

Celebrating National Mushroom Day with NEW “Mighty” Mushroom Research

Friday October 15 is National Mushroom Day. An opportunity for our Aussie mushroom farmers to update Australians on the new, industry funded research and exciting early-stage discoveries that could see us all reaching for more mighty mushrooms to take advantage of their ever-increasing range of unique health benefits.

Earlier this year, Nutrition Research Australia held an expert round-table, bringing together a group of leading Australian nutrition experts, food scientists, an Indigenous culture expert and a culinary nutrition expert, to discuss the science, history and future of mushrooms, with an impressive range of emerging evidence.

AMGA Dietitian, Jane Freeman explains “The expert round-table highlighted six key areas where our humble Australian grown white mushroom variety, could greatly impact the health of all Australians.”

“In addition to being a super-food and nutritional all-rounder, it seems mushrooms could soon be a food recommended by health professionals to help prevent vitamin D deficiency, heart disease, support the immune system and the gut.”

Mrs Freeman summarised the discussions from the expert round table, with six exciting advancements:

- 1. Mushrooms are an essential food, able to meet daily vitamin D levels and support immunity.**
Australians spend over \$100 million dollars on vitamin D supplements every year, yet 1 in 4 of us are vitamin D deficient. This is an alarming public health statistic which can lead to major health concerns. New research has discovered a solution - just one serve of mushrooms (three medium sized mushrooms), that have been exposed to direct sunlight for just 15 minutes can provide the same dose as a 1000IU supplement. This is big news as previously it was thought that we needed to expose our skin to sunlight or take a supplement to meet our daily vitamin D needs.
- 2. Mushrooms support immunity and respiratory health.**
In addition to being the new sunshine food, mushrooms were found to contain a number of other bioactive nutrients and antioxidants that able to help support and influence immune system responses. Mushrooms are high in ergothioneine, which is a potent antioxidant being touted for its positive effects on cognitive function and inflammation. It is also in the research spotlight, as casual observations noted that lower levels in the body seem to correlate with higher rates of COVID-19 hospital admissions and complications.
- 3. Mushrooms as a food that lowers blood cholesterol.**
Mushrooms contain very high levels of beta-glucan. We know that beta-glucans found in oats and barley can actively help lower cholesterol, but could that be a proven claim for mushrooms too? New and exciting mushroom research is underway with the CSIRO, who are undertaking human trials in consultation with our food authority FZANZ. If successful, doctors and specialists around the country could be confidently recommending a daily dose of fresh mushrooms in our everyday diets.
- 4. Mushrooms support gut health**
Gut health has found its way into the health spotlight with particular importance placed on pre-biotic rich foods that feed the good types of bacteria in the gut. Mushrooms contain chitin, which also attributes to their woody structure and meaty-like texture. Recent trials have shown chitin is the likely driver behind significant improvement in gut function when mushrooms replaced meat in the diet.
- 5. Mushrooms could reduce cancer risk.**
Scientists around the globe have been studying mushrooms effect on cancer for many years, and recent trials continue to uncover more positive evidence. One study found that eating a serving of white mushrooms (three medium sized mushrooms) could reduce women’s chances of being hit with ovarian cancer by one-

third. In men, another trial found that regular consumption of mushrooms helped to improve prostate treatment outcomes. More studies need to be conducted to provide conclusive evidence to substantiate claims, but these recent trials are promising.

6. Mushrooms and their place in the updated Australian Dietary Guidelines.

With a growing number of people in Australia moving towards plant-based diet approaches, it is important that the new Australian dietary guidelines, currently under-review re-visit how they classify food into the key food groups, so as to ensure that meat eaters, vegetarians and vegan alike know how to meet their recommended daily dose of essential nutrients. It is also why mushrooms should be re-classified in these new Australian guidelines. Mushrooms have previously mis-classified as a vegetable, but in fact they are not a vegetable, nor are they an animal food, a grain or a nut. Mushrooms are a fungi, and such belong to their own biological food kingdom – explaining this provides a great opportunity to highlight how their unique and all-rounder nutrition profile is beneficial across all dietary approaches.

Mrs Freeman urges Australians to add more mushrooms to their everyday diets “With the growing body of emerging evidence, the science is pretty clear. We should all be striving to consume at least 3 medium sized white mushrooms (which equates to one cup of chopped, raw mushrooms) every day, to help support optimum health and our immune system. They are so versatile and delicious, I encourage all Australians to ‘add the mighty mushy’ to their breakfast, lunch and dinner today, to celebrate National Mushroom Day.” she added.

More detailed information can be found on our website: <https://australianmushroomgrowers.com.au/celebrating-national-mushroom-day-with-new-research/>

Celebrating National Mushroom Day, AMGA Dietitian Jane Freeman is available for radio interviews on Friday October 15.

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RADIO INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY:

AMGA Dietitian, Jane Freeman is available for radio interviews Friday 15 October.

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The Australian Mushroom Growers Association (AMGA) is the not-for-profit peak industry body for the Australian mushroom industry. For the past 60 years, AMGA have represented the best interests of the mushroom growers of Australia.

AMGA Dietitian, Jane Freeman, is an internationally regarded and experienced dietitian and nutritionist, is an IOC (International Olympic Committee) qualified sports nutritionist, Leiths qualified cook and an award-winning author. As a practicing dietitian and director for CANutriton, a cancer specialist nutrition practice in Sydney, Jane is big mushroom lover and passionate about delivering practical nutrition advice that is easy to understand and adopt.