project. Steve Solomon, menu strategist for the Mushroom Council, created the now popular, "The Blend," which replaces at least 25% of ground meat in applications with mushrooms. The goal was to communicate that mushrooms are excellent at reducing fat and sodium while enhancing flavor, fullness and doing something positive for the environment. In this project, consumers vote on their favorite entrants; 5 winning chefs and 2 lucky consumers have a chance to win a visit to an event at the James Beard House.

UMAMI: Mushrooms, especially champignon and shiitake are an excellent source of umami bringing that mouthwatering response you're seeking. Chefs love playing with Nikken's mushroom powders in their dishes to bring the fifth taste to unexpected places. For development, we've got a crop of umami tricks up our sleeve guaranteed to have your consumers clamoring for more. We'd love to share.

REAL FOOD SOLUTIONS

Blend your way to a healthier application. Nikken Foods' Champignon Mushroom Extract Powders and Shiitake Extract Powders are real food ingredients rich with the real powers of mushrooms. Contact us today.

NIKKEN®
NIKKEN FOODS USA, INC.

Nikken Foods USA, Inc.
4984 Manchester Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63110
314.881.5858 ph
314.881.5850 fx
nikkenfoods.com

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