

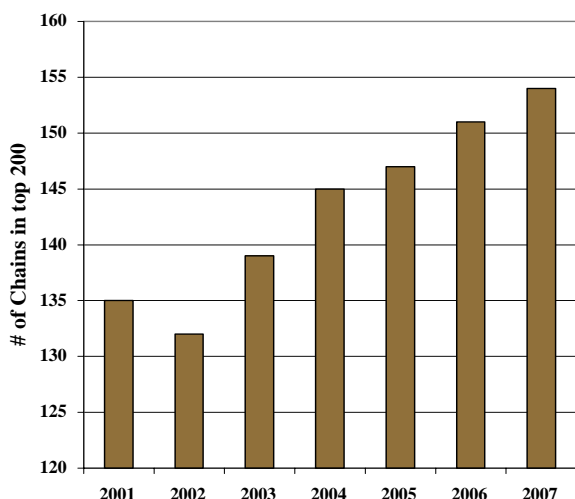
The Savory Connection



Mushrooms Heat Up on Chain Menus!

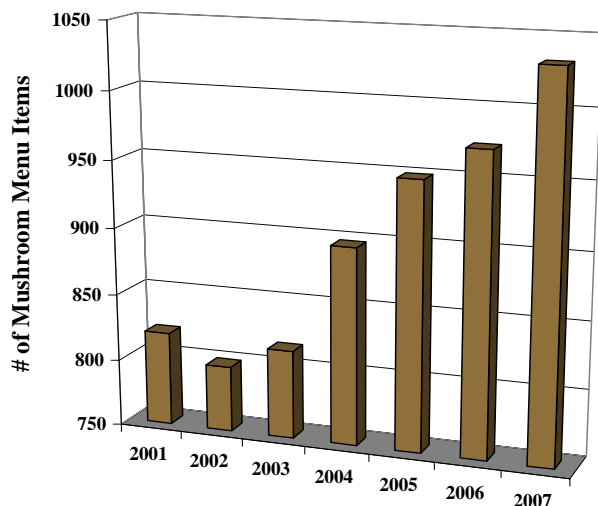
If you think mushrooms are more popular on foodservice menus today than just a few years ago, you are right. New menu data from the leading 200 chain restaurants, just reported by Food Beat, indicate that 154, or 77%, of these leading operators have mushrooms on their menus—an increase of 14% in the past six years.

Mushrooms Menued by Top 200 Chains



As important, the number of menu items containing mushrooms continued to climb to a record 1,032—up over 26% since 2001.

Mushroom Items Menued in Top 200 Chains



Rise of the Portabella Burger



A June 2007 consumer research study using a national representative sample indicated that 43% of consumers have ordered a Portabella burger when eating out. This is up from 41% earlier in 2007 and an increase from 39% in 2006. Food Beat reports 111 menu items using Portabella mushrooms in 2007 versus 93 a year ago.

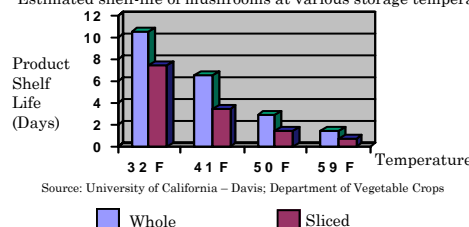
Keeping Time with Freshness

The optimum temperature to store fresh mushrooms is 34°F. Each degree above that can lead to a shorter shelf life. The majority of higher storage temperatures occur at the distribution center and individual restaurant unit. One easy solution: move mushrooms to cold storage immediately at every point of distribution!



Maintaining the Cold Chain

Estimated shelf-life of mushrooms at various storage temperatures



Sandwiches are Stacking Up



According to NPD, a leading research group, the sandwich is now the leading entrée at breakfast and dinner both at home and away from home. In fact, Food Beat reports that one-third of the top 200 chain restaurants add new sandwiches each year. Thus it should come as no surprise that in 2007, chains mentioning mushrooms in sandwiches increased 9% over 2006. Some of the newest menu applications include:

Steakhouse Panini – On a farmhouse roll with shaved steak, melted Swiss cheese, roasted peppers, caramelized onion, roasted Portobello mushrooms and mayonnaise, \$6.79 – Au Bon Pain

Chicken Portobello Wrap – Grilled chicken and Portobello mushrooms rolled in a flour tortilla with crisp romaine lettuce, creamy Caesar dressing, tomato basil salsa and Parmesan cheese. Lunch Menu Item, \$7.99 – Charlie Brown’s Steakhouse

Mushroom Jack Burger – Topped with sautéed mushrooms and Monterey Jack cheese. Served with French fries and coleslaw, \$7.99– Joe’s Crab Shack

Cheyenne Steak Sandwich – A mesquite-grilled USDA Choice 6 oz. sirloin covered with mushrooms and Jack cheese. Served with Texas toothpicks and a mild horseradish sauce, \$8.99 – Tumbleweed Southwest Grill

The Mushroom “Trick the Eye” Effect

Plate coverage is an interesting consideration in foodservice meal-design. “Bigger is better” has given rise to multiple hamburger patties, toppings on steaks and entrée salads. But the achievement of acceptable plate coverage does not necessarily have to come from larger quantities—or lots of calories. Plate coverage is a matter of perception and mushrooms can play a role in influencing the appearance of greater volume.

Research has shown that fresh mushrooms add value for which consumers are willing to pay more.

Part of this value-adding mushroom capability comes from sheer volume. Topping steaks, sandwiches and salads with mushrooms of all varieties provides the visual effect of “more.” The greater perceived quantity of the portion size, the higher the

consumer value perception. Substituting fresh mushrooms for part of more costly protein also provides the chain restaurant with another opportunity to achieve comparable if not greater customer satisfaction with improved profitability.

The savory flavor impact of mushrooms not only substitutes for protein but also enhances and rounds out the available protein flavors.



Under the Cap

- Over 300 million pounds of fresh mushrooms are consumed annually in food-service.
- Fresh mushrooms contain more potassium than a small banana or a medium orange
- Seventy-five percent of consumers report ordering mushrooms on pizza when eating out. This is followed by ordering steak with mushrooms, 66%; with pasta and with salads, both at 59%.
- Research at John Hopkins University found that substituting white button mushrooms for meat entrees provided an acceptable lower-calorie alternative without compromising flavor or satiety.

The Savory Connection is a publication of the Mushroom Council for professionals in the foodservice industry. Feel free to share this information with your associates.

For more information call 408-432-7210

