

THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL FORAGER'S GUIDE

Edible mushrooms & dangerous look-alikes — free to share

This dataset is educational only, not professional foraging/medical advice. Wild mushroom consumption carries extreme risk including organ damage, neurological injury, or death. The author assumes no liability for injury, illness, or death resulting from use of this data. Users forage entirely at their own risk.

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UNIVERSAL SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Golden Rule: When in doubt, throw it out. Never consume a wild mushroom based on a single field identification asset.

1. Verify 100% of the key visual markers listed in the specific regional profile.
2. Take a complete spore print on both white and black paper if a lookalike has a distinct spore color requirement.
3. Ensure the specimen is growing on the documented host wood or soil matrix.
4. Check for signs of insect infestation, decay, or chemical spray contamination before harvesting.
5. Retain one un-cooked, intact specimen in a paper bag in the refrigerator as a voucher for medical teams in case of accidental poisoning.

COOKING REQUIREMENTS

All Species

All wild edible mushrooms must be thoroughly cooked before consumption — raw wild mushrooms contain indigestible chitin walls and volatile toxins that can cause severe gastrointestinal distress.

Sierra Porcini (*Boletus rex-veris*)

Cook thoroughly until internal flesh reaches a uniform hot temperature; undercooked boletes can cause mild, temporary stomach upset.

Pacific Golden Chanterelle (*Cantharellus formosus*)

Sauté in a dry pan first to release excess water content, then cook thoroughly with fat for at least 10-15 minutes.

Matsutake (*Tricholoma murrillianum*)

Slice thinly and cook completely; the dense, firm texture requires longer heat exposure to become fully digestible.

EMERGENCY POISON CONTROL CONTACTS

National / Universal (US)

America's Poison Centers — 1-800-222-1222

24/7/365 — routes automatically by area code / cell tower.

California

California Poison Control System — 1-800-222-1222

calpoison.org

Oregon

Oregon Poison Center — 1-800-222-1222

ohsu.edu

Washington

Washington Poison Center — 1-800-222-1222

wapc.org

1. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA — Desert & Chaparral (3,000-9,000 ft)

Laguna Mountains to San Jacinto Mountains

EDIBLE



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Desert Shaggy Mane

Podaxis pistillaris

- Elongated, woody, white-tan cap with scales
- Gleba turns black/powdery with maturity
- Woody stem deep into sandy soil
- Spore print: blackish-brown
- Habitat: arid soils, desert roadsides
- Season: late winter-early spring

TOXIC LOOK-ALIKE



(c) Sadie Hickey, CC BY-NC, iNaturalist

False Parasol

Chlorophyllum molybdites

Toxicity: GI irritant, low-mod lethality, onset 1-3 hrs, violent vomiting/diarrhea

- White cap, brownish scales
- Gills white aging grayish-green
- Spore print: green/olive-green
- Habitat: lawns, disturbed soils
- Season: summer-early autumn

CRITICAL DISTINCTION:

MUST spore print. True edible parasols never have green spore prints or green-tinted mature gills.

2. CENTRAL CALIFORNIA — Sierra Nevada Foothills & High Sierra (5,000-10,000 ft)

Kennedy Meadows to Sonora Pass

EDIBLE



(c) Dean Lyons, CC-BY-NC, iNaturalist

Sierra Porcini

Boletus rex-veris

- Reddish-brown to pinkish-buff cap, sticky
- Pores white aging yellow-green
- Bulbous, netted (reticulated) white stem
- Spore print: olive-brown
- Habitat: Red Fir & Lodgepole Pine
- Season: spring-early summer

TOXIC LOOK-ALIKE Smith's Bolete

Caloboletus smithii

Toxicity: GI distress/purgative, low lethality, onset 30min-2hrs, extremely bitter

- Olive-brown to clay cap, dry, smooth
- Yellow pores bruise instantly blue
- Stem yellow top, pinkish-red base, no netting
- Spore print: olive-brown
- Habitat: mixed conifer forests
- Season: summer

CRITICAL DISTINCTION:

Scratch the yellow pore surface. If it instantly flashes dark blue, reject it immediately.

3. NORTHERN CALIFORNIA — Cascades & Klamath Mountains (3,000-7,000 ft)

Castle Crags to Cascade Range

EDIBLE



(c) Alan Rockefeller, CC-BY, iNaturalist

Pacific Golden Chanterelle

Cantharellus formosus

- Orange-yellow, wavy, trumpet-shaped, apricot smell
- False gills: blunt decurrent forks
- Solid meaty stem tapering to base
- Spore print: pale yellowish-white
- Habitat: moss, 2nd-growth Douglas-fir/Hemlock
- Season: autumn after rains

TOXIC LOOK-ALIKE



(c) Matthieu Morin, CC-BY-NC, iNaturalist

False Chanterelle

Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca

Toxicity: GI allergen/mild toxin, low lethality, onset 1-4hrs, nausea/cramping

- Bright orange, funnel-shaped, velvety
- True gills, thin, crowded, forked
- Hollow, thin, flexible stem
- Spore print: white
- Habitat: decaying wood, wood chips
- Season: autumn-early winter

CRITICAL DISTINCTION:

Examine gills/stem: false chanterelles have true blade-like forked gills and hollow flimsy stems.

4. OREGON — Cascade Mountains (2,000-6,000 ft)

Ashland to Columbia River Gorge

MOST DANGEROUS PAIR IN THIS GUIDE

EDIBLE

Matsutake

Tricholoma murrillianum

- White cap developing brown scales
- Spicy cinnamon-red-hot-candy odor
- Solid, tough, cottony-veiled stem
- Spore print: white
- Habitat: sandy soils, Lodgepole Pine/Shasta Red Fir
- Season: autumn

TOXIC LOOK-ALIKE



(c) Christian Schwarz, CC BY-NC, iNaturalist

Smith's Amanita

Amanita smithiana

Toxicity: NEPHROTOXIC — extremely high lethality. Onset delayed 4-12hrs, kidney failure 2-6 days

- White-cream cap, floccose warts, earthy smell
- White-cream crowded gills
- Rooting bulbous base, fragile sticky veil
- Spore print: white
- Habitat: mixed conifer, often near Matsutake
- Season: autumn

CRITICAL DISTINCTION:

Matsutake smells intensely cinnamon/spicy with a firm cottony veil. *A. smithiana* smells faintly sweet/earthy, has a crumbly sticky veil that falls apart like wet tissue, and a rooting underground bulb.

5. WASHINGTON — Cascades & Olympic Peninsula Boundary (2,000-7,500 ft)

Columbia River to Pasayten Wilderness

EDIBLE



(c) ntune, iNaturalist

Bear's Head Tooth

Hericium abietis

- No cap — cascading white icicle-like spines
- Short tough branches from single base
- Spore print: white
- Habitat: dead/dying conifer logs (Fir/Hemlock)
- Season: autumn

TOXIC LOOK-ALIKE



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Jack-O'Lantern Mushroom

Omphalotus olivascens

Toxicity: GI neurotoxin, moderate lethality, onset 1-3hrs, severe vomiting/cramping

- Olive-orange funnel cap
- True sharp gills, faintly bioluminescent
- Solid fibrous tapering stem
- Spore print: cream-white
- Habitat: base of dead hardwoods
- Season: autumn

CRITICAL DISTINCTION:

Jack-O'Lanterns have normal caps with true gills, growing in overlapping clusters on hardwoods. *Hericium* grows exclusively as white icicles on conifers.