

# Fabulous Food



## The Safety Of Mushrooms: From Harvest To Home

(NAPS)—With new procedures and protocols from the impact of COVID-19, mushroom farms around the country are building on their strong foundations of safety.

Consider Maria. Before she begins her shift at the local mushroom farm's packing facility, she pulls essential items from her locker: facemask, hairnet, gloves and a smock. Now in "uniform," she takes her place on the processing line, 6 feet apart from colleagues, where she fills tills of the mushrooms that find their way to your grocery store. What may surprise many people to learn is that the items Maria puts on before each shift are nothing new—they have been part of Maria's uniform since she began packing eight years ago.

With the advent of COVID-19, all segments of agriculture have had to adapt their business practices. For mushroom farms, that means leaning in and building on their strong foundations of safety, quality and excellence to continue to provide this nutritious "superfood" to the public.

Mushroom farms and their packing houses, like other commodities, comply strictly, every hour of every day, to food safety and worker protection laws under U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other federal, state and local regulators. Farms are inspected routinely, often unannounced. So, for Maria, learning new guidelines wasn't difficult. She was glad to find there's no connection between the spread of the Coronavirus and the food supply chain—you can't catch COVID-19 from food.

With a myriad of safety procedures already in place, mushroom operations quickly incorporated COVID-19 guidelines—including requiring harvesters,



**Mushrooms, that tasty, versatile superfood, are harvested very carefully, with both worker and consumer health and safety in mind.**

packers and shippers to social distance, increase handwashing and increase the frequency of sanitizing processes, among other protocols. While public attention on farm and food worker safety has heightened, today and every day, facilities that grow, harvest and pack mushrooms are continually and steadfastly making the safety of both their workers and their products their top priority.

That's good when you think about all the benefits mushrooms bring to consumers. Mushrooms have long been celebrated for their gluten-free, powerful nutrients and low calories, sodium, fat and cholesterol.

Your immune system is made up of a network of cells, tissues and organs that work together to protect you from infection and maintain your overall health. Mushrooms have unique levels of selenium and vitamins D and B that support immune systems.

So, the next time you're social distancing in the grocery store, you may want to pick up a till of mushrooms and use them in your favorite dishes. Who knows, maybe they will have been packed by Maria.