

# THE SLOVAK SPECTATOR

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## NEWS

New cabinet rolls up sleeves

England footballer: "Worst racist abuse" (39 reactions)

Should Schuster see a shrink? (1 reaction)

Košice police: Judge's error caused escalating crime (2 reactions)

'Three strikes' system to promote a safer Slovakia

Another drunk cop wrecks car (1 reaction)

Rusko sees no need for more TV stations (3 reactions)

EdMin says University fees are necessary

Lexa answers police summons

Kováč case decision appealed

International human traffic gang busted

Cabinet reconsiders Roma handling (2 reactions)

Figeš keeps negotiator job

*Slovak Matters*

## Hold that mushroom: A curious craze for huby

By Tom Nicholson  
*Spectator Staff*

TALK ABOUT doggedness. Every year, several dozen Slovaks wind up in hospital after poisoning themselves (otrúvili sa) with bad mushrooms (jedovaté hriby). But for every death or green-faced patient, thousands of others take to the dripping fall forests, sure of their ability to tell edible mushrooms from their lethal cousins.

Mushroom picking (zbieranie húb or hribov - the terms are interchangeable) is a national passion. If you can get out of bed early enough in October, you will hear the following conversation in train stations all over the country, with both pensioners and young people clutching baskets (košíky) and shouting across the platforms:

- "Kam ste sa vybrali?" (Where are you heading to?)

- "Na huby predsa." (To pick mushrooms, obviously.)

- "Už rastú?" (Are they growing already?)

- "Jasné, teraz keď prší je ten správny čas." (Sure, now when it's raining is just the right time.)

Mushroom picking is not my favourite activity. It involves miles of tramping through boggy, buggy forests, looking for huba that I never seem to notice but which draw gasps of excitement from my companions, especially if they find a dubák, considered the finest variety of wild mushroom. Drž hubu, I mutter under my breath. Hold your mushroom, i.e.

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## Flash news

### Jan/4/2006

· Three killed in helicopter crash

· Slovakia again discussing completion of Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros

· Slovak soldiers to leave for Balkans mission

· No booze buying hysteria

### Jan/3/2006

· Excise tax on booze up 13.2 percent from January

· Budget performance better than planned

· Poll: People would vote for new party

· Doctor charged in 38 corruption cases

· Slovakia running on gas reserves

### Jan/2/2006

· President honours 20 Slovaks

· Slovakia takes seat on UN Security Council

· Gašparovič delivers New Year's address

· Pressure in Russia's gas pipeline in Slovakia drops (8 reactions)

· Avalanche kills seven mountaineers

### Dec/29/2005

· President: Next cabinet cannot cancel reforms (2 reactions)

Prodi: Don't fall asleep and you're in (1 reaction)

Politician Rusko sells TV stake

HZDS convention abandoned

## BUSINESS

Ivan Mikloš: "People weren't buying" media pessimism

Analysts warm to 2003 budget plans

NCHZ gets green light on Solivary merger

Metro impatient to start bridge construction

Volkswagen moves Spanish op to Slovakia

Wages up almost 10 per cent

Samsung plans huge Slovak operation

New AgMin pushes competition, EU

## GOVERNMENT FOCUS

Introducing the cabinet

## THE FIRST DECADE

The lie as working method (10 reactions)

## TELECOM

EC welcomes telecom opening as first step

Telecom sector still has highest wages

New Internet programs promise few changes, say experts

## FEATURES

Hold that mushroom: A curious craze for huby (4 reactions)

## OPINION

hold your gob, i.e. shaddap.

Hubári (mushroom pickers) are a special breed, hardy in their tolerance for early risings, foolhardy in their self-confident botany. While Slovakia has many varieties of poisonous mushrooms, the real bad one is the muchotrávka zelená ('the green fly poisoner'), which is the brother of the red muchotrávka with white spots. Now even I know not to eat that. Other dangerous fungi are less obvious, however. Hubári claim to know the subtle markings on the mushroom caps (hlavi•ka if small, klobúk if relatively large), the intricate details on the stem (noži•ka) and roots (hlúb, hlúbik) that tell you whether you can eat the thing in safety. But why take the gamble, I always ask them, when even the dubák tastes like boiled snails?

But if you can't get out of going mushroom picking, you might as well know some of the main names. Some names are derived from the trees near which they grow, such as the dubák, which is found near the dub (oak) tree, the brezák which sprouts under the breza (birch), the smrekovec (smrek-spruce).

Then you have ones that take their names from the Slovak calendar (almost each Slovak Christian name is assigned a certain day on the calendar) reflecting the best time of the year for picking them. Thus you have michalky (after the name Michal, celebrated September 29), and slávky (Slavomíra, celebrated October 10).

Finally, you get names reflecting the properties each mushroom has - the masliak, which is slimy and yellowish-brown (Why, why would you eat such a thing? Why?), the suchohrúb, or 'dry mushroom', the modrák, or 'blue mushroom', the prašivka, 'the powder mushroom', which explodes in a grey puff of dust if you step on it (Why, O Slovaks?), and finally the kuriatka, or 'little chicken mushroom' which is deep yellow and appears to be covered in feathers.

Don't say you haven't been warned.

*Slovak Matters is a bi-weekly column devoted to helping expats and foreigners understand the beautiful but difficult Slovak language. The next Slovak Matters will appear on stands November 4, Vol. 8, No. 42.*

[10/21/2002]

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· One third of brides pregnant when exchanging vows

· Health insurers to issue prescription drug booklets in January

· Fico most, Dzurinda least trusted, poll shows

**Dec/28/2005**

· Experts: Vatican Treaty a threat to freedom

· Foreigners buying Slovak real estate

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## Reader survey

### Which is your favourite restaurant in Bratislava?

- Alize  
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  - Camouflage  
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  - Caribic's  
[vote - click here](#)
  - Le Monde  
[vote - click here](#)
  - Ludwig  
[vote - click here](#)
  - Mezzo Mezzo  
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  - Savojka  
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  - Tempus Fugit  
[vote - click here](#)
  - UFO  
[vote - click here](#)
  - Other (please send your selection to [spectator@spectator.sk](mailto:spectator@spectator.sk))  
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## Spex

Slovakia's Monthly English Magazine

## Spectacular Slovakia

Slovakia's best travel guide in English, published yearly.

## Book of lists

The most useful guide to Slovakia's leading companies

## Green Pages

Internet version of Book of Lists

Quote of the Week

'Hu-hu-hu': We all descended from the same tree  
(33 reactions)

Letter to the Editor:  
Football violence, national shame  
(8 reactions)

Reader feedback: In praise of "fearless honesty"  
(1 reaction)

Reader feedback:  
Flattery, not flak

**CULTURE**

Chaplin on Chaplin

Larry King in Košice next year?

Russian photos exhibited for the first time

Review: Coen brothers' noir thriller may disappoint fans

First 3-D cinema to open

Bratislava in movement

One World raises awareness

Top Pick: Traditions go modern

Countrywide Events

***Real Estate Guide***

A guide for foreign individuals and firms wanting to buy or lease real estate in Slovakia

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The most useful guide to finding workers and finding work!

***Investment Advisory Guide***

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