

Mushroom consumption is also expected to continue to increase. Using dried shiitake as an example, purchases by income level are shown in Table 17.

**TABLE 17**

**Dried Shiitake Purchases by Income – 1988**

Yearly Income	Grams
Under C\$30 000	181
C\$30 000 - C\$42 000	153
C\$42 000 - C\$54 000	201
C\$54 000 - C\$72 000	223
Over C\$72 000	220

Source: *The Management and Co-ordinations Agency.*

**Biotechnology: Key to the Future**

The advancement of biotechnology has had a major stabilizing effect on the mushroom industry and is one way domestic makers are combatting cheaper imports. Growers can consistently supply mushrooms of good quality at stable prices. Buyers can thus avoid the risks of imports, although they must forfeit a cheaper price.

Attempts have also been made to produce new varieties that combine the qualities of two or more mushroom types. These qualities include fragrance, texture, tooth sensation when bitten, and colour. In addition, there is the possibility of specialized mushrooms, such as those made for soup (dried shiitake) or those made for salad (enokitake), as well as matsutake, which at present cannot be cultivated for consumption. Biotechnology is key to the future of the mushroom industry; significant developments are expected within three to five years.

**Improve Summer Sales**

Traditionally eaten in winter, mushroom sales are best early in the winter season. Sales from June to August reach about half those from October to

December. However, with changing eating habits – the popularity of Chinese food, French food, and such Western dishes as pizza – the demand for mushrooms in the off-season is increasing. In addition, the increasing use of refrigerated transport and storage is helping summer sales.

To further increase demand during off-seasons, the mushroom industry is using tactics such as mushroom only cooking classes.

**Domestic Price Inconsistencies**

Declining prices in the 1980s reflect two phenomena in the Japanese mushroom industry: the effects of advanced cultivation technology and increasingly lower cost imports. Using biotechnology, producers can grow many types of mushrooms with very low volume and quality risks. In addition, it is much easier to produce large quantities, thus allowing for economies of scale.

Table 18 shows the average yearly prices at the Tokyo wholesale market.

Champignon and kikurage prices are dropping as cheaper imports account for larger percentages of these markets. The year-to-year price fluctuations are due to the varieties of imported matsutake coming into Japan and the unreliability of natural production. Prices for foreign matsutake varied, according to country, from ¥4 684/kg to ¥11 950/kg while Japanese matsutake ranged from ¥24 663/kg to ¥38 639/kg.

**Local Taste Preferences**

Japan's regional differences influence the mushroom industry. For example, the way of preparing food differs from region to region, as does the variety of mushroom used. Kyoto is known for its matsutake, and while shirotamogitake and maitake are almost unknown in Tokyo, they are very popular in northern Japan. Such geographical differences are one reason wholesale prices vary between regional wholesale markets.

**Packaging is Important**

Presentation is important to the Japanese. In supermarkets, mushroom packages often have cooking instructions and suggestions on the use of certain mushrooms. Unusual varieties, such as the imported oyster mushroom, may be accompanied by an explanatory pamphlet.