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Contacts:

Tyson Allchin | Allchin Acres | (563) 299-0312 | allchinacresllc@yahoo.com

Tamsyn Jones | Outreach & Publications Coordinator | Practical Farmers of Iowa | (515) 232-5661 | tamsyn@practicalfarmers.org

Mushroom production field day at Allchin Acres – Aug. 8, Columbus Junction

COLUMBUS JUNCTION, Iowa – Tyson Allchin has always loved mushrooms – picking morels with his grandpa was a tradition – but it wasn't until college that he got the inspiration to grow them himself.

"I was in a horticulture class at Iowa State [University] and the topic one day was the symbiotic relationship between some fungi and their plant hosts," Tyson recalls. "It made something click in my mind. I thought, 'I haven't had any mushrooms for a while. Maybe I'll go to the grocery store and get some to fry up. But when I got to the store, they were way more than I wanted to pay. "

The prohibitive cost at that time – and the realization that there is strong consumer demand for mushrooms – inspired him to start his own business. He now lives near Columbus Junction and operates Allchin Acres, where he has been raising a variety of mushroom species for nearly 10 years.

Tyson will share his experience with starting and managing a mushroom farm at a Practical Farmers of Iowa field day he is hosting on **Tuesday, Aug. 8, from 4-6 p.m., near Columbus Junction** (18352 140th St., about 6 miles southeast of town). The event – "Oyster Mushroom Production" – is free to attend and will include a snack. **Please RSVP for the refreshments** to Debra Boekholder, debra@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661, by Friday Aug. 4.

Attendees will get to see every aspect of growing mushrooms, including substrate preparation; inoculation; the fruiting room; and harvest. Tyson will also discuss mushroom marketability and highlight his indoor production of oyster mushrooms, and his outdoor production of *Stropharia rugosoannulata*, also known as winecap or king stropharia mushrooms.

Though he currently focuses mainly on growing oyster mushrooms, Tyson is happy to answer questions about cultivation of other mushroom species. At the end of the field day, several Chin refugees, whom Tyson rents land to, will lead a tour of their fields.

"Oysters are by far the easiest mushrooms to grow," Tyson says. "They're the most recognizable – and, in my opinion, the most versatile. I would put an oyster mushroom in any recipe you'd put a mushroom in."

Tyson grows mushrooms year-round and markets to restaurants and grocery stores. His fruiting room is a 42-by-9.5-foot building built inside a high tunnel. At his peak, he was producing over 100 pounds of mushrooms a week. In the past, he has grown lion's mane, shiitake and pioppino mushrooms. In addition to mushrooms, Tyson grows microgreens for a distributor in the Twin Cities.

Directions from Columbus Junction: Drive east on U.S. 92. About 3 miles after crossing the river, turn right (south) onto O Avenue. At the T-intersection, turn left (east) onto 140th Street. The farm is the first house on the north side of the road, with a high tunnel in the backyard.

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