



MUSHROOM MADNESS

The shroom boom is upon us, and local forager Tyler Akabane of delivery service Mushrooms For My Friends (mushroomsformyfriends.com) is leading the charge. His pandemic-born company is bringing all fungi needs to our fingertips, from cooking varieties to medicinal species—plus, Akabane's first brick-and-mortar is also in the works, nearly one year after its virtual launch. Here, Akabane shares the five must-know facts about this fruitful, edible fungus.

BY MADISON DUDDY

Keep an eye out for Akabane's first brick-and-mortar, coming to Somerville this year.

1. There Are More Than 14,000 Species of Mushrooms

"That diversity [of the fungal kingdom] includes a variety of shapes and colors that many people have not tried. If people think they don't like mushrooms, I encourage them to try a few other varieties since most people have only tried button mushrooms (or portobellos, which are the same mushroom, only grown larger). For other cultivated mushrooms, hen-of-the-woods and maitake are favorites of mine."

2. You Can Cook Mushrooms Like a Steak

"The fungal and animal kingdoms are closely linked evolutionarily, and because of this, from a culinary point of view, they fulfill many of the same qualities when cooked. They're meaty and chewy just like a piece of meat can be. I often hear meat eaters remark on how the mushrooms were the 'better part of the dish.' They sear in a cast-iron pan with butter just like a delicious steak."

3. Mushrooms Are the Last Untamed Part of the Dinner Table

"Some are collected out in the woods because no one has figured out how to tame them and keep them growing in a lab. Wild mushrooms that cannot be found cultivated include chanterelles, porcini, black trumpets, matsutake, milk caps, lobster mushrooms and many more. This is due to a fascinating mycorrhizal [symbiotic] relationship between trees and fungi."

4. Hunting Mushrooms Can Be Safe

"There are deadly [mushrooms], but the same goes for plants and animals, and we don't instill the same type of fear with those kingdoms. In America, we have inherited a mycophobia (fear of mushrooms) from the colonizers who came here and had a non-mushroom-loving diet. One of my goals is to dispel that fear and make mushroom hunting a common activity like it is in many other countries."

5. Mushrooms Have Numerous Health Benefits

"Aside from being high in trace minerals, some have positive effects for the brain (lion's mane and psychedelics), wildly high antioxidant levels (chaga) and anti-cancer properties (turkey tail, maitake and more). I personally just think they're yummy, so I am happy to eat my medicine as is, but for non-mushroom lovers, there are capsules, teas and powders that can be found at health food stores, or maybe my shop some day."

PHOTO BY LINDA CAMPOS

Indulge in curdbox's divine, artisanal cheeses and food pairings with its subscription box.

4 SCRUMPTIOUS SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR YOUR INNER FOODIE

These luxe monthly subscriptions from local eateries are a must for every culinary connoisseur, offering artisanal bonbons, premium caviar and more.

BY MADISON DUDDY



Curdbox

Awaiting any package can be thrilling, but imagine if the box was filled with artisanal cheeses and food pairings—now that's a delivery worth the excitement. Every month, treat yourself with curdbox's (curdbox.com) three divine, artisanal cheeses and food pairings, including accompaniments like jams, spreads, chocolate and chips. While munching on these heavenly bites, ask Alexa to turn up the corresponding Spotify playlist to elevate this thoughtful experience. Each box tells a story through robust flavors, a perfectly paired soundtrack, Curdcast podcast and in-depth blog post: November's Umami Bomb box focused on savory comfort food with items like

tomato jerky and Italian black truffle cheese.

Flour Bakery's Flour Love

For those dreaming of baking gourmet pastries like Flour Bakery + Cafe's (flourbakery.com) Joanne Chang, look no further. Whether you're a beginner baker or experienced chef, the Flour Love program's Flour Fanatic box provides subscribers with everything they need to craft fluffy, swoonworthy treats like sticky buns, eclairs and apple vanilla pound cake. Delivered to your door the first week of the month, each baking kit includes ingredients, a recipe card and link to a video tutorial on Chang's IGTV.

Petrova Chocolates: The Chocolate Club

Creating chocolate is no small task for Betty Petrova, owner of Petrova Chocolates (petrovachocolates.com). Each bonbon is carefully crafted in small batches over a three-day period of polishing molds, painting with colored cocoa butter, tempering the chocolate into thin shells and filling them with harmonious flavors inspired by the seasons, her travels and childhood memories. Are you craving chocolate yet? If so, The Chocolate Club subscription will certainly push you over the edge. With two levels to choose from, we recommend the Gold subscription for an ultimate experience: a 16-piece box of bonbons, a chocolate bar and surprise item.

Saltie Girl Caviar Club

Arguably known as one of the world's richest delicacies, caviar is popular among the city elite—and now, you can experience it at home thanks to Saltie Girl's Caviar Club (table22.com/saltie-girl). Every month's Luxe box unpacks two 125-gram selections of premium caviar, handchosen accouterments, crispy Saltie Girl potato chips and recipes to add a dash of decadence to any at-home dining experience. Members also gain priority access to special events and dinners—allowing you to enjoy all Saltie Girl has to offer in a snap.