

# Wild Mushrooms for Beginners



Ernie and Cathy from The  
Fungal Network

[www.TheFungalNetwork.net](http://www.TheFungalNetwork.net)



- Free food!
- Fun!
- A good reason to be in the woods!



# What will you get out of this?

1. You won't eat things that will kill you or send you to the ER
2. You will learn to identify some of the easy, common mushrooms you are likely to encounter in NC
3. You will (hopefully) be inspired to expand your skills and knowledge



# First, don't die

1. Don't eat anything that you can't positively identify as a common edible mushroom
2. Don't EVER ask anyone online to ID a mushroom for you (or at least don't act on their ID)
3. If you ever question your ID, do a cost/benefit analysis: if you're right you will enjoy eating a mushroom; if you're wrong you could be dead or have a several thousand dollar ER bill. If you are you at a point in your life where the enjoyment of eating a mushroom is more valuable than your life/health/financial solvency then have at it.



# Common Bad Guys

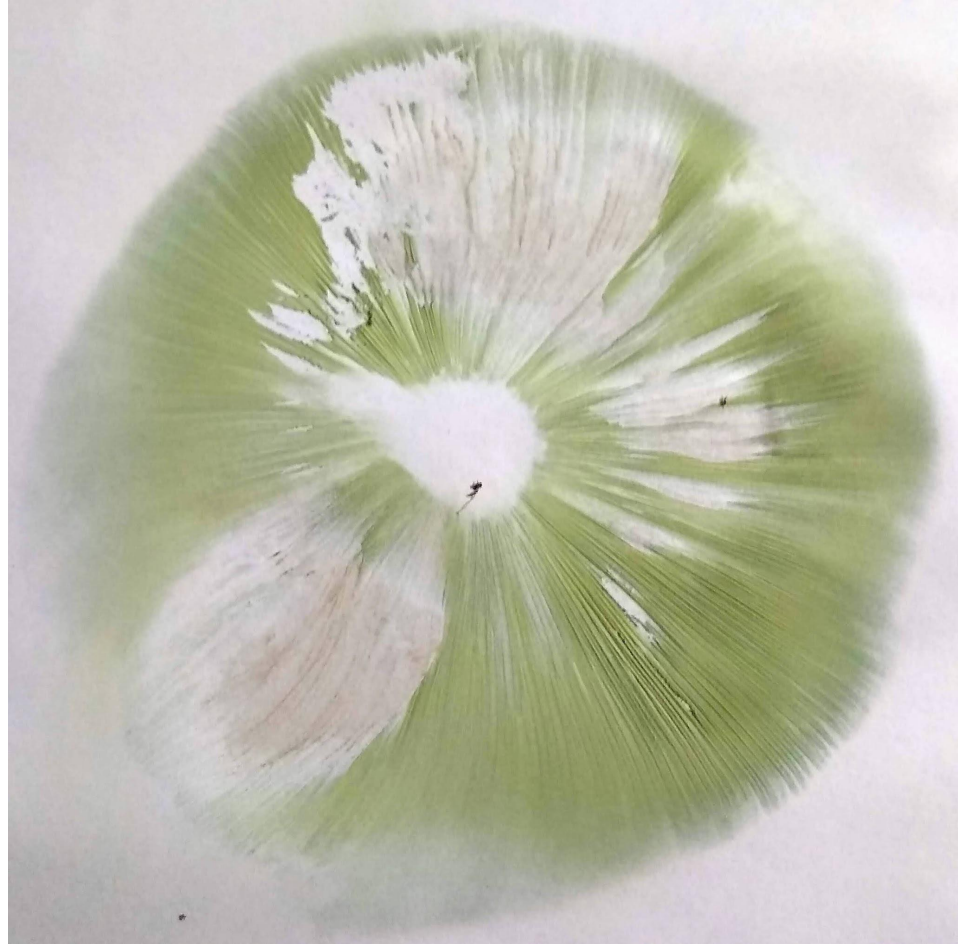
**Killer:** death cap, destroying angel, others

- Growing from the ground
- Parasol shape
- Swollen base
- Often warty cap
- Maybe white, reddish, orangeish



## Sickener: green-spored parasol

- Often seen in fairy circles on lawns
- Whitish, often with darker center on cap
- Spores green!



## Sickener: jack o' lantern

- Vivid orange, often large clusters
- Flesh the same orange inside
- Grow at the base of trees
- Sharp true gills



# How to view a mushroom

- Time of year
- Location
- What type of fertile surface does it have?
- Color and any patterns on cap and stem
- Color of spore print





# Helpful skills

- Identifying trees and other plants
- Making spore prints
- Using a dichotomous key



# How to eat wild mushrooms

1. In small amounts the first time: some people may find that they have sensitivities to certain mushrooms, so the first time you try a new one, always eat just a little the first time.
2. In almost all cases (I'm talking about you, beefsteaks) cooked. The cell walls of mushrooms are very difficult to digest, and there are also different compounds in some mushrooms that can upset stomachs if not cooked. So to maximize flavor and nutrition and minimize the chance of an upset stomach, cook them well. We recommend a basic technique of sauteing in a hot dry pan, then adding oil or other liquid after they release all of their water and start to stick to the pan.

# Good (and edible) mushrooms to know



# Morels: first mushroom of the spring



# Morel key identifiers

- Springtime
- Ridges are ON cap rather than being the result of infolding (like a crumpled paper)
- Hollow from stem continuously up through cap





# Chanterelles



# Chanterelle key identifiers

- “Gills” are not sharp, straight and parallel -- they are more ridge-like and forking, and extend down the stem
- Grow individually, or sometimes in twos, from the ground
- Inside is often lighter colored





**Black trumpets**





# Black trumpet key identifiers

- Thin, papery flesh
- Hollow all the way through
- No gills, but maybe slight ridges





Chicken of the woods



# Chicken of the woods key identifiers

- Orange, banded on top
- Grows in stacked layers
- Yellow or white pore surface, no gills
- Grows on (or at base of) hardwood



# Oysters mushrooms



# Oyster key identifiers

- Offset stem, offset clustering (like shingles)
- Growing on hardwood
- Gills white, extend down stem
- Pale spores



# Lion's mane (and relatives)



# Lion's mane key identifiers

- Growing in hardwood
- Drawn-out teeth rather than gills
- May be a large roundish cluster or more coral-like



# Maitake (hen of the woods)





# Maitake key identifiers



- Late summer to fall
- Solid white base with overlapping, feathery flat “petals”
- Top is brownish-to grayish with color variation
- Pore surface white
- At base of hardwood trees, usually oak or beech



# Resources

- **Mushroomexpert.com:** authoritative online resources including dichotomous keys
- **Field guides:** there are loads of them out there, but here are two that we like:
  - Mushrooms of West Virginia and the Central Appalachians by William C. Roody
  - A Field Guide to Mushrooms of the Carolinas by Alan E. and Arleen R. Bessette, and Michael W. Hopping
- **Social Media:**
  - On Facebook: “Piedmont Triad Mushroom Club Group,” “Piedmont Mycological Association,” and “I Love Wild Mushrooms!” groups
  - On Reddit: “Foraging,” “Mushrooms” and “Mycology” groups
- **Apps:**
  - I know there are several out there that people use for mushrooms, but the only one that I’ve tried is Seek, which is OK for basics, but I wouldn’t bet my life on it
- **Local mushroom folks:** The Fungal Network (this is us!) if you decide to grow your own

\*\* A .pdf printable version of this presentation is available at <http://TheFungalNetwork.net> under the “Education” tab and “Video Presentation Downloads”