

Mushroom

History

Mushrooms date back 4,600 years, but France is known to be the formal cultivators of mushrooms. Understanding that mushrooms grew best in moist environments, the French cultivated them in caves. By the 19th century, the United States was trying to farm mushrooms- unfortunately, they were relying on mushroom spawns. The spawns did not travel well from England, leaving the Americans with a poor product. It was not until 1903 that the US had access to strong spawn.

Mushrooms grow best in the wild, and some types can only be found in the wild, making them a rare delicacy. Recently, some types of mushrooms have been able to be farmed. Mushroom hunters are people who search plots of land for mushrooms and sell them. Mushrooms are not a vegetable, but part of the fungi family. They do not have roots, seeds, leaves, or flowers. Not all of them are safe for humans to eat raw- many are poisonous.

Mushrooms require a moist environment to grow. They are often found growing on damp logs. In the US, you can find them in Massachusetts, Michigan, California, and Pennsylvania. Today, mushroom farms in Chester County, Pennsylvania, grow nearly half of all the mushrooms in the US.

Varieties

Black trumpet have a flared shape, dark color, and earthy flavor.

Bluefoot have a beige cap, lavender stem, and meaty taste.

Chanterelle are flare-shaped, bright yellow, and taste like apricots.

Morels are tube-like with a tall textured cap and a nutty flavor.

Oysters are brown-yellow, grow in clusters, and taste sweet.

Porcini have thick stems and small cap with a smoky flavor.

Cremini are short, dark, and meaty.

Enoki are long, stringy, ivory colored, and crunchy.

Hen of the Wood grows in large clusters with a spicy flavor.

Portobello have large caps with dark gills and a sweet flavor.

Shiitake have tough, slender stems, wide, flexible caps, and a woody aroma.

White mushrooms are firm, squatty, and considered the “all purpose” mushroom.



Fun Facts

- Mushrooms play a large role in traditional Chinese medicine.
- There are at least a dozen mushroom growers in Wisconsin.
- A trained mushroom expert is called a mycologist.



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