

# Mushrooms



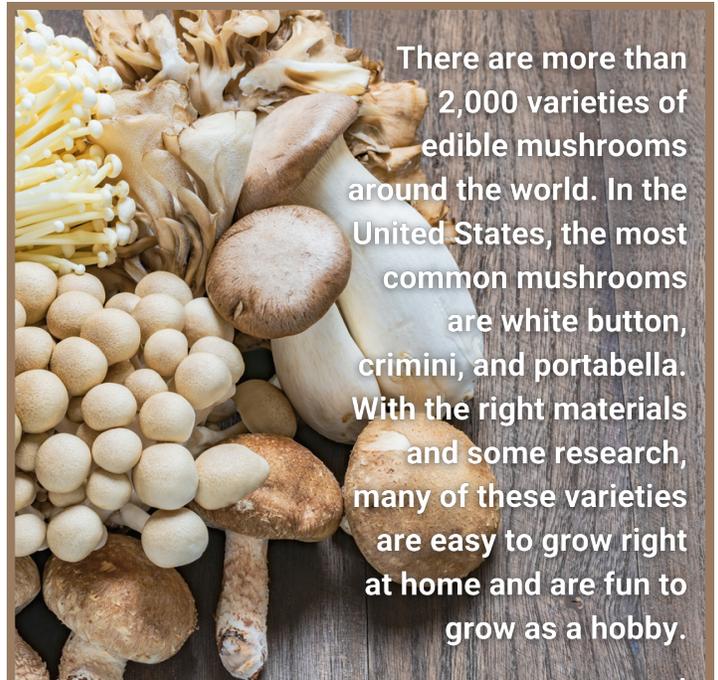
Mushrooms are the fruitbodies of different kinds of fungi. They are not considered plants or animals, although they share similar traits to both. Many mushrooms that you might see growing in your yard or on a fallen tree can be very harmful if they are eaten.

Edible mushrooms are mushrooms that are not poisonous and can be eaten. People around the world have been growing edible mushrooms for hundreds of years. These mushrooms are packed full of vitamins and nutrients and make delicious meals.

*Photo courtesy of John James*



In 2019, the United States produced around 844 billion pounds of mushrooms. Most mushrooms are grown for grocery stores where you can buy them fresh. The rest of the mushrooms are processed to make things like pickled, dried, or canned mushrooms, seasonings, supplements, coffee, and even cosmetics. Pennsylvania grows over 66% of the mushrooms in the United States. This makes them the number one state for growing mushrooms.



There are more than 2,000 varieties of edible mushrooms around the world. In the United States, the most common mushrooms are white button, crimini, and portabella. With the right materials and some research, many of these varieties are easy to grow right at home and are fun to grow as a hobby.



# Meet John, Guy, and Matthew

*Windy City Mushroom | Chicago, IL*

Matthew Lopez

## Tell us about your farm/business.

We founded Windy City Mushroom at the start of 2020 when we saw a need for reliable and sustainable super food sources. We started in a 10,000 square foot mussel storage farm that we converted into a single grow room mushroom farm. We are a vertically integrated farm that does everything from cooking substrate bags, inoculating grains, incubating the mushrooms, and fruiting them in our shipping containers - we are spore to spork! As our business grew, we wanted to create a simple, convenient way for consumers to eat oyster mushrooms while reducing our waste at the farm. And so Fungitarian Food was born. Fungitarian Food is a selection of fully cooked, sauced, and seasoned meals that are ready to mix with anything. You just heat it & eat it! We are now the largest local USDA Organic Gourmet Mushroom Farm in Illinois, producing over 4,000 lbs. a week of oyster & lion's mane mushrooms.



All photos on this page courtesy of John James

## How do you grow and harvest your mushrooms?

We grow our mushrooms on 10 lb substrate blocks made of Hard Wood and Soy Hull, which is a carbon and nitrogen source for the mushrooms. The blocks are sterilized in our autoclave for 6 hours a day at 240 degrees. After 6 hours, the blocks are taken into a sterile clean room to be cooled down and ready to get inoculated with mushroom mycelium (the pre cursor to mushrooms) and then incubated for 4-5 weeks. Then, they are put into the grow room where a hole is cut into the bag. With the right humidity and temperature the mushrooms will begin to form within a week. We harvest mushrooms 7 days a week. We have everything staged in the grow rooms in order to keep consistent, fresh mushrooms for our customers. To harvest, we grab the mushroom at the base of the stem and twist, which will leave a small amount of substrate at the base that we trim off before it gets put into its box.

## How do you sell your mushrooms?

We sell and deliver our mushrooms to over 60 restaurants in downtown Chicago and the Chicagoland area. You can find our products in over 20 grocery stores including Sunset Foods, Pete's Fresh Market, Fresh Thyme, and more! We also attend about 6 farmers markets from the city to the suburbs.