

MUSHROOMS

...The Super Food That Has Been Left Out In The Dark!

For too long now mushrooms have been overlooked by many westerners, and their incredible healing and nutritional benefits have been ignored. This is hardly surprising given the bad press that they have received. Diderot, an 18th century French philosopher was quoted in the French '*Encyclopedie*' as saying, "Whatever dressing one gives to them, to whatever sauce are put them, they are not really good to eat but should be sent back to the dung heap where they are born." Even European doctors gave them a bad rap, with Gerard in his otherwise fantastic Herbal saying, "Most of them do suffocate and strangle the eater." That along with their association with the 'magic' mushrooms that the berserkers were thought to consume before going into battle was enough to seal their fate for many, but there have been other cultures which have openly embraced them.

The ancient Egyptians believed that mushrooms were able to grant immortality and therefore that only the godlike pharaohs could consume them. Other cultures such as the Chinese, Mexican & Latin American believed that eating mushrooms could endow the eater with super-human strength and that they could lead the soul to reside with the gods.

But what does science have to say about this? One of the fairly agreed upon conclusions that has come out of clinical studies is that a number of compounds in mushrooms can stimulate the function of the immune system and inhibit tumor growth. These uses have been pointed to by chinese medicine for several thousand years at least, but researchers have finally identified a group of compounds called polysaccharides, which are thought to be responsible that are complex chain-like molecules built from many smaller units of sugar. The antitumor and immuno-stimulating properties of these compounds have been proven repeatedly. Some mushrooms also behave as adaptogens, which is a fancy way of saying that they perform broad-based, nonspecific actions in the body, and support the function of all of the major body systems, but includes the nervous, hormonal and immune systems. Mushrooms are also one of the few natural sources of vitamin D, which is essential for healthy bones and teeth, and are also a good source of the B vitamins riboflavin (B₂), niacin (B₃) and pantothenic acid (B₅). This means that mushrooms are an important source of B-vitamins for people who do not consume red meat.

Basically, there is a whole world of mushrooms out there just waiting for your taste buds to explore, AND they are an important medicine for the stresses and strains of modern life. Each variety has its own unique properties, as do vegetables, but the best variety is always the natural and organic variety!

- The Barefoot Doctor.