

The background of the entire cover is a repeating pattern of stylized mushrooms. The mushrooms have brown caps with small white spots and thick, light-colored stems. They are scattered across a dark green background that is also covered with small, dark, vertical lines, resembling rain or forest floor texture.

WISCONSIN
MUSHROOMS

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FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECTS

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

MADISON, WISCONSIN

WISCONSIN MIDDLE MUSHROOMS
FOR THE MUSHROOM LOVER AND LOVER
EDITOR'S NOTE
ALL THE YEAR ROUND MUSHROOMS

In every Middle West state there are numerous persons who find enjoyment in the collecting and eating of mushrooms. Most of these have an acquaintance with only one or two, or, at best, with only a very few mushroom species.

In this publication, prepared by a writer of the Wisconsin Federal Writers' Projects, an effort is made to provide descriptions and information of some twenty species of common edible fungi of the city, meadow, and woodland, which every mushroom lover should know,

SPONSORED BY THE WISCONSIN MUSHROOM CLUB
FOR THE YEAR 1937
Charles E. Brown
State Director, Federal Writers' Projects
MADISON, WISCONSIN
1937

WISCONSIN EDIBLE MUSHROOMS
FOR THE MUSHROOM HUNTER AND LOVER

ALL THE YEAR 'ROUND MUSHROOMS

POPULAR GUIDE TO THE COMMON
EDIBLE FUNGI OF THE CITY, MEADOW, AND
WOODLAND, WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR THEIR
TABLE PREPARATION

SPONSORED BY THE MADISON MUSHROOM CLUB
PUBLISHED BY THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECTS

MADISON, WISCONSIN

1937

MUSHROOMS DESCRIBED

SMALL INKY CAP

LARGE INKY CAP

SHAGGY MANE

RAIN CAP

MEADOW MUSHROOM

ELM CAP

VELVET STEM

GIANT PUFFBALL

CUP PUFFBALL

FAIRY RING

HONEY CAP

BRICK TOP

THE MORELS

CLAY TOP

CHANTARELLE

BLUE HAT

PRUNE

SULPHUR

CABBAGE

OYSTER

MUSHROOM COLLECTING

During most months of the year you may take your basket and a supply of paper bags and fare forth along the city streets and into the meadows, pastures, and woodlands in search of mushroom food for the home table. Whether you have a knowledge of mushrooms or not you are certain to get some real enjoyment in hunting for them.

The common edible mushrooms occurring in Wisconsin and in all states of the Middle West may be divided into two groups---those which are found in the greatest abundance within the limits of cities and villages---along curb strips, on lawns, and in vacant lots---and those which may be sought for in meadows and pastures or which find a retreat in open woods or hide in leaf beds and thickets in the forest.

As many as several hundred species of mushrooms occur in fields and woodlands in the vicinity of most of our cities. Of these some are edible, some unwholesome or deadly poisonous, a few have vile odors, and some are tough or woody and unfit for eating. Some others are uncommon, or hardly ever to be obtained in sufficient quantity to provide a respectable mess,

Among all of this large number of fungi there are about twenty common edible species which the mushroom hunter will find it profitable to know and to collect for table use. All are well and widely known and their forms and habitat not difficult to learn. They are described and pictured in all our standard books on mushrooms and in pamphlets issued by a number of states. In nearly every lo-

cality there are persons who know these common species well and who have eaten them for years. Their advice the beginner may seek. Once known, there is no excuse for getting into trouble by mistaking unwholesome or poisonous mushrooms for edible species. If one is inclined to be rash or careless in one's collecting of mushrooms one had best leave them alone.

CITY MUSHROOMS

If you confine your mushroom collecting to the city or village bounds keep your eyes always open for the Small Inky Cap. This is a very abundant small species growing in dense clusters on lawns or in curb strips, about stumps and the bases of shade trees from spring to late in the year. You are likely to happen upon this mushroom most unexpectedly in your walks and it will therefore be well to keep a paper bag always in your pocket for such opportunities. You will readily recognize this little mushroom by its light brownish cap, its slender white stem, and its white gills, which turn black when the fungus reaches maturity. It is a great favorite with mushroom friends.

Its relative, the Large Inky Cap, is considered by many persons as one of the best of all edible mushrooms. It is larger than the Small Inky Cap, with a grey or brown, sometimes scaly, bell-shaped cap. Sharp eyes are sometimes needed to see it in the tall grass or in beds of fallen autumn leaves.

Both Inky Caps are prepared for the table in the same manner. After they have been washed they may be placed in a saucepan with a small quantity of butter and slowly fried. They are then served on slices of toasted bread. They can also be used in gravies and soups (the stems being removed) and prepared in a number of other ways.

One of the very best of our mushrooms is the well known and greatly appreciated Shaggy Mane. Mushroom friends are always keen in their search for these. It has a white bell-shaped cap covered with shaggy scales. Its gills are at first white, turning pink, purple, and then black, and at last dissolving into a black inky fluid.

At Madison some of our best collecting grounds are in once marshy areas which have been filled in with ashes, cinders, and soil and become partly overgrown with weeds and grass. In these places the tasty Shaggy Mane reappears year after year.

The Shaggy Mane may be prepared for eating like its smaller relatives, the Inky Caps. It may also be cooked in a roasting pan, the mushrooms being laid around a meat roast. Other methods of preparing this choice species will suggest themselves to the competent cook.

After a summer or autumn rain the little Rain Cap, or White Hypholoma, can often be collected in quantity from some city lawn or park green. It is a very tender little mushroom with a cap that is at first bell-shaped and then expanded and umbrella-like, and with a slender white stem that is hollow and very brittle. When moist, its cap is a light greyish or brownish color. Its gills are at first white, then becoming pinky brown. Once known, this mushroom is forever treasured. It is a saucepan species.

The common Meadow Mushroom is one that generations of Americans have appreciated. From summer until late in the autumn, especially after rains, it is quite commonly found along the curb strips of our city streets, also sometimes growing in waste places and on lawns. Vacant lots and filled-in ground are favorite haunts of the common Meadow. Its cap is white or brownish, its gills a rosy pink, then brown, and it has a white ring near the middle of its stout white stem. This is the mushroom---hothouse, cave, or cellar grown---which we see displayed in little baskets or paper cartons in our grocery and delicatessen store windows and for which we often pay fancy prices.

Keep your eyes open for small circular white spots in the curb strips and elsewhere and dig them up with a pocket knife or with your fingers. The Meadow is prepared in various ways. It can be cut into slices and fried with steak, baked or broiled. Some persons eat it raw with a dash of salt or pepper. It is also canned for winter use.

In many cities the Elm Cap, a large, firm, often rather tough, white mushroom, is found in the late summer and autumn, growing from the crotches or from the branches of elm and box-elder trees. This is a well flavored species of which many pounds can sometimes be collected along a single street. A fishpole with a loop of stout wire or a knife fastened to its tip is often needed to bring it to earth. It can be parboiled or cut in pieces and fried, or stewed. It also broils well on a broiling iron.

To the writer's mind one of the most delicious of our common edible fungi is the little Velvet Stem. It grows, often in dense clusters, on or at the bases of stumps, also from decayed spots on the trunks of living trees. It has an attractive yellowish brown cap, which is very sticky when moist, and yellowish gills.

The Velvet Stem is often very abundant at the bases of willow trees in lowlands or on river or lake shores. This dainty can be collected the year 'round. We have frequently gathered it in midwinter from beneath the snow. It is cooked with meats and put in gravies or soups. It is also dried for winter use. Those who know the Velvet Stem love it.

PASTURE AND MEADOW SPECIES

In pastures and meadows and along the banks of drainage ditches in the late summer and autumn one may look for the Giant Puffball. This species often attains a very large size, specimens of it sometimes weighing from ten to forty pounds. A single specimen may thus

provide meals for several families.

A near relative of this mushroom giant is the Cup Puffball. It has a rounded form above, which tapers below to a stout base. It occurs most commonly in pastures and meadows, also sometimes in plowed fields. Specimens are often six or seven inches in diameter. It gets its name from the cup shape of the bases of the plant after the spores have ripened and blown away.

There are many other common species of puffballs of small and medium sizes, all of which are edible. These are good as long as the flesh is white and cheesy. When it becomes tinted with yellow they are bitter. No potato pancakes ever tasted any better than a slice of a large puffball fried in butter.

Another old time favorite which grows in pastures (sometimes also on lawns or other grassy places) is the Fairy Ring. It obtains its name from its habit of growing in rings of small or large diameter and from an old belief that these were gathering places or dance rings of fairy folk. It is a small mushroom with a buff colored cap, white or brownish gills, and a solid, tough, whitish stem. It can be fried, served with meat, or put in soups. It can be dried for winter use.

In pastures and woodlands which contain many stumps one may look for the very popular Honey Cap, one of the most abundant of our summer and autumn mushrooms. There are several well known varieties of it. One occurs singly, in pairs, or in small clusters, often on lawns. The other, and most abundant variety, grows in tufts or clusters of many individuals about the bases of stumps, roots, or dead or dying trees. The entire plant (cap and stem) is honey colored, but sometimes brown or yellowish. There is a more or less prominent cottony ring on its stem. The caps generally have near their centers numbers of small, pointed, dark colored scales.

The Honey Mushroom, in years favorable to its growth, is often so very abundant that bags or large baskets may be filled to the top with its caps. Although one of the coarsest of our common edible fungi, it is a favorite and very well known species and is collected in great quantities by mushroom friends. The writer has been a passenger on Sunday trains and motor busses when even the aisles were partly filled with bags and baskets of Honey Cap provender.

The proper way of preparing this favorite for the table is to cut the caps in pieces, place them in a saucepan with a quantity of butter, and stew them. A small quantity of milk and flour is added for thickening and to furnish a sauce. This stew may be served on toast. The caps may also be broiled, a bit of butter being placed on the upturned gills. Many persons cut up and dry the Honey Cap or can or pickle it for winter use.

Growing often in the same situations and places as the Honey Cap is the Brick Top, which is nearly as great a favorite. It grows often in dense clusters and is an attractive species. It has a cap of a reddish brown or brick red color. Its gills are at first yellowish, then greenish, and finally purple brown in color. It is prepared like the Honey Cap. It is most abundant in the autumn. We have collected it from beneath the snow about the roots of stumps. Although frozen, it provided a delicious meal.

WOODLAND FUNGI

The woodlands in the environs of our cities provide from spring to late in the year a number of fine mushrooms which every lover of such vegetable food should know.

The Morels are the earliest of these and are considered by many persons to be the most delicious of all. None are more widely known or more eagerly sought for.

Two closely related species, the Esculent Morel and the Conical Morel, are found in most parts of Wisconsin and in many other states. They grow in the same places in the woodlands. They sometimes appear in most unusual places, such as on lawns and in the cinder beds of a railroad right-of-way.

The Morels are readily recognized by their buff or brown, round, oval, or pointed caps, which are covered with a network of ridges or folds with pits between them. Their stout stems are hollow, white or whitish, and more or less furrowed or roughened. Their caps are hollow. The Conical Morel has a pointed cap with ridges and pits that run in distinct rows instead of the irregular rows of the Esculent Morel.

A third species, the Wrinkled, or Broad-stem, Morel, appears later in the spring than the other two. It is the largest of the three species. Its large, deeply wrinkled, white stem nearly equals its cap in width. Of the Morels both the cap and stem are eaten. They may be cut in two down their length, filled with chopped meat and bread or cracker crumbs, and baked in a pan in an oven. They can also be cut up and stewed and served on toast or cooked with meats. They can also be cut up and dried for winter use.

Hunting for these aristocrats of the woodlands in April or early in May among the dried leaves and other winter debris of the forest is the best of fun. You may go on for some time without seeing one. Then, just as you are becoming a bit discouraged, you sight one on a little bank beneath an oak tree. Thus encouraged, you scratch away the leaves with a stick or circle this tree and find another, then two more a few feet away. Extending the range of your hunting, you go over the ground carefully (the color of their caps is the same as that of the dead leaves) finding more and more, and perhaps whole troops of them. Now your basket is filled and you go on your way rejoicing.

A large, firm, early autumn mushroom is the Clay Top, or Clay-purple Clitocybe. It has a whitish or light ochre colored cap, a solid stem, and purple gills. It is tough but is excellent when well cooked. It has many friends among mushroom lovers.

Another fine autumn woodland species is the Chantarelle, a light buff colored mushroom with a straight or slightly depressed cap. Its gills, of the same color as the rest of the plant, are thick and forked. It is famous as one of the most delicious of mushrooms. It has an apricot odor.

The Blue Hat, a short stout mushroom, is usually found growing in leafy beds or in hazel brush or other thickets in the woods. We have also found the Blue Hat growing about the bases of old straw or hay stacks. The entire plant is often of a lilac or purplish color. Its cap is smooth, grayish or brownish, tinted with lilac or purple. The gills are violet or lilac when young, afterwards changing to a reddish brown color. The stem is stout, solid, often with a bulbous base of a deep lilac color. It has a fine flavor and is highly prized by those who know it.

The Prune often appears in considerable quantity in some favored spot in the woods. Its cap is of a grey color. Its gills are at first whitish, then changing to a light salmon color. Its stem is white or whitish. Growing near it is often found its abortive form, which is white in color and somewhat like a prune in shape. When fresh, this umbrella mushroom has a mealy odor and taste. It is a fine food species. It may be cut in pieces and stewed in milk, a delicious substitute for an oyster stew.

The Sulphur Bracket is an edible bracket mushroom growing from stumps or from mounds on the trunks of living trees. The caps are more or less fan shaped and overlap each other. Their tops are a bright orange color and the pores on their lower surface are a sulphur yellow color. This is a choice mushroom.

The writer has collected many pounds of it from a single tree trunk or the top or side of a stump. It becomes paler in color and woody or tough when old. The caps can be cut in cubes and cooked in a meat stew. They can be chopped in small pieces and made into croquettes with meat "left-overs" and rolled in cracker crumbs or flour. Some persons enjoy eating pieces of it in a raw state.

A related mushroom, the Cabbage, or Leafy, Polyporus, grows from the roots of trees or tops of stumps. It often resembles a large cabbage in shape. Specimens are found which weigh as much as forty pounds. This mushroom occurs in late summer and autumn. If kept in a cool place it can be partaken of for several days. The caps of the Cabbage are of a grey or brown color, the tubes or pores on its lower surface are whitish, and the stout stem is white.

The Oyster, a prime favorite, is so-called because its form suggests the shell of an oyster. It grows from the trunks and branches of dead trees, also from stumps, the large caps often overlapping each other. The color of the plant is white, light buff, or grey, with broad white gills. It has a short white stem which is often hairy at its base. In preparing it for the table the caps are cut into strips, stewed in a saucepan, with milk stirred in, and served as one would serve stewed oysters. There are other equally palatable ways of cooking the Oyster mushroom.

CLOSING REMARKS

Mushroom friends should always remember never to eat mushrooms which they do not know well. They should know that none of the old fashioned tests are reliable. Never eat mushrooms which are wormy or show any signs of decay.

Mushroom books and other mycological literature can be consulted at every public library, so that there is no longer any excuse for

collecting by mistake and eating any of the fairly numerous unwholesome or poisonous fungi.

Several favorite common mushrooms such as the Chalk, or Cracker, Mushroom, the Parasol Mushroom, and the Deer Mushroom are not mentioned in this publication because of a close resemblance which they bear to certain poisonous species and with which the beginning mushroom lover might confuse them. The Deadly Amanita, a white parasol mushroom with a ring on its stem and a cup or sheath at its base; the Fly Agaric, a beautiful red or reddish orange colored member of the same family; and the Jack o' Lantern, a bright orange colored mushroom growing in clusters, are very common and are among the poisonous mushrooms to be feared. These every collector should learn to know and to avoid.

It is a pity that a much larger number of the residents of every city in Wisconsin and the Middle West do not possess a knowledge of at least some of the common and abundant species of edible mushrooms.

Do not copy this

STORIES FROM THE MILWAUKEE MUSHROOM CLUB

GEESE

Dr. George Peckham, once noted Milwaukee librarian, told this little story to Mr. C.E. Brown, Madison.

He was driving from Beaver Lake in Waukesha county to Delafield. In a pasture field he saw some large white objects which he took to be geese. Their heads were under their wings. On his way home that evening he drove by the same field. The geese were in the same field and in the same position in which he had seen them in the morning. They had not moved. He climbed over the fence to investigate and found that what he had mistaken for geese were really Giant Puffballs. He filled his buggy with them. Next day he was able to feed all his neighbors with delicious and delectable mushrooms.

IN THE FRONT AND OUT THE BACK

Jack Atkinson was an enthusiastic mushroom collector of the old Milwaukee Mushroom Club. One day he collected from a decaying log in the woods about 40 pounds of the delicious coral-like Bear's Head Hydnum, a real delicacy. This he proudly exhibited to friends.

Living in the same flat building as Jack was a lady who had always wanted him to give her some mushrooms. So he went to her door with a nice mess of the Hydnum. She accepted the gift with the most profuse thanks. She was so very grateful that she almost embraced Jack.

He was so proud of having been able to make a mushroom present to so enthusiastic a neighbor. But a few hours later in passing through the alley gate in the rear of the flat he found the mushroom deposited in the lady's garbage can!

FOREWARNED

Mr. Edward Volk, a Milwaukee business man of thirty years ago, was especially fond of the Elm mushroom which grew in the crotches and from the branches of the elm trees along old Grand Avenue in Milwaukee. In the autumn Ed was about with a fishpole and umbrella to gather, in the morning or evening, these delicious fungi which he had "spotted" during the day.

Every year some of the best specimens grew on a line of elms in front of one of Milwaukee's most palatial homes. The owner was an irascible old man. One day the boys learned that Ed was going to collect some mushrooms in front of this home the next morning. So they posted the owner, telling him of a character who went about injuring shade trees with a pole. When Ed came around, there was the old man laying for him with a shotgun. He would not accept any explanation and threatened poor Ed with arrest if he tried to injure his trees, leaving Ed to go his way, greatly disappointed.

A MOREL FEAST

It was Morel time in the spring of the year 1906, and the members of the Milwaukee Mushroom Club had gathered for the first meeting at the Milwaukee Museum. The secretary, Mr. Pierson Halsey, and a few others had collected a nice lot of Morels. The mushrooms were displayed on paper plates on tables in

the lecture hall, and the members were gathered about these. Jack Atkinson and "Doc" Rogers, both fond of a good joke, had not collected any Morels. They were determined to have some. So Jack posted a number of confederates down the length of the tables. One of these men would pick up a Morel and pass it behind his back to another friend, and so it would travel on down to Jack at the end of the tables. He deftly deposited the prizes in the tail pockets of his frock coat as they came. Soon, before anyone realized it, most of the Morels had disappeared and no one knew what had become of them. Mr. Halsey was particularly agitated about their mysterious loss.

Jack and Doc and the other helpers in crime had a nice mushroom feast at Doc's home that night.

MY BONNIE

My Bonnie went out after mushrooms,
Some toadstools she happened to see,
She ate them that night for her supper;
Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me.

