

Alberta Mushroom Identification Chart

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Species	Season	Where It Grows	Key ID Features	Dangerous Look-alike	Edibility
Black morel (<i>Morchella angusticeps</i> group)	May – Jun	Conifer burns 1–2 years after wildfire; mixed aspen and spruce woods	Dark-ridged honeycomb cap fully attached to the stem; hollow from tip to base when sliced	False morel (brain-like, chambered inside, never hollow)	Choice; always cook
Yellow morel (<i>Morchella esculenta</i> group)	May – Jun	Cottonwood and aspen river bottoms in the parkland	Pale yellow-tan honeycomb cap fully attached to the stem; completely hollow	False morel	Choice; always cook
Dryad's saddle (<i>Cerioporus squamosus</i>)	May – Jul, peak Jun	Dead poplar and aspen stumps and logs	Large cream shelf with brown scales; pores underneath, no gills; cucumber-rind smell when young	None dangerous; too tough once it firms up	Edible when young and tender
Wild oyster mushroom (<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i>)	May – Oct, peak Sep – Oct	Fallen aspen and cottonwood	Shelf-like caps; gills running down a short off-centre stem; white-lilac spore print	Angel wings (thin, pure white, on conifer wood; avoid)	Choice
Aspen bolete (<i>Leccinum insigne</i>)	Jul – Sep, peak Aug	Under aspen across the parkland belt	Orange-brown cap; pale pores; stem covered in scabers that darken to black	Other scaber-stalk boletes; avoid red-pored boletes	Edible; cook well, some people react
Birch bolete (<i>Leccinum scabrum</i> group)	Jul – Sep, peak Aug	Only near birch, boreal and parkland	Grey-brown cap; whitish pores; tall stem with dark scabers	Bitter bolete (pinkish pores, dark netting on stem)	Edible; cook well
King bolete / porcini (<i>Boletus edulis</i> group)	Jul – Sep, peak Aug – Sep	Spruce, fir and lodgepole pine in the foothills and mountains	Brown bun cap; white pores ageing olive-yellow; fine white netting on a thick stem; does not stain blue	Bitter bolete; avoid red-pored or blue-staining boletes	Choice
Slippery jack (<i>Suillus luteus</i>)	Jul – Oct, peak Aug – Sep	Pine plantations and natural pine stands	Slimy brown cap; yellow pores; membranous ring on stem	Other Suillus; peel the slime layer, which upsets some stomachs	Edible; peel before cooking
Saffron milk cap (<i>Lactarius deliciosus</i> group)	Aug – Oct, peak Sep	Pine forest in the foothills and parkland	Orange cap with concentric rings; orange latex when cut; bruises green	Orange Lactarius with white or bitter latex	Choice
Lobster mushroom (<i>Hypomyces lactifluorum</i>)	Jul – Sep, peak Aug – Sep	Foothills mixed forest floor	Hard, pimpled orange-red crust over dense white flesh; no gills	Soft or deteriorated specimens; pick only firm, bright ones	Good; cook well
Honey mushroom (<i>Armillaria mellea</i> group)	Aug – Oct, peak Sep	Dense clusters at the base of dying aspen, poplar and pine	White spore print; ring on stem; grows in clusters	Deadly galerina (rusty-brown spore print); spore print every batch	Edible with caution; cook thoroughly
Hedgehog mushroom (<i>Hydnum repandum</i> group)	Aug – Oct, peak Sep	Foothills and Rocky Mountain mixed forest	Orange-tan cap with soft spines underneath instead of gills	None; the spines are definitive	Choice
Pine mushroom / matsutake (<i>Tricholoma magnivelare</i>)	Aug – Oct, peak Sep	Sandy lodgepole pine forest in the foothills, west of Hinton and Rocky Mountain House	Firm white cap with brown streaks; cottony ring; spicy-cinnamon smell; no sac at base	Smith's amanita (no spicy smell, smoother stem); dig out the whole base	Choice
Shaggy mane (<i>Coprinus comatus</i>)	Aug – Oct, peak Sep	Lawns, gravel road edges, disturbed soil	Tall shaggy white cylinder; gills dissolve into black ink with age	Common ink cap (reacts badly with alcohol); pick only young, all-white specimens	Good; cook the day you pick it
Giant puffball (<i>Calvatia gigantea</i>)	Aug – Oct, peak Sep	Pastures and field edges, parkland and prairie	Large white sphere; flesh pure white and uniform when sliced	Amanita egg-stage buttons; slice top to bottom to check for a hidden cap outline	Good; only while pure white inside
Chaga (<i>Inonotus obliquus</i>)	Year-round; easiest Oct – Apr after leaf-fall	Living birch in the boreal forest	Black, cracked, burnt-looking exterior with a rusty-orange interior	Birch burls (wood-hard, no orange interior)	Tea only; harvest sparingly
Destroying angel (<i>Amanita bisporigera</i> and <i>A. virosa</i>)	Jul – Sep	Mixed forest across central and northern Alberta	All white; free gills; skirt-like ring; sac-like volva at the base (dig to check); white spore print	Mistaken for puffball buttons, meadow mushrooms and pine mushrooms	DEADLY – do not eat
Deadly galerina (<i>Galerina marginata</i>)	Aug – Oct	Clusters on dead wood, same logs as honey mushrooms	Small brown cap with a ring; rusty-brown spore print	Mistaken for honey mushrooms	DEADLY – do not eat
Smith's amanita (<i>Amanita smithiana</i>)	Aug – Oct	Pine and mixed forest	White to pale tan cap; faint chlorine-like smell; smoother stem than matsutake	Mistaken for pine mushrooms	Poisonous – kidney failure
False morel (<i>Gyromitra esculenta</i>)	May – Jun	Sandy soil under conifers, overlapping morel season	Reddish-brown, brain-like wrinkled cap; chambered interior, never hollow	Mistaken for true morels; slice every "morel" lengthwise	DEADLY – do not eat

Never eat any wild mushroom you have not identified with certainty against multiple features. When in doubt, throw it out.

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