

THE REALITIES OF GLOBAL FOOD PRODUCTION: WHERE HAS THE VARIETY GONE?

by Mark-Jan Daalderop

When you go to the grocery store, or look at the food in your Good Food Box you might ask yourself: Why isn't there more variety? If we look back 12,000 years ago we see a very different picture: Roughly 7000 plant species and several thousand animal species were used for human food. Today, the majority of the world, with exception of some indigenous communities, uses mainly 30 crop species and about 14 mammal and bird species for food. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations estimates that only three percent of all plant varieties available to agriculture today are in use. Just 12 species provide three-quarters of the world's plant-based food! And dependence on that narrow genetic base makes the world's food supply vulnerable to disease or sudden climatic change.

Here is a story:

In this story there are two communities, both have the same number of citizens, and the same amount of land. One community makes it a priority to use nature as an example for their agriculture practices. Their fields are a mixture of different varieties of crops, planted in a way where the plants work together to protect each other, odorous herbs and larger shrubs and trees are planted around the fields to repel animals and insects and crop varieties are varied.

The second community has utilized technology and efficiency. They grow only a few different plants, which are grown individually in large fields where they can be quickly planted and harvested by machines.

An insect sweeps through both lands, due to higher than normal temperatures and drought. The insect preys on corn and wheat, both grasses. The first community loses some of its crops to the drought and some of its corn crops to the insect infestation. Luckily they have species of vegetables that are more drought tolerant, a variety of corn that is not as tasty for the insects, and some small hidden plots of corn in areas the insects were not able to find. The result is slight reduction of food but the community plants more than enough and survives.

The second community isn't as lucky. The corn and wheat

they grow produces high yields but is sensitive to drought. The drought wipes out much of the wheat, and the remaining corn is devoured by the lucky insects that find field upon fields of mouth watering food. Some crops survive but the community is threatened by starvation.

The loss of diversity happens when specific plants and animals are chosen exclusively for their high yields and are planted in large quantities to increase efficiency. The result, at first, is more abundance of affordable food, a shift from labor jobs to technology jobs and an overall rise in the standards of living. It really appears to be a very good thing for us—at first.

But good intentions sometimes backfire. It is biodiversity, the diversity of different plant and animal species in an ecosystem, that provides functions such as fertilizing the soil, recycling nutrients, regulating pests and disease, controlling erosion and pollinating many of our crops and trees. And it is knowledge of biodiversity -- notably by farmers responsible for their families' health and well being -- that can ensure food availability during periods of crisis such as civil conflicts, natural calamities or disabling diseases. Biodiversity can also serve as a safety-net to vulnerable households during times of crisis, present income opportunities to the rural poor, and sustain productive agricultural ecosystems.

The answer to the above question is that the global food market only offers us a limited variety of foods and FoodShare, especially during the winter, purchases food from this global market.

How can FoodShare help to promote biodiversity?

- Support local farmers who plant a greater diversity of crops
- Encourage farmers to grow a greater variety of crops and guarantee them a market for these crops.
- Advocate for biodiversity through Economic incentives, market access, and fairer prices
- Advocate for farmer's ability to save seeds, and grow heritage and local species.
- Support communities in starting community gardens

Food Share

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recipes

Submitted By Janet Armstrong

MIXED MUSHROOM SOUP WITH BOK CHOY

4 to 6 servings

- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 1 small onion, minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 8-10 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 1-2 TBS natural soy sauce, or to taste
- 3-4 cups sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1/4 cup dry white wine or water
- 5-6 stalks bok choy, with greens sliced thin
- 3-4 green onion, slice white and green parts
- 2-3 TBS soy sauce, or to taste
- Freshly ground pepper to taste

Heat the oil in a soup pot. Add the onion and garlic and sauté over medium heat until the onion is golden. Add 6 cups water, dried mushrooms, and soy sauce. Bring to a boil, then cover and simmer gently for 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand another 15 minutes. Strain through a fine sieve. Reserve the mushrooms, trimming and discarding any tough stems; thinly slice the caps. Return the broth and sliced mushrooms to the soup pot and bring to a simmer. Add the fresh mushrooms and simmer gently for 10 to 15 minutes, covered, or until they are cooked but still pleasantly chewy. Add the remaining ingredients and simmer for another 5 to 8 minutes, or just until the bok choy is tender-crisp. Serve at once.

Adapted from Nava Atlas, In a Vegetarian Kitchen

GREEK MUSHROOM SALAD

- 1 TBS olive oil
- 1/2 lb fresh cremini, button, or shiitake mushrooms, sliced and trimmed
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped fine
- 1 tsp dried basil or dried marjoram
- 1 medium tomato, diced
- 3 TBS lemon juice
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 TBS fresh chopped parsley
- Pinch of salt
- Pinch of fresh ground pepper
- 1 Tablespoon fresh chopped parsley

Heat the oil on low in a frying pan, then gently fry the mushrooms for 2-3 minutes. Do not overcook. Sprinkle in garlic and basil, then toss the mixture for a minute or two so that mushrooms are well coated. Add the tomato, lemon juice, water, salt, and pepper. Stir together and cook until the tomato softens. Remove from heat and let cool. Garnish with chopped herbs. Serves 4

Adapted from Vegetarian Resource Group

featured this week: MUSHROOMS

Mushrooms, the plant of immortality? That's what ancient Egyptians believed according to the Hieroglyphics of 4600 years ago.

The delicious flavor of mushrooms intrigued the pharaohs of Egypt so much that they decreed that mushrooms were food for royalty and that no commoner could ever touch them. This assured themselves the entire supply of mushrooms.

In various other civilizations throughout the world including Russia, China, Greece, Mexico and Latin America, mushroom rituals were practiced.

Many believed that mushrooms had properties that could produce super-human strength, help in finding lost objects and lead the soul to the realm of the gods.



Did you know that in addition to their flavor and versatility, mushrooms are gaining recognition for their value as a low-calorie, fat-free food that provides a number of important nutrients? A serving of 4-5 mushrooms provides a mere 20 calories and zero grams of fat, yet it is also a good source of numerous nutrients including several B vitamins, copper and selenium. In addition, mushrooms are an under-recognized source of potassium, a nutrient many people do not get enough of.

Storing: Mushrooms bruise easily! Handle gently. Loose mushrooms are best in a paper or damp cloth bag in your refrigerator. Unopened packages of mushrooms store well in the refrigerator but once the film wrap has been removed, store in the same way as you store loose mushrooms. Your mushrooms will breathe better and stay firmer longer with this attention. In your refrigerator, expect them to stay good and tasty for several days.

Cleaning Mushrooms: Gently wipe mushrooms with a damp cloth or soft brush to remove occasional peat moss particles. Or rinse with cold water and pat dry with paper towels.

Freezing Mushrooms: Fresh mushrooms don't freeze well. But if it's really necessary to freeze them, first sauté in butter or oil or in a nonstick skillet without fat; cool slightly, then freeze in an air tight container up to one month.

DELIVERIES

for the week of: JAN 30th
orders are due 5 pm Tues. JAN 23rd

for the week of FEB. 6th
orders are due 5pm Tues. JAN 30th



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