

Megan Deaton  
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**Tell me your first inclination that you might be interested in the fungi kingdom.**

In mushrooms?

**Yeah.**

My father-in-law told me to find a niche, because we had just moved out to the country and it was hard to find a job. I couldn't really find anything, but I read an article on cultivating mushrooms. I was like, this is different, this is weird. Ok. I like this. So I got my first book and started reading it and then quickly was like, ok I'm doing this. I wrote a whole 30-40 page business plan while reading that book going through standard operating procedures, all the equipment I was gonna need, came up with a budget, and then just got started with it.

**Have you been attracted to weird things in your life before? Or is this a first?**

That's a good question. I mean, everyone that knows me thinks I'm a little weird, but I don't know anything I'm attracted to that's weird. So it fits. And I can't grow anything green. My mom, my grandmother, everybody has this green thumb and can grow, just has these most huge gardens and I can kill a houseplant so easily. So the fact that I can grow something just like you know satisfies me.

**It sounds like you grow well too. Whatever you're doing, your mushrooms produce a lot. You seem pretty organized. Do you think that's because of the organization?**

I think so. You know I did a lot of substrate recipes in the beginning and made spreadsheets for everything, tracked every single block, every single harvest to see what worked and what didn't. Back then there wasn't a lot of information saying "use this formula." Master's Mix was just coming around or I had just barely heard of it. But I didn't really like the idea of working with soy, and I knew there were tons of other options out there. So I just made up a bunch of recipes and watched to see what worked.

**What's your favorite mushroom to grow?**

That's hard because I like growing them all for different reasons. The King Trumpets are probably one of the most challenging for me, so it's really satisfying when you get a big nice gorgeous one that you can make a big steak out of and whatnot. And they're picky and they are finicky and sometimes they don't grow at all even if you have the same exact recipe and the same exact environment. Sometimes they're like, "Eh, I don't feel like it." So it's satisfying when you finally make it work.

**You said that you had gotten on several Facebook groups as you were starting out to kind of figure out best practices, equipment and all that. What are those groups?**

*Mushroom Growing* and *Mushroom Growing for Beginners and Experts*. That second one is run by Lenny Rockwell who runs the Mycelium Emporium. So it's pretty cool because I quickly was ordering liquid cultures from him and he made that group for support. I really loved that he would answer questions himself as well, you know, to support his customers. That one's probably more my favorite even though it's a little bit of a smaller group. They're both huge now.

**So now you're working with Mushroom Mountain and doing your own cultivating. I'm curious...**

How do I balance all that?

**Well, yeah.**

It's been difficult and I am cultivating much smaller amounts when I'm home. My husband used to help me with the business. We started it together, but he has since had to grab another job and do other things and whatnot. So he can help when he can, but to do everything when I'm gone is just way too much. So I have tons of customers who are super loyal to me from the beginning so they don't care if they have to wait a couple of months and then get more. So I mainly cultivate just for them, I'm not doing events you know since I'm down here so much. But I pivoted Megan's Mushrooms a little bit and started the Mushporium which is on my website. It's still in the very beginning stages but I want it to be a shopping mall of mushrooms. I want you to be able to walk in and find every little eclectic, fun trinket but also spawn and growing supplies and anything mushrooms - for growers, for people looking for the medicinal extracts, for anything - I just want it to be a collection of whatever.

**Of cool, funky mushroom things. The Quonset Hut of Mushrooms.**

Yes, yes! That's exactly it! That's keeping things going and keeping everybody interested and then I grow when I can. I'm also trying to figure out how to cultivate some other more difficult varieties which is nice because some of those take a long time to see results. So it's something that I can create some spawn and let that incubate while I'm gone. Have my husband check it and then I just put it into storage if it's done and then I go back and play with it some more.

**What skills that you learned through Megan's Mushrooms are most transferable to Mushroom Mountain?**

Cultivation is a big one as Olga and I start doing consults for other companies that want to grow mushrooms. I've done consults on a smaller level in Colorado, but I started from the ground up troubleshooting. I didn't have any money to pay someone to come and tell me what was going wrong and how to fix it. So I learned firsthand how to fix problems. So cultivation is a big one but also wholesale really fits me because I started selling Olga's products (extracts) five years ago

and have added a bunch of products since then. But I know how to support a smaller business, larger business from both ends now because I went through all the questions. I can anticipate all the questions they're gonna ask, I can make recommendations on how to sell and how to educate customers on what it actually is.

**What have you learned from mushrooms? How have mushrooms changed the way you see the world? Or have they changed the way that you see the world?**

Wow. That's a really good question. And I want to think of some crazy, really amazing answer for that. You know, I think one of the biggest things is probably slowing down in life. When you're foraging, you have to slow down. If you're just running around, you're gonna smash mushrooms. Crush them and not see them all. You can't grow a mushroom from the beginning all the way to the end in a week, two weeks. If you're really looking at doing the whole process yourself, it's at least an 8-week process if not longer depending on the species. So it takes a long time to wait for results and wait to see what happens. It's not a hurried thing at all. Waiting for success was something that I wanted to be profitable but I knew it would take a couple of years to get there and whatnot. So I just slowly worked my way up.

**And all this cool stuff has grown out of it.**

Yeah. And I'm still learning from that because I'm in a hurry and we have all these projects going on, new projects coming up and I really want to jump in and start going with them. But it's the same sort of thing with mycoremediation. It's not let's just do this and it's gonna work, it's testing and working with different mushrooms and really observing what works and being patient and saying ok that didn't work let's try something different. I wish I could just start cleaning up everything.

**For me, one of the things about mushrooms. Since I like visual things and I like musical things, I feel like mushrooms like to be seen but they show themselves to me in a specific way. It's like visually, musically. I really believe that certain mushrooms teach me songs. It's so weird, or show me songs that they like. I know it sounds a little bit crazy but I do. I've kind of created this philosophy that the mushrooms really want to be communicated with. They want to communicate with us. They want us to see them and understand them and know them. It seems like with you, one of the ways that's played out is through the data almost.**

The data and you know maybe that's another thing they've taught me is that it's not all about just numbers and data and all this organization because I've learned just as much from the spreadsheets as I have from visually watching the mushrooms. Looking in on them every day to see what's changed and what they're doing. And they'll tell you. Like if your humidity system goes out, obviously they're gonna dry out. But little things. I went to school for photography so I'm a photographer by nature. And so for me as much as possible visually pleasing mushrooms are a hit. I just want as many pictures as I can, you know. So I notice all the little tiny details.

Even if the stem is just a little more elongated than normal, maybe I've got something weird going on.

**Yeah you pay attention to those details like that. Mushrooms are so cool.**

And when you grow a new species you're like, how the hell is this supposed to look. There's not enough pictures out there, especially of cultivated mushrooms, to really know what the end result is supposed to be. It's nice to figure that out and play with it and say like, maybe I can change that.

**Do something a little bit different, yeah. That's so cool. Well, are there any other thoughts that you have? That's a lot of good, I'll get a good quote out of there somewhere.**

Yeah let me know if you need anything else. I can't really think of anything else. When I was reading that first book and doing my business plan, I really thought, "This is my future." This isn't just another job that I'm gonna try out for a while and then move on to the next thing. There was something in me that was like, "This is your future." And now here I am at Mushroom Mountain helping with all these fun projects and just moving forward with everything. And now I feel like, "Oh, I'm so glad I listened to that." I'm so glad I kept going with it. A couple of years ago if you told me I'd be here, half the year and doing all these fun things, I would never have believed you. I'd be like, "No way!"

**I know what you mean. I kinda feel myself surprised to be here as well.**

You know, Olga's been my mentor from the beginning. To be able to sell MycoMatrix was a huge milestone for me and then we just kinda became friends and then she offered me a job. It's not like a snowball, it's like the opposite of a snowball effect. What would that be?

**Mycelial effect.**

Mycelial network.

**A mycelial network. Yeah that's so cool. Well I'm glad you found your way here. I'm glad I found my way here too.**