

Growing MushroomBox™ Judas Ear Mushrooms. (aka Jews Ear)

www.mushroombox.co.uk - *Purchase Mushroom Spawn online,
plus a source of growing instructions, downloads and mushroom-growing links*

The MushroomBox strain of Judas Ear is a fast-growing strain which will rapidly colonise the substrate. Because of this, it is not necessary to sterilise the substrate – pasteurisation is adequate.

Stages of Judas Ear Growth

- 1) Pasteurisation of the Substrate
- 2) Spawning the Substrate
- 3) Spawn 'run' (where the mushroom mycelium grows through the compost)
- 4) Latency/Ripening period
- 5) Fruiting

Pasteurisation

The substrate can be any of a variety of materials. Chopped straw or hardwood sawdust are two popular choices. The addition of a small amount (2%) of gypsum (ie plaster) and calcium carbonate (gardeners' lime) to the substrate provides nutrients, but it's not absolutely necessary.

Weigh out a suitable amount of substrate. Use the spawn at 2% - so 60g of spawn can be used with up to 700g of dry substrate (around 3kg once wet). For beginners, better results are usually obtained when using higher spawn rates (3-5%), as the higher concentration of mushroom spawn out-competes competitor organisms more easily. Place the dry, mixed substrate into a MushroomBox MycoBag (This is a bag which when sealed, allows CO₂ and Oxygen to be exchanged through micro-filters, whilst keeping bugs and contaminants out), and pour on boiling water, until the substrate is completely submerged in the hot water. Make sure the bag is placed inside a box to prevent it tipping over during this process, and take precautions when working with hot water to avoid scalding. Leave for 8-12hours, then drain away any excess water. Make sure all the excess water is drained away. Small quantities of excess water will water-log lower regions and provide an ideal environment for competitive contaminants such as moulds to take hold.

Cooling and Spawning.

After the excess water has been drained away, leave the substrate (fully covered to isolate against infection from airbourne contaminants) for 5-8hours until it is fully cooled to room temperature. Ensure you do not rush this stage – premature inoculation, whilst the substrate is still warm (over 35C) is the easiest way to kill your mushroom spawn, which will obviously produce an unsuccessful outcome. Remember that even if the outside of the compost feels cool, the inside may well be 40-50C. If the spawn is added to the compost when the temperature is above 30C, it will be killed, so make absolutely sure (leave overnight if necessary) that it is cooled to ambient temperature.

Once the substrate temperature has fallen below 30C, crumble the spawn into small pieces (ideally, do this before opening the pack by squeezing the pack between your fingers to separate the grains),

then mix the spawn throughout the spawn, with freshly washed hands. Higher spawn rates (3%) guarantee faster growth and less opportunity for infection by competing microorganisms.

Next, seal the top of the mycobag – ideally with a heat-sealer, but if you do not have access to one, use wide cellotape or parcel tape to completely seal the opening. Place the bag in a warm place – eg airing cupboard.

After a few days, you will see cottony growths coming from the grains of spawn, and after several more, noticeable white mycelium threads will be running through the substrate. After 10-20days, the substrate should be fully colonised and will appear almost white.

Once this stage is reached, remove bag to an airy, cool, daylight location – eg windowsill, but not in direct sun. Leave the bag in this location for 20days to ripen.

Place the bag in a moist environment (if necessary, use a box lined with a polythene bag and sprayed twice daily with water to keep moist), and make about 30 slits in the bag approximately 25mm long.

In 10-25days, you should see judas ear mushrooms growing from these slits.

To harvest mushrooms, simply twist or snap them off.

Judas Ear mushrooms are remarkable in that they can be dried, and easily reconstituted by soaking in water – and will retain to their original form, providing an excellent opportunity for long term storage if not needed immediately.

Judas Ear mushrooms are not popular in Western Cooking as they are fairly chewy. However, they are a prized addition to Eastern Dishes, and benefit from long cooking times which causes them to soften considerably. Judas Ear Mushrooms have very little flavour, but soak up and intensify flavours from their surroundings – which is why they are so popular in Eastern dishes.

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