

Nova Scotia Mushroom Identification Chart

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Species	Season	Where It Grows	Key ID Features	Dangerous Look-alike	Edibility
Golden chanterelle (<i>Cantharellus cibarius</i> group)	Mid-Jul – Sep, peak Aug	Mossy slopes in mixed Acadian forest under yellow birch and red spruce; Cape Breton Highlands flush heavily	Egg-yolk yellow; false gills (blunt, forking ridges) running down the stem; apricot smell; solid white flesh	Jack-o'-lantern (true sharp gills, dense clusters on wood)	Choice
Lobster mushroom (<i>Hypomyces lactifluorum</i>)	Late Jul – Sep	Mixed Acadian forest floor, often near hemlock and spruce, common across the mainland and Cape Breton	Hard, pimpled orange-red crust over dense white flesh; no visible gills; seafood smell	Deteriorated or soft specimens; pick only firm, bright ones	Good; cook well
Hedgehog mushroom (<i>Hydnum repandum</i> , <i>H. umbilicatum</i>)	Sep – Nov	Mossy conifer and mixed Acadian forest	Orange-tan cap with soft spines underneath instead of gills	None; the spines are definitive	Choice
Black trumpet (<i>Craterellus fallax</i>)	Jul – Sep	Beech and sugar maple stands of the mainland uplands, mossy slopes	Grey-black, thin-fleshed trumpet; no true gills; smoky-sweet smell	None serious in Nova Scotia	Choice
King bolete / porcini (<i>Boletus edulis</i> group)	Sep – Oct	Spruce-fir forest of the Cape Breton Highlands and the mainland interior	Brown bun cap; white-then-olive pores; fine white netting on a thick stem; flesh does not stain blue	Bitter bolete (pink pores, dark netting); avoid all red-pored or blue-staining boletes	Choice
Birch bolete (<i>Leccinum scabrum</i> group)	Jul – Oct	Under yellow and white birch, common in Acadian mixed woods	Grey-brown cap; white-to-grey pores; tall stem covered in dark scabby tufts	Bitter bolete; avoid red-pored boletes; boletes of Nova Scotia should always be cooked thoroughly	Edible; cook well, some people react
Chicken of the woods (<i>Laetiporus sulphureus</i>)	Jun – Oct	Living and dead hardwoods, especially oak and maple	Bright orange overlapping shelves with a sulphur-yellow pore surface; no gills	None direct; specimens on conifers can upset the stomach, so identify the host tree	Good; young soft edges only, cook well
Hen of the woods / maitake (<i>Grifola frondosa</i>)	Sep – Nov	Base of mature oaks in mainland hardwood country, at the eastern edge of its range	Grey-brown ruffled, spoon-shaped fronds from a single branching base	Black-staining polypore (bruises black)	Choice
Oyster mushroom (<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i> , <i>P. pulmonarius</i>)	May – Nov, flushing after rain	Dead and dying hardwoods: aspen, maple, beech	Shelf-like white-to-tan caps; gills running down a short off-centre stem; anise smell; white-lilac spore print	Angel wings (thin, on conifers; avoid)	Good
Shaggy mane (<i>Coprinus comatus</i>)	Sep – Nov	Lawns, gravel road edges, disturbed soil across the coastal lowlands	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	Pastures, field edges, Annapolis Valley farm country	Soccer-ball-sized 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
Honey mushroom (<i>Armillaria</i> group)	Sep – Nov	Dense clusters on and around dying hardwoods, stumps, buried roots	White spore print; ring on stem; dark hairs at cap centre	Deadly galerina (rusty-brown spore print); spore print every batch	Edible with caution; always cook well
Winter chanterelle / yellowfoot (<i>Craterellus tubaeformis</i>)	Sep – Nov, often into Dec	Wet mossy conifer ground, bog edges, rotting wood	Small brown funnel cap; hollow yellow-orange stem; blunt forked ridges underneath	None serious	Good
Cape Breton matsutake (<i>Tricholoma magnivelare</i>)	Sep – Oct	Sandy soil under jack pine and spruce, Cape Breton and the Eastern Shore	Thick white cap with cinnamon-brown streaks; cottony ring; firm stem; strong spicy cinnamon smell; no volva	White Amanitas (destroying angel has a sac at the base and no spicy smell); dig the whole base	Choice
Annapolis Valley morel (<i>Morchella esculenta</i> group)	Early May – early Jun	Old apple orchards, cottonwood flats, dying elms in the Annapolis Valley	Honeycomb-pitted cap fully attached to the stem; completely hollow from tip to base when sliced	False morel (wrinkled not pitted; chambered inside, never hollow)	Choice; always cook
Lion's mane / bear's head tooth (<i>Hericium erinaceus</i> , <i>H. americanum</i>)	Sep – Nov	Wounds on living hardwoods and fallen beech and maple logs	Cascading white spines; bear's head branches like coral; no cap, gills or pores	None; nothing dangerous resembles it in Nova Scotia	Choice
Chaga (<i>Inonotus obliquus</i>)	Year-round; easiest after leaf-fall	Living yellow and white birch, Cape Breton and the mainland interior	Black, cracked, burnt-looking exterior with a rusty-orange interior	Birch burls (wood-hard, no orange interior)	Tea and extract only; harvest sparingly
Turkey tail (<i>Trametes versicolor</i>)	Year-round	Dead hardwood logs and stumps	Thin, flexible, banded multicolour fans; white pore surface underneath	False turkey tail (smooth brown underside, no pores)	Tea and extract only; too tough to eat
Destroying angel (<i>Amanita bisporigera</i> and <i>A. virosa</i>)	Jul – Oct	Mixed Acadian forest and lawns near hardwoods	All white; true gills, skirt-like ring, sac-like volva at the base (often buried; dig to check)	Mistaken for button mushrooms, meadow mushrooms and puffballs	DEADLY – do not eat
Deadly galerina (<i>Galerina marginata</i>)	Sep – Nov	Clusters on dead wood, same habit as honey mushrooms	Small brown cap with a ring; rusty-brown spore print	Mistaken for honey mushrooms	DEADLY – do not eat
False morel (<i>Gyromitra esculenta</i>)	Apr – May	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
Jack-o'-lantern (<i>Omphalotus illudens</i>)	Jul – Oct	Dense clusters at the base of hardwood stumps and buried roots	Bright orange with true sharp gills running down the stem	Mistaken for chanterelles	Poisonous – severe illness

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

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