

Growing Maitake Mushrooms

Latin name: *Grifola frondosa*

Grown on sterilized, supplemented, oak and maple sawdust substrate. The blocks are ready to fruit now.

Maitakes are much more difficult to fruit successfully than most other cultivated mushrooms. Pay close attention to the following procedures, which have worked for us in the past.

1- Keep it Simple

Cut off a corner of the bag, creating an opening about 3 inches long, allowing some air to circulate over the block. While daytime temperatures remain above 55 degrees, keep the block outdoors in a shady spot that is safe from slugs. As the fruit bodies enlarge they may push against the bag. Carefully cut away the plastic as necessary, to allow full growth, which can take up to a month. Spray with water in very dry weather.

2 - Growing Like a Natural Pro

Cut the bag off just below the white breathing patch. Punch some drain holes in the bottom. Set out the block, as outlined above. Pay attention to humidity levels. In dry weather, spray once or twice each day with chlorine-free water. Be sure that fruit bodies dry out between scrapings. Watch out for flying bugs. If they buzz around your block, rig a fine mesh cover, or use an organic insect spray. Full maturity can take a month.

3 - Changing the Rules

To rush fruit body development, commercial growers sometimes alter conditions that work in the wild. They process Maitake blocks indoors, at temperatures above 70 degrees. Bag tops are cut off, as described in procedure no. 2, and humidity is held at nearly 100 percent through continuous misting. Very large, feathery fruit bodies are harvested in about ten days.

If you follow procedures 1 or 2, you should bring your block indoors when daytime temperatures fall below 55 degrees. You can then follow the directions given for Shiitake blocks, with the provisos that the block should never be removed from the bag, that high humidity, frequent air exchanges, and temperatures in the low 60's will produce the most attractive, compact mushrooms.

Over watering and poor air circulation cause Maitake petals to spoil and emit a foul odor. Cut off and toss the spoiled parts, carefully remove the remaining fruit bodies. If you have used procedures 1 or 2, follow the steps for re-fruiting Shiitake blocks. After the second flush, remove the outer bag entirely and bury the depleted block outside in a sawdust trench. You just might get more Maitake, but we make no promises.