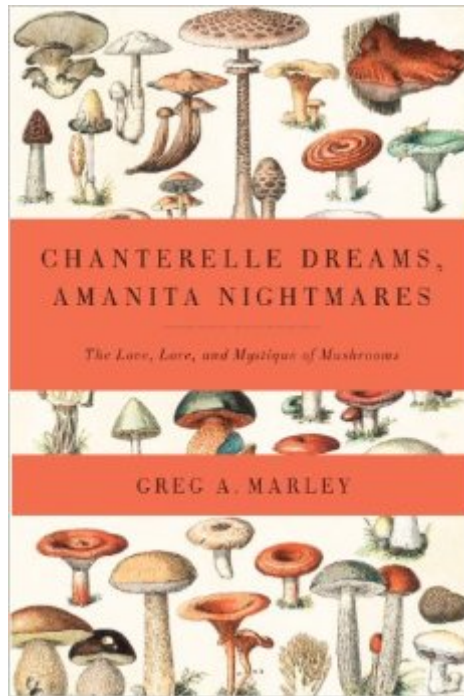


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Chanterelle Dreams, Amanita Nightmares: The Love, Lore, And Mystique Of Mushrooms



Synopsis

2011 Winner, International Association of Culinary Professionals Jane Grigson Award 2011 Finalist, International Association of Culinary Professionals in the Culinary History category Throughout history, people have had a complex and confusing relationship with mushrooms. Are fungi food or medicine, beneficial decomposers or deadly "toadstools" ready to kill anyone foolhardy enough to eat them? In fact, there is truth in all these statements. In *Chanterelle Dreams, Amanita Nightmares*, author Greg Marley reveals some of the wonders and mysteries of mushrooms, and our conflicting human reactions to them. With tales from around the world, Marley, a seasoned mushroom expert, explains that some cultures are mycophilic (mushroom-loving), like those of Russia and Eastern Europe, while others are intensely mycophobic (mushroom-fearing), including, the US. He shares stories from China, Japan, and Korea-where mushrooms are interwoven into the fabric of daily life as food, medicine, fable, and folklore-and from Slavic countries where whole families leave villages and cities during rainy periods of the late summer and fall and traipse into the forests for mushroom-collecting excursions. From the famous *Amanita phalloides* (aka "the Death Cap"), reputed killer of Emperor Claudius in the first century AD, to the beloved chanterelle (*cantharellus cibarius*) known by at least eighty-nine different common names in almost twenty-five languages, *Chanterelle Dreams, Amanita Nightmares* explores the ways that mushrooms have shaped societies all over the globe. This fascinating and fresh look at mushrooms-their natural history, their uses and abuses, their pleasures and dangers-is a splendid introduction to both fungi themselves and to our human fascination with them. From useful descriptions of the most foolproof edible species to revealing stories about hallucinogenic or poisonous, yet often beautiful, fungi, Marley's long and passionate experience will inform and inspire readers with the stories of these dark and mysterious denizens of our forest floor.

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Customer Reviews

The first time I went on a mushroom hunt with the Mycological Society of San Francisco [...], I learned a lot about mushroom lore, mushroom anatomy, and mushroom recipes. My favorite joke from the group leader was this, "You'll only eat a poisonous mushroom once." ;-)

Greg Marley's book "Chanterelle Dreams, Amanita Nightmares: The Love, Lore, and Mystique of Mushrooms" continues that guided tour of the mushroom world with a 6-part discussion:

- Part I. Mushrooms and Culture
- Part II. Mushrooms as Food
- Part III. Dangerously Toxic, Deadly Interesting
- Part IV. Mushrooms and the Mind: The Origin of Religion and the Pathway to Enlightenment
- Part V. Mushrooms within Living Ecosystems
- Part VI. Tools for a New World

Each part is chock-full of good tidbits, introducing each type with its common name, its genus, and its species. What follows is great fun: other than the author's history with each mushroom, he offers songs, proverbs, and poetry that reference the great mushroom. For those who love this fungi, it's a great book to add to your collection. For those just getting acquainted, this is a good book to start with. The photographs detailing each mushroom are vivid and clear. The endnotes give you a bit of further reading, and the index is invaluable. You can look up your mushroom by any of its names, nicknames, or even recipes.

CHANTERELLE DREAMS, which focuses on mushrooms commonly found in the New England states, is neither a general introduction to mycology for beginners nor a mushroom-hunter's field guide. Most of the text consists of anecdotes about the author's personal enjoyment of, and experiences with, wild mushrooms; about well-publicized cases of mushroom poisoning; about religious and cultural uses of mushrooms; and about myths and lore surrounding glow-in-the-dark mushrooms, fairy rings, and the like. Clearly the author is an expert in things mycological, but his technical descriptions of specific mushrooms can be difficult for beginners to follow. For example (p. 38): "Morels are saprobes, using as their food source leaf duff and wood in the soil. They have also been shown to form symbiotic, mycorrhizal associations with various tree species during parts of their life cycle. Their mycelia colonize broad areas, and often the fruiting body appears far from the original site of inoculation or obvious food source." Such information--undoubtedly of interest to experienced mushroom collectors--seems out of place in a book that isn't intended as a field guide. However, happily for the mycological novice, most of the stories that comprise the bulk of the text

are far, far easier to read. One fact that particularly caught my attention, is that some mushrooms (e.g., morels) can be mildly poisonous if not cooked before ingestion. CHANTERELLE DREAMS includes various mushroom recipes, a lot of good advice on how to get started with collecting mushrooms (e.g., start by joining a local mushroom club), instructions for growing your own mushrooms, a bibliography of recommended and supplemental reading, and an eight-page section of beautiful full-color photographs of selected mushrooms. Experienced mushroom collectors--especially those located in the New England states--will probably enjoy reading this book. However, the book is probably not the best choice for a mycological novice who has only a casual interest in learning about mushrooms or in actually gathering mushrooms.

I've been interested in mushrooms for a while, but like many people, I have a fear of eating the wrong one and dying :-). I have collected and eaten morels, but haven't had the nerve to eat any other wild mushroom ...yet. This book is fantastic as a way to get someone over that fear. I've read mushroom field guides before, but was overwhelmed by the photos and amount of info. I needed a framework to begin to grapple with overcoming my fear of mushrooms and give me a proper framework and attitude towards learning about them. No one I know personally does collecting. I also wanted a protocol on how to not only collect, but how to learn to safely eat for the first time mushrooms that are new to me. One of the other features I liked about the book was his recommendation of four mushroom groups for someone new to mushroom collection, his "Foolproof Four": 1. Morels, 2. Puffballs, 3. Sulphur mushroom/polypore, and 4. Shaggy Mane. This book is just what I have been looking for, to get me over my nervousness as a newbie to mushrooms.

I find some of these less than 5 star reviews absurd. The critical reviewers wanted this to be a field guide. Listen up. This is not a field guide! Read the title. Love, lore, mystique. Having read at least 50 mushroom books, I can tell you that this book is different from all others. It fills in a lot of knowledge you will NEVER get in a field guide. Read this after you have gotten over your need for field guides. It has a niche unto itself. Further, let me say that Greg's writing style is head and shoulders above that of most any other mushroom book. Excellent laying on the couch winter reading. I consider it one of the top three mushroom books I have read. Not a field guide though.

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