

## Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### Morel Mushroom Hunting Puts the 'Fun' in Fungi!

**(Coldwater, MI)** May marks the beginning of Morel mushroom season in Michigan.

Morel mushrooms have a smoky taste and are delicious when sautéed in garlic butter or



breaded and fried. In addition to being yummy, many people enjoy walking in the woods and looking for morels, which tend to spring up around dying trees or mossy places that have ample ground cover.

#### *Hunting morels is a fun sport, but hunters need to beware.*

##### **'True' Morel**

The forest is full of morel look a-likes which should not be eaten.

##### Mushrooms

These 'false' morels can make the eater very ill and uncomfortable.

**False morels**, including the *Beefsteak* and *Early Morel* mushrooms, contain a substance called gyromitrin which is toxic to the liver. Once ingested, illness usually occurs within 6 to 48 hours. Symptoms include:

- nausea,
- vomiting,
- abdominal pain,
- diarrhea,
- dizziness,
- headache,
- muscle cramps,



Beef steak Mushroom



Cap or Early Morel

- bloating, and
- fatigue.

Untreated, people may develop confusion, delirium, seizures and coma. The gyromitrin toxin can lead to pain on the right side of the body, hepatitis and jaundice (yellow skin). These symptoms can appear within 48 hours. In serious cases, the toxin can cause increased bruising and bleeding due to loss of blood clotting factors. (People who suspect they have eaten a 'false' morel are cautioned to seek immediate medical care.)

There are many resources which can help you learn how to identify morels. Be sure to review these resources often and consider taking a photo or handout with you while mushroom hunting. Once you are sure you have found 'true' morels, be sure to pick and store the mushrooms in a way that will assure freshness. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency offers the following tips for picking and storing newly harvested mushrooms safely:

- Collect morels only from areas away from pesticides or heavy metals sources.
- Do not mix other mushroom species with morels when collecting.
- Don't collect morels that look bad such as old, discolored or decayed parts.
- Do not collect or store morels in plastic bags. Morels spoil rapidly in plastic. Baskets or mesh bags are best for collecting; paper sacks are best for storing in a refrigerator.
- If you plan to freeze morels, first cook them a couple of minutes. Cooking will stop bacteria growth.
- Always cook morels. They are not safe to eat raw.

Mushroom hunting can be a great way to spend time with your family and friends. By taking time to know what you are picking and how to properly store them, you can make sure that this fun-filled past time is always enjoyable and memorable. To stay up-to-date on a variety of health and safety topics, be sure to regularly visit our website at <http://www.bhsj.org>.

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