

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
OFFICE OF HEALTH PROTECTION  
DIVISION OF FOOD, DRUGS AND DAIRIES

TECHNICAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

NUMBER: Technical Information Bulletin/ Food #16

SUBJECT: Wild Mushrooms and Cultivated Mushrooms

EFFECTIVE: April 13, 2004

SUPERCEDES: August 14, 1987

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Over 5,000 species of fleshy mushrooms grow naturally in North America. The vast majority has never been tested for toxicity. Research has shown that about a dozen species are deadly to humans, and about another hundred are poisonous to humans in some way. Some mushroom toxins affect the central nervous system while others affect the peripheral nervous system, but most cause mild to severe gastrointestinal upset. Some people react adversely to species that are harmless for most, and some react adversely to species they have eaten before without ill effects.

Although only a small percentage of wild mushrooms cause life-threatening illness, the North American Mycological Association Mushroom Poisoning Case Registry indicates that between the years 2001 and 2003, a total of 130 reports of mushroom poisonings were made involving 192 people. No human deaths associated with eating wild mushrooms have been reported between 2001-2003. It is the priority of IDPH to prevent such incidents from occurring. The State of Illinois does not have a licensure program for qualifying individuals as "experts" in the field of identifying "wild-type" mushrooms.

WILD MUSHROOMS

- A. Except as specified in part B, due to the hazards associated with improperly identified mushrooms, "wild-type" mushrooms species picked in the wild shall **not** be received for sale or distribution regardless of whether there is a charge for the mushrooms, through wholesale, retail, food service establishments or temporary events open to the general public within the State of Illinois, unless all of the following requirements are met:
1. Only *Morchella Species* may be sold or distributed to the public (specifically excluding Gyromitra and Verpa species – commonly known as false morels, wrinkled thimble-cap or smooth thimble-cap).
  2. The mushrooms shall show no signs of spoilage (i.e., sliminess, mold, soft spots, rancidity, or other structural damage, etc.).
  3. The mushrooms shall not be cut (except in the process of picking), cooked, processed or soaked in any liquids prior to being sold or distributed to the public.

4. A consumer advisory placard is displayed in a conspicuous location or an individual consumer advisory shall be given to each consumer. The advisory shall state, at a minimum, the following message:

#### NOTICE

These mushrooms have been picked in the wild and have **not** been approved as safe to eat by any expert or regulatory agency. Persons who suspect they have mushroom poisoning should seek medical care immediately if any of the following symptoms occur after consuming wild mushrooms: gastrointestinal irritation, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, sweating, dizziness, weakness, or hallucinations.

**It is strongly recommended to thoroughly cook these mushrooms prior to consumption.**

If a placard is used, the placard must:

1. Be written in English (other languages may also be provided in addition to English)
2. Be titled "NOTICE" using capital letters in bold and all letters shall be at a size not less than one-half inch, for example arial font – size 36.
3. Be written so that all letters in the placard are equally readable.
4. Maintain visibility in contrast to other posted materials.
5. Be posted near each consumer entrance or point of sale or distribution and be clearly visible.
6. Be easily readable from where consumers would normally stand to read it.

#### CULTIVATED MUSHROOMS

- B. Only the following **cultivated** mushroom species that are grown, harvested, and processed in an operation that is regulated by the food regulatory agency may be served through wholesale, retail or food service establishments:

Button, Portobello, Crimini (cultivated *Agaricus species*)

Oyster Mushroom (Hiratake) (*Pleurotus species*)

Straw Mushroom (*Volvariella volvacea*)

Wood Ear (*Auricularia auricula*)

Enoki (*Flammulina velutipes*)

Shiitake (*Lentinus edodes*)

Morel (*Morchella Species*)

Hen of the Woods (*Grifola frondosa*)

1. Identification of cultivated mushroom species served through retail or food service establishments shall have a written buyer specification, which is to remain on file in the food establishment for a minimum of 90 days from the date of sale or service. This written specification shall include:
  - a. Identification by the Latin Binomial with author and common name,
  - b. Identification in the fresh state (before drying or any other form of processing),

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- c. The name of the person making the identification, and
  - d. A statement of their qualifications and training.
2. Section (B)(1) does not apply to mushroom species if they are in packaged form and are the product of a food processing plant that is regulated by the food regulatory agency.

#### References

Beug, M.W. (2004). Mushroom Poisoning Case Registry, North American Mycological Association Reports for 2001, 2002, and 2003.

Lincoff, G. H.(1994). National Audubon Society Field Guide to Northern American Mushrooms. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Publishers.

U.S. Public Health Service. 2001 U.S. Food and Drug Administration Food Code.