

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL FORAGER'S GUIDE

Edible mushrooms & dangerous look-alikes — free to share

NEVER consume any wild mushroom unless 100% certain. Use multiple features. When in doubt, throw it out.

Educational use only. The author assumes no liability for wild fungi ingestion.

BACKCOUNTRY MEDICAL EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

1. Stop Eating

Spit out any remaining mushroom. Stop all meal consumption immediately.

2. Secure Evidence

Place raw specimens, cooked scraps, or vomit into a paper/cloth bag. Medical staff need the physical sample to identify toxins.

3. Signal for Help

Call 911 or Poison Control (1-800-222-1222). In dead zones, immediately trigger a satellite SOS (Garmin, ZOLEO, Apple SOS).

4. Track the Clock

Note ingestion time and symptom onset. Early symptoms (<2 hours) usually mean stomach upset. Late symptoms (6-24 hours) indicate deadly liver toxins.

UNIVERSAL SAFETY PROTOCOLS

1. The 100% Rule

If you are 99% sure, it is a 100% NO. Never guess.

2. Identify Host Trees

Fungi absorb compounds from hosts. Never eat edibles growing on toxic trees like Hemlock, Yew, or Conifers.

3. Sample Conserve Method

First time eating a species? Cook and eat a tiny bite, wait 24 hours. Keep one raw specimen safe as backup.

4. Always Cook Thoroughly

Raw wild mushrooms contain heat-sensitive toxins. Cook completely to destroy stomach irritants.

SOUTHERN REGION (GA, NC, TN, VA)

Humid cove hardwood & oak-hickory forests

EDIBLE



Golden Chanterelle

Cantharellus cibarius

- Yellow-orange
- Apricot aroma
- Grows scattered on dirt
- False gills (blunt folds)
- White internal flesh

EDIBLE



Meadow Mushroom

Agaricus campestris

- White/brown cap
- Open grassy fields only
- Fragile ring on stem
- Gills pink, aging to chocolate-brown
- Spore print: chocolate-brown

TOXIC LOOK-ALIKE



Jack-O'Lantern

Omphalotus illudens

Toxicity: Severe GI illness

- Dense fused clusters
- Grows on wood logs
- True gills (sharp blades)
- Orange internal flesh

TOXIC LOOK-ALIKE



Destroying Angel

Amanita bisporigera

Toxicity: Lethal liver/kidney failure

- Deep woods near trees
- Skirt-like ring on stem
- Grows from buried volva
- Gills stark pure white
- Spore print: pure white

MID-ATLANTIC REGION (WV, MD, PA, NJ, NY)

Transitional oak forests & rocky river valleys

EDIBLE



Chicken of the Woods

Laetiporus sulphureus

- Bright orange top, yellow edge
- Overlapping shelves on hardwood
- Meaty texture
- Smooth pore surface (no gills)
- WARNING: Only hardwoods - conifer/Hemlock causes severe vomiting

TOXIC LOOK-ALIKE



Velvet-Footed Pax

Tapinella atrotomentosa

Toxicity: Severe stomach poisoning

- Fuzzy dark brown stem base
- Dull, faded color shades
- True gills underneath

NEW ENGLAND REGION (CT, MA, VT, NH, ME)

Northern spruce-fir & birch boreal forests

EDIBLE



Honey Mushroom

Armillaria mellea

- Massive tight base clusters
- Tiny hair scales on cap center
- Tough, solid stem
- Spore print: white/cream

TOXIC LOOK-ALIKE



Deadly Galerina

Galerina marginata

Toxicity: Lethal amatoxins

- Small loose groups on logs
- Smooth, bald wet cap
- Fragile, hollow stem
- Spore print: rusty-brown

NEW ENGLAND REGION (cont'd)

Northern spruce-fir & birch boreal forests

EDIBLE



Hedgehog Mushroom

Hydnum repandum

- Creamy orange cap
- Grows on dirt near birch trees
- Snaps like chalk
- Spines/teeth underside (fragile needles)

[OK] No Toxic Look-Alike

No toxic variants carry needles or spines under the cap in this ecosystem.

EDIBLE



Black Trumpet

Craterellus cornucopioides

- Deep gray to pitch black
- Hollow horn/trumpet shape
- Highly camouflaged in dead leaves
- Smooth to wrinkled skin (gill-less)

[OK] No Toxic Look-Alike

No poisonous species display a completely hollow, dark funnel frame.