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## Monterey Mushrooms continues legacy growing people — and mushrooms

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[Monterey Mushrooms](#) is celebrating its 50th anniversary in business. Company owner Shah Kazemi, who started as an employee himself, purchased the business in 1971 when it was a single mushroom farm in California. Today the company grows packs and ships mushrooms from nine farms in seven states and Mexico. Its 4,000 employees grow, pack and ship more than 200 million pounds of fresh mushrooms annually.



Shah Kazemi

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The devotion shown by the teammates inspired Kazemi to create a scholarship program for their children. Since its inception 31 years ago, more than \$3.6 million in scholarship funds have been awarded to 2,460 students.

“Our teammates invest so much in us and this is a small way we can show our appreciation and help support their children on the path to a bright future like the one they've helped to create for our company,” Kazemi said. “We don’t grow mushrooms, we grow people. Our purpose is to enhance people’s lives and we do that with the way we treat people, the way we treat the planet, and in the quality of the food we provide.”

The company introduced Portabella mushrooms to the American market in the early 1990s when white mushrooms were the only variety available in grocery stores. Its biotech company, Amycel, patented two Brown mushroom varieties that represent 92 percent of the global market share. The company was also at the forefront of growing and distributing high vitamin D mushrooms. In 2011, Monterey Mushrooms received the Produce Marketing Association Marketing Impact Award.

In addition to its fresh mushroom business, the company developed nutraceutical mushroom powders. SpawnMate®, a second biotech company, works with Amycel, to develop and patent spawn, and produce strains and supplements for the mushroom industry. Its transportation and logistics company, Premier Refrigerated Transport, has also been instrumental in the company’s overall growth.

“We have celebrated many accomplishments over the years and there’s no better time to recognize them than on our 50th anniversary, our biggest milestone yet,” Kazemi said. “I am thankful to share this success; the best is yet to come.”

The company will be at booth No. 3361 at the IFPA Global Fresh Produce and Floral Show.

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