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Mushrooms are more popular than ever

By

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[The Mushroom Council](#), based in Lee's Summit, MO, is comprised of fresh market producers and importers that average more than 500,000 pounds of mushrooms produced or imported annually.

"Research and promotion programs help to expand, maintain and develop markets for individual agricultural commodities in the United States and abroad," said a spokesperson for the council. "These industry self-help programs are requested and funded by the industry groups that they serve."

In 2022, the Mushroom Council launched a multimedia activation with Food Network to amplify mushrooms and promote blending mushrooms and meat.

Anne-Marie Roerink, principal of 210 Analytics and author of comprehensive industry insights, noted mushrooms have a strong staying power and that the spotlight will likely continue to shine on them.

"There are three levers of growth for any product, brand or category: You can have more people buy it, have people buy it more often and have people spend a little more because they are buying more or experimenting with different varieties," Roerink said. "The more of these that apply, the stronger the trend. Mushrooms hit this growth trifecta during the pandemic, and pre-pandemic mushrooms enjoyed a strong engagement as well."

Pam Smith, RDN, president and founder of Shaping America's Plate Inc., noted that an array of facts are driving mushrooms up trend lists.

"Mushrooms' nutritional benefits, plant-forward role and sustainable attributes are highly attractive to consumers at home and menu developers in foodservice," Smith said. "But, most of all, they are the 'it' ingredient because of their ultimate versatility. They play a key role in the planet's favorite foods like pizza, pasta, burgers, beverages, even desserts, and work across the board for so many menu types: Asian, Italian, Latin and American fare."

Additionally, mushrooms, with their inherent meaty qualities and umami, are the ideal central ingredient for chefs offering plant-based, plant-forward dishes. Bringing all those elements together — flavor, function, form and footprint — make mushrooms a particularly appealing application for today's menu.

Roerink noted that retailers and foodservice providers have an ideal opportunity to leverage the mushroom trend. In fact, the popular Jersey Mike's Subs chain recently added multiple mushroom-centric sandwiches to its coveted permanent menu board.

"Customers' willingness to experiment is an invitation for retailers and restaurants to feature a

variety of mushrooms,” she said. “In this case, it’s really important to provide taste and texture descriptions and fun recipes. Meal stations that feature all parts of a recipe/dinner have worked extremely well in the past year as people are looking for inspiration. Including mushrooms as part of meal kits is also an ideal way to introduce people to new varieties and flavors.”

The Mushroom Council also points out that for the fourth consecutive year, mushrooms have been named a top trend by food industry trend spotters. Capping the 2022 trend forecast season, The New York Times recently named mushrooms the “Ingredient of the Year” and an essential food for the plant-based movement.

For similar reasons, MSNBC declared mushrooms a 2022 “Healthy Food Trend,” while Delish named them to their “Top 12 Trends to Look Out for in 2022,” suggesting they will continue to be featured in more recipes this year.

Experts in both retail and foodservice note multiple factors are converging to drive mushrooms’ continued recognition on trend lists.

“That relates back to mushrooms’ versatility. They can be a center of plate much like meat. Think portabellas,” Roerink said. “They can be an ingredient for soup and stew season. But they’re also great for grilling and salads in the summer season. So that year-round engagement drives mushrooms to be a constant presence in people’s lives and on trend lists.”

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About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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