

History of mushrooms

FACT SHEET



Information about mushrooms through the ages

- According to hieroglyphics of 4600 years ago, ancient Egyptians believed that eating mushrooms would help you live forever. They thought that they were a special delicacy and they passed a law stating that mushrooms were food for royalty and no commoner was ever to touch them.
- The Greeks believed that mushrooms provided strength for warriors in battle.
- The Romans thought of mushrooms as a gift from the gods, and served them only on special occasions such as special feasts. They thought that mushrooms would give soldiers unusual extra strength.
- The Chinese treasured mushrooms as a health food, and they have been used in China as a medicine for more than 6000 years.
- A mushroom from 90 million years ago has been found preserved in amber.
- In Europe in the mid-1400s, people thought mushrooms were grown by evil spirits. This probably had something to do with people not knowing the difference between mushrooms which are edible and those which are poisonous.
- France was the first country to grow mushrooms to sell. It has been said that Louis XIV (1638–1715) was the first mushroom grower. Around this time mushrooms were grown in special caves near Paris.
- In Italy proof has recently been found that mushrooms were used in prehistoric Europe; a bowl of field mushrooms has been found in a Bronze Age house near Nola.

