# Grow your own mushroom kits:

# Phoenix Oyster Mushrooms

Warm greetings to all reading this. I was thrilled and honoured to get to produce these mushroom growing kits for all you amazing tamariki and your kaiako. Within your package you will find one large Phoenix Oyster mushroom grow kit. For more detailed information about all of this please check out my Webinar on Wednesday the 23rd March, or an online recording of it that will be available the following week.

Here is what you can expect to see from your kit. After one to three weeks the fungus should have grown all throughout the straw in your kit. You should see little white fluff balls under the plastic – these will get bigger and bigger until all of the straw is covered. You will see there are cuts in the bags – these are to allow the fungus to breathe, grow and eat. The fungus can sense the fresh air coming through the cuts and will grow the mushrooms out of those gaps. When they start to form, the mushrooms will look like small, firm, grey blobs. Within about a week those tiny baby mushrooms will mature into adult mushrooms ready to harvest and eat!

Caring for your kits:

The grow kits you have been provided with need to be kept somewhere relatively warm while the fungus grows throughout the straw, anywhere between 18C and 25C will work but aim for somewhere around 20C. It is important that it is not kept somewhere enclosed like a closet because as mentioned above, good air circulation is important for the fungus to breathe. The kits should be kept upright, which means standing it on one of the small ends with the cuts in the bag horizontal.

When your kit starts producing baby mushrooms it is best to put the kit somewhere humid – somewhere with a lot of moisture in the air. In a school environment you could pop the kit on a workbench in your classroom. If your space is quite dry or large you could simply loosely drape a bag over the top of the kit. This helps foster a small humid microclimate around the grow kit. It is critical however that the kits get lots of fresh air! So don’t block up the cuts in the bag.

The mushrooms should happily form through the gaps in the bag and grow to a good size. Mushrooms can range in size from 3-4cm wide up to 10-15cm wide. You want to harvest them just after the mushroom caps start to turn convex. If the mushrooms look like they are drying out then you can give them a spray with water. If the mushrooms look thin and stretched out then they are not getting enough fresh air, try moving the kit somewhere else with more fresh airflow.

Once mature you can simply cut the mushrooms from the base of the stem. These can be eaten fresh or stored refrigerated for up to two weeks. After you harvest mushrooms simply leave the kit where it is and wait, with patience more mushrooms will grow. Mushrooms are roughly 95% water, so after the first crop you could submerge the kit fully in water for 5 – 12 hours, this will rehydrate the fungus and allow it to produce more mushrooms. This can be done following each harvest of mushrooms. After three or four crops of mushrooms the kit will be done. The spent mushroom substrate at this point makes for fantastic compost for your school garden or grounds.

Good luck and enjoy,

Christopher Smith - The Mushroom Smith