

**Annual Report on the
Bi-monthly Mushroom Tracking Report**

**Prepared by
Dr. John L. Stanton
Department of Food Marketing
Saint Joseph's University**

Introduction

The bi-monthly tracking report was instituted by the Mushroom Council to assist, anticipate and predict changes that might occur in the consumer market over time. The method is to ask the exact same questions to the exact same target audience (not the same people) to see how the responses are changing over time. In many cases strategic and even tactical actions of the mushroom marketers and growers/distributors are based on assumptions of the future and future changes and this research helps provide this information and lowers the risk of decision making. The purpose is not so much to provide “point indicators” of consumer behavior but to have indicators of change. Additionally it is not a substitute for other forms of targeted research such as ATU (attitude, trial and usage) or other media types of research.

The tracking report is made up of 12 monthly surveys of the exact same questions to the exact same audience via an Internet data collection method. The method is well tested and well established. The data is reported bi-monthly to reduce some of the potential random shifts. There are about 200 samples collected each month.

The questions are divided into separate sections based on information the Mushroom Council is looking to gather. The sections are:

1. Purchase trends (frequency and quantity)
2. Nutritional perceptions
3. Health and weight loss
4. Miscellaneous topics
5. Eating away from home habits and perceptions

For each of the categories a number of questions were asked about the consumers’ perception of aspects of that category. In the remainder of this report the key questions will be reported and a short statement about the direction of the trend will be included if one is present. A complete list of all the questions can be found in a separate report entitled “Tracking Survey Results.”

For the ease of the reader, three methods of reporting and explaining are provided. A graphic depiction of the results is shown for the key questions. In each graph the six bi-monthly results are shown. Additionally a summary of the trend is provided for each graphic and finally a short “take away” impression is shown above each graph.

The future is not something that any individual has the skill to interpret and each reader of this report can decide for him/herself what the findings portend for the mushroom industry. I have provided a short general interpretation below which may comport with your opinions or you may reach other conclusions. It is from the discussion of these findings among the industry or with your own firm that meaningful conclusions will develop.

Results

The sample

The profile of the entire sample across the year has approximately the following demographic:

- 90% White
- 3% Black
- 3% Hispanic
- 3% Asian.

The sample is about 56% married and 15% single with the remainder divorced, widowed or not described. It contained 71% females. Finally the income and age distribution was distributed as expected with most responses in the middle income and age groups. Income and age was distributed as shown below. Most importantly for this study there was very little variation across the 6 sample period.

Age distribution across the sample

18-24 years	7.8%
25-34 years	15.9%
35-44 years	23.6%
45-54 years	20.2%
55-64 years	16.2%
65 or older	16.3%

Income distribution across the sample

Under \$15,000	5.4%
\$15,000-\$24,999	7.8%
\$25,000-\$34,999	11.9%
\$35,000-\$49,999	16.4%
\$50,000-\$74,999	21.4%
\$75,000-\$99,999	12.0%
\$100,000-\$149,999	7.2%
\$150,000 and over	4.5%
Prefer not to answer	13.5%

Results Tracking

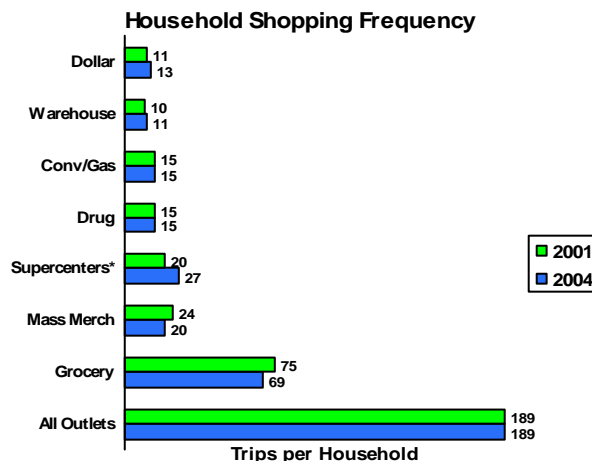
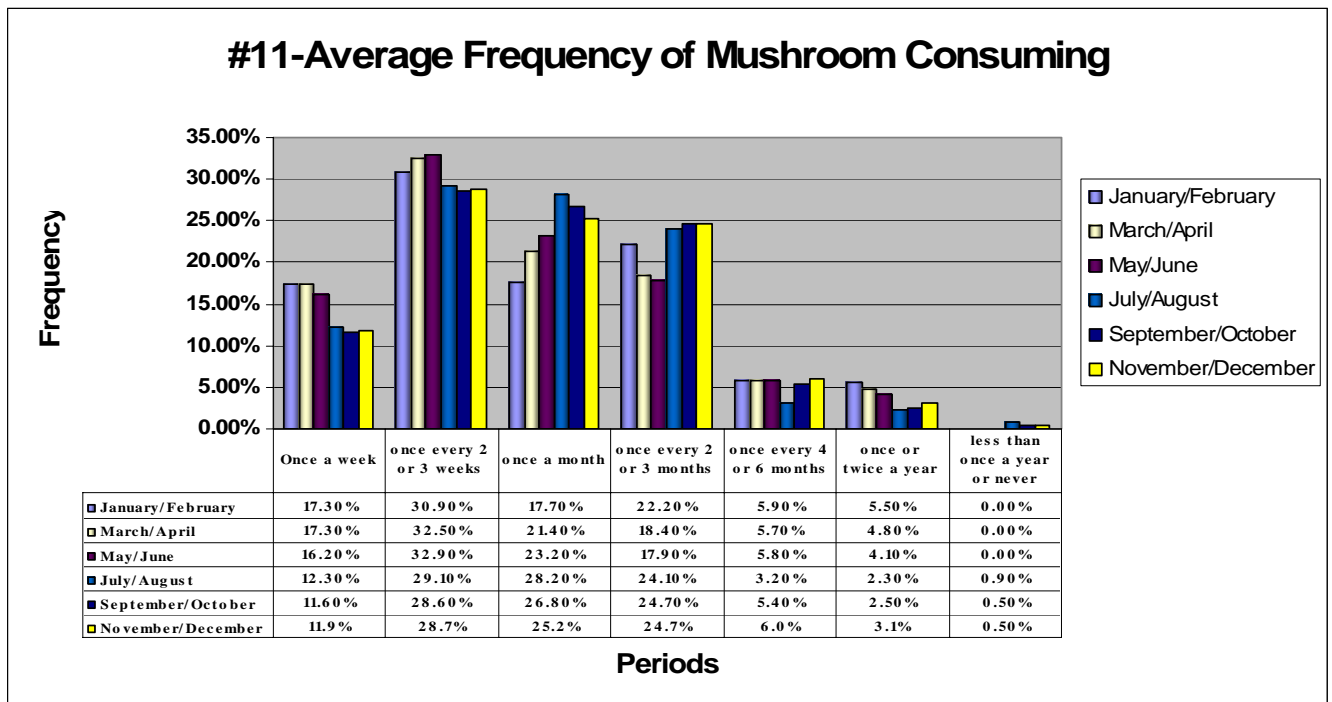
The initial group of questions focused on purchase trends. These questions are not meant to provide estimates for what has been sold as the sales reports provided by the Mushroom Council can best serve that function. Instead the questions are designed to track whether consumers appear to be changing their purchase frequencies and/or sizes and forms in which they buy.

I Purchase Trends

1. Average Frequency of Purchase

As can be seen in Question 11, there appears to be a trend toward less frequent purchases with both once a week and once every 2 or 3 weeks declining. This result is very consistent with food shopping trends. Visits to grocery stores are down significantly. See Nielsen shopping frequency chart below.

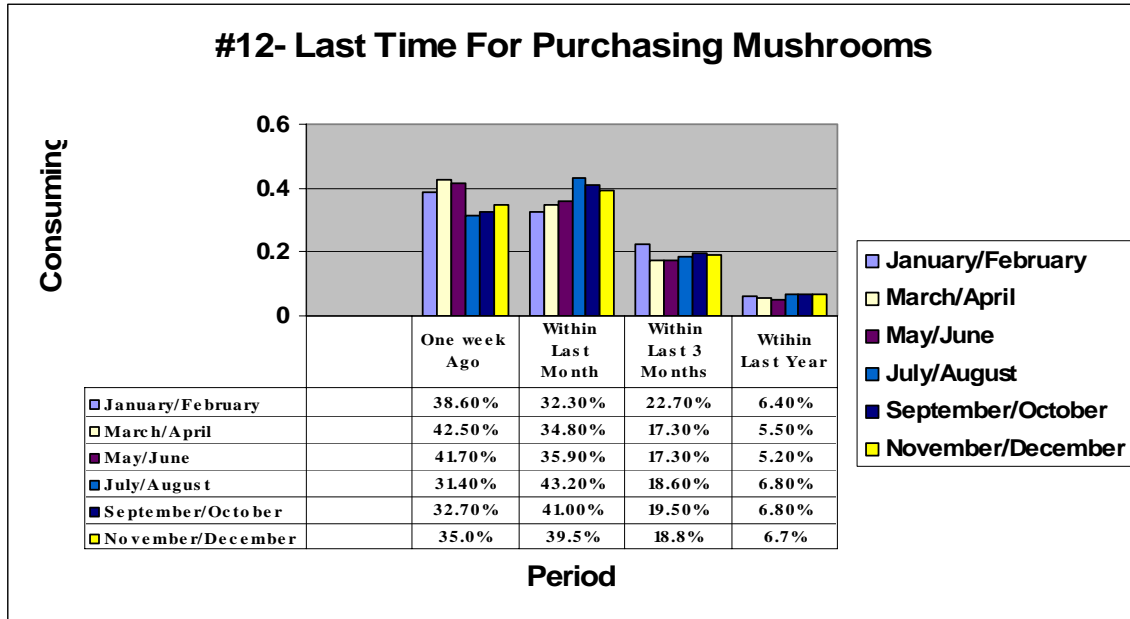
Frequency of purchase is down



2. Last Time Purchased

One can see that there is a slight trend toward purchasing within a month and this is consistent with the previous question.

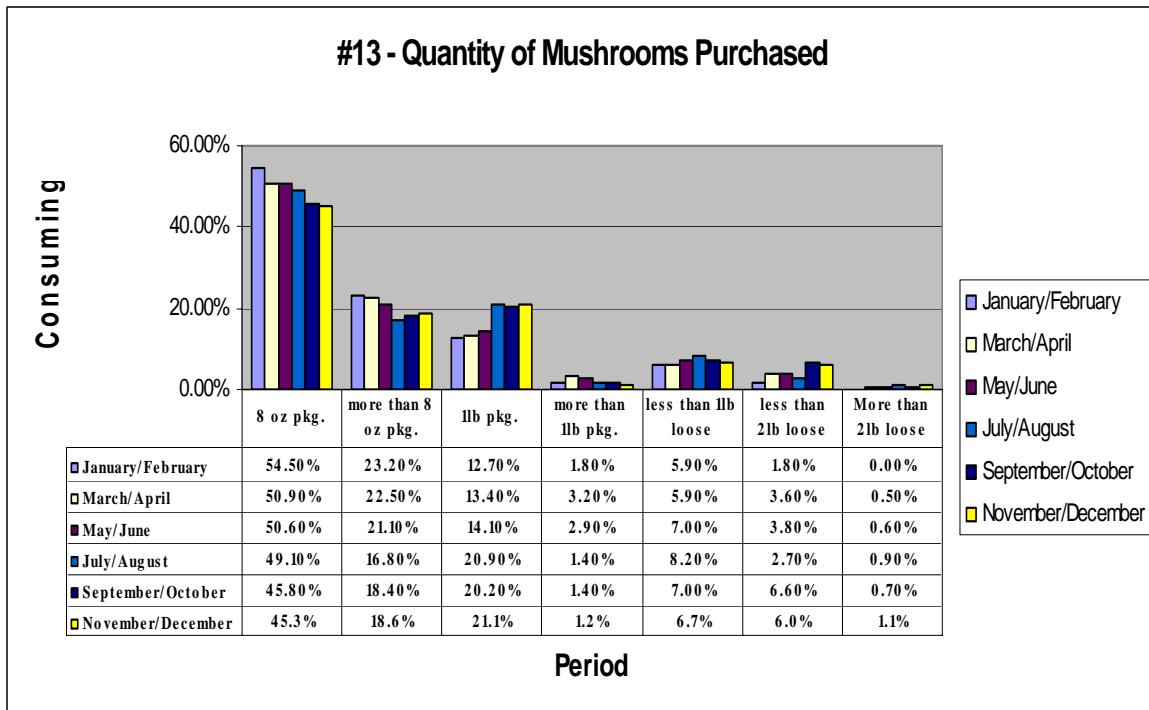
Purchase trend toward once a month



3. Quantity Purchased

There seems to be a trend towards purchasing the one pound package and away from purchasing the 8 oz. package. It cannot be determined if this is a purchase preference or a merchandising issue, i.e. the larger sizes may be being promoted and displayed more.

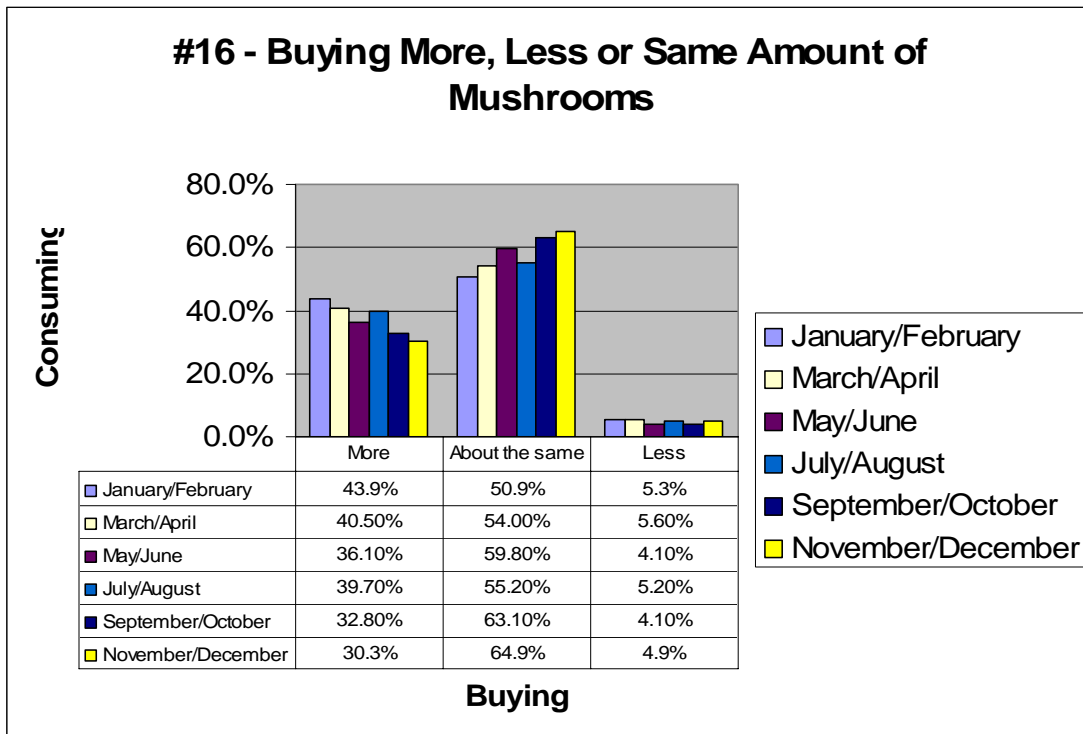
Trend toward One pound package



4. Buying More or Less

There seems to be a decrease in the number of consumers who believe they are purchasing more mushrooms this month versus last month and an increase in the number of consumers who believe that they are buying about the same. This is consistent with the previous two slides which indicate a slight decline over the year. The good news is that it appears that those who buy less is both a small percentage and a consistently small percentage over the year.

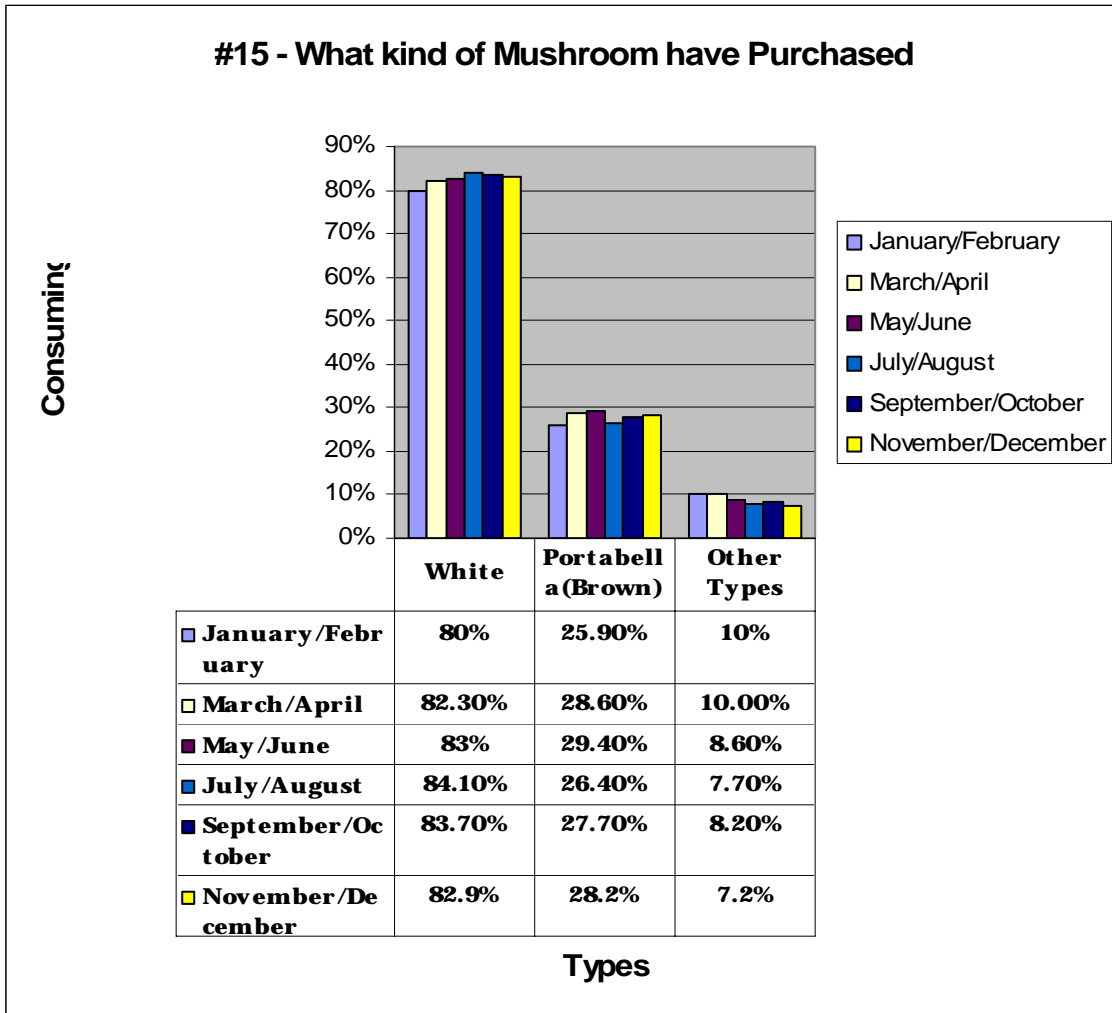
Fewer People buying more



5. Types Purchased

There appears to be little change in the type of mushrooms purchased with a slight movement from the Ports to white. One can also see a slight decline in “Other” types of mushrooms. Changes are so small that more time will be needed to see if this is a trend or just a “within year” adjustment.

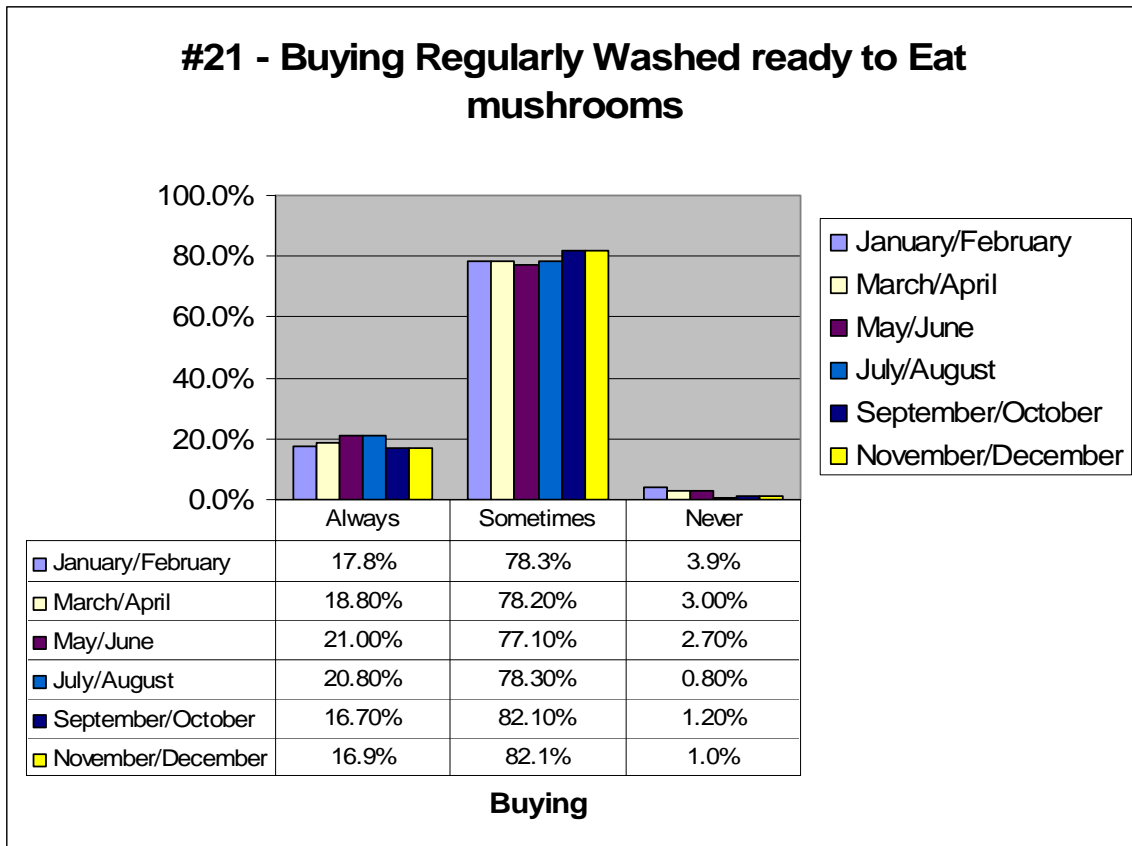
No change in types purchased



6. Purchasing Washed Ready to Eat

While it seems that the Mushroom Council’s monthly sales reports would suggest that washed mushrooms would be more popular it appears that there has been no trend among those who are trying the washed product. If any trend exists it is that the percentage of people who “sometimes” try the product has increased. This should be watched for consistency next year.

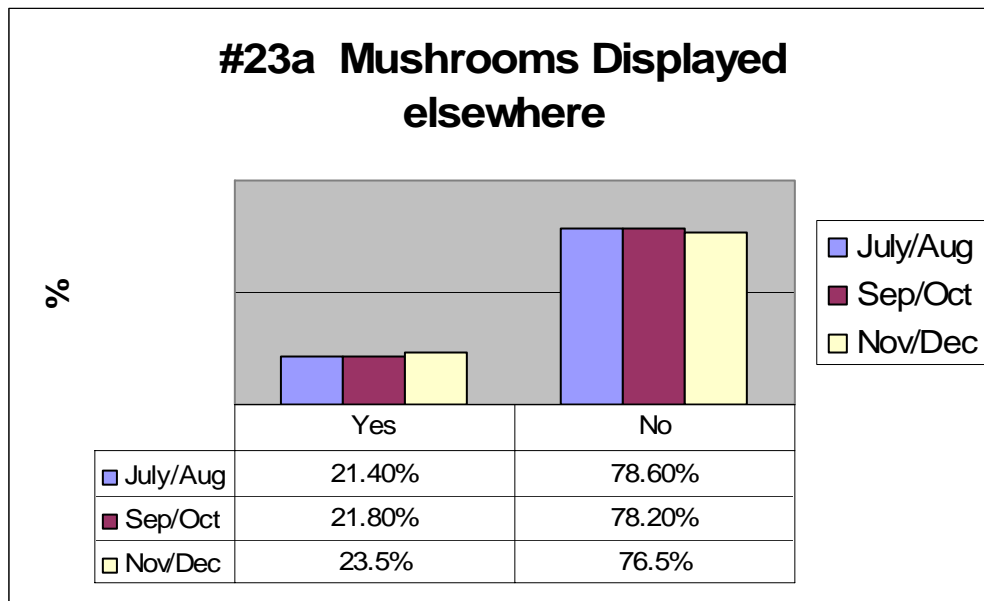
Trend toward sometimes using washed mushrooms



7. Secondary Displays

A question was added halfway through the year as to whether consumers have seen mushrooms displayed anywhere other than the “mushroom section.” While only about 23% said they had seen them displayed elsewhere the number has shown a slight increase. This is a significant movement that should be watched because consumers have frequently mentioned that secondary placements would be a way to get them to buy mushrooms more often. This should be watched carefully to see if the blip is a true trend or a random event.

No change in number of people who saw secondary displays



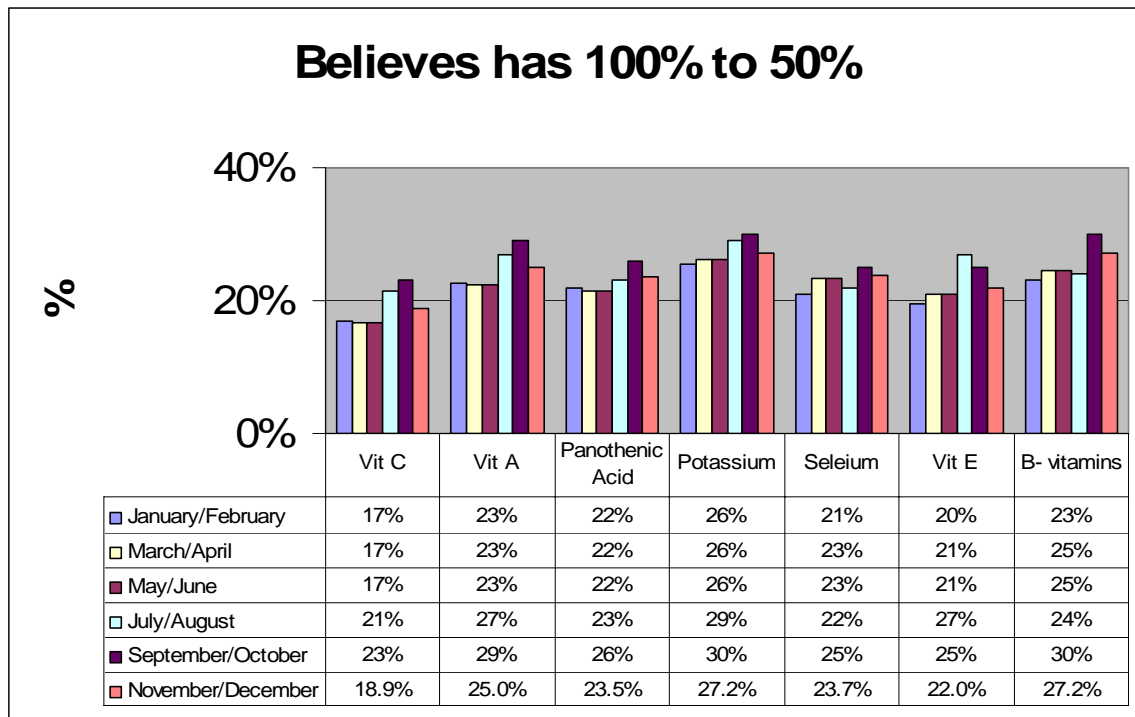
II Nutritional Trends

1. Vitamin Mineral Content

It appears as if people don't see mushrooms as having more than 50% of the RDAs but there may be a slight upward movement in every category. It remains to be seen whether the trend will continue especially if the Mushroom Council instigates a nutritional advertising/promotion program.

In a related question consumers were asked about Aromatase inhibitors, a substance associated with cancer reduction and/or protection. About 78% of the population had never heard of Aromatase inhibitors and the number was very consistent across the 6 reporting periods.

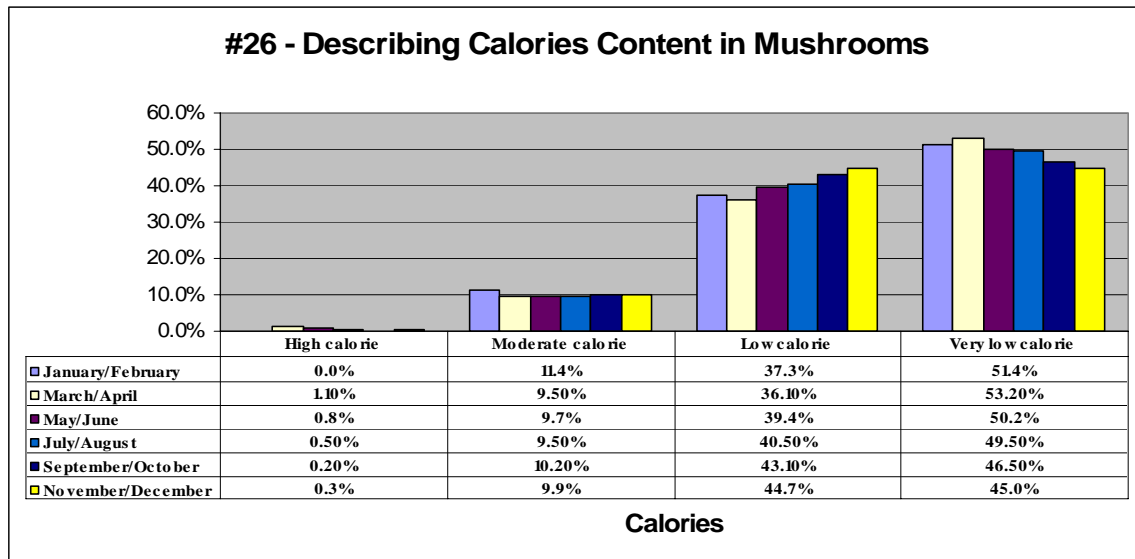
Small but consistent upward trend



2. Other Nutrients

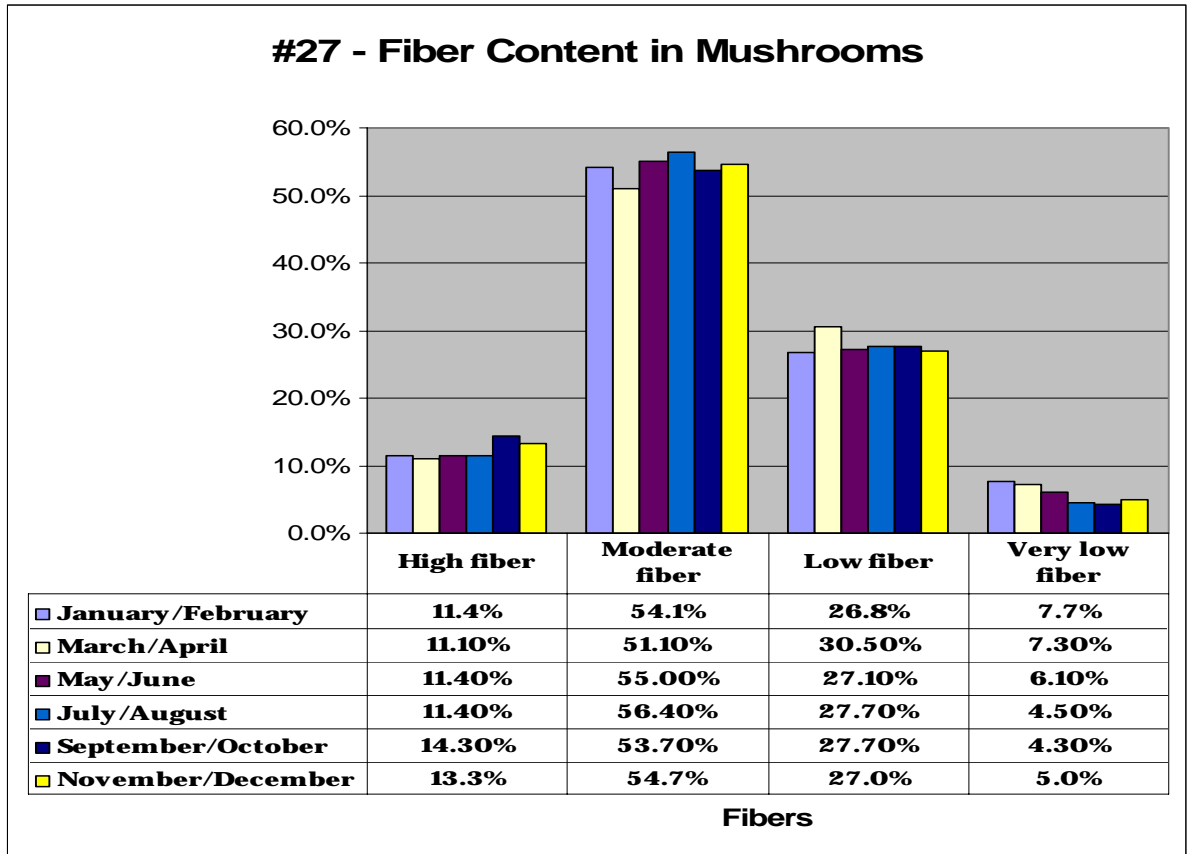
Calories- In terms of calories mushrooms are viewed as low calorie or very low calorie. The only minor indication of a trend is that there is a consistent decline in the perception that mushrooms are very low calorie.

Caloric content viewed as low calorie but may be losing image



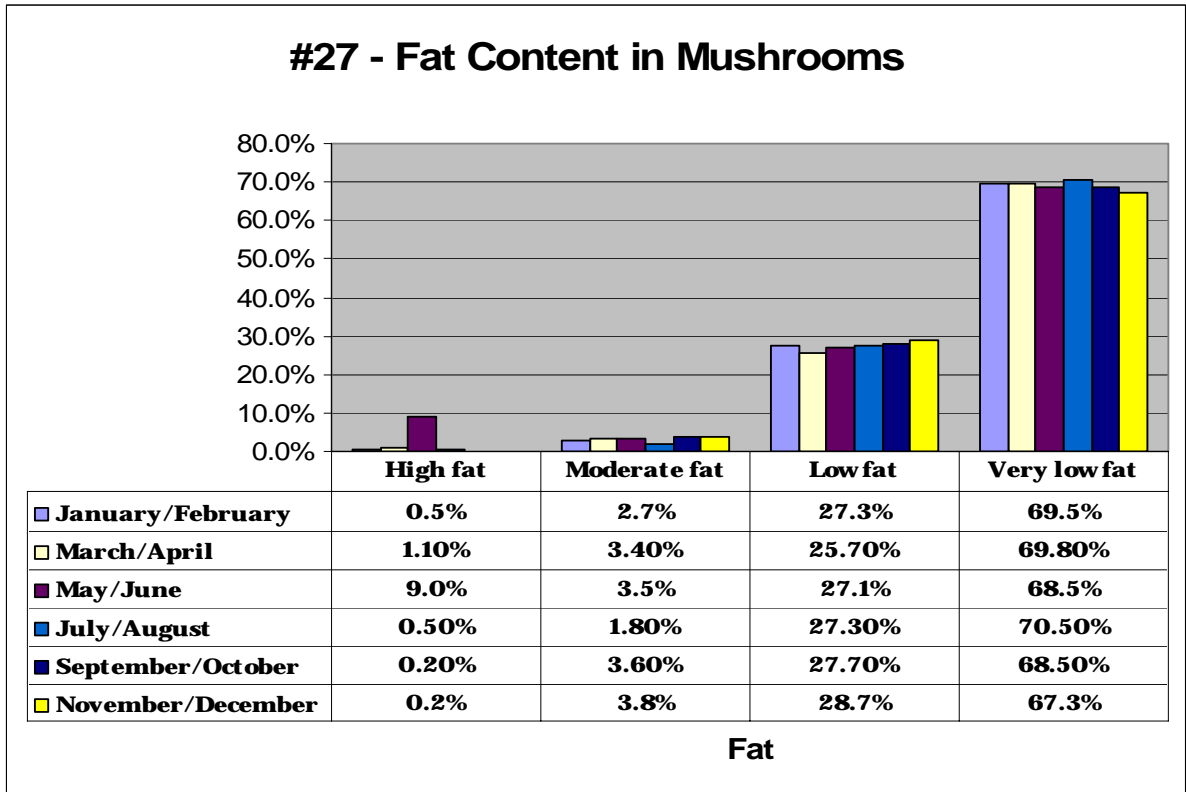
Fiber- The perception of mushrooms and fiber has not changed over the year. They are viewed as high to moderate fiber.

Viewed as high to moderate fiber



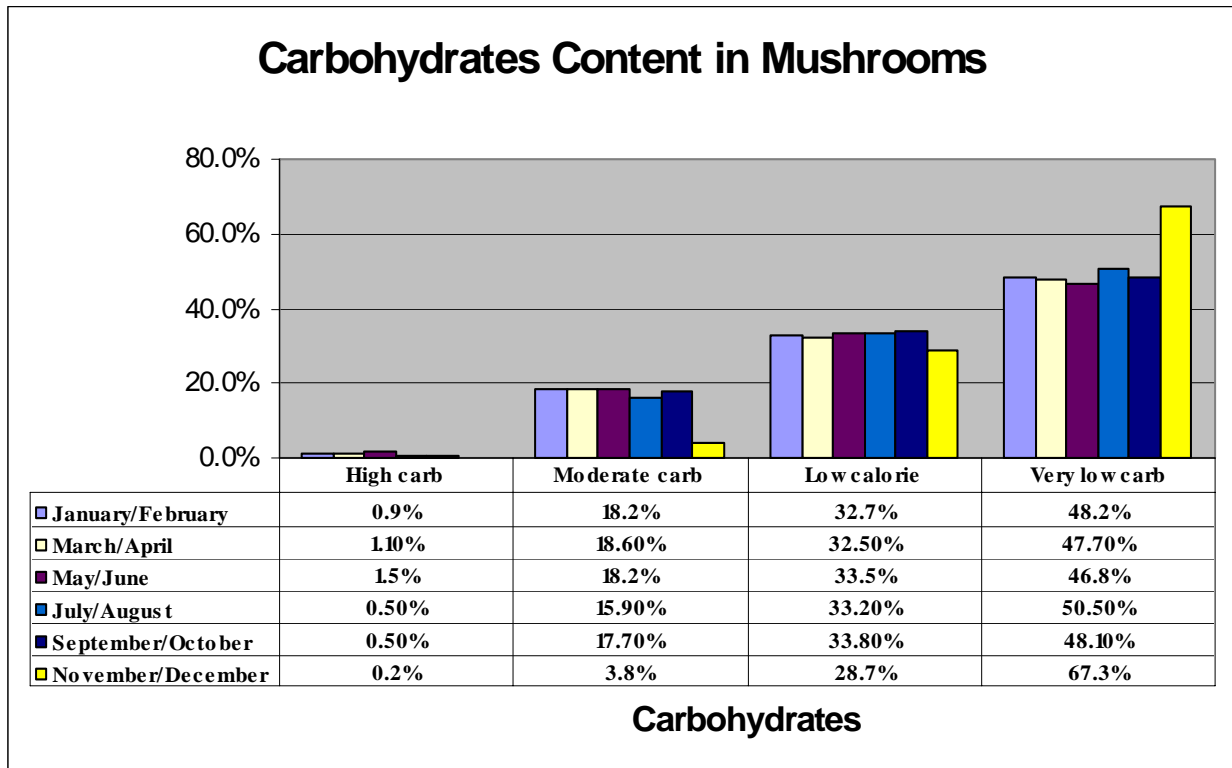
Fat- Mushrooms are viewed as very low fat with about 70% of the consumers indicating that they believe mushrooms are very low in fat. There may be a minor drop over the year which should be watched as fat content is still very important to health conscious consumers.

No real change, viewed as Low/very low fat



Carbohydrates- The carb perception is that mushrooms are a very low carb food and this image may be growing. There was a spike in the last reporting period and this may be due to more promotion of low carb or more general awareness. This must also be watched. Unfortunately the low carb craze has passed and the perception may offer only modest opportunities in the future.

Viewed as very low carb and perception may be growing

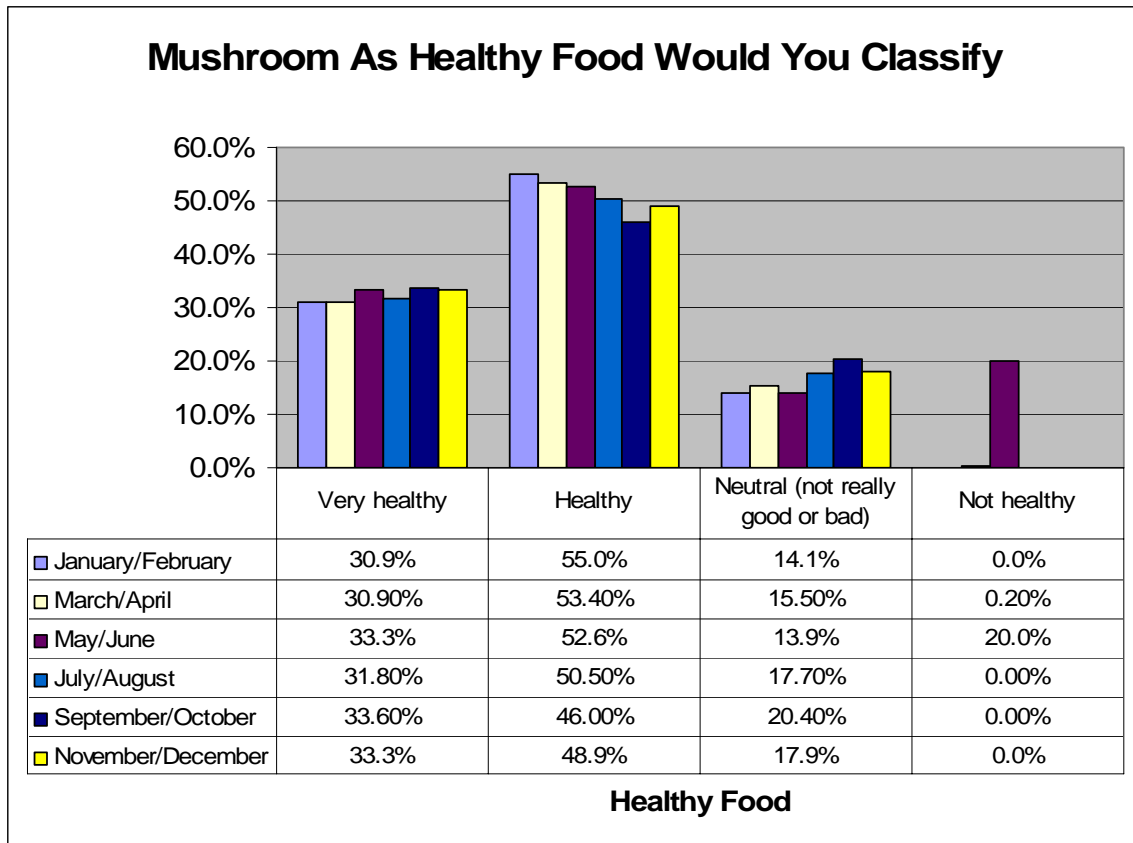


III Health and Weight Loss

1. Healthy Food

Consumers see mushrooms as a healthy food but not necessarily as a very healthy food. However there appears to be a slight trend in the percentage of people that see mushrooms as a very healthy food. Like many of the other variables measured, the trend is slight and must be monitored over the next year. If the perception of very healthy increases it will be a very positive sign.

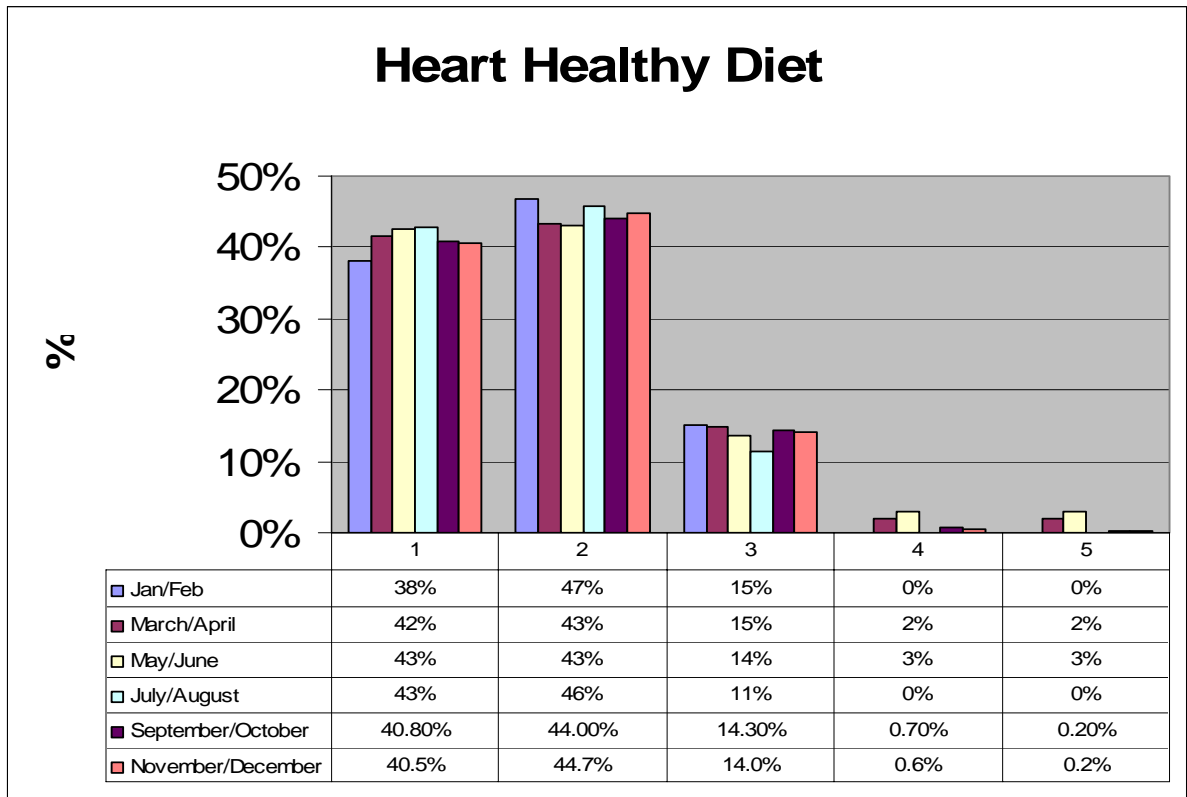
Possible increase in % who believe very healthy



2. Heart Healthy Diet

There appears to be no trend or changes in the year in consumers' perception of mushrooms in a heart healthy diet. This may be in part because the total percentage who either agree or strongly agree that mushrooms are part of a heart healthy diet is so high (About 85% of consumers agree {2} or strongly agree {1}).

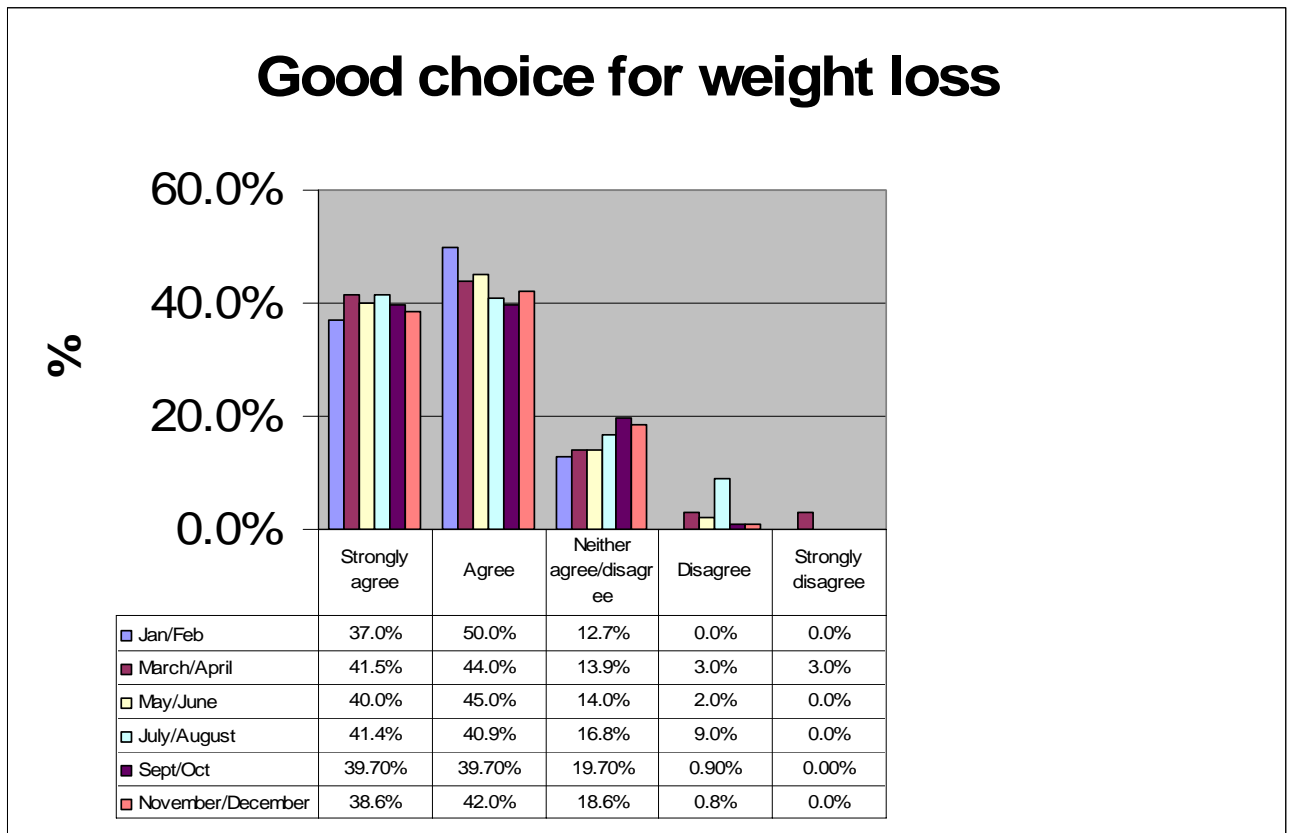
No change but most believe heart healthy



3. Weight Loss

There is a very high percentage of people who believe that mushrooms are a good choice for those on a diet to lose weight. Over 80% consistently agree or strongly agree that they are a good choice. However there appears to be a slight decline in the opinion as the neutral choice of “Neither agree nor disagree” is constantly growing. Given the interest that the nutrition community has now put on weight control the slippage may not be good even though the static opinion is high.

Consumers agree a good choice but opinion is waning



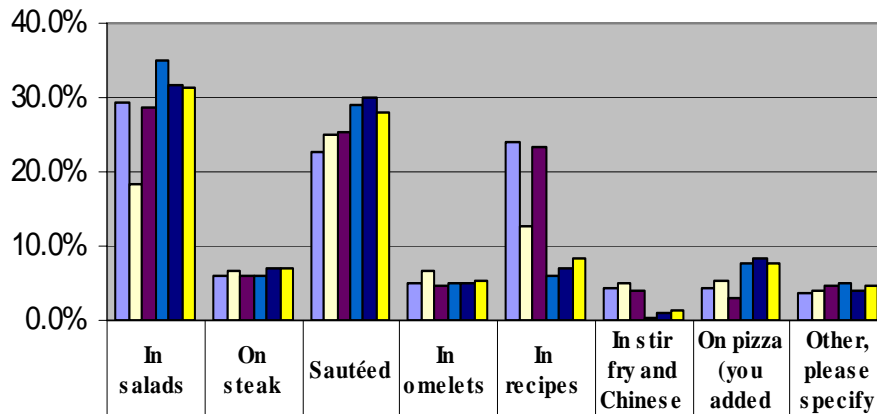
IV Miscellaneous Topics

1. Eating Fresh Mushrooms at Home

It appears that all the primary ways that consumers have reported eating mushrooms in the previous static research done over the years is confirmed and remains the same in this study. Salads and with steak (Steak and sautéed should be combined) are the highest.

Confirms our previous research

#40 - Eating Fresh Mushrooms at Home



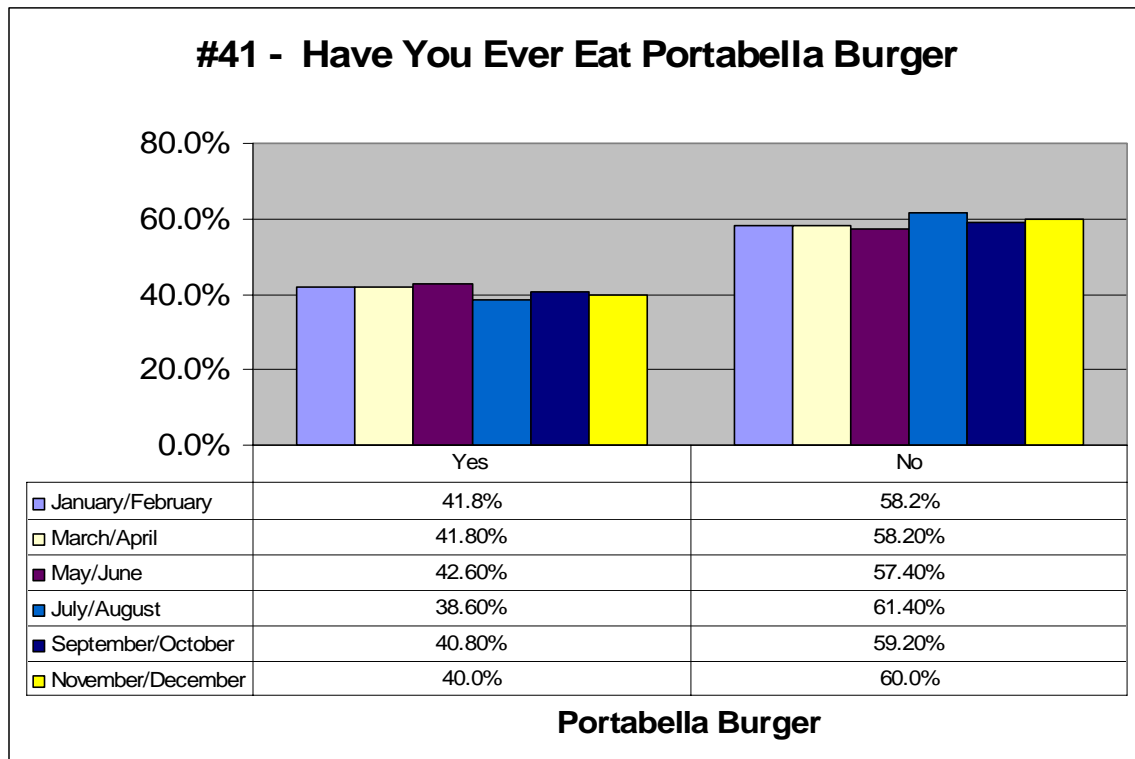
	In salads	On steak	Sautéed	In omelets	In recipes	In stir fry and Chinese	On pizza (you added)	Other, please specify
January/February	29.5%	5.9%	22.7%	5.0%	24.1%	4.5%	4.5%	3.6%
March/April	18.40%	6.60%	25.00%	6.80%	12.70%	5.00%	5.20%	3.90%
May/June	28.60%	5.90%	25.50%	4.80%	23.50%	3.90%	2.90%	4.80%
July/August	35.00%	5.90%	29.10%	5.00%	5.90%	0.50%	7.70%	5.00%
September/October	31.70%	7.00%	29.90%	5.00%	7.00%	1.10%	8.40%	3.90%
November/December	31.3%	7.0%	28.1%	5.2%	8.2%	1.4%	7.8%	4.6%

Types of Dishes

2. Ever Eaten a Portabella Burger

It seems about 40% of the population believe they have eaten a Port burger with almost no change. This represents a big opportunity.

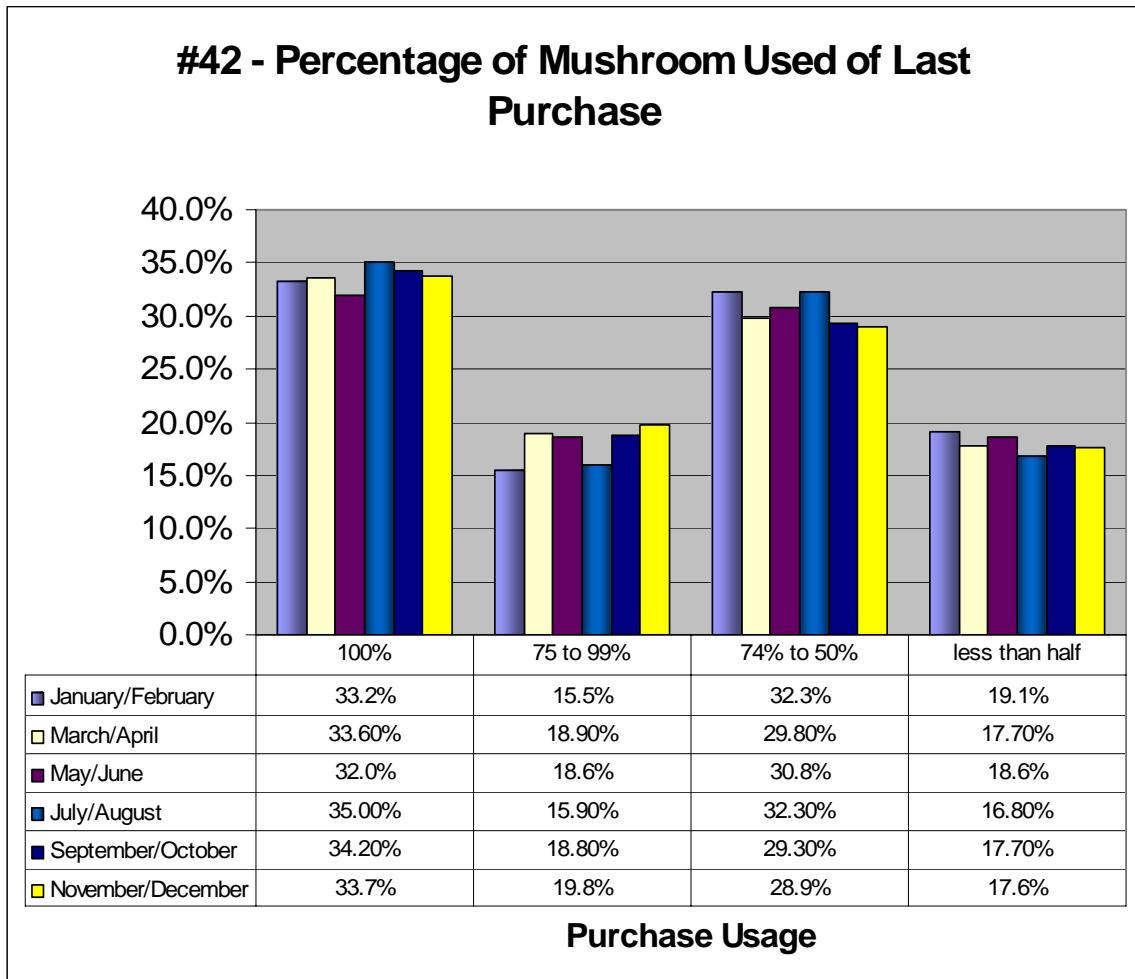
No Change but big Opportunity



3. Percentage of Mushrooms Used (two charts)

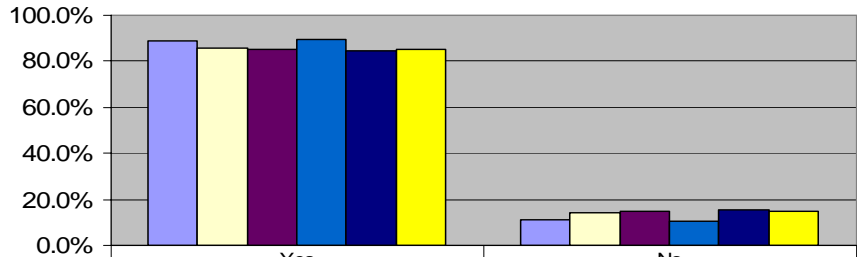
About a third of the population believes that they used all the mushrooms they bought on the last occasion, but about 20% used less than half. It is not clear how many of those go wasted however the second chart below shows that 10% to 15% say that they do not use the remainder. Previous research suggests that unused mushrooms become the basis for menu ideas.

Most mushrooms are used eventually



Most mushrooms are used eventually

#43 - Use of Remainder of Last Purchase Of Mushrooms



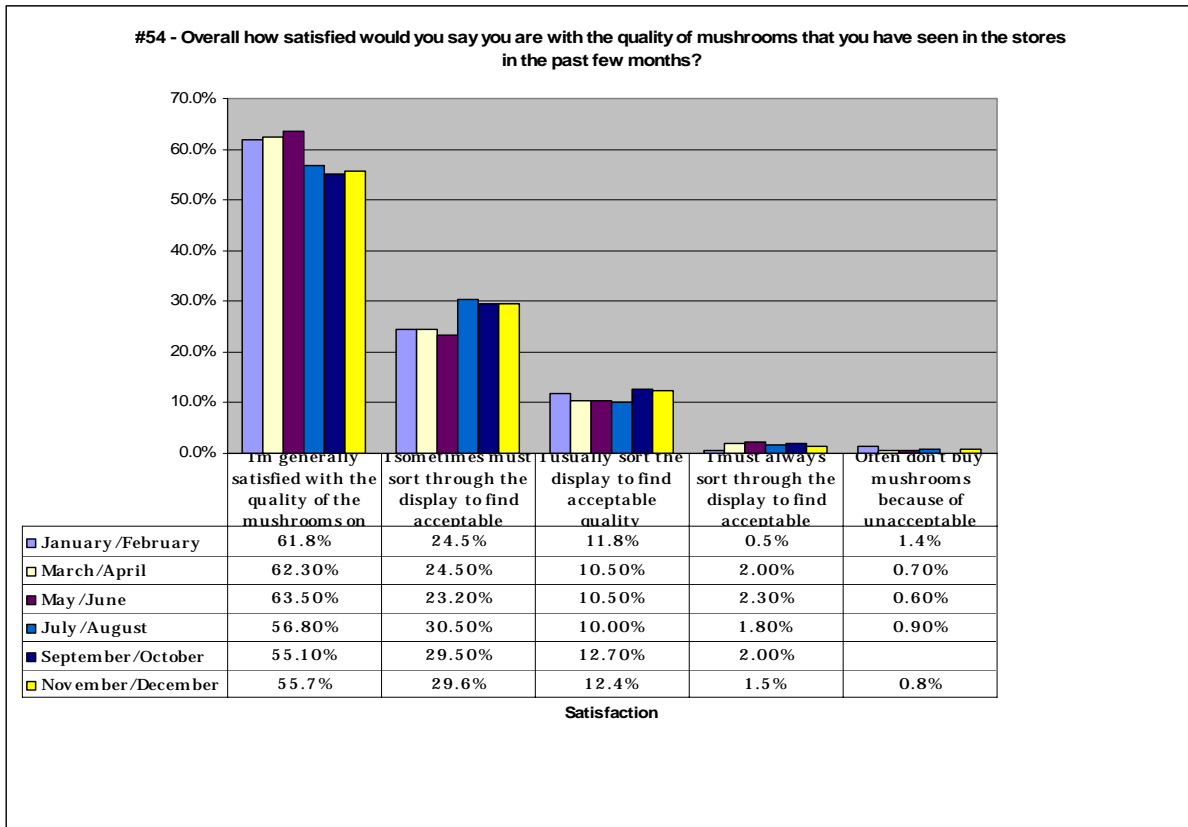
	Yes	No
■ January/February	89.1%	10.9%
□ March/April	85.60%	14.40%
■ May/June	85.3%	14.7%
■ July/August	89.50%	10.50%
■ September/October	84.50%	15.50%
■ November/December	85.3%	14.7%

Purchase Remainder Usage

4. Shelf Quality

This is a very perplexing question. Perplexing because growers/distributors feel that they can do little to affect this as it is a retailer issue yet consumers have repeatedly said the shelf quality affects their decision to buy. This response indicated that only about 50% of consumers believe that they are generally satisfied with the quality of mushrooms on display. More significantly it also appears that the number is declining. Unlike other questions this decline appears real and significant.

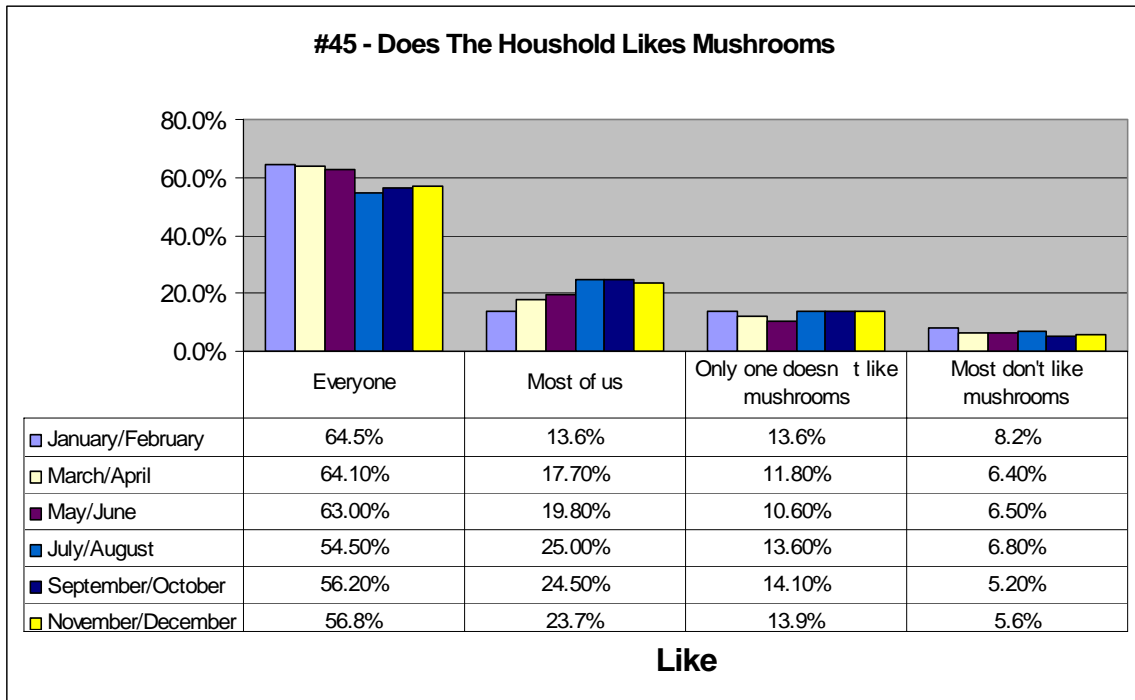
Shelf quality is questionable at best and is declining



5. Who Likes Mushrooms

This is a very interesting question because it confirms the ubiquity of the mushroom liker. While the percentage of everyone in the family who likes mushrooms has dropped from 64% to 56%, the combined percentage of “everyone” and “most of us” remained constant. Most importantly the percentage of those who responded “most don’t like” has shown a slight decline.

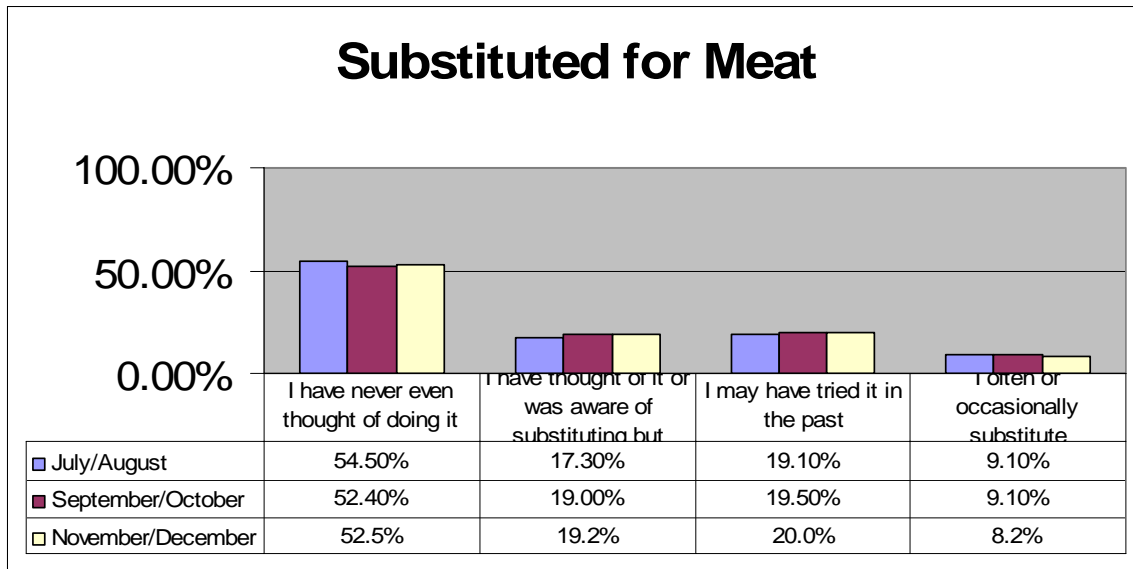
Families where EVERYONE likes mushrooms are declining



6. Substituted For Meat

This question was added mid-year and has only three observations. It was included to see if the non-meat among non-vegetarians trend is having an effect on mushroom use. Very few consumers claim to have tried to substitute mushrooms for meat and there is no trend. This is a variable for the future and is a baseline for future promotion and advertising.

Not much substitution

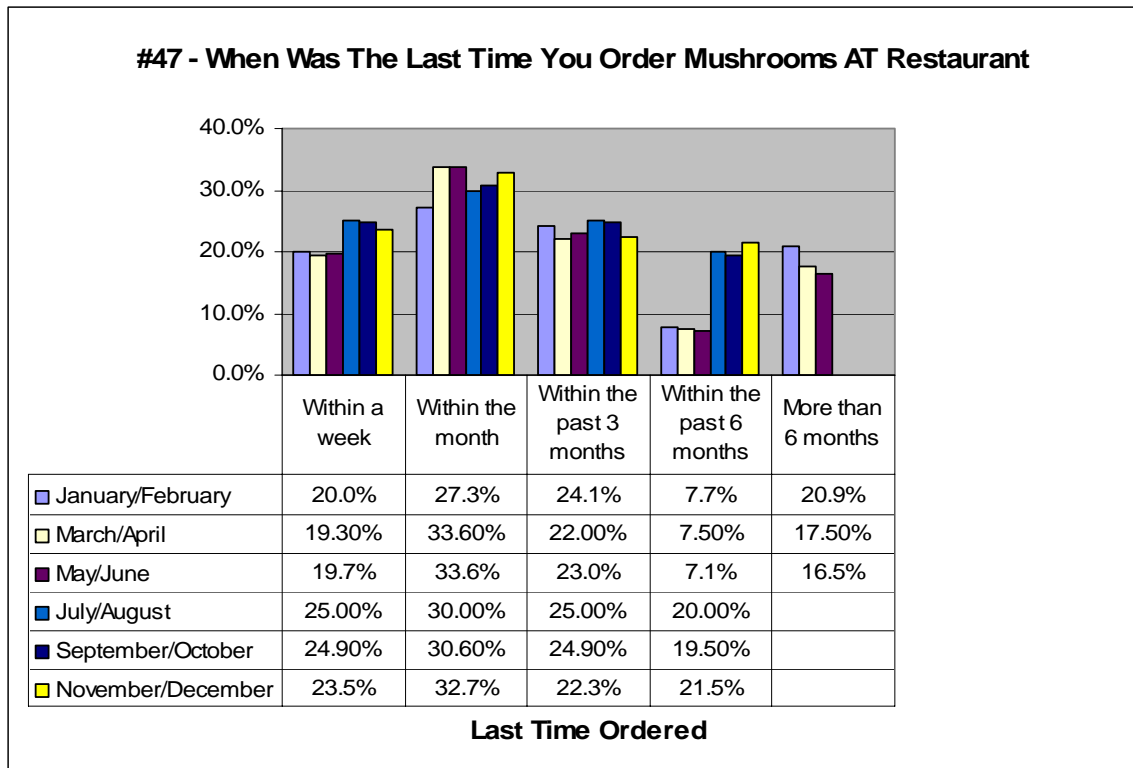


V Eating Away from Home Habits and Perceptions

1. Last Time Ordered

It appears that mushroom consumption in restaurants is perceived to be more frequent than at home consumption with 20% of the sample claiming to have ordered mushrooms in the past week. Most significantly it also appears that the percentage who order once a week is increasing with the increase coming from those who ordered within a month. Thus it seems the trend is medium users are becoming heavier users.

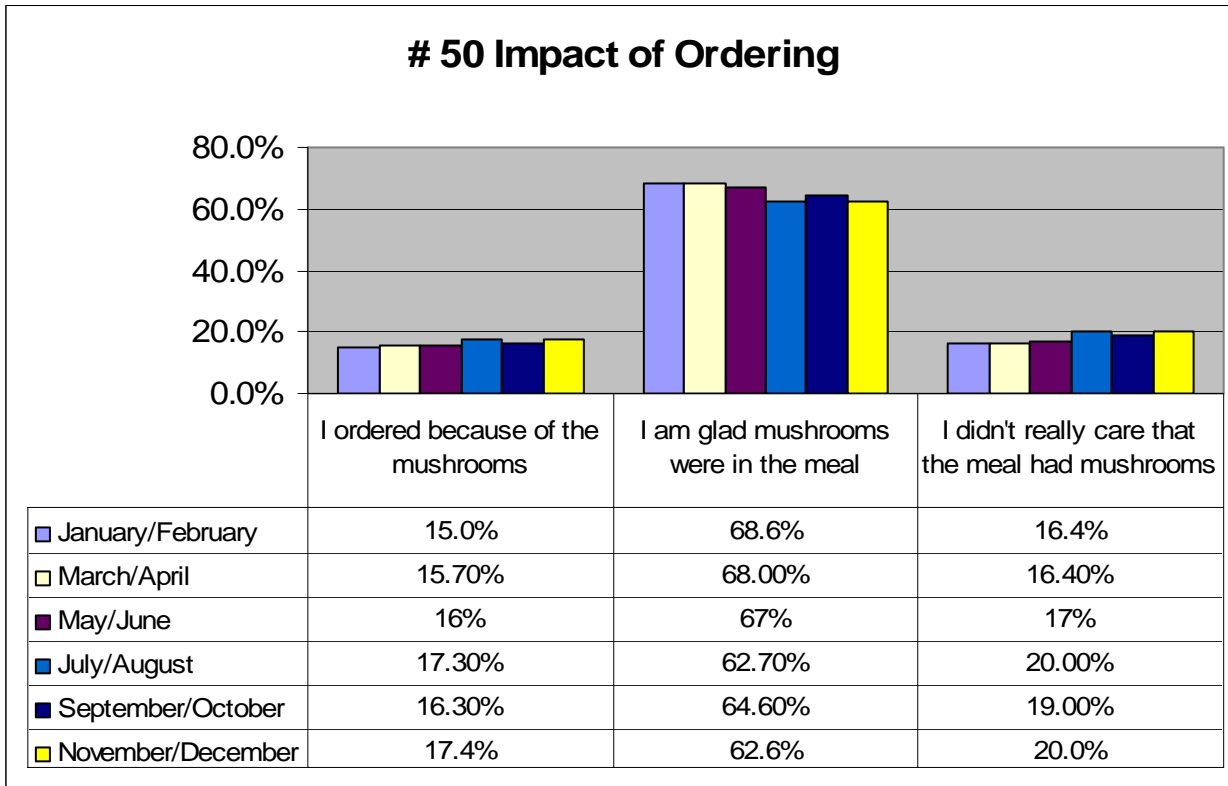
Heavy “orderers” increasing



2. Impact

It appears that most people do not order specific menu items because they include mushrooms but they are glad the mushrooms are included. There is almost no change in this variable.

Consumers are glad mushrooms are included but no change



3. Influence

This is a good example of the value of looking at trends. While any one reporting period shows that there is almost indifference in the sample (same percentage who agree and disagree) as to whether mushrooms had any influence on what they ordered, one can see that the percentage has clearly increased over the 6 reporting periods.

Growing influence

