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Basciani Foods enjoying National Mushroom Month

By

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Basciani Foods has had a challenging 2021. This includes the pandemic, trucking, port and labor issues, yet the longtime mushroom company prospers on.

“We’re going to survive,” said Michael Basciani, Sr., chief operations officer for the Avondale, PA-based company. “We’ve been through some pretty heavy stuff in the past and know how to survive. I’ve been doing this since I was 10 and I’ll be 60 in October, so I’ve been playing this game of thrones for 50 years.”

Entering the mushroom business in 1925, the company grows all sizes of white mushrooms and exotics. It also packs for national retail grocery store chains and foodservice distributors, has processing and storage facilities in Chicago and Minneapolis, and ships more than a million pounds of mushrooms per week.

“It’s a challenge, but we are growing a beautiful crop of mushrooms and we’re not slowing down,” Basciani said. “My grandfather, who started this business, was sharp and tough and my father and his brothers were just as sharp. My brothers and I followed their path and now our kids are all doing different jobs in the company and helping us to expand.”

Throughout September, National Mushroom Month, the company has celebrated through a series of events in Pennsylvania. It is also getting ready for the next three months of hard work preparing the new crop of mushrooms for January.

“One thing we saw this summer was that portabella have been very strong, after being stagnant for the last couple of years,” Basciani said. “I think more people are staying home and cooking that portabella on the grill and demand is through the roof. It blew my mind.”

The cremini mushrooms have also seen an increase in sales this past year, and he credits the fact that both these varieties are great for burgers or sandwiches.

“It’s a good thing for our farms because you need less labor for the portabellas,” Basciani said. “It yields less but it has a higher per pound price to it.”

With the mushroom shortages out there today, retailers are doing their best to keep customers happy. Basciani feels they are doing a great job with that.

“On the foodservice end, we introduced a 5-pound bag a few years ago that really helps our customers because it gives a longer shelf life and trucks are fuller with less deliveries,” he said.

Joe Basciani, chief financial officer for the company, noted Basciani Foods has a 10-year strategy

outlined for the future and is constantly looking at ways to improve and grow.

Among those are the addition of 30 new rooms in the next five years that will allow the company to bring on another 25-30 million pounds of mushrooms, bringing the total number to more than 100 million pounds annually. There are also improvements coming to the packing room and bagging machines that will speed up the process.

“We are gearing up for the 21st century and looking forward to our 100th year in business soon,” Basciani said.

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