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**Mushrooms can be the answer to inflation worries**

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By

Keith Loria

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[The Mushroom Council](#) is composed of fresh market producers or importers that average more than 500,000 pounds of mushrooms produced or imported annually.

“Every year, we tend to devote each quarter to giving extra emphasis to a key mushroom attribute that’s right for that season,” said Bart Minor, president and CEO for The Mushroom Council. “In the late fall and throughout early winter, we promoted the role mushrooms play in feeding the immune system. In the spring, which includes Earth Month in April, we emphasized mushrooms’ sustainable production.”

The Mushroom Council also spent the summer showcasing how blending fresh mushrooms with meat for burgers is a winning proposition.

“This campaign leads into a late summer/fall campaign that gets to the heart of how mushrooms are the answer in the face of rising food prices,” Minor said. “The Council once again leveraged the spring/summer burger season as an opportunity to educate home and professional cooks on the benefits of blending fresh mushrooms with ground meat to make meals more delicious, nutritious and sustainable.”

For mushrooms, Minor noted it’s important to look at the longer trend lines to truly see market shifts.

“One important one is the slow but steady shift from white button mushrooms to Crimini mushrooms,” he said. “Year after year, we see Crimini take up just a little bit bigger share across the country. This means a little longer shelf life for retailers and consumers, but also a bit of a higher ring.”

For most retailers, the focus is also on packaged versus bulk, but they are bringing some of the advantages seen in bulk into the packaged world.

“For instance, you can now find mixed varieties in most stores that combine Oyster, Crimini and Shiitake,” Minor said. “This is something that started in restaurant foodservice and often served up as ‘wild mushroom’ dish, which has a very nice ring to it and gives meals just that little extra foodie touch. That’s important to keep in mind — mushroom shoppers are foodies, especially folks who buy Crimini and specialty mushrooms. That’s just a great open door for retailers and others in the CPG industry to have fun with premium-ized meal ideas.”

Anne-Marie Roerink, principal and founder of 210 Analytics, noted cross merchandising is an area where mushrooms can and do perform strongly.

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“Mushrooms are incredibly versatile, and consumers know it,” she said. “In produce, mushroom purchases are highly correlated with red onions, tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers and peppers. In meat and seafood, consumers are buying fresh mushrooms along with chicken, beef, bacon, shrimp, salmon and more. In center store, you see mushroom consumers over index for broth/stock, canned tomatoes, spaghetti noodles and sauce, and more. In all these areas, secondary displays can prompt incremental purchases.”

Additionally, retailers have an opportunity to leverage mushrooms to help consumers address the already enormous and rising pressure on income. For instance, with the price of eggs up 60.4 percent this year, meat up double-digits and chicken up 18.4 percent, mushrooms can help.

“For instance, add 30 percent mushrooms to a pound of ground beef and get an extra one or two burger patties out of it,” Roerink said. “Mushrooms have the opportunity to be a budget hero in times when 78 percent of consumers are looking for ways to save money on groceries. And, of course, the same is true for restaurants as well.”

Leading up to and during September, which is National Mushroom Month, the Mushroom Council has been demonstrating how mushrooms are the answer in the face of rising food costs.

“Our intent is to showcase how mushrooms can help consumers continue to enjoy the meaty meals they crave in these inflationary times,” Minor said. “Mushrooms are the great meal extender, whether it’s blending with meat for making even more burgers, bulking up a breakfast omelet or hearty soup or maximizing a comforting dish like beef stroganoff.”

It is promoting this idea via a digital hub positioning mushrooms as an essential pantry item featuring recipes, usage tips, nutrition information and sustainability facts; exclusive promotions sent to mushroom followers including promotional giveaways, shopping lists and digital assets aimed at inspiring mushroom purchases; digital and social media ads declaring — Mushrooms are the Answer — driving users back to the site; and collaborations with registered dietitians to showcase mushrooms’ solutions for local media.

“During these times when maximizing your dollars is key, mushrooms can truly be your grocery budget’s best friend,” Minor 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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