

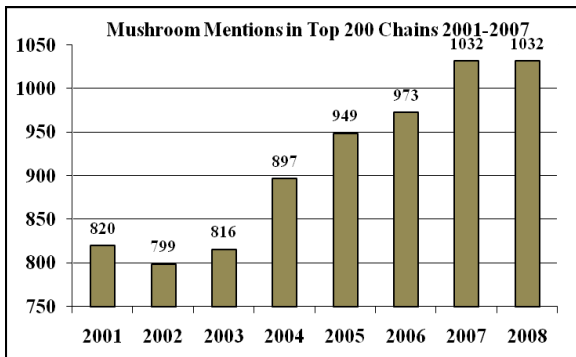
The Savory Connection

Unearthing the Possibilities with Nature's Hidden Treasure



Mushrooms Stay The Course On Chain Restaurant Menus

At a time when restaurant sales are beginning to show some weakness in response to the downturn in the economy, mushrooms are holding their own. Over three-fourths (77%) of the top 200 chain restaurants offered mushrooms on their menu during the first half of 2008, reported by Food Beat.



The top five chains with the greatest number of mentions of mushrooms in the first half of 2008 included:

1. California Pizza Kitchen (29)
2. Cheesecake Factory (28)
3. La Madeleine (19)
4. Bakers Square (18)
5. Roly Poly Sandwiches (18)

The top three market segments in number of mentions of mushrooms on menus in the first half of 2008 were:

1. Casual/Theme with 247 mentions (38 chains in the segment)
2. Italian Dinner houses with 161 mentions (14 chains in the segment)
3. Family/Coffee shops with 157 mentions (22 chains in the segment)

Breakfast Bright Spot

According to the recently released 2008 NPD report *Eating Patterns In America*, consumers are eating breakfast in restaurants at an all-time high with traffic up 5% versus dinner traffic down 1%. It's timely that mushroom mentions in **breakfast applications increased 13% over the past year** (*Food Beat*), while mushrooms menued as an add-on increased 23%. Some of the newest breakfast mentions of mushrooms include:

au bon pain *Portabella, Egg & Cheddar Breakfast Sandwich* – Portabella mushroom, egg and Cheddar cheese on ciabatta bread, \$3.49 — **Au Bon Pain**

Veggie Piadini – Portabella mushrooms, spinach, cheese and scrambled egg Piadini, \$3.25 — **Starbucks**

Egg White Veggie Flatbread Sandwich – Filled with cheese, bell peppers, potatoes and mushrooms, \$3.99 — **Dunkin' Donuts**



Steakhouse Scrambler – Crispy fried breakfast potatoes and scrambled eggs with grilled sirloin steak strips, sautéed fresh mushrooms, beef gravy, Swiss cheese, creamy hollandaise sauce and chopped parsley. Served with seasonal fresh fruit and choice of accompaniment, \$8.99 — **Perkins**

Bonjour Omelette – Swiss cheese, ham and mushrooms. Served with a croissant, \$6.99 — **La Madeleine**



Garden Omelet – Green bell peppers, onions, tomatoes, mushrooms and your choice of American or Cheddar cheese. Served with grits and toast, \$5.49 — **Huddle House**



Burger King Mushroom And Swiss Steakhouse Burger Hits The Menu And Media



Another Council-funded promotional effort is underway at Burger King Restaurants nationwide. For a limited time, a new “**Mushroom & Swiss Steakhouse Burger**” is available, and is being supported by a national TV and radio ad campaign.



Applebee's To Kick Off Server Promotion



Starting November 3rd, 378 franchised Applebee's locations across the country will kick off a “**Make Room for 'Shrooms**” promotion and server incentive contest. Wait staff that sell the most mushroom items in each store during the month of November will win American Express gift cards. In addition to the server incentive contest, some stores are featuring table-top cards funded by Kraft Foods to further promote mushrooms as a steak topper. The Council is providing the AMEX gift cards and a tip sheet for servers to help them sell in more mushrooms.

Chefs love mushrooms' ability to enhance rich, earthy dishes

Mushrooms may rarely be a marquee ingredient, but chefs at high-end establishments, vegetarian eateries and large chains alike say mushrooms' ability to enhance the flavors and textures of dishes make them an indispensable part of their kitchen arsenals.

Andrew Hunter, vice president of culinary development for Wolfgang Puck Worldwide, says mushrooms are essential for a

hybrid chain like Wolfgang Puck Bistro and Wolfgang Puck Express, which combines fast-casual service during the day with a full-service, casual-dining format in the evenings. "For me they are a workhorse ingredient," Chef Hunter says. "People see mushrooms and it draws them to a dish. Especially a vegetarian dish."



Chef Robin Stotter

PF Chang's China Bistro, with 172 venues in 39 states, features mushrooms in nine of its dishes.

"Mushrooms are a subtle vehicle that carry any flavor. When I'm developing an item, I know that adding mushrooms will improve the quality and flavor of the food," says Robin Stotter, research and development chef at PF Chang's. Mushrooms are a

key ingredient in several of the restaurant's vegetarian dishes, an area that Chef Stotter says is growing in popularity every year.

"Mushrooms play a huge role in the future of PF

Chang's. We're currently developing a new menu and mushrooms are a big part of it."



Under The Cap...

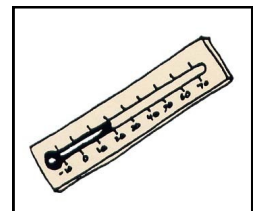
The National Restaurant Association's Hudson Riehle commented to *Time* magazine (Oct. 10), "We're going to see a dramatic change in the landscape of the restaurant industry as a result of the economic crisis." He predicts that fast-casual restaurants will replace the aging chains now found throughout suburbia. **Fast casual chains** are bucking the trading down trend. Buoyed by healthier offerings and a narrowing price gap compared to quick-service restaurants, chains like **Panera Bread and Chipotle** are seeing a continued sales surge.

- Two research reports from *Mintel* and *Technomic* show sales in the segment shot up more than 13% last year, and experts predict the growth to continue. Why is the sector thriving in a so-so economy? Partly, it's because of demographics.
 - Fast casual chains benefit from having a younger consumer base that has more discretionary income. At the same time, it attracts a more affluent audience. "There is at least equal or greater likelihood of use among higher income household adults," said David Morris, senior research analyst at *Mintel*.
 - The category is also stealing baby boomers from their fast food rivals, said Jeff Davis, president of *Sandelman & Associates*, Villa Park, Calif. "As baby boomers age, they still like that fast food occasion, but they also want a slightly better experience, and so, marketers are exploiting that niche."
- Food-at-home price increases were at an 18-year-high in September, up 7.6% from a year earlier, according to just-released government data. Meanwhile, **food away-from-home prices were up 4.5%**.
- The **top 10 menu-item health claims** are: vegetarian/vegan, low-carb, low-fat, gluten-free, light, organic, *trans* fat-free, natural, healthy and low-calorie (*Mintel*) *Food Technology* 10/08.



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.

