

MUSHROOMS.

Few persons have a correct idea of the cultivation of this member of the vegetable family. Many have attempted to raise them in this country, but at such great expense that they were soon obliged to abandon the undertaking. We will try to explain why they can only be produced successfully and profitably in France, whence the stock for the yearly increasing demand is drawn.

Take Paris and draw a circle of say five miles around it, and you will enclose nine-tenths of the mushroom beds from which France, as well as foreign countries, draw their supply. Some people have the erroneous idea that this is due to their cultivation in the catacombs which exist under more than one-half the city of Paris, but this is a mistake, as they have never been used for such a purpose. The catacombs were always under control of the city, and of late visitors could not be admitted to them on account of the danger from the falling of old masonry. It is a well known fact that the city of Paris and its neighborhood is built upon a stratum of stone and plaster, where, for centuries, the quarryman has constantly brought to surface the building materials for the great city. We can mention more particularly the villages of Purteaux, Grenelle, Mason, Blanche and Menilmantant.

Visitors may have viewed with much curiosity the great wheels seen all over the country, and wondered what was the purpose of the man climbing them; it is the primitive method employed by these people in raising the stone and plaster to the surface, the weight of the man on the one side of the great wheel having a rope twisted around it, represents several horse power. We can see the principle illustrated on a small way in the hoisting apparatus of any hatchway. It is in these old quarries, abandoned on account of the veins of stone or plaster having been exhausted, that mushrooms are grown.

These places are leased for a nominal sum, the lessee taking the risk of losing all his materials and labor by the invasion of water, as is often the case.

These quarries are well adapted to this purpose; in fact, they are the only places where these vegetables can be profitably raised, for they must not be exposed to the light, and must have as even a temperature as possible from one end of the year to the other. The soil and different species of manures are lowered into the quarries. The beds are arranged in rows two feet high and two feet broad, with rounding tops, and are two and a half feet apart. This is to allow the laborers free access with baskets or wheelbarrows. The seed, which is a series of fine roots or fibres so entwined or interwoven as to

resemble somewhat a piece of lace, is placed between layers of soil and a variety of manures. Nothing more is required but time, not even water, no labor being necessary except to repair the damage done by ground mice. From two to three months are needed to produce the first vegetables, they then continue to increase, and in six months are in full bearing. By that time the seed or lace work above mentioned has crept all over the beds, and the mushrooms grow indiscriminately on the tops or sides.

Mushrooms are gathered every morning, care being taken in picking them not to destroy the network of seeds underneath the layers of manure. Every day brings its crop, the large ones alone being gathered, the others being left for the next day's picking.

Beds well made will last about two years. At the expiration of that time they must be remade, the seed generated by being transferred to other well seasoned manure.

Mushrooms thus grown are white, firm and tender. They are brought to the Paris market every morning, and are sold at public auction, the manufacturers of preserved vegetables being the largest buyers.

As soon as purchased they are brought to the factory, where they are at once washed and peeled by women who make it their business, and who accomplish their work with wonderful dexterity. They are put into a large kettle, with water slightly salted, and are allowed to boil from fifteen to twenty minutes. Then they are put into tin cans, which are carefully weighed; the liquor in which they have been boiled is then added, the lid is put on, and the can is passed to the solderer to be closed. This, however, is not the last process. The cans having been soldered are put into a perforated iron receptacle, which is raised by a powerful lever, and lowered with its contents into a large cylinder, the lid of which is securely fastened, then a valve is opened to allow the free ingress of steam from ten to fifteen minutes, for the purpose of producing as much vacuum as possible, thereby insuring preservation. They are then taken out, and being allowed to cool, are ready for labeling and boxing, preparatory to being shipped to any country. Thus preserved they will keep for years in any climate.

We all know how they are consumed, and how they garnish a tender "fillet," or a substantial "porterhouse."

The consumption of these delicious vegetables is largely increasing in America, and the stock of any first-class grocer can hardly be said to be complete without its due proportion of them.

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Some men lie abed just as easy as they tell the truth when they are wide awake.

He that runs may read—a great many things concerning his character, especially if he runs for an office.

Etiquette: "No true gentleman will ask a lady if her coral jewelry is made of sealing-wax."

He said he rather guessed he knew how to sail a boat; but the gentle zephyrs that kissed the wavelets over his watery grave, mournfully whispered, "He luffed not wisely."

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