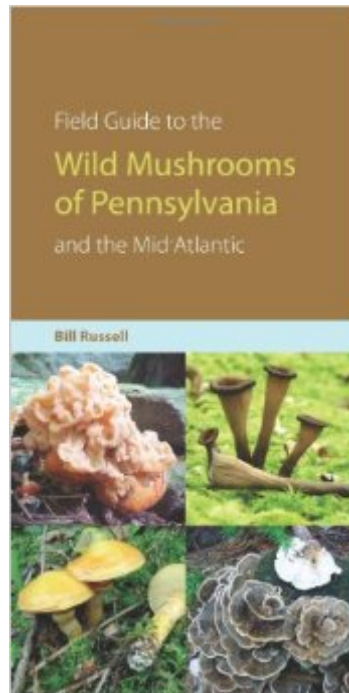


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Field Guide To Wild Mushrooms Of Pennsylvania And The Mid-Atlantic (Keystone Books®)



Synopsis

To most Americans, mushrooms are the brown lumps in the soup one uses to make a tuna casserole, but to a select few, mushrooms are the abundant yet often well-hidden delicacies of the forests. In spite of their rather dismal reputation, most wild mushrooms are both edible and delicious, when prepared properly. From the morel to the chanterelle and the prolific and aptly named chicken of the woods, mushrooms can easily be harvested and enjoyed, if you know where to look and what to look for. Bill Russell's Field Guide to the Wild Mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic helps the reader learn just that—specifically for the often-neglected East Coast mushrooms of the United States and Canada. Suited to both the novice and the experienced mushroom hunter, this book helps the reader identify mushrooms with the use of illustrations, descriptions, and environmental observations. Russell's fifty years of experience in hunting, studying, and teaching about wild mushrooms have been carefully distilled into this easy-to-use and well-designed guide. The book is divided into the four seasons, each with its unique mushroom offerings. Each mushroom section includes a detailed description, information about the mushroom's biology, tips on where the mushroom is most likely to be found, and a short "nutshell" description for quick reference. The book also includes color photographs of each of the mushrooms described. Russell's Field Guide to the Wild Mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic shows the reader not only how to identify the most common mushrooms found in the region but also how to avoid common copycats—and what to do with the mushrooms once they're identified and harvested. With both color illustrations and insightful descriptions of one hundred of the area's most common mushrooms, Field Guide is an indispensable reference for the curious hiker, the amateur biologist, or the adventurous chef.

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Customer Reviews

I was able to meet the author of this book. I found both the book and the author very helpful. Bill has been hunting mushrooms all his life, and actually Penn State Press came to him to write this book and with good reason. The book has great photos and useful descriptions that are useful for the novice mushroom hunters, but plenty helpful for the experinced too. The author also give mushroom walks. I can't wait to go on one. Author of "Hobo Finds A Home" and editor "Of A Predatory Heart"

As a PA resident, I found this book invaluable. It is clearly written, and has great photos as well. Anyone intersted in mushrooms should... make that must, have several references, but if you live in this part of the world this is the first book to look at! Other books I've read are not always clear as to a specific mushroom's distribution. I know the fungi in this book are found here, and that focus makes identification so much easier.

It is a wonderful book. Lots of color photographs and packed with detailed descriptions of mushrooms. The field guide allows the reader to identify mushrooms that are common to the Mid Atlantic, but also the Eastern United States. Included are many tasty recipes that make mushroom hunting the joy that it is. It is an essential guide for both amateur and professional alike.

OVERVIEW: I am an amateur mushrooer who has been casually identifying mushrooms in Southwestern Pennsylvania for about one year and wanted to get more serious about identifying edible mushrooms. Given its regional focus, this book seemed like the best place to start. I have found it to be an informative, practical guide with detailed descriptions and excellent photos of 100 regional mushrooms with a focus on edibility, as well as useful information on mushrooming in general. The book itself is compact and sturdy.
DESCRIPTION (mostly objective): The main bulk of the book are the individual entries. It covers 100 mushrooms, about 75% of which are edible. It is divided into sections for each season with 13 mushrooms in the Spring section, 57 in Summer, 19 in Fall, and 11 in Winter. Each entry appears only once in the season in which it is most likely to be found, even if it can be found in multiple seasons. Each section is further divided into sub-sections for Gilled Mushrooms, Pored Mushrooms, and Neither Gilled Nor Pored Mushrooms. Each of these

sections is further divided by color of spores. Entries are numbered consecutively 1-100. In each season, the text descriptions appear first, with the corresponding numbered photos at the rear of the section. There is only one color photo for each entry, but the photos (usually taken by the author) often show multiple views (top, side, underside) of the mushroom. An index includes both common and Latin names. Each entry is headed by the entry number, the mushroom's common/vernacular name(s), and its Latin name along with phonetic spelling, followed by a general prose description focusing on identification, growth habits, and edibility. After the prose description, are headings with detailed descriptions for Cap, Gills/Spores, Spore Print, Stem, Growth Habit, Edibility, Copycats, and Tips (for identifying, harvesting, preparing, growing etc.). Also included is a brief, highlighted "In a nutshell" description. In addition to the specific individual entries, the book includes general information on identifying mushrooms (w/illustrations), mushroom names, gathering mushrooms, edible & non-edible mushrooms, toxins, and preparing mushrooms, along with a handful of recipes. The author has a lifetime of experience with mushrooms, as both a hobbyist and a professional, especially in the Central Pennsylvania region, and the content of this book seems to be based on both personal experience and professional & academic study. His love of mushrooms is evident in his writing which, in turn, is easy and enjoyable to read. Technical information is presented without being overly academic. The book itself measures approximately 5" x 9.25" and weights a bit over 1 lb. The binding and covers seem quite sturdy and the rear cover flyleaf has a convenient ruler for measuring mushrooms.

EDITORIAL (mostly subjective): This book focuses on wild mushrooms of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic and I happen to live in that region. If you live elsewhere, this may not be the ideal book for you, though it may still be very useful and have content appropriate to where you live. Since I bought this book out of an interest in foraging for edible mushrooms, I find its focus on predominantly edible mushrooms to be ideal. As a novice, I appreciate that it is written with the layman in mind, though I have no doubt it will be of interest and use to experienced mushroomers as well. Given these foci, the book does not attempt to be a truly comprehensive guide, yet covers a substantial number of mushrooms in detail. As this and other guides recommend, if you are foraging for edible mushrooms you will want to use multiple sources of information. Unlike some other reviewers, I like the organization of the book by season. For me, it is a useful way to limit my focus to those mushrooms I'm most likely to see on an outing at a particular time of the year. However, I learned quickly to also consult adjacent seasons (see below). Initially, I had wished that the photos were included with each entry as opposed to a separate section at the end of each season. However, I have come to appreciate being able to peruse all of the photos at once for initial identification before referring back to the detailed written entry. Lastly,

the book's size and construction make it a convenient & durable companion on hikes. Although it fits nicely in a cargo pocket, it is a bit heavy, but this is probably unavoidable unless it offered less content or were less well constructed. At first, the binding seemed rather tight and difficult to open all the way, but I believe this is rather an indication of its sturdiness. (As a book collector, I have an aversion to cracking a book's spine.) This is a book that is made to be taken on hikes and can take a beating. On the first two hikes I went on with this book, my girlfriend and I collected samples of eight different mushrooms and conclusively identified all eight with the help of this guide, one other guide, and spore prints. Much of the information in this book was spot-on accurate and really helped with identification. Although it was late October, only two of the mushrooms appeared in the Fall section of this book (Deadly Galerina, Honey Mushrooms), four in the Winter section (Brick Tops, Velvet Stems, Oyster Mushrooms, Inky Caps), one in the Spring section (Dryad Saddle), and one in the Summer section (Pear-Shaped Puffballs), though the Growth Habit description for each did include October in its range. Nonetheless, most were still easy to locate in the book since I was looking in both Fall & Winter sections. I used this book, while my girlfriend used another.

Sometimes, she found a mushroom first and I was able to locate it easily in this book using the index. Of the eight mushroom we collected, seven were edible species, although we deemed only three of them fresh enough to eat (Oysters, Puffballs & Inky Caps). The following day we harvested several fresh oyster mushrooms and some puffballs, cleaned them, and sautéed them in butter. They were both delicious! Maybe later, if we're adventurous enough, we'll try the Inky Caps (they were just starting to come up) or maybe we'll just make ink out of them, the recipe for which is in this book. If you live in the Mid-Atlantic, and especially Pennsylvania, and are looking for a book on mushrooms, particularly with a focus on edibility, I can think of no better book to begin with or to add to your collection. I hope this review helps you in your search. Happy mushrooming!

ADDENDUM: I wrote this review three years ago when I purchased this book as my first mushroom guide. Since then, it has been a most valuable resource and everything in the above review still stands. It is now one of four books I use for identification and is the first book I refer to as well as the most portable of the four.

I wish the pictures were with the written descriptions. They are all at the end of the chapter. You have to flip back and forth. Not very functional. I really like how the book is segmented by the seasons.

Returning from vacation to a front yard filled with at least a dozen different types of mushrooms

rekindled my interest in these wonderful fungi. Bill Russell's book is an excellent read, with a casual style that imparts a lot of information. The book has a great introduction, basics of mycology and then is split into the characteristics of 100 commonly found mushrooms in this area of the country, separated by the time of year that they are found. I am looking forward to making spore prints and attempting to identify the variety of 'shrooms in our vicinity. I may even pluck up enough courage to eat some if I am sure I can identify them.

I am very much a beginner shroomer. I also am an avid reference and non-fiction book reader. And reader in general. While I cannot speak to the accuracy of the descriptions and photos of the mushrooms (it did come highly recommended from my mushroom club) I can speak to how well written it is. The author is even has a sense of humor in his descriptions. I like how it is organized by seasons and how each mushroom has its points as well. The only reason I do not give it 5 stars is that it is a pain to have to go back to a picture rather than having the picture right there with the description.

This is a wonderful book, with a rich mixture of personal experience and scientific information. I love the unique layout by season. The seasonal layout is very accessible and provides a different context to organization and identification than other field guides I have used. I consider the content of this book a vital part of my fungi library, but I need to upgrade to hard copy. I wish I had purchased the hard copy of this book, because it is very difficult to navigate the Kindle e-book edition. Like many e-books this edition lacks a hot linked, table of contents. You can not click on a chapter or season and go there directly. You have to go through page by page to find the content you are looking for. You can create your own bookmarks for more efficient browsing, but a hot linked table of contents would be much more user friendly. I do not recommend buying the Kindle version of this book, unless the publisher can come up with a more user friendly, easy to navigate, e-book edition. I highly recommend buying the print edition.

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