



8.22.05 Press Release to
The Produce News

Midsummer Exotics™ Launches in Michigan

"Fresh morels, all year round!" Summing up the unique feature of Midsummer Exotic Mushroom's entry into the specialty produce industry, Dr. Gary Mills beams as he looks over the 80-acre facility that produces *Gourmet Mix*.

With significant capitalization from investors, the company began as a division of Diversified Natural Products in 2003. Diversified Natural Products is dedicated to providing safe, environmentally friendly products for everyday use. Along with developing all natural processes for growing exotic mushrooms indoors year-round, it breathed new life into Scottville, Michigan, when it purchased the old Chiquita bean cannery. Removing all but 200,000 square feet of indoor growing space from the cannery property, Mills created a state-of-the-art growing facility about ten miles from Lake Michigan. He says, "The area presented ideal environmental conditions for high quality, high volume production of mushrooms. First, we are using the natural by-products of Michigan's hardwood lumber area as substrates for the growing medium. Added to that, we have a natural aquifer of fresh water pumping 750,00 gallons of water per day." The expect yield is about 16,000 pounds of mushrooms per week.

Dr. Mills is a noted U.S. mycologist (the study of fungi) and has selected the five specialty mushrooms produced by Midsummer Exotics for their taste, texture and color — and nutritional value. The trend in high value foods, specialty foods in particular, is to provide good health and good taste in a well-packaged product. In the past two years, there has been a real increase in packaged, all-natural or organic produce under the distinctive label of the producer. Volume leaders are lettuces, berries, organic mini-vegetables and mushrooms.

The banner product, *Gourmet Mix*, contains **shiitake, morel, cinnamon nameko, oyster and black poplar mushroom varieties** in a 3.5-ounce plastic clamshell package. "These five taste very good together; they go very well together," Mills says. "In addition to the taste and texture, each mushroom has a different look and color, making the mixture of all five a really interesting combination." Initial marketing is to grocery stores in the Midwest, where the company expects to capture the attention of home chefs at the local supermarket.

"We expect that the *Gourmet Mix* combination fits in with consumer awareness of maintaining good health through natural sources. The selected *Gourmet Mix* mushrooms have a particular health benefit. Shiitake and oyster have cholesterol lowering agents, poplar contains anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory pain-killing properties, and the nameko contains immunostimulating cancer-fighting components. Morels? They just taste good!"

Shipping began on the fourth of July from the Scottville plant. The company is packaging each individual variety for sale in addition to its *Gourmet Mix*. "The real investment in expertise, site selection, and environmental controls needed to grow mushrooms on this scale is paying off for the company. There are 50 more acres available for constructing another plant, and the company will introduce a second mixture, Nutra Mix in 2006," said a very pleased Gary Mills.

All inquires may be directed to Gary L. Mills, Ph.D., Chief Operating Officer, Midsummer Exotic Mushrooms, 506 East State Street, Scottville, MI 49454.

MIDSUMMER EXOTIC MUSHROOMS

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