

Ida's Notebook

Ida Risser



We flew west several days before our tour of Alaska so that we could visit our daughter and her family in Seattle.

We spent some time at their summer home on Camano Island north of the city. One day I picked some of her everbearing strawberries for breakfast. While we were there we had an opportunity to dig some Little Neck clams and also go fishing in their boat. We had meals at a Chinese restaurant and later at a Mexican one in Seattle.

One day we toured the Skagit hydroelectrical plants. They took 50 people 600 feet up Sourdough Mountain on an Incline Railway. The platform was pulled by a 400 horse power electric motor and a counterbalance. We also boarded a boat and cruised the Diablo Lake to see the Ross Powerhouse. All of this was followed by a big chicken dinner.

My husband attended a Mariners baseball game in the Kingdome and I hoped to see the Aquarium but it was closed when we got there. However, the next morning we drove to Pike Place Market

where many beautiful and unusual flowers were for sale along with unusual vegetables and herbs.

Then came a rather bad start to our flight to Anchorage. You see, we had to "sit" in the airport for six hours. Due to mechanical problems our flight was cancelled completely and we had to get another one. We flew 500 miles per hour at 39,000 feet and when we arrived at 10 p.m. in Anchorage it was still daylight but we retired anyway as we were tired.

Half of Alaska's population live in Anchorage. We walked throughout the town and saw the Museum of History. At noon we drove by bus to the Alyeska Ski Resort where we ate a lunch of soup and a big sourdough bun. Next we had one of our most memorable experiences -- a one and one-half mile long ride to the top of a mountain on a double ski lift. We are lucky that the weather was clear and the view was terrific. We also saw Portage Glacier. The icebergs come from a 13,000 year old glacier and the ice is very blue.

Get The Vitamin Value

Iron deficiency is a nutritional problem in the United States. Iron may be abundant in your diet but meager in your body because the mineral is difficult to absorb.

There are ways to help you get the iron you need. Heme iron — found only in meat or blood-containing foods — is more easily absorbed than nonheme iron — found in plants, iron supplements, and iron fortification sources. In addition, consuming meat with

other foods will enhance the absorption of iron from the non-meat foods.

Ascorbic acid (vitamin C) is a potent enhancer of iron absorption. Vegetarians whose meals include fruits and vegetables that are good sources of ascorbic acid can significantly increase the amount of absorbable iron in the meat.

Try to avoid drinking tea with meals. Tea can cut iron absorption by as much as 50 percent.

Oriental Mushroom

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upon what state of production they are in at the moment.

"The logs, left as waste by loggers after an area has been timbered," McMichael says, "are cut to four foot lengths mainly because that size can be handled by a man most easily." The implanted mushroom spawn grows on the cambium layer of the logs by absorbing nutrients and letting the wood rot.

Using an electric drill, holes approximately 1/2" diameter by 3/4" deep are bored into the logs every five to six inches at specific intervals around the log. Purchased spawn about the size of a thumb is pressed into each hole. Next, the holes are sealed with styrofoam, plastic plugs or more commonly, a wax resin mixture. The mushrooms start appearing in about a year.

According to McMichael, the

first year an average log may produce one to two pounds of mushrooms, and in succeeding years two to four pounds, depending on the diameter of the log. The logs will produce three to five years if maintained properly. Proper humidity and shade, McMichael observes, are important requirements for optimum growth of the shiitake. If the logs become too dry, they may split and kill the spawn.

The mushrooms are hand-harvested daily. The mushroom cap needs to be 50 to 60 percent open to be sold as a fresh product or 70 to 80 percent open to be sold as a dried product.


Growing the mushrooms is not problem-free. Pests like snails eat the mushrooms, beetles bore into the bark and open the way for other

fungus, and a little black fly eats the spawn of the mushrooms.

Kim and McMichael presently market their product in large metropolitan areas such as New York City and Philadelphia where there are sizeable Oriental populations. But both men are confident that the American market will continue to grow.

Their biggest competitor, they say, is artificial logs where the shiitake spawn is grown in an artificially-controlled environment. Right now, McMichael points out, Americans don't differentiate between naturally grown mushrooms such as they produce and artificially grown ones, but as they become more sophisticated consumers, he is confident that they will taste the difference.

By next summer when his operation is in full swing, Kim says, he hopes to produce about 2,000 pounds of mushrooms per week.



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