

# Harvesting and Selling Wild Mushrooms in Minnesota

Minnesota Department of Agriculture; Minnesota Department of Health; University of Minnesota Extension

## Background

The purpose of this factsheet is to provide the legal requirements related to the harvesting, sale, and purchase of wild mushrooms.

## Regulations on Wild Mushroom Sales

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has specific regulations for individuals who harvest and wish to sell wild mushrooms. To learn more about becoming an MDA approved source, or to inquire about an MDA license, call the MDA Dairy and Food Inspection Division at (651) 201-6027.

There are specific regulations in the Minnesota Food Code (Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4626) regarding wild mushrooms. The Minnesota Food Code requires that all food sold or served to the public must be obtained from an approved source.

Visit the following web site for a current version of the Minnesota Food Code:  
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety/business/index.html>

## Who May Sell Wild Mushrooms?

The Minnesota Food Code states that a food establishment may only purchase wild mushrooms from an approved source where each mushroom is individually inspected and found to be safe by a mushroom identification expert.

The Minnesota Food Code defines a mushroom identification expert as someone whose knowledge of mushroom species has been “...*verified and approved by the regulatory authority through the successful completion of a wild mushroom identification course provided by either an accredited college or university or a mycological society.*”

## What are the Steps to Becoming an Approved Source of Wild Mushrooms?

To be an approved (safe) source of wild mushrooms, and to sell wild mushrooms to a food establishment in Minnesota,



the *mushroom identification* expert must: (1) qualify to be licensed by MDA or a delegated agency; and (2) obtain a letter from the college or university where they took a mushroom identification course certifying that they have successfully completed the course. That letter must be provided to MDA or the local authority that issues a license.

**Individuals** that harvest and sell mushrooms grown only on their own or rented land may not be required to be licensed, but must still comply with all other applicable rules and regulations, including documentation of training as a *mushroom identification* expert.

According to Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4626, cultivated wild mushrooms species are considered to be from a safe source, if they are grown, harvested, and processed in a facility that is regulated by the food regulatory agency that has jurisdiction over the operation. Wild mushrooms, including those from independent harvesters, that are sold in packaged form by a regulated processing plant are also considered to be from a safe source. These plants are licensed by MDA, and they employ one or more recognized *mushroom identification* experts.

## Which Wild Mushrooms may be Sold by an Individual Harvester in Minnesota?

The **morel** mushroom is currently the only wild mushroom that may be sold directly to markets, restaurants, or consumers in Minnesota. No mushroom identification experts have been certified to sell any wild mushrooms except morel mushrooms at this time.

## Warning for the Mushroom Lover

There are roughly 250 species of wild mushrooms that can cause illness or death. Mushrooms poisoning may result in symptoms ranging from a mild stomachache to severe



*Amanita phalloides*,  
the death cap  
mushroom.

physical distress—including vomiting, diarrhea, cramps, and loss of coordination.

Three of the most dangerous groups of wild mushrooms are Amanitas, false morels, and *little brown mushrooms* or LBMs. LBMs include a large number of small, dull-colored mushrooms that are difficult to identify. Of all the poisonous species, Amanitas cause 90 percent of mushroom-related deaths.

Even safe mushrooms can cause allergic reactions in some people. The first time you try a new wild mushroom, eat only a small amount and wait 24 hours before eating more. It is always best to eat moderate amounts of wild mushrooms and to avoid eating them raw because they are hard to digest. Eat only firm, fresh mushrooms.

**Notify your doctor immediately if you suspect mushroom poisoning of any kind**

### Tips for the Mushroom Harvester

There is no easy way to test and separate edible from poisonous mushrooms. There are many myths (including testing with a silver spoon, checking to see if insects will eat the mushroom, and judging by color) but none of these is reliable. To avoid mushroom poisoning:

- Wrap each type of mushroom separately to avoid cross-contamination between safe and unsafe species.
- Identify every mushroom you collect, and only eat those whose identification is certain. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Strictly avoid any mushroom that looks like an amanita, all little brown mushrooms, and all false morels.

### Tips for the Mushroom Buyer:

*Do not take chances with the health of your customers or family, and the financial security of your business.*

Buy wild-picked mushrooms from an individual who can demonstrate their standing as an approved *mushroom identification* expert.

It is unsafe and illegal for restaurants, grocery and convenience stores to buy any food from an unapproved/undocumented source.



*Amanitas can be white, yellow, red, or brown. All Amanita species have white gills, and a sac-like cup surrounding the base of the stem.*

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food>

(651) 201-6027 • 1-800-967-AGRI

[www.health.state.mn/divs/eh/food/fs/index.html](http://www.health.state.mn/divs/eh/food/fs/index.html)

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