

THE MUSHROOM STATE

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

If you were to be asked what agricultural product of Pennsylvania provides its largest export, I wonder what your answer would be...milk?...beef?...grain?. The answer is mushrooms--right, mushrooms! The bounties of wild mushrooms in Pennsylvania, I have expounded upon in a recent story, but I am speaking of the cultured and grown mushrooms, produced in the dark, dank houses of the mushroom industry in Chester County. The fungus which adds so much taste to the dining tables of America is Pennsylvania's most exported product! Chester County is the national center of the cultivated mushroom industry, producing over 65 million pounds annually. The growing of mushrooms began in Pennsylvania 75 years ago and continues as one of our most important agricultural benefits for the people of America. During the first week of November, the American Mushroom Institute heralds the advent of the new peak mushroom season. Sixty-two percent of those mushrooms grown in the United States are produced in the immediate area of Kennett Square, near the famous site of lovely Longwood Gardens and Star Roses--and a stones throw away from historic Chadd's Ford and Brandywine. Most of the mushrooms in the United States came from a single mushroom cluster which was found in a mushroom house near Downington many years ago. It is the variety known as "snow white". Before that, most mushrooms were tan. In cookery, they go with spaghetti, steak

and pizza, but are used with fish, poultry and eggs. Mushrooms are low on calories, only 66 calories to the pound, excellent for dieters. Mushrooms are grown in greenhouses, without windows, two hitched together, and you can see them dotted all over the Chester County countryside. Inside, a lot of work goes on; mushrooms requiring tender loving care--as much as African violets. They're planted in pasteurized soil. A few tips: Buy mushrooms and use them immediately--they're tastier; keep them well refrigerated, soak them under running water and dry them--they need no peeling, for they have no skin; eat them fresh or cooked. Mushrooms are a delicious Pennsylvania delicacy--they are good for you, and dipped in sour cream and onion soup mix--that' a Chester County recipe--wow!

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.