

Mushrooms' Imprint on Civilization

From the Ancients

Mushrooms, the plant of immortality, guided ancient Egyptians 4500 years ago. Their flavor fascinated the pharaohs of Egypt so much that mushrooms were only used as food for royalty. Look at the history of Russia, China, Greece, Mexico, and Latin America and you will find mushroom rituals being practiced. Their properties were believed to produce super-human strength, cognitive advantages, and even guide souls to the gods.

Aztecs and other indigenous Americans used mushrooms in religious practice and for divination. The mushroom was a spiritual cornerstone of these people and this legacy lives on in southern Mexico today. All over the globe, mushrooms left their imprint on great civilizations of the past.

For More Historical Information See:

<http://blog.crazyaboutmushrooms.com/quetzalcoatl-mushrooms-mushrooms-mesoamerica/>

<http://www.mushroominfo.com/history-and-background/>

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/278858.php>

What are Mushrooms?

Mushrooms are classified as vegetables in the food world, but they are not technically plants. They belong to the fungi kingdom. All mushrooms are **fungi**, but not all fungi are mushrooms. For those fungi that produce them, the mushroom plays a similar role to a flower or a fruit in plants.

Alice Henneman, MS.RD. Extension Educator of Nutrition, Food Safety, and Cooking at the University of Nebraska Lincoln tells us that mushrooms are technically considered fungi because they have no leaves, roots, or seeds and don't need light to grow. They are not a true vegetable.

Although they are not vegetables, mushrooms provide many important nutrients.

Adding Types of Mushrooms to Your Diet:

There are many different types of mushrooms such as White Button, Oyster, Crimini, Portabella, Enoki, Maitake, and Shiitake. The Fresh

Mushrooms site offers a PDF chart that describes their flavor, appearance, and nutrition. It will also explain how to prepare and cook them.

For This Information See;

<http://mushroominfo.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Mushroom-Varieties-Chart-2012-SR24.pdf>

Edible mushrooms contain varying degrees of protein, fiber, B vitamins as well as powerful antioxidants like selenium, which supports the immune system and prevents damage to cells and tissues. Different varieties have different medicinal properties. Did you know that white button mushrooms is a source of vitamin D? Some other mushrooms can protect against cancer, are beneficial in the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, help lower cholesterol, protect the heart by maintaining healthy blood pressure and circulation.

If you see some of the exotic mushrooms, check out the Shiitake that have antiviral properties, anti-tumor, and cholesterol-lowering. Enoki mushrooms look like little thin shaped mushrooms but are really important for their anti-cancer and immune-enhancing effects. Maitake mushrooms are also known as the “hen of the woods,” and may have anti-cancer, antiviral, and immune-enhancing properties. White creamy colored Oyster mushrooms while having a mild flavor are packed with nutrition. Dr. Weil recommends Asian mushrooms rather than the common ones since they possess more general health benefits

Other examples of health-enhancing mushrooms species include: Reishi, Turkey Tail, Himematsutake, or Pom Pom (Lion’s Mane) mushrooms,
For More Information See:

<http://goodtimes.sc/columns/wellness/how-mushrooms-heal/>

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/health-benefits-mushrooms>

<http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/types-of-mushrooms#1>

Buying Mushrooms:

Select the ones that are firm, dry, and unbruised. Avoid any mushrooms that appear to be slimy or withered. Store them in the refrigerator. Do not wash or trim them until you are ready to use them. Don’t keep them wrapped in plastic since they need to breathe. Store them in their purchased container or in a paper bag.

Wild or Foraged Mushrooms:

Only consume mushrooms that have been cultivated under appropriate conditions. If you forage for mushrooms, follow the recommendations of an expert in this field.

Eating certain wild mushrooms can be toxic, cause severe illness and sometimes even death. Also, some mushrooms contain high levels of heavy metals and other harmful chemicals.

Medicinal Mushrooms:

Some species of mushrooms have been used as medicines for thousands of years, especially in Japan and China.

For More Information See:

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/278858.php>

<http://eol.org/info/453>

<https://www.bestfoodfacts.org/is-the-mushroom-a-vegetable-2/>

Should you eat raw mushrooms?

Some experts including Dr. Andrew Weil suggest that even edible, everyday mushrooms should be cooked. Dr. Andrew Weil says that all mushrooms are essentially indigestible if eaten raw because of their tough cell walls, and that to release their nutrients, they must be cooked. Also certain mushrooms contain small amounts of toxins that can be destroyed through cooking since they are not heat stable.

For More Information See:

<http://www.anh-usa.org/supermarket-mushrooms-dangerous-to-eat-raw/>

<https://www.prevention.com/health/health-experts/ask-dr-weil-it-true-you-should-never-eat-mushrooms-raw>