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The Blend™ is the Big Fungi on Campus

Research from Datassential Reveals Fast Growing Adoption of Mushroom-Blended Dishes at Colleges and Universities

Redwood Shores, CA (Dec. 4, 2019) – Coming soon to a campus near you, if they aren't already there: mushrooms. New research from Datassential shows The Blend™ – the culinary practice of blending meat/protein with chopped mushrooms – is earning widespread adoption at colleges and universities nationwide, and it's not going anywhere anytime soon.

In a survey commissioned by the Mushroom Council, Datassential found that 42% of college and university operators are serving The Blend and 83% either are serving or are interested in doing so.

In addition, of all colleges serving The Blend, 65% plan to use it more over the next two years. None plan to decrease usage. Datassential estimates operators served 29,163,360 lb. of blended protein last year.

"We've long known that The Blend has been a strong performer on college campuses, and this data reveals that, not only is penetration widespread, interest in serving The Blend is almost ubiquitous," said Bart Minor, president of the Mushroom Council®. "College dining halls are where consumers have their first opportunity to choose what they eat on a consistent basis, helping them develop food choices for life. The study validates our belief that The Blend will become the choice dish among new generations of diners."

Among the survey's additional findings:

- **Blended burgers are the most popular blended option.** 30% of operators either serve or are interested in serving blended burgers. Operators served an estimated 15,056,960 lb. of blended burgers in the past year.
- **Yet, blended burgers are far from the only application.** Operators use The Blend to add a delicious and nutritious edge to a number of indulgent crowd-pleasers:
 - 19% either currently serve or are interested in serving blended meatballs
 - 18% for blended meatloaf
 - 16% for blended tacos
 - 14% for blending pasta toppings or fillings
 - 11% for blended chili



- **Operators serve blended menu items with frequency.** Nearly 60% of operators who serve blended dishes offer it to students multiple times per week.
- **Blended protein is a relatively new option.** Of all colleges serving blended products, 77% have introduced it in the last two years
- **Few operators hide the fact that protein has been blended with mushrooms.** Instead, operators are proud to call it out. When serving blended protein, 95% of operators at least some of the time note mushrooms are included.
- **The forecast for blended protein on campuses is overwhelmingly positive.** Of the two-thirds of operators who plan to increase blend servings over the next two years, among their reasons:
 - 50% are doing it to provide healthier options
 - 43% because students like and/or are requested blended products

Datassential based its findings on a September survey of 155 college and university operators who are part of its OPERA panel.

Additional Fresh Data Validates Interest Among All Ages

Minor noted the campus study echoes a growing body of data showing increased interest among all ages for Blend trial and adoption. “Study after study and data point after data point validate The Blend’s appeal,” he said.

- Recently, Hartman Group [reported](#) 56% of plant-based product purchasers are interested in or have already purchased a blended burger. Also in the study, even among consumers who don't currently purchase plant-based products, 30% say they are interested in blended burgers.
- This year’s “Power of Meat” study¹ found 13% of consumers buy blended burgers, and 63% want to try one.

About the Mushroom Council

The Mushroom Council is composed of fresh market producers or importers who average more than 500,000 pounds of mushrooms produced or imported annually. The mushroom program is authorized by the Mushroom Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act of 1990 and is administered by the Mushroom Council under the supervision of the Agricultural Marketing Service. Research and promotion programs help to expand, maintain and develop markets for individual agricultural commodities in the United States and abroad. These industry self-help programs are requested and funded by the industry groups that they serve. For more information, visit mushroomcouncil.com.

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¹ “The Power of Meat 2019,” Published by: Food Marketing Institute and Foundation for Meat & Poultry Research & Education, Prepared by: 210 Analytics, LLC