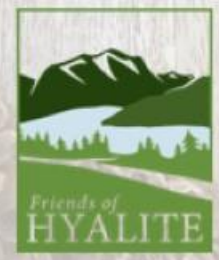




Mushrooms of Hyalite

by Greg Garrigues





Foraging and our Family's Story

- Our family is like many of yours; we love to get out and enjoy the fresh air as often as we can. One of our activities that we have always loved to do, is to pick berries in the middle of summer. Huckleberries, raspberries, strawberries and our favorite, the mighty grouse whortleberry. Many years ago, on one of our berry picking expeditions, we noticed that as we moved across the hillside, as the angle and orientation of the slope changed, the berries would fade away, and frequently the mushrooms became thick. So we set out to learn about the mushrooms in the mountains to double our foraging harvest. Ever since it hasn't just doubled our harvest, but it extended our season and quadrupled our fun.

What are mushrooms?

This is a common question. Are they a plant? No, they are a fungus. In the ground is a massive network of interconnected hair like fibers made up of a fungus like bacterial colony called mycelium. In the spring and summer, when the conditions are right, the mycelium creates the mushrooms that we pick. These mushrooms are the fruiting bodies that emerge when the conditions are right to spread spores and extend the organisms network. Mycelium helps to break down plant materials on the forest's floor and make soils.





Is it edible?

- Our strategy has always been to only eat what we know is absolutely safe. We key out every mushroom and if we can't we default to not consuming it.
- After studying which mushrooms have deadly look-alikes, it became obvious that most errors are made with mushrooms that have gills – the ones that radiate but are detachable from the stem. Our family does not harvest mushrooms with gills.
- Never eat a raw wild mushroom. Cooking with some heat will make it easier for your stomach to handle.
- Start small and test your relationship with the mushroom. A negative experience will likely involve some gastric distress.
- Use the key in your book and be certain of identification.
- **If you are unsure, play it safe and don't consume it.**

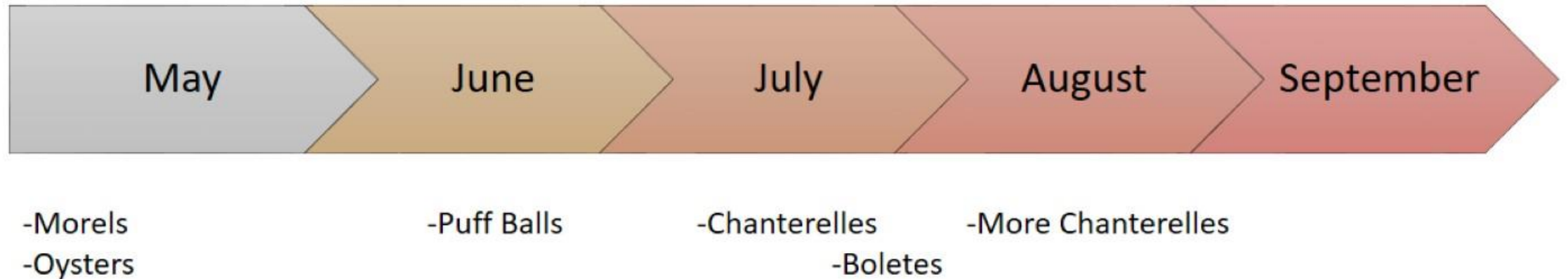
Forager's Tools

- A soft **mesh bag** is ideal to collect your harvest. The mesh allows spores to fall through and back into the forest.
- A good **pocket knife** is critical. You want to cut the mushroom off at ground level, so that you leave the mycelium that is in the ground intact, which will support future mushroom growth in the area. There are bespoke mushroom knives with a curved blade and a hair brush for cleaning., but any knife will do.
- Perhaps the most important tool you can have is a good identification book.
 - My personal favorite is David Arora's ***All That The Rain Promises...*** It may be the best mushroom book ever written...or is it? It is actually the index for David's advanced tome, *Mushrooms Demystified*. What makes this little paperback so good is the tremendous dichotomy key, good color photos, lots of great insights, and if you can believe it, some mushroom humor. It also calls out when there is a deadly doppelganger for the mushroom you are looking at. It focuses on Western Mushrooms, but does not cover ALL mushrooms you might encounter, but I would say it covers the most important ones. **My personal approach is if I can't confidently find it in this key, then I don't keep it.**
 - Usually available at the Country Bookshelf, and yes that is the author on the cover in a tuxedo carrying a flugelhorn.



Seasons

Mushroom season starts in the spring, down low when we have four consecutive nights of temps above 50F. As temperatures warm, follow the mushrooms up in altitude. The season ends with lack of rain or frost.



*We are right in the middle of a Chanterelle and Boletes season. The foraging is good.

Morels

Highly sought after and a deliciously flavored mushroom. Found early in the season frequently in creek and river bottoms. Hides in grasses. As temperatures warm, follow them up Middle Creek into the mountains. Have had some great mid season finds in some of the meadows at altitudes below Lick Creek. In addition to their unique appearance, you can verify that it is a morel by cutting in half vertically. It will have a hollow center and the cap cannot be separated. David Arora's book has good photos of this. Air dries and reconstitutes well, for use throughout the year. Great umami flavors full of yeasty overtones.





The Oyster

- Like the Morel, the Oyster is a part of the “season opener.” Follow it up hill, but it won’t go too high. Can find with new rain growing on non- conifer trees down low.
- Grows on a tree.
- This is a meaty mushroom with great flavor. Dries well, but can be tough near the attachment to the tree.

Puff Ball

- Very distinct round mushroom. Grows dispersed and in groups.
- If they are past their prime and are ready to spread their spores, they will explode with a dust.
- If they are still in their prime, cut them vertically, and you will see a creamy white flesh, like the top image to the right there is any soft or powdery green pit inside the mushroom means it is past its prime.
- Mild and delicious.
- Can be confused with young amanita – which you don't want to eat. When you cut it vertically, if it looks like it is a capped mushroom emerging from an egg, then it is an amanita and you don't want it.





King Boletes (Porcini)

A real delicacy. Found throughout Hyalite. There are many kinds of boletes, and several of them grow in Hyalite. Make sure you key out the mushroom you have. Some prepare differently than others and some are insipid. They all have a spongy mesh on the underside – not gills. A small fine mesh with a broad stem like those shown here, are king boletes. A bigger mesh with a slender stem is often found and is most likely a Slippery Jack. If stem is infested with worms cut stem off and dry cap and gills separately before use. Huge savory umami flavor. Very popular in soup bases and big pasta sauces.



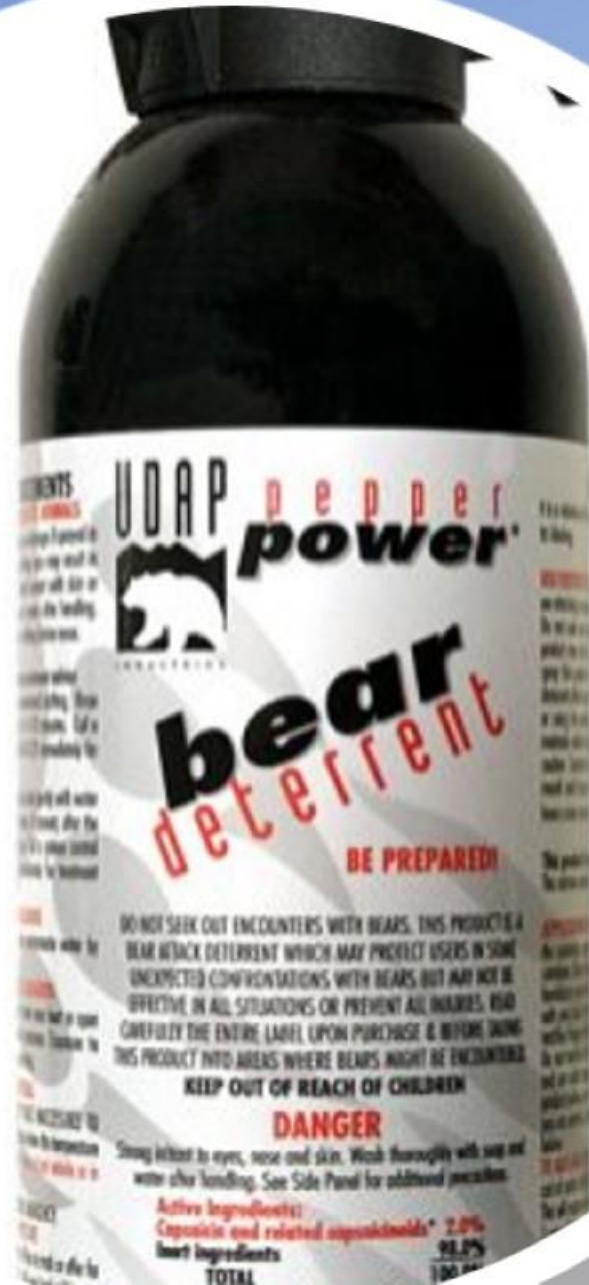
Chanterelle

My favorite mushroom of all. Grows in clusters, and when the forest starts to dry, you can still find them in spring fed areas. Amazing yeasty-peachy scent and flavor when cooked. Has firm texture, and goes very well with scrambled eggs or in a shallot cream sauce over some protein. In July you can find them lower and follow them up the mountains. They can be found now slightly above 6000 ft. They reside in the spongy duff, not on trees. Sometimes they are fully buried and the top bleaches so they look more white buttons on the forest floor, rather than peach colored. Gills run down the stem, and the cap cannot be separated.



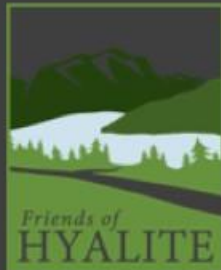
Bears

Always be bear aware and carry bear spray. Keep in mind that mushrooms can be both on and off the beaten path, and are often adjacent to berries. Bears will be in the area even if you don't see them.



A prize:

- Get out and go look for some mushrooms. Take a walk in the woods, slow down and observe the dynamics that Hyalite Mycelium creates.
- Wanting to motivate people to get excited about foraging, we are offering a free mushroom knife prize to the first three people to post two selfies on Instagram or on the HyaliteFest! Facebook group page with two different Hyalite Mushrooms and #HyaliteFunGuy. After HyaliteFest, we will track you down, and get you your knife.
- The HyaliteFest! group page is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/hyalitefest/>
- And, since it's a "virtual" event, we've expanded the dates from just the weekend to August 22-30.
- Good luck!



Questions

- If you have any questions about mushrooms in Hyalite please don't hesitate to reach out.
 - greggarrigues@gmail.com

Have fun in Hyalite!

