

Button mushrooms contain as much anti-oxidants as expensive ones

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The humble white button mushroom (*Agaricus bisporus*) has as much, and in some cases, more anti-oxidant properties than more expensive varieties.

Although the button mushroom is the foremost cultivated edible mushroom in the world with thousands of tonnes being eaten every year, it is often thought of as a poor relation to its more exotic and expensive cousins and to have lesser value nutritionally.

But according to new research in SCI's *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, the white button mushroom has as much anti-oxidant properties as its more expensive rivals, the maitake and the matsutake mushrooms - both of which are highly prized in Japanese cuisine for their reputed health properties including lowering blood pressure and their alleged ability to fight cancer.

Anti-oxidants are believed to help ward off illness and boost the body's immune system by acting as free radical scavengers, helping to mop up cell damage caused by free radicals.

Dr Jean-Michel Savoie and his team from the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, a Governmental research institute in France, found that anti-radical activity was equivalent to, if not more, than the better known mushrooms when they measured the respective mushrooms' free radical scavenging ability.

The French team also found that the body of the mushroom had a higher concentration of anti-oxidants than the stalk.

Dr Jean-Michel said: “It can be reasonably assumed that white button mushrooms have as much, if not more, radical scavenging power as mushrooms currently touted for their health benefit. The good thing is button mushrooms are available all year round, are cheap and may be an excellent source of nutrition as part of a healthy diet.”

Source: Society of Chemical Industry

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