Note that no sterile technique, sterile material, or special equipment is needed to assemble the kit and successfully produce mushrooms with this method.

1. Mix 4 cups Purina Yesterday’s news (unscented) and 4 cups dechlorinated water in a suitable container and wait 10 minutes or so until the water is completely absorbed.

2. Add a handful of pelletized guinea pig chow (or pelletized rice bran) to the container along with a cup of your favorite Pleurotus grain spawn.

3. Mix well and transfer it into a clean, well-rinsed and dry ½ gallon milk carton. Completely fill the carton, compacting the substrate. Pack substrate to the top of the carton and to 1/4 inch of the lip of the pouring spout.

4. Seal the top of the milk carton with staples and/or tape, and replace the cap on the spout. Tighten the cap and then loosen a half turn to allow some air exchange through the spout.

5. Mark the carton with the start date. Place it in a dark OR LOW LIGHT ENVIRONMENT, cool area (60 – 65º F (17 C) is optimal). If the carton is kept constantly above 70 - 75º F it may favor growth of contaminant microorganisms.

6. Depending on the Pleurotus strain/species used, fruiting can be expected to start 2 1/2 to 4 weeks from the date marked. After 2 to 2 1/2 weeks, remove the cap from the spout. MOVE KIT TO LIGHTED ENVIRONMENT!

7. Inspect the spout daily for primordia. When they appear and are actively growing, mist them several times a day with dechlorinated water from a spray bottle.

8. The developing mushrooms should almost double in size every day. You can pick the whole clusters when mature and cook them in your favorite mushroom dish!

9. Once the initial flush is harvested, add 3 - 4 tablespoons of water to the kit, replace the cap on the pouring spout and store the kit for about 2 weeks. Repeat steps 5, 6, and 7. There should be a second round of fruiting, but production will be reduced. If you are lucky, there will even be a third fruiting, but with even fewer mushrooms. The spent kit makes a good soil amendment; put it on your compost pile or mix it into your garden.

10. Troubleshooting: If your mushrooms develop with long stems and small caps, the light in your room is too dim and needs to be brighter. Temperature, light, carbon dioxide, and other conditions affect their growth. If you don’t see primordia in 4 to 5 weeks after you made the kit, refrigerate it (without freezing) for a day or two, take it out again, add a bit of water through the pouring spout, and then watch it closely. Good luck and happy growing.

Milton Tam 5/27/12