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Quality and consistency keys to Phillips Mushroom Farms' success

By

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Doing business in what's known as The Mushroom Capital of the World, Kennett Square, PA-based [Phillips Mushroom Farms](#) is one of the largest growers of specialty mushrooms in the area.

"Phillips Mushroom Farms has been growing mushrooms in Kennett Square since 1927," said Sean Steller, director of business development for the company. "Initially, mushrooms were distributed at markets and not transported very far due to perishability and lack of refrigeration. The industry has come a long way in just the last few decades."

For instance, refrigeration and transportation is taking produce to the next level with direct-to-consumer delivery, home delivery of meal kits and other innovative distribution models.

"At the same time, consumers are looking for new items such as Maitake and Oyster mushrooms, beyond the traditional White or Baby Bella items," Steller said. "We are excited to help fuel the continued growth of mushroom consumption, on restaurant menus as well as in kitchens."

That means quality and consistency are key.

"Mushrooms are a year-round staple at this point, and consumers expect high-quality mushrooms on the shelf," Steller said. "This means each crop must be managed very carefully, and quality control is extremely important at every stage of production."

Phillips Mushroom Farms is coming off a strong year as mushrooms were heavily in demand. Steller describes 2021 as "a mixed bag with strong retail sales and recovering restaurant sales," and he anticipates 2022 will see some slowing in growth due to increasing costs and consumers reducing grocery spend to adjust.

"Healthy eating trends continue to drive demand for mushrooms as low calorie, flavorful additions to any dish," he said. "Reduction of red meat consumption for health and environmental reasons also continues to drive mushroom usage with the trend to blend. Blending mushrooms with other protein sources adds another layer of flavor, while improving the nutritional values of the meal."

Sustainability is another key trend driving mushroom consumption.

“Mushrooms require significantly less water and land than meat for instance,” Stellar said. “Producing 1-pound of mushrooms required only 1.8 gallons of water.”

Production of mushrooms has been improving since last fall, when things were going south for many in the industry.

“The fall included many challenges that combined to reduce overall production across the industry,” Stellar said. “Improved compost quality, peat moss availability, and spawn quality are all contributing to improved production.”

Still, labor shortages remain challenging across the industry and the company is facing a lot of competition for workers, which contributes to increasing costs.

“Supply chains are still not operating perfectly; while this may not be visible in missing items, in most cases costs continue to rise rapidly due to continued disruptions,” Stellar said. “Even key raw materials such as paper for labels has been under pressure this year due to supply chain disruptions.”

Phillips Mushroom Farms is looking forward to increasing its production of high-quality mushrooms with the recent opening of a new state-of-the-art farm in Pennsylvania.

“This 250,000-square-foot farm will help meet the growing demand for mushrooms, and help support customers growth,” Stellar said.

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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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