

the mushroom marketplace



Consumer Demand for Fresh Mushrooms and Retail Sales Continue to Grow Across Variety

Last quarter, sales of fresh mushrooms demonstrated a growing customer base across multiple mushroom varieties. Once again, this quarter's sustained sales growth shows that fresh mushrooms are experiencing strong consumer demand at retail, with substantial growth in both dollars and volume sold this summer. Findings from the National Agricultural Statistics Service's annual crop report also show significant growth in crop sales, as well as the value of those sales.

For the **four-week time period ending July 17¹**:

- Mushroom pounds sold were up by 2.5 percent.
- Fresh mushroom sales were led by brown mushrooms, with a sales growth of 4.3 percent.
- Similarly, sliced brown mushroom sales grew by 8.6 percent.
- White whole mushroom sales increased by 3.4 percent.

This report not only illustrates a sales increase over the past month, it also shows that fresh mushroom sales have continued to grow throughout the entire year and shows an interesting trend of growth in larger packages of mushroom varieties.

For the **52-week time period ending July 17²**:

- Overall mushroom pounds sold increased by 1.8 percent, with brown sliced mushrooms leading the growth with a 4.1 percent increase.
- White whole mushroom sales saw a 3.7 percent growth in sales.
- 8-ounce packages of brown sliced mushrooms brought in double digit sales growth of 12 percent.
- 8-ounce packages of whole brown mushrooms showed a significant 23 percent sales growth.
- Larger 10 to 24-ounce packages of whole white mushrooms also experienced sales growth.



In addition to the Council's sales figures, the USDA-funded **National Agricultural Statistics Service crop report recently found³**:

- Sales of the 2010-2011 U.S. mushroom crop totaled 862 million pounds, up 9 percent from last season.
- The value of these increased sales totaled \$1.02 billion, a 10 percent increase over the previous season's sales value.
- The number of mushroom growers is down by 35 from last season, while the average price for fresh mushrooms is up 1 cent from a year ago.

The increased sales and sales value across both variety and package size – despite decreased growers and lower prices – demonstrates the healthy growth of this produce category. Shoppers are not only purchasing mushrooms more often; they are also purchasing more mushrooms with each trip down the produce aisle.

¹ FreshLook Marketing, Fresh Mushroom Topline Report, Period Ending July 17, 2011

² Total U.S. Mushroom Pounds Sold SKU, Period Ending July 17, 2011

³ USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Mushrooms Crop Report. August 19, 2011

Mushrooms Harvest Retail Rewards

While mushrooms are in season year-round, they are a popular produce item in the fall and winter months as consumers incorporate them into cool-weather meal staples like stews, soups, chilis and pastas. Mushrooms' rich flavor and hearty texture provide the perfect balance of taste and nutrition, making them an easy choice for consumers looking to add something special to their fall meals.

Retailers can take advantage of shoppers' seasonal palates by promoting fresh mushrooms to round out their breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner dishes. Here are a few considerations to help carry produce promotions through the autumn months:

- Encourage shoppers to incorporate fresh mushrooms in their traditional comfort food recipes (i.e. soups, stews, pastas, casseroles, stir fries and sautés) to add nutrients and flavor.
- Create promotions with mushrooms displayed alongside other seasonal vegetables such as squash, zucchini and pumpkin.
- Educate shoppers about umami – the fifth taste (provided by mushrooms) aside from sweet, salty, sour and bitter that can add a rich, savory, meaty flavor to meals.
- Include recipes such as our [Hearty Fresh Mushroom Chili](#) or [Mushroom Veggie Frittata](#) alongside seasonal produce displays to get consumers thinking about cooking with fresh mushrooms.



To ensure the appeal of fresh mushrooms during autumn promotions, always make sure to follow these retail best practices¹:

- Discount mushrooms by more than 25 percent when on promotion.
- Promote packaged and bulk mushrooms together.
- Do not promote packaged whole and sliced mushrooms together at the same price point, because consumers will always choose sliced for convenience.
- Feature multiple mushroom varieties in the same advertisement.
- Include a white mushroom item with advertisements for brown, specialty and dried mushrooms, as they remain the foundation of a strong campaign.

¹Retail Best Practices Study: Initial Findings. Encore Associates, 2009.

Catering to Healthful Consumers with Fresh Mushroom Recipes

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) recent shift from the Food Pyramid food guidance system to the MyPlate approach is helping Americans choose healthier food options for themselves and their families. Since half of all breakfast, lunch and dinner plates should be filled with fruits and vegetables, now is the perfect time for retailers to help consumers find recipes that incorporate fresh produce – such as the versatile mushroom – into their meals.

Help families fulfill their nutrition goals and back-to-school dietary needs by featuring nutritious recipes alongside fresh mushroom displays. Put a healthy spin on a convenient and delicious family favorite with grilled portabella pizzas.

Grilled Portabella Pizzas -- Yield: 2 servings
Courtesy of the Mushroom Council and Foodie Tots

Ingredients

4 large portabella mushrooms
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup marinara sauce
1/2 cup shredded mozzarella and/or 2 ounces crumbled feta
Fresh basil leaves
Sliced black olives
Sea salt and black pepper

Directions

1. To start, gently clean your portabellas with a damp paper towel. Trim the stems with a paring knife (and a tip learned from a local chef: save the stems for making mushroom stock) and use a spoon to scrape the dark brown gills from the underside of the cap. (Just toss — or compost — those.)
2. Arrange the sauce, cheeses and toppings in small bowls and line them up across the top of your work surface.
3. Brush the underside of the caps with olive oil and grill, oiled side down, for 3-4 minutes over a medium-high flame.
4. Place the caps on your work surface, cooked side facing up, and season with salt and pepper. Spread 1 to 2 tablespoons of sauce around the cap. Go easy on the sauce as the mushrooms will give off liquid when they cook, and too much sauce can make them soggy. Sprinkle with cheese to cover, then add olives or other desired toppings. Gently place back on the grill (toppings facing up!) and cook them for another 3 minutes, or until the cheese is melted.



Consumers' Online Behavior Reveals In-Store Opportunities

The average American spends more than 60 hours per month online, presenting a major opportunity for retailers to connect with audiences using the social media outlets they most frequent. Understanding consumer behaviors in the digital space can help retailers identify consumer retail habits – and use these insights to help increase patronage in the grocery store.

In May 2011, the Mushroom Council launched a Search Engine Marketing (SEM) campaign on Google, resulting in a 42 percent increase in traffic to MushroomInfo.com. The SEM campaign provided consumer data that shows the top-performing search terms leading consumers to the web site include “mushroom recipes” and “vitamin D.”

The Mushroom Council's search campaign reveals that Americans are eager to find new recipes that use mushrooms, and a recent consumer focus on vitamin D introduces a new opportunity for retailers to connect with their customers. According to 2011 Rose Research, shoppers aware of fresh mushrooms' vitamin D content are more likely to purchase more mushrooms, more often¹. Retailers can use this information to help increase sales with frequent promotions targeting shoppers' specific food-related behaviors and interests both on and offline.

To help meet their customers' needs, retailers should feature mushroom recipes in-store and online, as well as supply their shoppers with health messaging surrounding vitamin D and the other nutrients provided by fresh mushrooms:



- Mushrooms are one of the few non-fortified food sources of vitamin D in the grocery store, and the *only* fresh source of vitamin D in the produce department.
- Mushrooms are low in calories, fat-free, cholesterol-free and very low in sodium. They also offer several nutrients and antioxidants.
- Mushrooms are the leading source of the antioxidant, selenium. Antioxidants, like selenium, protect body cells from damage that might lead to chronic diseases.
- Mushrooms provide ergothioneine, a naturally occurring antioxidant that may help protect the body's cells.

¹ 2011 Fresh Mushrooms Attitude & Usage Tracking Presentation. Rose Research, 2011. <http://www.mushroomcouncil.org/export/sites/default/ConsumerResearch/MushroomAttitudeandUsageStudy6-23-11.pdf>