PACIFIC COAST FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION

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MAGNIFICENT MUSHROOMS

Button, shiitake, oyster, cremini, Portobello, and many varieties of mushrooms can be found at your local farmers' market. Mushrooms are a fungus, not a vegetable, even though they are universally used as a vegetable. They are unique, delicious, and often just weird! Edible mushrooms are a most prized culinary ingredient because of their versatility, diversity, and special "umami" earthy flavor.

Here are a few of our favorite varieties of mushrooms. Be sure to purchase them at your farmers' market where you know they are just picked, very fresh, and safe to eat. Many of these varieties you will only find at your local farmers' market.

Button: Good raw, but more flavorful when cooked. The most commonly used mushroom.

Cremini: A more mature version of the button mushroom, but a bit more flavorful with a meaty texture.

Portobello: A fully mature version of cremini and button mushrooms; good for roasting and grilling, or in place of meat products. They're great for stuffing because of their large size.

Porcini: Prized and sought out for their smooth texture and aromatic, woodsy flavor. Perfect in pasta and rice dishes.

Morel: Only grown in the wild, they are highly prized for their strong, nutty flavor and earthy aroma. Be sure

Morel: Only grown in the wild, they are highly prized for their strong, nutty flavor and earthy aroma. Be sure to purchase these from a reputable forager because there are “false” morels that look the same but are poisonous! You can be assured mushrooms found at your farmers’ market are safe to eat.

Chantrelle: Highly prized for exquisite flavor, color, and texture. Their rich flavor pairs well with eggs and cream sauces and make your dish look beautiful because of their bright yellow to orange color.

Oyster: Smooth texture and subtle, oyster-like flavor. They work beautifully in stir fry or sautés.

Shiitake: Earthy flavor like wild mushrooms, large and meaty. Another mushroom that is good for stir frying and soups.

When shopping for mushrooms, look for those that are firm and clean, with no dry or moldy patches. Do not keep mushrooms in plastic bags because lack of airflow will cause them to deteriorate faster. Wrap mushrooms in cloth or place them in a paper bag and store them in the refrigerator. Use as soon as possible.

You’ve probably seen contradictory information on how to properly clean mushrooms. There are arguments for both sides: brush them off or rinse them. Both are considered viable ways to clean them. First, mushrooms purchased at the farmers’ market are grown in sterile soil. This dirt is not at all harmful, but it’s still dirt and who wants to eat dirt? Brushing them clean is the way to go. Use a mushroom brush specifically made for this use, or you can use a clean toothbrush.

Another way to clean them is to run them quickly under cold water. You can also fill a bowl with water and place mushrooms in it. Rinse them around for no more than 8 to 10 seconds to remove grit. Then quickly dry them thoroughly. It’s important to note that mushrooms are like sponges, so any water you use will be absorbed into it. Do not clean mushrooms until you are ready to use them. They mold quite easily.

Either way you clean them is fine. Just be sure to purchase them at your farmers’ market. As we say – fresh is best! You’ll find the freshest, tastiest mushrooms at your farmers’ market from Solano Mushroom Farm in Vacaville, Fungi Temple based in Oakhurst, Mushroom Adventures out of Marysville, Far West Fungi from South San Francisco, and E&H Farms in Oakdale.

TAGS

mushrooms