

# HUNTING MUSHROOMS

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FUN GUY



# **Hunting Mushrooms**

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# Chapter 1 — Identify with Confidence: The Five Must-Know Species for Lane County

This chapter gives you one clean thing: how to identify chanterelles, morels, boletes, oysters, and Amanitas in Lane County so you can pick the good, avoid the bad, and laugh at your mistakes later. No long history lesson. Read, memorize, and use the quick tests below in the field.

## **Chanterelles (*Cantharellus* spp.) — The golden stars of the Willamette Valley**

Look: funnel-shaped, wavy cap edges, blunt forked ridges that run down the stem. Color ranges from deep gold to apricot. Smell: fruity, apricot-like. Habitat: conifer or mixed woods, mossy ground, late June through October after summer rains. Key test: gill ridges are blunt and fork; if you can splice a gill with a fingernail into a clean sheet, it's probably not a chanterelle. Common mistake: Jack-o'-lanterns (*Omphalotus*). They have true sharp gills, grow on wood or wood chips in clusters, and often glow faintly in the dark. When in doubt, take a photo of the underside and send it to a local ID group.

## **Morels (*Morchella* spp.) — Spring's honeycomb treasure**

Look: a spongy, honeycombed cap attached at or near the stem top, hollow inside from tip to base. Season: March through May in Lane County; excellent after recent burns or in older oak and fruit tree orchards. Key test: cut one lengthwise. If it's uniformly hollow, it's likely a true morel. False morels (*Gyromitra*) have lobed wrinkly caps and are not hollow, often containing cottony tissue or chambered cavities. NEVER eat a suspicious morel raw; cook thoroughly. When you see a spring morel patch in Mohawk Valley or near Eugene, slow down and enjoy the moment — someone else probably knows about it already.

## **Boletes (*Boletus* and allies) — The big, meaty caps**

Look: cap with pores instead of gills underneath. Many are brown or tan on top; pores can be yellow, olive, or red. Season: summer through fall under pines and firs in Cascade foothills and Coast Range edges. Key test: bruise a pore with your thumb. If it turns blue immediately and tastes very bitter, mark it as avoid. Safe boletes: those with olive or tan pores and no blue-staining, like king boletes (porcini relatives). Red-pored boletes often cause gastric upset. Spore print color and cap texture help narrow species.

## **Oysters (*Pleurotus* spp.) — The easy wood lovers**

Look: shelf-like, fan-shaped caps attached laterally to wood, decurrent gills running down a stubby stem, often in overlapping clusters. Season: after fall and winter rains, oysters can appear year-round on hardwood logs and stumps in Lane County. Smell: mild, sometimes seafood-like. Key test: they grow directly on wood, not on soil. Avoid white, small species with brittle flesh if you don't know them; some lookalikes are too small or bitter.

## **Amanitas — The dressy ones you respect from afar**

Look: classic mushroom silhouette, often white gills, a ring on the stem, and a volva or bulbous base. Many Amanitas are edible in other places, but Lane County harbors deadly species including *Amanita phalloides*, the death cap. Key rule: if you see a white-gilled mushroom with a ring and a bulbous base or volva, mark it as "avoid until a local expert says otherwise." Never taste-test or nudge with a fork. Death caps often associate with oaks and chestnuts and can be found in urban Eugene landscapes as well as forest edges.

## **Field ID basics you must do**

- Make a spore print: cap on half white, half dark paper, cover for 6 hours. Color matters.
- Cut one specimen lengthwise: hollow vs. cottony is a fast tell.
- Take photos: top, underside, whole mushroom in context with a coin or pen.
- Smell it: some species have distinctive scents (chanterelle = apricot).

## **Local quick rules**

- If you do not get the five identifying tests right, do not eat it.
- If it's white-gilled, ringed, or bulbous at the base, do not eat it without local verification.

- Use the Cascade Mycological Society and Mount Pisgah Arboretum walks to confirm your first 10 finds. They're worth the entry fee.

Do this chapter's five identification checks next time you find a promising cap. If any one test fails, leave it. You're allowed to be picky; mushrooms are not.

### **Do a 7-Minute Field ID Routine Every Time**

No guessing. Perform one tight, repeatable routine that gives you reliable clues in under seven minutes. This is your go/no-eat checklist — practice it until it's second nature.

### **Assemble a 6-item quick kit and set it up in 60 seconds**

Assemble this 6-item quick kit and set it up in 60 seconds: folding knife; phone with camera; coin or pen for scale; small cardboard box lined half white/half black for spore prints; six paper bags (one species per bag); permanent marker for labels. At the patch: clear a flat spot, write date/site and sample number on one bag, place a single mushroom in that bag, open box and press cap gill/pores-down on contrasting paper, start a 6-hour spore-print timer on your phone. Begin the spore print in the field and finish in the car — roadside science. This kit guarantees three critical ID items: context photo, lengthwise cut, spore print; never mix species in one bag.

### **Run this 6-step pass/fail sequence; if any single step fails, leave it**

Run this six-step pass/fail sequence for every distinct mushroom; fail any step and leave it: 1) Context photos — take one wide shot showing substrate and one close shot with coin/pen for scale. 2) Underside check — photograph gills/pores and note whether gills are true (blade-like) or forked/ridged. 3) Smell test — sniff cap and stem base; strong apricot or anise = positive, chemical or sickly-sweet odors = flag and leave. 4) Lengthwise cut — slice top-to-base; hollow stems vs. cottony/partitioned stems are decisive. 5) Pore bruise — if pores present, bruise and watch 30–60 seconds for rapid blueing; immediate blue plus bitter taste = avoid. 6) Record pass/fail per sample; only harvest if all applicable steps match expectations; no group hugs.

### **Get Fast Local Verification and Practice Conservative Eating**

Local experts are your safety net. Learn exactly what to send and how to taste safely so you don't become a cautionary tale at the next Mount Pisgah walk.

### **Send identifications that get quick, accurate replies**

Use this five-photo package and precise metadata so Lane County experts answer fast: 1) wide habitat shot showing trees or trail; 2) top view of the cap; 3) underside (gills/pores) with a ruler for scale; 4) lengthwise cut showing interior; 5) spore print photo on white and dark paper. Add date, GPS coordinates or nearest trailhead/road, substrate (e.g., Douglas-fir log, mossy soil, oak), and your kit number. Post to Cascade Mycological Society email list or CMS Facebook group, or bring labeled samples to Mount Pisgah Arboretum ID days. If experts ask for a specimen, follow their mailing/drop-off instructions.

### **Conservative eating protocol: cook, micro-dose, wait, and preserve a voucher**

Follow this four-step conservative eating protocol: 1) Cook 10–20 minutes in a hot pan or boil for 10 minutes to denature heat-sensitive toxins. 2) Micro-dose: eat exactly one cooked teaspoon alone; wait 24 hours; no alcohol or other new foods; do not mix species. 3) Have two sober people nearby and a phone; if severe symptoms (vomiting, severe cramps, dizziness) call Poison Control 1-800-222-1222 and seek medical care. 4) Preserve a voucher: dry or refrigerate remaining specimen, label with date, site, and your kit number, and store for 72 hours for expert recheck or medical analysis.

# Chapter 2 — Harvest Smart: Techniques, Etiquette, and a Field Checklist

This chapter gives you one usable outcome: how to harvest mushrooms in Lane County without wrecking the patch, getting fined, or angering other foragers. Learn the exact cut method, the equipment that matters, the etiquette that keeps access open, and a no-fail field checklist you can print and carry.

## **The harvest cut — preserve the mycelium and the patch**

Use a fixed-blade or folding knife with a clean, sharp edge. Technique: hold the stem near the base, slice the stem cleanly at ground level or millimeter above the substrate, leave the mycelial mat undisturbed. Why: tearing uproots mycelium and kills future flushes. For oysters on wood, cut the cluster leaving a small remnant to allow regrowth. For morels, a gentle twist-and-cut at the soil line works. Do not pull or dig up the stump or soil.

## **Carry and carry right**

Basket or mesh bag only. Plastic bags sweat mushrooms and speed spoilage. Mesh bags let spores fall and reseed the forest as you walk. Use separate paper bags or small boxes if you have multiple species to avoid cross-contamination. Keep delicate chanterelles on top and heavy boletes below to avoid crushing. Bring a brush or small knife to remove debris in the field — washing at home is fine, but keep them relatively clean in your basket.

## **Harvest etiquette — real rules that keep moths flying**

- Ask permission for private land. A "no" should be accepted; a "yes" deserves a thank-you and a few mushrooms as a tip.
- Respect plaques, rare plant zones, and posted signs. Some City of Eugene and state parks prohibit collecting. Check land manager rules for BLM and USFS ground before you go.
- Take only what you will use. Leave a third or more of a patch, including smaller specimens.
- Share GPS dots carefully. Do not post exact coordinates of a productive patch on public social media. Use private messages with trusted folks or tag to "friends only."
- Report invasive species like *Amanita phalloides* to local ID groups and the Oregon Department of Agriculture if requested.

## **Seasonal tips for Lane County**

- Spring (March–May): Morels. Check post-burn areas and old orchards in Mohawk Valley. Ground dries fast; go after a mild rain.
- Early summer (June–July): Chanterelles begin in shady, mossy conifer spots, especially after late rains. Look at Mount Pisgah slopes and shaded pockets near the Coast Range foothills.
- Summer–Fall (July–October): Boletes and late chanterelles. Look under fir and pine in the Cascades and mid-elevation ridges.
- Winter (November–February): Oysters thrive after steady rains. Low elevation hardwoods in the Eugene-Springfield area are prime.

## **Field checklist to print and carry**

- Knife, small brush, mesh bag or basket
- Small paper bags/labels for species separation
- Phone/camera and coin for scale
- Notebook and pen to note GPS, habitat, tree associates
- Spore print kit: flat paper (half white, half black), small glass bowl
- Hand sanitizer, first-aid basics, rain shell

## **Simple site-note template (write one line per find)**

Date | GPS or landmark | Habitat (trees, moss, wood) | Species guess | Cap size | Notes (smell, hollow, pore color) | Photo file name

### Quick diagram: cut at base, leave the mycelium

Cap  
| <-- slice here  
Stem  
---soil surface--- <-- cut at this line, leave roots/mycelium  
Mycelial mat

If you follow the cut method, use a mesh bag, respect land rules, and keep good notes, you will get more mushrooms next year and keep the woods open for everyone. That's the whole point of smart harvest: more feasts later, fewer angry hikers now.

### The One-Cut Routine That Saves the Patch

Make one clean cut and you get future mushrooms, happy landowners, and fewer angry hikers. This routine is exactly what to do from knife choice to basket placement. Follow it every time; it's not fussy, it's effective.

#### How to cut and handle (do this every pick)

Carry: one sharp folding or fixed knife (6 to 9 cm blade), small stiff brush, wide-mesh basket and paper bags. Cup the cap, grip the stem at its base, slice in one clean motion at the soil or wood surface; leave the mycelial mat intact. For clusters, cut the whole cluster as a unit leaving about 5 mm of stem to encourage regrowth. Field-clean by brushing dirt and bugs; never wash in the woods. Load fragile chanterelles and morels on top, heavy boletes below. Wipe the blade between species with a tissue or alcohol swab. Label paper bags by species immediately. Gravity is your friend.

#### Species tweaks that matter right now

Oysters: cut at the wood face, leaving 1-2 cm of attachment; cut parallel to the log to avoid mycelial tearing. Morels: hold the cap, twist while cutting at the soil line so the hollow stem stays undamaged; leave one immature for every three picked. Chanterelles: cut 3-5 mm above moss or duff; skip caps under 3 cm diameter to increase next season's yield. Boletes: make a 1-2 cm slice through the cap flesh to inspect pore color and firmness; discard wormy or waterlogged specimens immediately. Amanitas: do not consume; note GPS or trail marker, photograph cap/gills/ring, bag only if a club asks and contact Cascade Mycological Society for advice. They love pictures.

### Print-and-Go Field Checklist plus a Foolproof Site-Note Routine

Record well and you'll find more mushrooms next season and dodge ID disasters. This single routine covers what to carry, how to photo, how to label, and how to act so patches stay open to everyone.

#### Printable carry list and how to use each item

Carry these items and use them like a lab tech: 1) Mesh bag or wicker basket — carry in hand; never pack in plastic; let mushrooms tumble below to drop spores and keep airflow. 2) Sharp knife and small brush — cut stem at base with a single clean slice; brush dirt off in-field to prevent muddy cross-contamination. 3) Paper bags + permanent marker — place each suspected species in its own labeled bag: DATE | HABITAT | CODE (e.g., CH-0825). 4) Phone + coin — take three photos: cap close, stem/base including volva, habitat-wide with coin for scale; disable geotag before sharing. 5) Spore print kit — place cap on half-white/half-black paper under a bowl for 4-6 hours; dry and label.

#### Fast site-note routine to do for every find (60 seconds)

Do this 60-second routine for every find: 1) Create a one-line entry: DATE (MM/DD/YYYY) | Landmark or GPS (e.g., "Riverbend Trail 43.984,-123.015") | Tree associates (fir/alder/oak) | Substrate (soil/log/stump) | TENTATIVE (chanterelle/morel/etc.) | Quick ID note (smell:apricot; hollow stem; pores:yellow) | Photo filename (IMG\_1234). 2) Write the same short code on the paper bag immediately (e.g., 0825-RB-Fir-CH1) so specimen matches note. 3) If

patch yields >3 mushrooms, leave at least one-third standing and log location in a private app; never post exact coordinates. 4) If poisonous or invasive suspected, photograph whole specimen, place in paper bag, refrigerate, and contact Cascade Mycological Society or local ID club for handling instructions.



# Chapter 3 — Prepare, Preserve, Troubleshoot: From Field to Fork (and Who to Call)

This chapter gives you two immediate skills: preserve your harvest so it lasts, and troubleshoot common ID and handling mistakes so you don't eat something dumb. It also points you to local experts in Lane County when you need confirmation.

## Quick kitchen rules

- Clean, don't soak: brush off dirt and trim stems. Rinse briefly only if sandy. Pat dry.
- Always cook wild mushrooms thoroughly. Raw, they can contain compounds that bother your gut.
- Do a small test serving the first time you eat any wild species. Wait 24 hours. Some people are sensitive to otherwise edible mushrooms.

## Fast preservation methods

- Drying: Best for most chanterelles, boletes, and oysters. Use a food dehydrator at 120–140 F. If you don't have one, use your oven at the lowest setting with the door cracked. Fully dry until leathery and brittle. Store in airtight jars with oxygen absorbers or vacuum seal. Rehydrate in warm water, and reserve the soaking liquid for soup stock.
- Freezing: Sauté first. Cook mushrooms in butter or oil until moisture mostly evaporates, cool, then freeze in portioned bags. Avoid freezing raw mushrooms — they get soggy.
- Pickling: Good for small chanterelles and oysters. Blanch briefly, then pack into hot vinegar brine with spices. Label with date.
- Refrigeration: Short term only. Paper bags in the fridge for up to 3 days. No plastic.

## Common mistakes and how to fix them

- Mistake: Confusing chanterelles with jack-o'-lanterns. Fix: Check underside closely. Chanterelles have blunt ridges that fork. Jack-o'-lanterns have sharp true gills and fruit on wood. When in doubt, don't eat.
- Mistake: Eating white-gilled mushrooms without verification. Fix: If gills are white and there is a ring or bulbous base, treat it as suspect *Amanita* and get local confirmation.
- Mistake: Not checking pores on boletes. Fix: Slice and press pore surface; a red pore that stains blue on bruising is a warning. Taste tests are not recommended.
- Mistake: Using plastic bags in the field. Fix: Switch to mesh; move current haul to paper and dry or cook quickly to avoid slime and bacterial growth.

## Emergency plan

If someone develops strange abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, or confusion after eating wild mushrooms, treat it as a medical emergency. Call 911 and take a sample of the mushroom (fresh, refrigerated if possible) and photos. Also call the Oregon Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 and local emergency services. Fast action saves lives — and yes, don't lie about mushroom ingestion when you call for help.

## Local resources and how to use them

- Cascade Mycological Society: The go-to for regular ID nights, field trips, and mentors. Bring whole specimens and photos. They vet beginners generously.
- Mount Pisgah Arboretum and Mount Pisgah Festival: Annual mushroom walks and a festival with ID tables. Great for confirming your first 10 species.
- Local ID clubs and Facebook groups: Use them for photos and spore prints, but treat in-person ID as the gold standard. Don't eat based solely on a social media comment.
- USFS and BLM ranger stations: Check rules on foraging in Siuslaw and Willamette National Forests. Some areas restrict commercial harvest or require permits.

## Final field checklist before you eat anything

- Verified ID by at least one trusted local expert or club

- Spore print consistent with ID
- Specimen sliced lengthwise and checked for hollowness or internal features
- Cooked properly and eaten in a small test portion
- Emergency contact numbers saved

Take mushrooms seriously, but not fearfully. Use the checks above, preserve smart, and when in doubt ask the Cascade Mycological Society or a Mount Pisgah volunteer. You'll eat better, keep your stomach intact, and help preserve Lane County's productive fungus patches for the next rainy season.

## **Preserve Like a Pro: Field-to-Storage Workflow**

A five-minute, step-by-step routine that prevents slime, loss of flavor, and ruined batches—do this immediately after you leave the patch.

### **Immediate triage and cooling**

Sort in the field: place questionable specimens, insect-ridden mushrooms, and dirt-heavy clusters into separate paper or mesh bags—never plastic. Trim stems and brush caps now; remove visible debris so you won't need to soak later. If drive time exceeds 30 minutes, pack haul in a cooler with a cold pack and keep out of sun to prevent sweating and bacterial growth. Label each bag with date, GPS or trail name, and provisional ID. Use one bag per species to prevent cross-contamination. Outcome: fewer spoiled batches, faster kitchen prep, and clear provenance for later ID verification.

### **Preservation actions by priority**

Follow this preservation priority: 1) Drying for long-term: slice thick mushrooms 1/4-1/2", dehydrate at 120-140°F until brittle (4-12 hours); cool and store airtight with oxygen absorbers or vacuum-seal; use within one year. 2) Freezing for quick meals: sauté until most moisture evaporates, cool, portion, vacuum-seal or use heavy-duty freezer bags; eat within 6-12 months. 3) Pickling: blanch 30-60 seconds, pack hot into vinegar brine, refrigerate and label; use within 3-9 months. 4) Short term: single layer in paper bags 2-3 days. Slice chanterelles thin; avoid raw-freezing boletes; oysters dry or pickle well. If ID uncertain—do not preserve; bring samples to Cascade Mycological Society or Mount Pisgah ID table.

## **Troubleshoot IDs Fast and Get Help the Right Way**

Concrete, non-panic actions for verifying questionable mushrooms and for emergencies—what to do in the field, what to photograph, and who to call.

### **Field-lab checks that catch most ID mistakes**

Make a spore print: remove stem, place cap (gills/pores down) on half-black/half-white paper, cover with jar for 4-12 hours; photograph print beside a ruler and note color with single-word label. Do a cut test: slice through cap and stem vertically to show pores, flesh color, hollowness or chambered base; photograph cross-section immediately with scale. Do a bruise test: press a thumb on cap and stem (no karate required), photograph every 30 seconds for 5 minutes, log any color change (blue/red/brown) and time stamp. Collect habitat shots showing substrate (soil vs decaying wood) and nearby tree species; time-stamp photos and file them by GPS coordinate.

### **How to request reliable ID and act if something goes wrong**

When requesting an ID include: GPS coordinates or trail name, date/time, four photos (top, underside showing gills/pores, side with scale, cross-section), spore-print color, substrate, and nearby tree species; label filenames clearly. Treat social-media IDs as provisional—bring specimens to Cascade Mycological Society meetings or Mount Pisgah ID tables for confirmed ID. If symptoms develop after eating, call Oregon Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 immediately, photograph the meal and specimens, and bring fresh samples (wrapped in wax paper) plus labels to the ER; do not induce vomiting unless a Poison Center clinician instructs you. Build a pocket kit: blank paper, small jar, folding ruler, wax paper, tiny notebook (fits in pocket).

# Your 7-Minute Challenge: Go Find One

Enough theory — this weekend pick a nearby Lane County trail, run your quick field checks, get one expert to confirm a single specimen, and then treat yourself to a tiny, cautious taste. One careful, verified success will build more real skill than a dozen lucky guesses. Think of it as practice with a chef's hat and a safety rope.

Challenge: post your photo package to the Cascade Mycological Society group or bring one candidate to the next Mount Pisgah ID day by Sunday and call it the "7-Minute Challenge." Do that one tidy action and you'll either have a verified edible or a story to laugh about — either way you win. Now go find one and prove you're not afraid of a little fungus-powered bravery.