

# The Savory Connection

*Unearthing the Possibilities with Nature's Hidden Treasure*



## Connecting with Customers through Mushrooms' Vitamin D Content



Only 10 percent of Americans currently have optimal blood levels of vitamin D, according to a new study in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* – alarming news as deficiency in this essential vitamin may result in weak bones and an increased risk of

heart disease. Previously the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005* also stated that many Americans, especially those with dark skin, the elderly, and those who use sunscreen or avoid the sun aren't getting enough vitamin D. Vitamin D promotes the absorption of calcium, which is essential for healthy teeth and bones.

“Mushrooms are the only natural fresh vegetable or fruit that contains vitamin D,” says Mona S. Calvo, Ph.D., who is an expert regulatory review scientist at the Food and Drug Administration, Center for Safety and Applied Nutrition.

Adding mushrooms may be an easy and tasty way to increase vitamin D intake and appeal to women, minorities and senior customers who are most aware and concerned about this vital nutrient.

## Take Advantage of the 2008 Weight Watchers-Mushroom Partnership



The Mushroom Council will partner with Weight Watchers in 2008 as the official Pick of the Season promotion sponsor from July through September. This partnership will highlight Weight Watchers' support of mushrooms as a healthy food.

As part of the Mushroom Council's promotional program to support the Pick of the Season initiative, which includes a supplemental retail advertising campaign that will reach 650 million consumers, one of mushrooms' hidden treasures will be highlighted - the fact that Weight Watchers members can eat up to a two-cup serving of mushrooms, which has a **POINTS®** value of 0, and still stay on the plan.

This promotion can help guide Weight Watchers members and health conscious consumers as they shop for groceries. Foodservice operators would be wise to take advantage of this heightened consumer awareness and feature mushrooms in existing and new menu items.



## Mushrooms On Trend



Research Chef Skip Julius of Gordon Foodservice recently summarized and distributed to the Research Chefs Association membership the many food trends published at the beginning of 2008 by various prognosticators. Not surprisingly, mushrooms fit perfectly with most of them:

- More nutritious food in general
- Upscale hamburgers
- Big, bold ethnic flavors
- Extinction of the single dish entrée, replaced by tapas or small plates
- More narrowly focused niche restaurant concepts and menus

Mushrooms' natural nutritional content, flavor-boosting umami, contribution to satiety and savory flavor compatibility are right on trend.

## Cheesecake Factory: Sets Trends with Mushrooms



Considered by corporate executive chefs in all menu formats to be the foodservice innovator to watch, the Cheesecake Factory has taken to mushrooms like no other restaurant chain. In the most recent 2007 Food Beat Menu Analysis, Cheesecake Factory offered 23 items across five categories and day parts: Asian, Entrees, Sandwiches/Burgers, Breakfast and Pasta. Mushroom

varieties, cuisines and preparation varieties were as extensive as the number of menu items, and included:

- Shiitake, white button, portabella varieties
- Italian, Asian, American, French cuisines
- Grilled, sautéed, roasted and sauced

Selected Cheesecake Factory menu items included:

### Sandwiches/Burgers

- Kobe Burger with **Sautéed Mushrooms**
- Ranch House Burger with **Sautéed Mushrooms**
- Grilled **Portabella** on a Bun
- Grilled Turkey Burger with **Fresh Mushrooms**
- California Cheese Steak with **Sautéed Mushrooms**

### Breakfast

- Joe's Special Breakfast with Scrambled Eggs, Chicken Sausage and **Fresh Mushrooms**
- California Omelet with **Sautéed Mushrooms** and Avocado
- Asparagus, **Portabella** and Artichoke Omelet

### Entrees

- Shepherd's Pie with **Mushrooms**
- Chicken and Biscuits with **Mushrooms**
- Chicken Madeira with **Fresh Mushroom Madeira Sauce**
- Steak Diane with Rich **Mushroom Wine Sauce**

## Under the Cap



- Umami was first isolated in Japan in 1908 but was not confirmed as a fifth sense until 2000 by researchers at the University of Miami.

- In 2007, 154 of the top 200 restaurant chains used mushrooms in 1,032 different menu items – up 6 percent over 2006. (Source: *Food Beat*)

## Building a “U-Bomb”

The definition of “umami” may be elusive, but there’s no doubt when you’ve experienced a true “u-bomb” of rich, savory flavor. Fish sauce is full of umami. Aged cheese is packed with it. And mushrooms are loaded with umami.

Umami stimulates the appetite; it makes food taste good from first bite to last, and it helps to create satiation. “Thousands of chefs and serious cooks have embraced [umami] as an easy, hearty and dramatic way to make food taste better, by emphasizing umami’s rich, meaty, savory qualities,” says David Kasabian, coauthor of *The Fifth Taste: Cooking with Umami*. But until just a few years ago, a lot of people weren’t even sure umami existed.

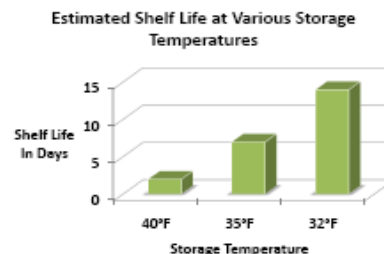
Recent stories in *The Wall Street Journal* and on the *Today* show have brought more attention and awareness to umami, including the power of mushrooms to add umami to a variety of dishes.

In general, the more umami is present in food, the more savory and flavorful it will be. That principle applies not just to the ingredients, but also to the cooking or handling processes that are applied. The example of a broiled or grilled steak topped with sautéed mushrooms represents an umami “triple play.” Umami is present in both the beef and the mushrooms, and is further enhanced through the cooking process. When this happens, the umami sensation – and thus the eating pleasure – is multiplied.



## Keeping Time with Freshness

The optimum temperature to store fresh mushrooms is at 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.



**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