Foragin' Policy

Morel Dilemma Episode 8 Script. Written and copyright Elizabeth S Gall 2016.

[Music begins]

Izzie: Welcome to Season 2 of Morel Dilemma, an exploration of why some mushrooms are so highly sought, some are so heavily cultivated, and some are so very dangerous. I'm your host, Izzie Gall. I hope you all had an amazing winter holidays, and are staying warm. And if I have any listeners in the southern hemisphere – Hello! My goodness! How did you get here? – I hope you are staying cool.

A new year is all about new beginnings. Lots of us have resolved to make this year our best yet by going on new adventures, learning new skills and trying new things. That's why this episode is all about using your newfound love of mushrooms to meet ALL your New Year's goals! Want to eat more locally? Forage for mushrooms! Want to get more exercise? Forage for mushrooms! Try new foods? Learn something new? Make new friends? Forage, forage, forage!

[Music ends]

Izzie: My American and British listeners are probably not feeling too enthusiastic about the idea of going out and picking mushrooms on your own. If I have any listeners in Eastern Europe or Asia, though, you're probably rolling your eyes at that trepidation. World cultures are fairly starkly divided between being really comfortable with wild mushrooms, which is called being mycophilic, and being generally afraid of wild mushrooms, or mycophobic. American mycologist Greg Marley thinks mycophobia has three prongs: thinking that it's hard to distinguish between safe and toxic mushrooms; thinking that *most* wild mushrooms are poisonous; and thinking that *most* poisonous mushrooms are instantly lethal. Before we go any further, let me dispel those myths.

First, let's talk about identifying mushrooms. There are tons of very easily identifiable mushrooms that are perfectly delicious and don't have any dangerous relatives, though it's true that some yummy mushrooms do have nauseating lookalikes. The easiest mushrooms to identify are commonly recommended to beginners, and many of them are considered "foolproof." I will talk about a few of those in detail after the break.

Second, there are *more* edible mushrooms than poisonous mushrooms, even though not all edible mushrooms are necessarily tasty. Like a raw acorn, a polypore will probably not be delicious, but it won't hurt you either. With more than 10,000 fruiting fungi in the world, it's not surprising that the Food and Agricultural Organization has found that 1,154 varieties of mushroom are regularly eaten in 85 countries

worldwide. Less than 10 percent of mushrooms are likely to make you sick. Yes, most Amanita species are scary and poisonous, but they are easy to avoid.

Finally, even if you do get poisoned, you will probably be miserable for a few hours at most. Mushroom poisonings generally involve gastrointestinal distress of varying degrees, from which victims usually fully recover in just a day. In rare cases, poisoning can interact with preexisting conditions such as kidney or liver disease to become life-threatening, but even then, hospitalization can often help victims fully recover.

[Musical tone]

Izzie: With our myths dispelled, let's talk about the fun aspects of foraging. For this episode I was lucky enough to speak with three people who devote a lot of their time to picking, cooking, and eating wild mushrooms.

First, meet Eugenia Bone. She's the author of several cookbooks, like Kitchen Ecosystem and Well-Preserved, and an amateur mycology book aptly titled Mycophilia. Eugenia has also served as the co-president of the New York Mycological society. She was never too badly affected by general American mycophobia.

Eugenia: I grew up in an Italian-American family, and the way we interacted with nature was via food. So we foraged for dandelion greens and blueberries, and a certain degree, mushrooms.

Izzie: As she grew older, Eugenia became increasingly interested in foraging fungi. She now makes seasonal trips all over the country, hunting morels in the Sierra Nevada, chanterelles in Colorado and truffles in Oregon before heading home to foray for maitakes in New York.

I also talked with Ari Rockland Miller and Jenna Antonia DiMare, who co-founded a mushroom hunting blog called The Mushroom Forager detailing their mycological adventures in the woods near their Vermont home. Ari's interest in mushrooms came to him early on, despite his family's general mycophobia.

Ari: I was always interested in wild mushrooms and wild foods. When I was a little kid I would just marvel at all the mushrooms in the woods around me and gather them from the forest and pile them on the hood of my parents' cars. You know, I think every parent may be reluctant to hear the kid is interested in wild mushrooms. Obviously there is some rational reason to be very careful and cautious of mushrooms because some are deadly, but the phobia can go a little too far.

Izzie: Eventually, he won them over, and his mom gave Ari his first field guide to mushrooms when he was ten years old. By the time he met Jenna, he was foraging for the table. His passion inspired her to gather edibles as well, and the blog was born.

Jenna: I grew up hiking and have always been a naturalist and there's no question that my love of mushroom hunting and foraging for a wild edible started from Ari's.

Izzie: Now Ari and Jenna host classes for other hopeful mycophiles and are creating a mycophilic environment for their two year old daughter Eliana, who loves porcinis, a delicious Boletus variety.

Jenna: When mild mushrooms are in season, we do go out everyday into the forest and look for mushrooms, and if we have the pleasure of finding yummy things we definitely bring them home and eat them.

Ari: That's part of the beauty of mushroom hunting, just the feeling of that connection of the full cycle of food going from the forest, you know, into your body, and it's just a really full circle way to connect with the natural world in a flavorful and rewarding way.

Izzie: Part of that rewarding cycle is making sure that your foraging is sustainable and not damaging to the forest. A lot of folks have misconceptions about what harvesting a mushroom really means, especially in a mycophobic society, so let's lay those to rest. The major ecological impact most people fear is that removing the mushroom can reduce the number of future mushrooms. You can actually hear me make this mistake in Episode 1, where I lament that picking puffballs may lead to fewer puffballs.

Actually, a 13-year study in Oregon found *no* difference in annual fruit production between a plot where people picked mushrooms and a plot where they didn't. In fact, removing a mature mushroom may help the population. Most spores dropped by a mushroom apparently stay within just a few feet of the mushroom itself, which is why fairy rings happen. By carrying a mushroom away from its clearing, you may be helping the species spread spores in a new area!

Another myth is that picking the mushroom kills the fungus. Remember from Episode 1 that the mushroom is just one *part* of the fungus.

Ari: Mushrooms are not the organism itself so it's important to remember that we're not killing anything when we harvest a mushroom.

Izzie: All the same, foragers do need to be cautious not to disturb the mycelia or other species growing and living around a mushroom patch. Methods like raking for truffles and kicking up the soil can disturb the tiny, hairlike structures that form the fungal mycelia. Such habits are not just unsustainable - according to Eugenia, they're also less fun.

Eugenia: The primary way those truffles are collected is by raking under the tree.[56:45] It tears up all the little root tendrils, you're raking up immature truffles. it's just a destructive process. And I've also hunted Oregon truffles with dogs, which is this marvelous phenomenon. I mean just imagine these pine forests with all these scents wafting between the trees. [56:15] The dog is running back and forth perpendicular to those scents until he picks up the truffle and then he runs upstream, and it's wonderful.

Izzie: For aboveground mushrooms, you can cut them at the stem with a knife or gently rip the fruits up at ground level. Both techniques are safe for future harvests. You do need to be careful about how many mushrooms you take, though. Older mushrooms may have dropped their spores and finished their jobs, so they're up for grabs, but younger ones haven't had the chance. Sustainable foraging means leaving enough mushrooms to complete the life cycle.

Ari: In general, that means never picking more than half the patch, often a lot less than half the patch, and really favoring mature mushrooms that have already dropped a lot of their spores.

Izzie: While Eugenia also believes in that philosophy, the highly sustainable standard isn't always easy to uphold.

Eugenia: If there's only like two little chanterelles and there's nothing else, then I won't pick them because I can't use them. [56:45] Then my other [57:00] self; which is my greedy, gluttonous, self, says "Fuck it, I'm takin' 'em all." I don't care if it's, you know, the size of my pinky nail. [59:00]

Izzie: Eugenia says mushroom foragers are like treasure hunters, willing to go great lengths for a find and unwilling to leave a trophy behind.

Eugenia: If it weren't for our interest in science, I don't think we'd be that different from the guy in Ft. Lauderdale who's working the beach with a metal detector. We're kind of on that level in many ways.

Izzie: Talking to mushroom foragers, you do get the sense that they're off on a grand hunt for booty.

Jenna: All of these mushrooms are really fun to find in their own way and all treasures as well in their own little unique way.

Ari: Chanterelles are wonderful. I love seeing the splash of gold, that beautiful golden band in the forest.

Izzie: But when you're just getting started, it's important not to look at the world through chanterelle-colored glasses. Proper identification is paramount for anything you might want to eat. Start out slow, with easily identifiable species that are simple to distinguish from anything dangerous.

Jenna: Ari's and my approach to teaching people about mushroom hunting is to start with what you feel most comfortable with, start with some of the easier mushrooms to identify and build from there.

Izzie: The Mushroom Forager team also recommends that you start with a small piece of any new mushroom you're foraging, in case you are allergic to it. In case you missed the warning at the end of every episode of this podcast so far, species marked edible in

guidebooks *can* make you sick. Eugenia herself is allergic to a commonly suggested beginner mushroom, the Sulphur Shelf, also called chicken of the woods. If you do discover that you're allergic to one such mushroom, don't let that be the end of your new hobby!

Eugenia: No, it wasn't that discouraging, because you know what? It's not that fabulous of a mushroom.

Izzie: Mushroom allergies are like any other allergies. You might be lactose intolerant but still able to enjoy goat cheese, or be allergic to strawberries and still eat plenty of blueberries, raspberries and blackberries with impunity. It's also likely that if you're careful identifying what you eat, you may never get sick. Like, ever.

Jenna: We have never had stomach ache or even mild stomach upset from anything we eat and that's I think that's partly due to our prudence picking mushrooms.

Izzie: To inspire *you* to prudence, I am about to tell you some of the dangers of misidentified mushrooms. For the most part they are just funny-sad stories of people throwing up for a few days, but there will be a lethal account from 120 years ago. If you don't want to hear about that, and would rather skip ahead to the intermission and more forage-happy info, that's at the 15-minute mark.

Greg Marley calls carelessness about the mushrooms you forage "dinner by mushroom Russian roulette". One of the most dangerous habits a forager can develop is overconfidence. If you try too hard to make a mushroom you've found match the description of the mushroom you *want* to find, or convince yourself before setting out that you will definitely find a certain mushroom, you could put yourself in danger. In 2000, a report from Russia found that a lot of Russians who accidentally poison themselves claim that they ate a perfectly safe variety of mushroom, but that the particular mushroom they ate must have been a mutant. When the so-called mutant mushrooms were tested, it turns out that they were all, in fact, perfectly normal mushrooms from a dangerous species. But these people, who had grown up in a mycophilic society, were convinced that they hadn't made a mistake. This is the danger of becoming complacent, and being overconfident in your skills too fast. No matter how good you think you are, make sure you are 100% confident in your mushroom identification.

A particularly dire example of misidentification comes to us all the way from 1897. Italian diplomat Count Achilles de Vecchj, who considered himself an expert mycologist, decided to eat some of the (*Amanita muscaria*) mushrooms growing on an acquaintance's property. He prepared a massive breakfast, eating 24 mushroom caps himself and feeding 12 caps to a friend of his, Dr. Kelly. Soon after he arrived at work, Dr. Kelly felt very ill. He went straight to the hospital and, after an unpleasant few days, made a full recovery. Alas, when the Count fell ill, he refused treatment. Being generally in bad health, heavy muscarine poisoning did not suit him, and he

died the day after his mushroomy breakfast. Unfortunately, the poisoned immigrant is a common tale; people who emigrate from mycophilic areas commonly misidentify mushrooms in their new location. Always follow a local guidebook wherever you forage; bringing a local expert with you is an even better idea.

Ari told me about a more recent example of mushroom confusion, with a happier ending. As the writer of a mushroom blog, he gets a lot of identification requests by email.

Ari: "This guy sent me an email asking me, "Is this a chanterelle I have here?" I said, "No, not even close, not even the right color." He said "Thank you so much, you're a lifesaver." You know, that's typical. People often are off the mark at first and that's why they ask me. But, the problem with this guy is that he wrote me back two weeks later and said, "Oh I just had the most delicious chanterelles."

Izzie: You can probably guess where this is going.

Ari: I said to him "Are you sure, because two weeks ago you sent me an email and I told you it wasn't even the right color and you weren't capable of I.D.ing this on your own yet." He writes back 20 minutes later and says "I guess not, we're vomiting right now."

Izzie: It turns out this guy had picked a different variety of orange mushroom, called Jack O' Lantern. It's commonly mistaken for chanterelles by beginners. Don't worry, the man made a full recovery after a few miserable days… as did his now-ex girlfriend. Don't make this mistake, friends. If you learn slowly and make sure you have that 100% ID, foraging can be very safe. Learning from experts really is the best way to begin - Ari and Jenna have never had someone who joined their foray classes later get sick from a misidentified mushroom. Beyond showing you the safe species to pick, an expert will instill you with important habits and caution.

These stories aren't meant to scare you away from foraging, but to make sure you know how important it is to be sure what you're eating. In more mycophilic regions of the world, it's generally accepted that every once in a while people give themselves small bouts of sickness. Greg Marley says in his book, quote, "European mushroom-lovers have a very different attitude than Americans about minor illness caused by mushrooms; they take it in stride as a manageable side effect of enjoying a diverse diet of mushrooms." And remember that the chances of eating a deadly mushroom are very low even if you aren't being as careful as you should. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently estimated that 3,000 people die from food poisoning per year in the US, only one or two people in the US die of *mushroom* poisoning each year.

Now that we've gotten some of the darker stuff out of the way, let's move on to the happier aspects of foraging. For our intermission, we have a charming story of mushroom hunting in the woods of Russia. After that, we'll talk about some good

beginner mushrooms, and wrap up with some more important information about safe places to forage and how to prepare your wild finds.

[Music begins]

Voicemail Recording: Hello! You have reached the voicemail for the podcast Morel Dilemma, hosted by me, Izzie Gall. I can't talk fungi right now, but if you leave me your name, number, and a brief message, I will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you!

Anna: Hello there. My name is Anna, and I invite you to travel with me to my childhood in Russia. As a child I spent some summers with my grandmother, who lived in the northern part of Russia, and during the summer even deeper into the country, in a village called Myakotiha. The name can be literally translated as "a soft and quiet place". Foraging is a common practice, and my grandma knew exactly where and when to go to get the best harvest. The best outings were the mushroom hunts.

My grandmother didn't study mycology. She was taught by her mother and the experience foraging.The colloquial names for mushrooms often are in accordance with their habitats. So the "under the birch tree" mushroom versus the one that would grow under the oak tree. The most prized mushroom had quite a simple name in Russian. Just "White Mushroom"... known in English as "King Bolete". If you found one, you felt like the king of [the] mushroom hunt. Other favorites were the bright chanterelles. They were innovatively prepared for late breakfast with eggs and loads of butter. The common name for these are "Little Foxes", reflecting their vibrant color.

The best part of the experience was the hunt. If you ever went out, you have obviously discovered how tricky mycelium is. It was, and is, always a game of hide and seek.

[Music ends]

Izzie: Welcome back. The next step on your adventure towards foraging is knowing some of the easiest mushrooms for beginners to find and identify. I'm not going to describe the mushrooms here. I'll give you a list and some general information, including pros and cons for each mushroom. I'm not including extensive details, certainly nothing that is anywhere close to a full diagnostic description. If one of these sounds interesting to you, you should get a guidebook, familiarize yourself with the mushroom and all of its lookalikes, and when you go, go with an expert or a mycological society from your area.

The idea of beginner's mushrooms hasn't always been around. In mycophilic societies, children learn about mushrooms from foraging hikes with their families, and possibly in school. The vocabulary of mushroom species builds up naturally, like the names of flowers or animals or colors. In mycophobic societies, there wasn't always such a thing as a "beginner's" mushroom, because all mushrooms were considered dangerous, so nobody should ever become a beginner in picking them. However, in the 1940s, American mycology was gaining steam and the public was

becoming more interested in mushroom hunting. Into this atmosphere, American mycologist Clyde Christensen released a short list of wild edible mushrooms that were supposedly easy for a beginner to identify, and hard to confuse with poisonous species. These mushrooms were called the "Foolproof Four".

The first of the Foolproof Four is the morel. Not only delicious when cooked, the morel possesses a distinctive, spongy cap and hollow cap and stem, which differentiates it from many other mushrooms. The biggest reason Christensen included it is that there are no poisonous species in the morel genus *Morchella*. A caveat to this so-called foolproof mushroom?

Ari: Well morels are actually sort of poisonous raw.

Izzie: In his book Chanterelle Dreams, Amanita Nightmares, Greg Marley recounts a 1992 banquet in Vancouver attended by almost 500 guests, including the head of the Department of Health. No doubt hoping to impress his important clientele, a chef added raw morels to the salad, accidentally poisoning 77 of the guests, some of whom required hospitalization. So much for impressing the Department of Health. But as long as you stick to cooking your morels, *you* will have much greater success.

There's also the small issue that there's actually a mushroom called "the false morel", and it's pretty dangerous. It actually contains high amounts of a chemical that's also usable as jet fuel. Good for rockets, not so good for your digestion. Luckily, they're pretty easy to tell apart once you know what you're looking for. There are many features that distinguish the real and false morels - for example, the caps of real morels are covered in pockets, while false morels have slick, brainy looking lobes. Plus, the false morel is actually considered a delicacy in Finland, where it is painstakingly prepared for safe, or at least safe-er, consumption.

The second of the Foolproof Four is much better for the nervous. Besides generally being quite large, providing a big payout for the forage investment, giant puffballs are smooth and rotund, easy to spot and identify. Giant puffballs should only be eaten when they are young. You can tell a puffball is good to eat by slicing it in half. If the mushroom is full of soft, white flesh throughout, it's perfect. Slicing through also helps eliminate any potentially dangerous or unpleasant lookalikes. Very young amanitas look like small puffballs from the outside, but cutting them open reveals the distinctive shape of a cap and stem. Puffballs are solid throughout, so you can toss the amanitas with ease. If you cut open a firm puffball and it's not white - say it's dark purple inside - you know to avoid that too. It may be a poisonous lookalike, or it may just be a mature puffball. Older puffballs are squishy and yellow or purple inside. They aren't particularly dangerous, but they are bitter enough to ruin a whole batch. Ari says the best way to make this a foolproof mushroom is to make sure you only look at mushrooms that are bigger than your fist. Stick with large puffballs with a consistent white interior and you can't go wrong.

The third of the Foolproof Four is the Sulphur Shelf, or Chicken of the Woods. While Christensen listed this as just one mushroom, it's really several closely related species. This bracket fungus is bright orange and very fleshy looking - not only is it eye-catching, it has no poisonous lookalikes. This is another one that's very important to thoroughly cook. Also remember to start with small portions, as some people, like Eugenia, may be allergic. As long as you cooked it first, the allergic reaction should just be annoying.

The last, and least, of Christensen's Foolproof Four is the Shaggy Mane. It's the least popular of the four, mostly because it has to be eaten so fast after being picked. Unlike many mushrooms, which release their spores while keeping their caps intact, Shaggy Mane spores can only be released after the caps have dissolved into a black goo. The mushroom actually starts digesting itself once it reaches a certain age, or is picked. Cooking stops the process, but even if it goes for too long, the mushrooms can still be useful - as a source of writing ink. This is a true historical fact. The mushrooms are tall and white, and are heavily textured with feathery scale-like protrusions.

[Musical tone]

Izzie: When I asked Ari and Jenna about the so-called Foolproof Four, their thoughts weren't exactly glowing.

Ari: I don't think any mushroom is really foolproof. I think that term is sort of misleading because anyone can make a mistake with any wild mushroom.

Jenna: Even when we describe a foolproof mushroom during a workshop we also know that folks that are just starting to learn about hunting for mushrooms don't always see those nuances that we see in the forest. So we are careful about that.

Izzie: Jenna was particularly alarmed at the inclusion of Shaggy Mane. She said a beginner might not recognize the difference between the feathery texture of a Shaggy Mane and the veil warts of an immature Death Cap mushroom. I wasn't sure I could see that parallel, but a very quick Google search brought up a 2010 article in the Guardian about a man who ended up in the hospital because he had made this exact mistake. Important pullout quotes from that article include, "At home, I spent some time looking for my mushroom book to identify what I'd picked, but couldn't find it." and "I was in a rush because I was going out, so I thought, 'It's OK, I know what I'm doing.'" As you might imagine, the aptly-named Death Cap is no joke. Fortunately, this gentleman realized his mistake quickly and, after a few weeks in the hospital, did recover. But it's a good reminder that, again, convincing yourself that you have a particular mushroom is not the same as properly identifying a mushroom.

I asked The Mushroom Foragers what they consider to be better "beginner" mushrooms. Jenna said Sulphur Shelf is a good bet, as is black trumpet - which looks just like a black trumpet coming up from the ground and has no poisonous lookalikes. Her favorite beginner mushroom is Lion's Mane, which makes large fruiting bodies

that don't have gills, but instead have large 'teeth' that look like icicles. Ari said giant puffballs can stay on the list—

Ari: But very specifically *giant* puffball.

Izzie: —and added hedgehog mushrooms, which have teeth similar to those of lion's mane. Despite some objections to Christensen's list, in principle, Ari and Jenna like the idea of "beginner" mushrooms.

Jenna: We definitely point out which mushrooms are easier to begin with and there's no question that I would say that a lion's mane is much safer to forage for a beginner than say a chanterelle which has lookalikes like Jack O' Lantern.

Ari: The overall concept of the foolproof four is the idea of there being certain mushrooms that are safer, that you start with, that you focus on and master first. I think that's a great general teaching framework.

Izzie: So let's say you've looked through your local guidebook and called up an expert or a mycological society willing to help you on your first foray. You may be surprised to find out that your expert isn't heading into the woods right by your road, or the lawns where you've seen giant puffballs sprout up. Identifying the right mushroom is only part of the process - the location of your harvest is also very important.

A lot of fungi grow by reaching out mycelia into areas that plants can't access, to get nutrients they can't access. When it's mushrooming time, many of those nutrients go into the mushroom. That's why you may have heard mushrooms referred to as accumulators: they accumulate minerals and nutrients in the soil. Unfortunately, many mushrooms are really good at accumulating high levels of heavy metals or pesticides. This is probably great defense for the fungus, but isn't so great for you to eat. And they don't stop at pesticides.

Eugenia: Well, here's a good one, you can see this on the BBC, and there's this guy he went to Chernobyl, to a town outside of Chernobyl where folks had been collecting mushrooms in the shadow of the reactor, you know, the disaster site? And this guy had a Geiger counter and he's going over the fruits and it's like tick, tick, tick until he hits the mushroom and it's like [rapidly whirring machine noise] ... and he said to them, "The mushrooms are radioactive." And the vendor said "Yeah we know, but we believe if you drink enough vodka with it, it mitigates the radioactivity."

Izzie: That's why foragers should always avoid disturbed areas. Though not quite as dramatic as the mushrooms outside Chernobyl, Eugenia also warned against mushrooms by mine tailings, which accumulate heavy metals. Jenna cautioned that folks at farmer's markets should always check where a forager found their bounty.

Jenna: Not all mushroom hunters are practicing ethical wildcrafting[1] approach and might pick these chanterelles, or probably more commonly a morel, in a disturbed habitat like the roadside. Could it have been sprayed with pesticides?

Izzie: Morels especially require caution, because they can accumulate lead and arsenic compounds. This mostly is an issue because morels love growing in apple orchards, and from about 1900 to about 1950, arsenate compounds were the main pesticides used in apple orchards. An important feature of heavy metal compounds is that they stick around in the soil, and are really only mobilized by fungi. One morel from an orchard that used to use arsenate compounds isn't going to hurt you, but if you eat a lot of them over a long period of time, you might get pretty sick. This actually happened to a mycologist, whose story you can read in Greg Marley's book. After 30 years of harvesting morels from apple orchards, the man suddenly fell ill with acute arsenic poisoning. Fortunately, after nine months of intensive treatment he did fully recover.

Eugenia also told me a story of mushroom accumulators that are even *better* than usual.

Eugenia: On the other hand in Pennsylvania, there are mushrooms growing on the cocoa husks outside the Hershey factory and that they smell like chocolate.

Izzie: That case demonstrates some of the potential benefits of mushrooms as accumulators - their nutrition value comes from that same ability. In fact, it's because of all the interesting nutrients and compounds in natural soils that many people prefer the flavor of wild mushrooms over cultivated strains. Even so, it's obviously better to be cautious than to be radioactive!

You can count on your mycological expert to tell you where it's safe to harvest - and beyond that, where it's legal. Parks, national forests and private property should be avoided if you don't have permission or a license.

Jenna: There are rules and regulations varying state to state for state parks regarding whether or not you actually can harvest mushrooms.

Eugenia: Like dove hunting or anything else, you have to get your licenses from the forester, but that's not a big deal, you know. It's usually pretty cheap.

Izzie: Finding a good foraging spot doesn't have to be a drag. Once you and your expert have found a legal, safe area of the woods, it'll be much more peaceful than walking by the highway or a golf course anyhow.

Don't leave your expert behind without asking the proper way to prepare your finds. Ari and Jenna cook up the mushrooms foraged during their classes for students to eat immediately, a satisfying end to the lesson. Cooking helps break down the tough cell

[1] "Wildcrafting" is the general term used for foraging fungi, herbs, and plants.

walls of the mushroom, making the nutrients and proteins inside available for your body to use. Beyond that, some mushrooms that are prized for their taste are mildly or severely poisonous raw. Remember the raw morel banquet, or the prized rocket fuel false morels of Finland. Some of the most exquisite mushrooms will make you very sick if you don't cook them. But with all the amazing recipes out there using a wide variety of wild mushrooms, why would you ever want to skip the culinary side of mushroom hunting?

If you're in the Vermont area, consider visiting Ari and Jenna. You can find them at TheMushroomForager.com. That website also includes Ari's blog and the ForageCast, which is updated each week with what's fruiting. If you're somewhere else, you can search out foraging classes and experts in your area. There really are mycological societies everywhere these days, especially New York, where you can see mushrooms AND me at the same time! For a fun look at general mycological information, check out Eugenia's book Mycophilia: Revelations from the Weird World of Mushrooms, or check out her cookbooks at Mycophilia.com.

If you proceed carefully, ensure a 100% positive ID, and cook up something scrumptious, mushroom foraging could be your new favorite hobby!

[Music begins]

Izzie: "Morel Dilemma" is written and produced by me, Izzie Gall. Our theme song is "Fungi Among I", composed and performed by John Bradley. Special thanks this episode to Anna for doing the intermission. If you want to hear your voice on the podcast, you can call the hotline at 347-41-MOREL and leaving a mushroomy message for an episode intermission.

If you would like to make a donation to support the podcast, Morel Dilemma is on Patreon, where you can receive cool rewards for donating, and donations start at just $1 a month. That would help me a lot! If you can't donate financially, but you still want to help, that's cool too! Leaving a review on iTunes would be a really awesome way to do that. You can find other ways to contribute, and other Morel Dilemma content, at moreldilemma.org.

Yes, even at the end of this episode where I've said it a hundred times, I would like to remind everyone that mushroom hunting is tricky business, and you should never eat a wild mushroom unless an expert has positively identified it in person, and told you it is safe to eat. Remember that everyone is different and allergies to uncommon foods are hard to predict. Species marked as edible in guide books could still make you sick. There are other ways of enjoying fungi. My favorite is podcasting.

[Music ends]

Resources

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