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How to Find, Identify, and Understand Wild Mushrooms

Mushrooms grow everywhere. Here's how to start finding and identifying the best ones to eat—and how to bring them to the table.



Common and Poisonous 19

A Few Toxic Mushrooms

Poisonous mushrooms grow everywhere in Illinois. Before you pick and eat any wild mushroom, learn to recognize toxic species.



Into the Forest 33

Mushrooms Found with Trees

Edible mushrooms often grow on or around living and dead trees.

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The Morels 79

Morchella esculenta, Morchella elata, and Morchella semilibera

The most popular wild mushrooms in Illinois look like a sea sponge. There are three basic morel species—plus several varieties.

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The Chanterelles 99

Cantharellus cibarius, Cantharellus lateritius, Cantharellus cinnabarinus, Craterellus cornucopioides, and Craterellus foetidus

Yellow, black, orange, and red—wildly popular chanterelles are a group of vase-shaped summer mushrooms that often grow near oaks.

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The Boletes 119

Xanthoconium separans, Strobilomyces spp., and Gyroporus castaneus

These terrestrial mushrooms have pores on the underside of the cap. There are hundreds of bolete species; here are a few easy ones to identify.

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The Puffballs 129

Calvatia gigantea, Lycoperdon pyriforme, Lycoperdon perlatum, Calvatia cyathiformis, and Calvatia craniformis

You can stomp on them when they're old, or eat them when they're fresh.

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Take the Field without Getting Hurt 137

Agaricus, Coprinus, Macrolepiota, and Lepiota

Wherever there's grass, look for these edible wild mushrooms.

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Let's Eat 159

Recipes and Advice for Cooking Wild Mushrooms

From simple fried morels to a champagne breakfast with fungi, fourteen great chefs from Illinois tell you how they get wild with mushrooms.