

FAQs!

Can you identify this mushroom for me?

If you need help identifying a mushroom, please email or DM me on Instagram. Include clear photos of the top, bottom, and side views, and provide basic information about the surrounding area. I can't guarantee that I'll respond to messages in my DMs and email about them, there are just too many requests at this point, but I do my best!

Where do you live?

Currently I live in Waynesboro, Virginia, in the United States. I also forage in Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania with some frequency. I hope to do more traveling to gather food in other states and countries, and especially to meet up with other foragers! (Contact me at chaoticforager@gmail.com if you're a foraging or science account interested in a meetup!)

Can you tell me more about foraging for “magic mushrooms,” or psilocybin-containing species?

Sorry, but community guidelines make that too risky. In the United States, “magic mushrooms” (containing psilocybin) are a Schedule I controlled substance, so giving any advice on finding or growing them would violate the community guidelines. In order to keep my channel safe for everyone and to avoid getting my educational content removed, I don't talk about any psilocybin-containing species. The topic is okay to discuss in my Discord channel. If you want to do your own research on the topic, there are many years of collected information on shroomery.org that you can peruse.

I live in XYZ state/country, what can I forage here?

Since I live in the midwestern United States, I feel very comfortable making foraging recommendations for people who live here (anything by the inimitable Samuel Thayer is a good place to start!). If I haven't been somewhere or foraged there, I'm unlikely to feel confident making those recommendations, and will generally decline. I am working on a list of foraging

resources for all 50 states and Canada. I do recommend joining a local Facebook foraging group to help you get familiar with commonly found species in your area! This can also help you to gauge when different things are in season. You probably have a local mycological society too! You can also look at the [Regional Foraging Series](#) in the United States for more general information, and there are a lot of other wonderful foraging books. Check the link in my bio for some of my recommendations!

What books do you recommend?

Sam Thayer's books are the best place to start out. Buy them, they're worth your money a thousand times over. I also love Ellen Zachos, Dina Falconi, Pascal Baudar, and the Regional Foraging Guides. For fungi, book recommendations tend to be more regionally specific.

What got you interested in foraging?

I have been foraging ever since I was 5 years old and was taught how to identify highbush blueberry bushes in my backyard. Wild food is the best food, in my opinion, and my interest in gourmet cooking, ecology, and creative and sustainable life practice has reinforced my commitment to wild food over the years.

What is your favorite mushroom?

Chanterelles are always exciting to find, and they are absolutely delicious! I am also partial to polypores of all sorts. However, my favorite mushroom will always be the one I haven't found yet!

How can I address concerns about sustainability?

When done mindfully, foraging can be an extremely sustainable way of feeding yourself. Your food is local and seasonal, and you don't rely on a supply chain to get it to you. However, it is important to remember that abundance is not the same thing as sustainability (ramps are a good example of this), so care must be taken when harvesting certain wild foods for personal use. For a list of at-risk botanicals in North America, check out this link at [United Plant Savers](#).

Aren't you worried about spraying in the areas where you are foraging?

To be honest, I'm more worried about the spraying that goes on at commercial farms! I don't recommend foraging close to roads or from sidewalks (who wants to eat dog pee?!), but I also don't worry about pesticides most of the time in the places that I choose to forage.

Where can I forage? Isn't it illegal?

I suggest checking with your local Department of Natural Resources if you're worried about a specific location, but it is legal to forage on most public land. Avoid preserves, as they are more carefully managed ecosystems. States may vary on the specifics (for example, California has more stringent mushroom gathering laws than most), but it never hurts to ask. You can generally feel comfortable foraging in public green spaces like parks (but again, check first! Some metro parks don't want you foraging there, and you need to respect the rules of anywhere you go). Keep in mind that there are some protected species that you should *a/ways* leave alone (unless you have a permit), like American wild ginseng, as gathering these species is considered poaching and you may be prosecuted.

How can I support you?

First, there is never ***any*** pressure to support me financially unless you need repeat assistance. Wild food is free, and I am choosing to share my knowledge and research with you!

Thanks for your support!

-@chaoticforager