

# Shiitake for the holidays

One of the joys of the holiday season is expressing your love and gratitude to friends and family. One of the best ways to do that is to give gifts.

I really enjoy a handmade gift. I'm also a fan of making handmade gifts. The first year we got our pug Otis, I teamed up with a vineyard in Benton County to make a special release pinot noir called "Adventure Pug Pinot." That was my gift to my partner Holly for Christmas.

My brother and I are in a perpetual competition to see who can make the best handmade gift for one another during the holiday season. We trade handmade silly paintings, macaroni art and funny cards back and forth every year.

I'm a well-known (to my friends and family) amateur mycologist. I took a mycology course as a graduate student and became infatuated with the



**Logan Bennett**  
*Extension Services*

mystical world of mushrooms.

There are suspected to be over two million species of fungi on this planet, only approximately 150 thousand of which we have classified.

The kingdom of fungi is large and diverse, ranging from pulsing yellow species called slime molds to bright pink, purple and blue mushrooms. Some species grow in the ocean, in the Arctic and even in underwater volcanoes. Fungi can be found in nearly any environment.

Some mushrooms can perform a process called bioremediation, which means that they can consume pollutants like plastic, oil and even radiation. They perform critical

ecosystem services by eating dead and fallen matter like wood and some fungi can even decompose animals.

This big world of mushrooms has kept me in the woods every October looking for fascinating fungi to identify. It's fun to go out and see what you can find in the outdoors.

Here in Oregon, we have several choice edible mushrooms in our woods. One of the most prized is the Chanterelle, but we also have lion's mane, morels, cauliflower fungi and matsutake mushrooms that grow here in the state.

If you are interested in mushrooming but want to get started in a more controlled environment, you can grow your own mushrooms. Many companies make pre-made grow kits that you can purchase. These kits are typically made with sawdust and inoculated, and you need to give them water to allow them to grow.

They will produce

mushrooms that you can use in your dishes to change up textures, make new recipes and elevate flavors.

Alternatively, you can make your own mushrooming kit using spawn and a medium of your choice. I like this option a lot because it allows you to have more ownership of the product, and you can also customize the medium and spawn choice you use to make the grow kit.

Although it's not native, Shiitake Mushrooms can grow very well from spawn here in Oregon. Like any crop we produce, Shiitake Mushrooms have many different varieties (called strains). Some are better suited for Oregon's climate and some produce more or produce faster.

This is a great mushroom to grow at home because inoculated logs can last for years if cared for properly.

They also make great gifts. They are a great way to show that the gifter has put time,

effort and thought into something they are gifting to a loved one. Not only that, but they are also fun to make.

I will be hosting a Shiitake log-making workshop this holiday season on Dec. 9. The workshop will be at the OSU Extension office from 10 a.m.-noon.

During this workshop, we will cover information on how to select wood, what tools are needed, how to select spawn and a step-by-step tutorial on how to inoculate logs to produce Shiitake Mushrooms. Participants of the workshop will have two different strains of Shiitake to choose from and will take home their own log to keep and grow or give as a gift.

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*Logan Bennett is the Small Farms Program Outreach Coordinator at the Oregon State University Extension. He can be contacted at [logan.bennett@oregonstate.edu](mailto:bennett@oregonstate.edu) and 541-236-3015.*