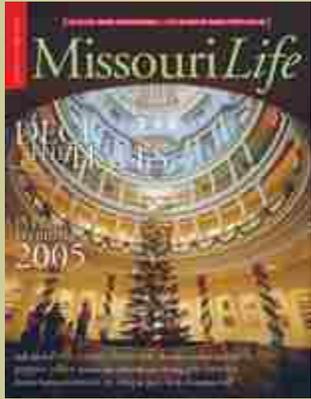


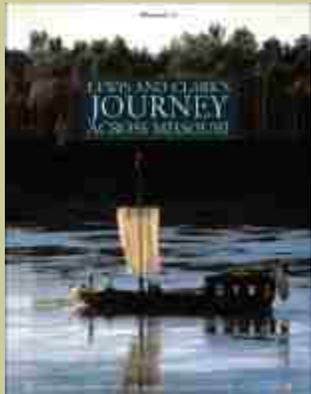
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Feature Article

Wild Mushroom Hunting



The Black Trumpet, *Craterellus fallax*, blends into the shadows, making it difficult to find. It grows alone or in groups under hardwoods, and its thin flesh has a strong, fruity fragrance.

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WILD MUSHROOM HUNTING

THE LURE AND LORE

By Kathleen Kerr

MUSHROOMS HAVE ALWAYS been a portal between this world and another, a realm of mystery and intrigue. Fairies came to dance in their rings. Sorcerers used them in their potions. Some actually glow in the dark, the phenomenon known as “foxfire.”

Today, many of us drawn to wild mushroom hunting enter this shadowland sport through culinary desire rather than myth and legend, though there are many fascinated by the lore. We begin with the smoky, earthy flavor of spring morels. But then, with a curious palate, a keener eye for spotting fungi, and nature prompting us, we explore other choice mushrooms of all shapes, sizes, and colors that primarily fruit in Missouri’s mid- to late summer and fall.

With so many more species on our list, the fervor of the hunt can be even better than a spring morel

hunt. Finding a bright-orange chicken of the woods layered and painted on an oak tree is much like landing a trophy trout. With the zeal of our first choice catch, we pass into the subculture of the mushroom people.

MUSHROOM PEOPLE

It's not clear how or who passes over to the mushroom people, the land of mycophiles, us fungus-lovers. Some mushroomers, such as Leon Shernoff, editor of *Mushroom*, *The Journal of Wild Mushrooming*, believe the call lies within our past.

“My father likes to say that we were all hunter-gatherers at one point, so we all have a deep need to get out in the woods and fish, hunt mushrooms, game, or collect wild plants,” Leon says. “It really does awaken something primeval within us — even nonmushrooming friends who come along on a mushroom walk have told me that it completely changes the way that they see the woods.”

Along with the innate drive to hunt and gather, something strange seems to take over mushroom people, an enthusiasm for fungi that knows no bounds. For example, you can listen to the CD *Fungal Boogie*, a tribute to various fungi by Zoe Wood, a songwriter and guitarist, and Larry Evans, a fungal ecology consultant and mushroom peddler.

It's a mix of blues, country and western, rock 'n' roll, waltz, and polka. Here are some sample lyrics from the blues number “I Just Like Morels Too Much”:

*Oyster mushrooms mighty fine
Seafood and some nice white wine
Chanterelles're tasty too
In a wild mushroom ragout
Store-bought 'shrooms can be a crutch but
I just like morels too much.*

I understand the kind of passion that incites fungal songs. Recently, at my first Missouri Mycological Society event, the Morel Madness weekend, I experienced morel elation. Out on a foray with member Willie May, a self-taught morel expert who often takes business calls while climbing woodland slopes and scoping dead elms, I fell to my knees at the sight of two six-inch yellow morels and shouted, “I feel the madness!” I then let out some kind of primitive cry that sounded like a cross between a chimpanzee and the whistle of a choo-choo train. It happens. With Willie's help, I found thirty morels. It was a peak morel experience. Willie has had mushroom fever since 1994.

“As a turkey hunter, I loved to be in the woods in early spring, when the woods were coming alive from winter's rest, but the turkeys wouldn't answer my terrible calls,” Willie says. “I gave up turkey hunting and started hunting morels. I was consumed by it. And, with the use of my topographic map abilities, I found most of the good spots in the St. Louis area. Enough spots that in 2000, I found two thousand morels. I averaged close to one thousand per year for seven years. Now, I am slacking off in order to control my morel mania.”

Mushroom people are rather diverse in level of hunting skill, age, profession, you name it, but Missouri Mycological Society President Maxine Stone says members have pondered for years the question: What is it about us mushroom hunters?

“We have tried to figure out the commonalities of people who have the passion of mushroom hunting,” Maxine says. “Most of us are very independent people. We don't go with the flow of society. We are a great cross section of class and age. Children love to mushroom hunt, and our oldest member is ninety-four. We are unique, warm, and welcoming. But, basically, we are all gatherers — it is in our bones.”

Mycophiles also can have an uncanny sense of wit. Who else would find it funny to carefully arrange oyster mushrooms, *Pleurotus ostreatus*, so they appear to be growing out of a fellow hunter's tubesock, take a photo, and then turn it into a slide, perhaps to include in a PowerPoint presentation?

Meet our resident expert Johann Bruhn, a forest mycologist and mushroom cultivator at the University of Missouri. He won a mushroom photo contest with the picture.

NO OLD, BOLD HUNTERS

Missouri's woodlands and river bottoms have many choice mushrooms growing from the soil and on or from living and dead wood. Hunters can find choice mushrooms in lawns, open areas, and fields. The trick for most mushroom hunters is how to identify the choice from the poisonous. A saying often quoted among mycophiles: "There are old mushroom hunters and bold mushroom hunters, but there are no old, bold mushroom hunters."

If you are a beginning mushroom hunter, remember that phrase and repeat it often. Some of the most beautiful wild mushrooms are poisonous or deadly. The elegant destroying angel, *Amanita virosa*, almost calls to you in the dusky woods, so white it appears to glow. Break its trance. Look away. You would certainly suffer a dire fate if you were to sample it. Beginning mushroom hunters should learn their *Amanitas* or stay away from many of the gilled mushrooms. Gills look like radiating blades on a mushroom's cap. This is in contrast to other mushrooms, such as the polypores and boletes, which appear to be spongelike or porous on the underside of the cap. It's mostly the gilled mushrooms that can be fatal, but some boletes also are poisonous.

"We try to help newcomers learn what is poisonous and what is not," Maxine says. "We always tell people, 'Don't put a mushroom in your mouth unless you are one hundred percent sure of what it is.

Ninety-nine percent is not good enough.' There are specific people notated on our roster that will help others identify what they have found. This usually needs to be done in person because there are so many close look-alikes."

Even after a mushroom has been identified as safe, cook it well before eating. Sauté a little of the mushroom, taste it, and make sure you and guests feel fine before eating more. Some people may have an allergic reaction to certain mushrooms.

With that said, there are lots of easy-to-identify choice mushrooms in Missouri, many of which are nongilled species.

And in case you are wondering about all the Latin counterparts to the common names, most of us amateur mycologists don't know how to pronounce them, either. We use them, or at least attempt to use them, because there are many variations on the common names for mushrooms, which can make proper identification and even conversation difficult. Eventually, all mushroom hunters succumb to some use of Latin, which also proves this classical language is not dead.

WHERE TO FIND THEM



It would be helpful to understand something about forest mycology if you plan to be more than a one-hit wonder or if you truly want to understand these intriguing fungi that often seem to magically fruit overnight. This interest in mycology seems to develop along with mushroom-hunting fever and well beyond the fact that it will help you find the mushrooms you seek faster and more consistently.

If mushrooms didn't exist, our planet would be overrun by plant debris — mass vegetative chaos. Mushrooms are history's great recyclers and decomposers, and they deserve due recognition for their hard work. Unlike plants, mushrooms lack chlorophyll and must rely instead on organic material as a source of energy. Mushrooms break down dead and living vegetative matter and dead animal matter into smaller and simpler compounds and return them to the ecosystem.

Mushrooms receive the nutrition they need to grow by being saprophytes, parasites, and mycorrhizae. Saprophytic mushrooms forage the forest floor and obtain nutrients from dead or decaying wood and other vegetative matter. They recycle these nutrients back into the soil. Parasitic fungi attack living plants or animals. Many of these species enter trees through existing wounds and cause rot and decay. Mycorrhizal mushrooms have a symbiotic relationship with the roots of living trees. They absorb nutrients through an underground network of fungal filaments that attach to tree roots. With the help of mushrooms, the tree roots gain access to a wider, farther-reaching spread of food and water. Fungi can and do progress from one lifestyle to another, such as from saprophyte to parasite.

Most fungi are not seen by the human eye. They exist underground in decaying wood and vegetation. However, some fungi produce fruiting bodies, mushrooms as we know them, which reproduce through the spread of spores disbursed mostly by the wind but also by water, insects, and animals. A spore can grow into a single fungal filament, a hypha, and form mycelium, a web of hairlike or threadlike strands that accumulate into hyphae. After two sexually compatible fungal filaments join, they can form a knob, which can then produce an immature mushroom given the right temperature and moisture.

Much of the excitement and talk of mycelium among mushroom hunters arises because mycelium can spread over extensive areas and reproduce as many fruiting bodies. We know that possible reproduction is taking place, and we grow anxious while we pace nature's maternity ward, awaiting these glorious mushroom births.

Knowing how mushrooms reproduce and whether they are saprophytes, mycorrhizal, or parasites can help you locate specific mushroom species. For example, the shaggy mane is a decomposer of duff, and you would look for it in lawns, roadsides, or woodchips, whereas the chicken of the woods is a decomposer of wood, and you would look for it fruiting on living trees or dead wood, particularly oaks, in a forest.

JOIN THE FALL FORAY

If all this mushroom talk has caused any palates to salivate or at least tingle with curiosity, try a foray with the Missouri Mycological Society. The MOMS Annual Fall Foray will be held September 16 through 19 at Mingo National Wildlife Refuge in Puxico. A fall foray will allow you to hunt with experts, attend educational workshops on identification, and most importantly, experience the camaraderie and oddities of us mushroom people. You never know — you just might be one of us.

“What’s really great about going out with other people is that everyone has a different kind of knowledge and excitement to share,” Maxine says. “First, we are great people to be around. Someone will say, ‘Hey, look at this’ or, ‘I know what this is.’ We always help each other out. I go out a lot on my own, but there is nothing more fun than going out on a foray. We are like a fungi support group. Sometimes, I come back from a foray, and I feel filled with life, friendship, and the beauty of nature — and sometimes, even a full basket. It’s a magical time that I wish everyone could experience.”

For more information on mushrooming safety, cooking, preservation, and recipes, or the Fungal Boogie CD, please visit our web site at www.missourilife.com and click on the “Stories” archive for “More on Missouri Mushrooms.”

For more information about the Missouri Mycological Society or the Annual Fall Foray, visit www.missourimycologicalsociety.org or send an e-mail to MOMS President Maxine Stone at m.stone@missourimycologicalsociety.org.

MUSHROOM VISUAL IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Oyster mushrooms



Pleurotus ostreatus can be found from spring through fall and even in warm periods during the winter. These shell-shaped mushrooms have white, gray, or brown caps two to eight inches wide with white or yellow-tinged gills that descend at least partway down a short stem, if present.

Oyster mushrooms grow mostly on hardwoods and their fallen logs. They are always found in clusters. There are some unpleasant look-alikes.

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Chanterelles and black trumpets



During warm summer weather, the hunt turns toward the famed funnel-shaped chanterelles, *Cantharellus cibarius*, and black trumpets, *Craterellus fallax*. Chanterelles have bright yellow to orange caps 3/8 to six inches wide with thick, blunt-edged, forked ridges descending to the stalk. They may have an apricot fragrance or no odor at all. They are scattered or found in groups in the duff, decomposing vegetation beneath leaf litter and twigs, and under conifers and hardwoods, primarily oaks.

Hunters should beware of the poisonous look-alike, the [Jack O'Lantern](#), or *Omphalotus olearius*, which grows in clusters on stumps or buried wood. This poisonous look-alike's gills are narrow, unforked, and sharp-edged. The gills of the Jack O'Lantern actually glow in the dark. The black trumpet is gray, dark brown, or black with brownish scales. The cap is 3/8 to 3 1/4 inches wide, and the flesh is thin with a strong fruity fragrance. The black trumpet is found alone or in groups under hardwoods. It takes awhile to learn to find the black trumpet because it blends into the shadows so well.

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Bear's head tooth and bearded tooth



Mushroomers can find the mother lode late summer through fall. Hunters can find bear's head tooth, *Hericium coralloides*, and bearded tooth, *Hericium erinaceus*, which are in the tooth fungus family. Bear's head tooth is whitish and found in toothed clumps fruiting from the wounds of hardwoods, stumps, and fallen logs. The mushroom ranges from six to twelve inches wide. Bearded tooth has a beardlike appearance with long, spinelike teeth. It's typically found alone fruiting from living hardwoods. The mushroom ranges from four to ten inches wide. This mushroom gives off a bewitching look as the sunset's glow illuminates its white body and contrasting black shadow. Don't confuse the tooth fungi with the coral mushrooms. The teeth of a tooth fungus point downward, whereas the branches of a coral fungus grow upward. Also, coral fungi typically grow in the duff or only on

very rotten wood, whereas tooth fungi get their start by rotting the heartwood of living trees.

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Puffballs



Puffballs are ball- or pear-shaped mushrooms. Their flesh looks similar to white bread, marshmallows, or tofu. Life tofu, puffballs absorb flavor. Most mushroom hunters can find gem-studded puffballs, *Lycoperdon perlatum*, and pear-shaped puffballs, *Lycoperdon pyriforme*. Both are small, up to around two inches wide. Gem-studded puffballs can be found alone or in clusters in lawns, roadsides, and open woods. Pear-shaped puffballs can be found alone or in clusters in soil or on decaying logs and stumps. Cut puffballs in half from top to bottom, as they can look like immature, deadly amanitas. The flesh of a puffball should not have the outline of a cap, gills, or stalk but should have a consistently white flesh. There is one species of edible puffball that grows in the forest floor and can reach a foot in diameter and weigh several pounds.

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Boletes



The boletes, family *Boletaceae*, are a popular and flavorful group of mushrooms. There are more than two hundred species of boletes in North America. These mushrooms appear spongelike on the underside of the cap. Bolete caps are often brownish and bun-shaped with a thick flesh. Most boletes are edible. Hunters should avoid boletes that have orangish-red pores or those with flesh or pores that bruise bluish when pinched. Most boletes have whitish or yellowish to greenish-brown pores with a centered stalk. Boletes are found under hardwoods and conifers. The most sought-after bolete is the king bolete, *Boletus edulis*, which can have up to a ten-inch cap and a ten-inch stalk. Finding a king bolete is as thrilling as finding a giant morel.

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Chicken of the Woods



Sulfur shelf, *Laetiporus sulphureus*, most commonly known as Chicken of the Woods, is truly a woodland work of art. It's as though the sun rained paint that miraculously landed and layered itself on a tree. The orange-red to orange-yellow caps grow in layers that fruit from the wounds or at the base of hardwoods and conifers, stumps, and logs. A polypore, sulfur shelf has yellowish pores underneath its caps. Sulfur shelf can have more than fifty layers. The flesh tastes like lemony chicken and can be substituted for meat. Sulfur shelf can cause an allergic reaction of swollen lips or discomfort in the digestive tract in some people, but there are no poisonous look-alikes.

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Hen of the Woods



Hen of the Woods, *Grifola frondosa*, as the name implies, is a polypore that looks like the fanned feathers of a hen. Once you correctly identify it, you will not usually confuse it with another mushroom. Hen of the woods grows in large layers and clusters. The caps are grayish-brown and spoon-shaped. The pores are whitish. They appear to fruit from the base on hardwoods and conifers but are actually fruiting from wounds in the trees. The hen makes an excellent meat substitute because of its flavor and fleshy texture. Some hens can grow to weigh a hundred pounds. There are no poisonous look-alikes.

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Shaggy Manes



Hunters can find shaggy manes, *Coprinus comatus*, in the inky cap family, from late summer to early fall. The shaggy mane is a delicate mushroom that appears bell-shaped as it matures. Shaggy manes grow singly or in clusters in lines on lawns, pastures, woodchips, or hard-packed soil. Avoid collecting along roadsides or in lawns where pesticides might have been used, as many mushrooms accumulate metals or pesticides. The shaggy mane's white cap is cylindrical with brownish scales. Gradually, the gills liquefy into a black, inky substance. The cap can be two inches wide and six inches long. There are no poisonous look-alikes, though the alcohol inky *Coprinus atramentarius* is a similar mushroom that can cause illness with the consumption of alcohol. Mushrooms in the *Coprinus* family should be cooked soon after collection because they deteriorate quickly.

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Morels



Morels, *Morchellas*, have a honeycomb shape; their caps have pits and ridges. Generally, they range between two and twelve inches tall with a whitish stalk. Unlike the poisonous false morel, *Gyromitra esculenta*, a morel's cap is a direct extension of the upper stalk; split one in half to see. The false morel has a cap that hangs from the top of the stalk rather than a hollow cap. The caps of false morels are wavy, not pitted, and resemble a reddish, brainlike structure. Stay away from all *Gyromitra* species of mushrooms. There are three species of common morels: the yellow morel, *Morchella esculenta*; the black morel, *Morchella*

elata; and the half-free morel, *Morchella semilibera*, whose lower half of the cap hangs free of the stalk. In spring, morels fruit first on southern slopes, then make their way to northern slopes. Rather than looking at the ground while hunting morels, you should hunt trees. Morels fruit in woodlands and river bottoms, often around dead elm but also other trees, such as live elm, ash, and oak in Missouri.

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Adapted from Johann Bruhn; National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms

Fairy rings and magic mushrooms



Fairy rings capture the heart of mushroom folklore. At night, fairies were thought to dance in their rings, circular growth formations of mushrooms, such as *Marasmius oreades*. Others thought the rings were a place of sorcery and witchcraft. Some people were afraid to step within them for the evils they might incur. Others thought they were created from lightning bolts striking the ground.

This love affair with fungi, whether for taste, utility, mystery, or beauty, has existed since prehistoric times. Stone Age man, found in the Tyrolean Alps, carried shelf fungi with him, perhaps as fire starter. The ancient Greeks hypothesized about mushrooms as food of the gods. Shakespeare created verse about them. Some women were accused of being witches because of them. Victorian artists painted them. Sigmund Freud hunted them. Roman Emperor Claudius is thought to have died after his queen mixed a toxin with his favorite mushroom. And Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* gave the fly agaric, *Amanita muscaria*, legendary status. Remember that crazy caterpillar who kept prodding Alice, already disoriented from becoming larger and smaller, with the existential inquiry "Who are you?"

Sources: *In the Company of Mushrooms: A Biologist's Tale* by Elio Schaechter and *Toads and Toadstools* by Adrian Morgan

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COOKING & PRESERVATION

Many mushroomers have their own style of cleaning and cooking mushrooms. Some mushrooms, like morels, are more buggy and sluggy than others. You can cut off bad spots, rinse them in a colander, wipe them with a damp paper towel, brush them off or soak them in water. Do remember that mushrooms are 90 percent water, so don't drown them.

Most people sauté wild mushrooms in butter or oil. You may want to experiment with different oils to see which one accents the flavor of a specific mushroom. Each choice mushroom has its own distinctive flavor, which is partially why we are so obsessed with them, so don't drown them in butter and oil either. One quick and easy method to prepare mushrooms is to make a thin white sauce after you sauté them. This works well for meaty mushrooms such as the chicken of the woods and the hen of the woods. Other common additives are garlic, onion, lemon, fresh peppers, nuts, wine, spices, such as savory, thyme and sage, salt and pepper, and possibly soy sauce or sugar.

For a hard-learned tip, you may want to double up on the freezer bags to reduce chances of freezer burn. I froze a beautiful chicken of woods without sautéing it in single, flimsy baggies. I spent nearly six hours trying to rehydrate this mushroom, which didn't work. I then decided to make a pate, which

could be mixed in a blender with olive oil and garlic.

If you feel less experimental, there are wild mushroom cookbooks that contain recipes for soups, appetizers, meals, and desserts such as *The Mushroom Lover's Mushroom Cookbook and Primer* by Amy Farges.

Many beginning mushroom hunters often have questions about what to do with an abundance of mushrooms rather than sautéing and freezing them. Mushrooms can be dried or brined for the easiest methods of preservation. Canning can be impractical and laborious unless you have excessive amount of mushrooms.

Drying Tips

By Johann Bruhn

- Clean with dry rag, no water, slice large mushrooms
- Keep oven at lowest temperature, 15 to 24 hours, mushrooms or racks should not touch, circulation on all sides, ventilate to room humidity, until nearly crisp
- Store in sealed bags up to 1 year, or indefinitely frozen
- Best for morels, boletes, and black chanterelles; all can be dried
- Experiment: test for various extracts, some have no flavor

Brining Tips

By Johann Bruhn

- Clean mushrooms, all types okay
- Blanche in salt solution (1 1/2 oz salt per quart) 5 minutes boiling, cool
- Brine solution 7 oz salt per quart of water, boil and cool
- Layer mushroom gills down and brine each layer
- Weight down mushrooms to keep under brine and cover with cheese cloth
- Use as needed, remove any mold and keep brine above mushrooms
- Desalting place in cold water for 48 hours or running water for 2 hours

RECIPE CHOICES

Here are a couple of recipes from local and neighboring fungus-lovers for a start.

Mushroom, Barley, and Parsley Chowder

By Jeanne Mihail, Fungal Ecology and Mushroom Cultivation scientist, University of Missouri

- 1.5 lb mushrooms
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 large (about 10 oz) onions, chopped (or three leeks)
- 1/4 cup sweet Hungarian paprika (or regular paprika)
- 1 can (14.5 oz) Roma tomatoes
- 2 quarts regular strength chicken or beef broth
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup pearl barley, rinsed
- 2 tablespoons of red wine vinegar
- 1 cup minced parsley
- salt and pepper

Slice mushrooms thinly. In a 6 to 8 quart pan, over high heat, combine mushrooms and 1/4 cup olive oil. Stir often for about 15 minutes until mushroom juices evaporate. Add onion and stir often for about 10 minutes until onion is limp. Stir in paprika, tomatoes (and packing juice), broth, water, and red wine vinegar. Over high heat, bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer, cover, and cook about 30 minutes until barley is tender. Stir in 3/4 of parsley, ladle into bowls. Sprinkle with

remaining parsley just before serving. Salt and pepper to taste.

Mushroom Soup

with *Grifola frondosa* or Hens of the Woods

Courtesy of the Missouri Mycological Society

1 lb tender hens, cut into bite sized pieces (use woody parts for stock)
2 cups onions
4 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons flour
1 cup milk
1 tablespoon paprika
1 tablespoon tamari (or soy sauce)
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup fresh chopped parsley
2 cups vegetable stock or water
1/2 cup sour cream
salt & pepper

Sauté the onions in 2 T butter until soft.

Add mushrooms.

Sauté until mushrooms give off moisture, and moisture is taken back into mushrooms.

Add 1/2 C water or stock, tamari, and paprika.

Simmer for about 15 minutes.

Melt remaining butter in a soup pot.

Whisk in flour and cook over low heat for a few minutes.

Add milk and simmer, stirring frequently about 10 minutes.

Stir in mushroom mixture, remaining stock, lemon juice, sour cream, salt and pepper.

Serve garnished with parsley.

Easy and delicious!

Chanterelle-Egg Scramble

Tula Erskine, Wisconsin Mycological Society

2-3 cups chanterelles cut in 1/4-inch strips
4 tablespoons of butter, margarine, or bacon drippings
6 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup milk
1 teaspoon flour
1/2teaspoon sea salt
pepper
chives, finely cut
parsley, finely cut

Melt shortening in a large frying pan. Add chanterelles and stir for 2-3 minutes. Cover and simmer 10 minutes. Cooking time depends on age of chanterelles, which can become tough with maturity. Use your own judgment or experiment. Add 1/2 cup milk, mixed with 1 teaspoon flour, to beaten eggs and seasonings. Mix and pour over chanterelles. Stir until not runny. Serve with toast, biscuit, or bagel.

MUSHROOM SAFETY

Never eat mushrooms not identified to species. There are many generalizations applied to entire groups that are not quite true enough of all species in the group. Generalizations are more helpful as warnings against certain groups.

- Eat no *Amanita* or *Gyromitra* species.
- Avoid Little Brown Mushrooms (LBMs).
- Never eat white-capped mushrooms unless carefully identified.

- Beware of mushrooms with rings on stalks.
- Beware of mushrooms with basal cups/sacks or with swollen bases.
- Avoid boletes with reddish or orangish pores, as well as those that bruise bluish.
- Avoid deformed morel-like fungi, including those with brainlike to irregularly lobed or saddle-shaped caps.
- When collecting puffballs for food, cut them in half neatly and vertically to make sure they are not immature amanitas.
- Never eat mushrooms growing on dung unless carefully identified.
- Never eat mushrooms growing along roadsides or in polluted areas to avoid toxins by pesticides and other chemicals.

Mushroom hunters also should keep different mushrooms species separate during collection by wrapping them individually in wax paper. Flat baskets rather than mesh bags work best. If you are a collecting a new or unfamiliar mushroom, take the whole mushroom, including cap, stalk, and root for identification purposes. Use reliable field guides and cross reference. If you are at all in doubt about a mushroom's identification, do a spore print and talk to an expert. Spore prints are quite easy to do. You only need a black and white piece of construction paper. Place them side by side and situate the underside of mushroom cap so it rests on both colors of paper. You can place a bowl over the cap to keep it sturdy. A light spore print such as white will appear on the black paper, and a dark colored spore print, such as brown, will appear on the white paper. Once it clear that your mushrooms are safe to eat:

- Always cook mushrooms; never eat wild mushrooms raw.
- Eat specimens only in prime condition.
- Don't try more than one new species at a setting.
- Try only a small cooked portion the first time and never overeat.
- Don't force mushrooms on the hesitant, the unwilling, or the unaware.

Adapted from Johann Bruhn

EDIBLE GILLED MUSHROOMS

Once you have gained a high-level of knowledge as a mushroomer or are working with an expert, there are many species of edible gilled mushrooms to explore such as the striking, bright blue indigo milky, *Lactarius indigo*, which is a thrilling mushroom find, though reports on taste vary.

Other edible gilled mushroom such as the true honey mushroom, *Armillaria mellea*, and the ringless honey mushroom, *Armillaria tabescens*, are abundant in Missouri but identification can be extremely difficult, and they can cause stomach upset in many people. The parasol mushroom, *Lepiota procera*, is also common in Missouri, though it can be confused with toxic *Amanita* species.

Remember, there are no bold mushroom hunters. Symptoms of *Amanita* poisoning begin to show 8-12 hours after consumption, which is then too late for stomach pumping, and you're en route to liver and kidney failure. If you are not 100 percent of what a mushroom is, take a photo instead it's much less painful, and you'll live longer.

CAUTION - Avoid Poisonous Mushrooms

Jack-O-Lantern



Jack O'Lantern, or *Omphalotus olearius*, grows in clusters on stumps or buried wood. This poisonous

look-alike's gills are narrow, unforked, and sharp-edged. The gills of the Jack O'Lantern actually glow in the dark.

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