

## PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release  
July 30, 2003**

**Contact: Lynn Monroe  
360-568-3403**

### **FUNGUSAMONGUS: A MUSHROOM EXPERIENCE**

**Snohomish, WA** – Many couples dream of working together, but few do it surrounded by mushrooms. Michael and Lynn Monroe offer 12 varieties of what most would consider “exotic” mushrooms. Consumers are becoming savvier about the health and culinary rewards of mushrooms like shiitake, maitake, and reishi mushrooms. The Monroe’s stand on the leading edge of this wave. This fall, they plan to commemorate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year by launching their new line of instant soups in hopes of reaping an increased share of the \$912 million, 851 million pounds (2001-2002), of the US mushroom industry.

Unlike the perception of dark, dank, and mysterious farms, the Monroe’s greenhouses are clean, well-lit, and organized. They have fine tuned their 4200 square foot operation by using a proprietary growing medium formula and becoming experts in the science of edible fungi. This comes after the hard work of repeated growing and harvesting, seven days a week. After selling the perishable side of their business to a distributor, they now concentrate on the pursuit of nationwide distribution of their dried mushrooms and finished products like seasonings and soups.

“We didn’t have much of a life. The mushrooms were in control of everything: the greenhouse climate, the harvest, and even the commute out our back door. We had taken only two, three-day breaks in 10 years”, explains Lynn, a computer geek in her former life. “Fresh mushrooms have to be harvested everyday, dried mushrooms can be stored for up to two years. We’ve taken back control of “the fungi” and gained a nationwide market to boot!”

What started as a “self taught” experiment in the garage has expanded to a delicately timed, science-based operation. Alder and maple sawdust are mixed with rye, wheat, Michael’s natural secret ingredient, made into blocks, and packed into polypropylene bags. Contrary to popular belief, no soil is used. Pressure cooking in a monster autoclave bakes out any contaminants. The blocks are then inoculated with mycelium spawn of the various varieties. The blocks are stacked high and wide. The mycelium grows and knits into the sawdust resulting in 6 pound blocks that, when fruited (mushroomed), resembles modern art sculptures. The growing blocks are used for three cycles before they are recycled as fertilizer to a nearby farm.

The Monroes hold the exceptional, national distinction of being able to grow various varieties in the same greenhouse. Spores released by one strain can land on the blocks of a different strain, sending a chemical message to the contaminated block that it has already “fruited”. Then it simply won’t grow. Their unique mushroom science allowed them to maximize their greenhouse space and realize success on a larger scale than most all other mushroom farmers.

**FungusAmongUs** products include twelve varieties of unique mushrooms; three seasonings; home mushroom growing kits; and a line of three new instant soups. They are distributed nationwide at major natural and gourmet stores and are available locally at Whole Foods, Fred Meyers, QFC, PCC, Town and Country Markets, Food Pavilion, and Madison Markets.

###

### **POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. What inspired you to grow mushrooms commercially?
2. Why do mushrooms get the “dark, dank” perception?
3. Why have you chosen to focus on dried mushrooms as opposed to fresh?
4. When should one use fresh versus dried? What are the attributes of dried?
5. How do you develop your product recipes?
6. The organic industry is growing by 20% each year, why did you decide to “grow organic”?
7. How did you come up with the “**FungusAmongUs**” name?