

Gourmet Mushrooms in your Backyard

By Shawn Jadrnicek, Clemson-CES, Jasper County

With the onset of cooler wet weather I have seen a tremendous flush of mushrooms sprouting up everywhere. Many people have called in wondering how to get rid of the invading mushrooms. The best way to handle them is to enjoy their mysterious beauty before it fades with winter. In the Spanish language mushrooms are called “Carne del Muerte” or “flesh of the dead” describing how mushrooms emerge from decaying plant and animal matter. Mushrooms are the fruit of fungi a huge underground network of white mycelial roots that help break down dead plant material. Without fungi we would be buried twenty feet deep in sticks, leaves, and dead roots.

While a few mushrooms are deadly poisonous most are harmless and many are fabulous edibles. Because some mushrooms are toxic it is very important to have an expert identify the mushroom before eating it. One of my favorite mushrooms has abounded this year and provided my family with a tasty treat. This mushroom is called the Chanterelle. Chanterelles have a special relationship with Oak trees. They attach themselves to the oak tree roots and feed the oak tree water and nutrients from organic matter. In payment for the water and nutrients the Oak tree gives food to the Chanterelle. Chanterelles are trumpet shaped, orange in color and have false gills (more like ridges) that move halfway down the stalk. The false gills are branched towards the margin of the cap. Chanterelles sell for about \$15.00/lb in stores, a tasty and valuable morsel of flesh from the dead.

