

Ontario Department of Agriculture

ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Common Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms of Ontario

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INTRODUCTION.

At the present time when the world is threatened with a shortage of food, it becomes necessary to utilize all our food resources. We are advised to use more corn, to grow and consume more vegetables and fruit and to have smaller portions of food served. All this will help, but we should also see to it that all possible sources of food are utilized. At the present time there is in Ontario a supply of food going to waste which should form an important addition to our diet. Every year thousands of tons of mushrooms are allowed to decay. These plants are extensively utilized in European countries not only by the wealthy but also by the poorer classes. In this country few people gather wild mushrooms and such high prices are charged for the cultivated kind that they cannot be used except occasionally as a luxury.

FOOD VALUE OF MUSHROOMS.

The food value of mushrooms is not as great as that of many of our staple foods such as meat, wheat, flour or beans, but it is about equivalent to that of our fresh vegetables. In addition, they give distinct and pleasing flavours to other food, and by furnishing the needed variety to our diet they become valuable as food accessories also. Further, if one knows wild mushrooms this extra food and luxury may be had at the expense of a few minutes walk on a cool morning or a trip to the woods or parks on a holiday.

During the past year numerous articles have appeared in newspapers and elsewhere advocating the use of wild mushrooms for food. From these articles one might be led to suppose that they had a very high food value, i.e., "twice that of fresh vegetables or half that of lean meat." A careful examination of the chemical analyses of many species shows that mushrooms vary considerably in composition but in general are 90 per cent. water and 10 per cent. solid matter. In fact their composition resembles very closely that of turnips or cabbage. They are not "animal-like" in their nature as one might suppose from the popular statement that mushrooms are "vegetable beefsteak." A glance at the following table will show the food value of some common kinds compared with some of our staple foods: