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Wilderness Survival

Exploring the Horizons of Mycophagy on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington Part 3

Text and Photos by [Storm](#)

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Dog Vomit Slime Mold

Regarding cooking procedures: I use a skillet (cast iron preferably) on medium heat that is washed between each frying of different species. I use no oil, which can impart taste to the mushroom. For watery specimens, I fry until all excess water has dissipated. Nary a day goes by (literally) when I do not consume these mushrooms as meat or tea, for I view this process as a life-long exploration. Polypores or otherwise tough-fleshed mushrooms are made into teas and ingested in this fashion (having filtered out the mushroom solids). Exceptions include *Panus conchatus*, *Lenzites betula* and *Poria corticola*, which I pound with a wooden billet to tenderize the flesh to make it more palatable.



Sessile Earth Star

"To ask a person to gather his own mushrooms for the table, without previous instruction that will enable him to avoid the deadly kinds, is equivalent to, if not worse than, inviting him to put his unprotected hand into a den of rattlesnakes."

Tips On Researching About Edible Mushrooms

Admittedly, my search for information on the edibility of mushrooms was by no means exhaustive. But this endeavor has yielded some insights for enhancing one's mycophagic research and experimentation:

1. Get to know the half-dozen mushrooms in North America that are known to be deadly. Especially:
 - Death Cap (*Amanita phalloides*)
 - Destroying Angel (*Amanita verna*, *A. ocreata* and *A. virosa*): together with Death Cap, they comprise 95% of mushroom poisoning fatalities in the U.S.
 - Deadly Galerina (*Galerina autumnalis*)
 - Gyromitra infula (contains the toxin MMH, which is a key ingredient in rocket fuel!)
 - Cortinarius gentilis
 - Ringed Cone Head (*Conocybe filaris*)
2. Consider your sources. Be critical of everything you read. Everyone has an opinion.
3. Try your best to exhaust available research tools. You may be surprised by what you discover.
4. Draw your mushrooms while keying them out. It requires you to pay close attention to their characteristics, which help aid in their correct identification.
5. Beware of individualized reactions to some mushrooms. Even though most people can ingest these with impunity, there are reports of folks suffering intestinal distress as a result of consuming such species as Blewits (*Clitocybe nuda*), Sulphur Shelf (*Polyporus sulphureus*), Morels (*Morchella* spp.) and Early Morel (*Verpa bohemica*). People falling ill from consuming Caesar's Amanita (*Amanita caesarea*) and Chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*) have also been reported.
6. Although recent research has shown that picking certain mushrooms can stimulate their fertility, conservation can allow for others to also enjoy your favorite fungi!



Gemmed Puffball

A Plea For Unity

Finally, I'd like to address the minor but pervasive undercurrent within various mycological communities from which the experimental mycophagist is looked upon with disdain. Derisive accusations of "exaggeration," "recklessness," "needless heroism," and having "the foolhearty pretence of tempting fate" are slung harshly and quite erroneously. While I can appreciate the need for caution and the responsible dissemination of information (indeed, some people die each year from mushroom poisoning), I find it alarming that the sincere objective of restoring a mostly disintegrated mycogastronomic record, which serves to further strengthen our biologic ties to our local landscape, would elicit such acerbic attacks. After all, mushroom eating seems to me to be only as "dangerous" as consuming plants. Out of several thousand species, only a half-dozen mushrooms are considered deadly poisonous. Compare this to the number of plant species that have been shown to be toxic. Perhaps the bad rap that has been inflicted upon fungi is due to our basic fear of the unknown, since mushrooms have been studied far less than have plants. In this modern world, fear perpetuated by blind ignorance has given birth to the countless procession of warnings and disclaimers that inundate us constantly: We all should recognize ownership of our own existence. Adventurers and pioneers have forever elevated the zeitgeist of each successive generation! Let us deconstruct such ego-barriers, which thwart effective communication and further injures a world wracked by negativity. Ultimately, we have the right to decide what we want to do with our lives. Basic human freedoms....

Please feel free to contact me for any reason. I especially want to hear from fellow "toadstool testers" and welcome all comments. Be Well.



A good day!

Acknowledgements

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Pholiota limonella

References available upon request.

Questions? storm@stoneageskills.com

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