



Guidance for Retail Sale of Wild-Harvested Mushrooms

DEFINITIONS

A wild-harvested mushroom means a fresh mushroom that has been picked in the wild but not processed (e.g., dried) or packaged in an approved food processing plant. Wild-harvested mushroom does not include cultivated mushrooms.

Growers of cultivated mushrooms typically purchase “plugs” that have previously been inoculated with an edible fungi species (for example, shiitake spp.), and insert them into holes that have been drilled into logs. As environmental conditions allow, the mushrooms begin to grow directly on the logs and are then picked by hand.

WHY ARE THERE REGULATIONS SPECIFIC TO WILD-HARVESTED MUSHROOMS?

The sale and service of wild harvested mushrooms occurs nationwide at retail sales and food service establishments, and poses the risk of death if toxic species are inadvertently offered in place of species that are safe to eat. Over 5000 species of fleshy mushrooms grow naturally in North America. The majority have never been tested for toxicity. It is known that about 15 species are deadly and another 60 are toxic to humans whether they are consumed raw or cooked. An additional 36 species are suspected of being poisonous, whether raw or cooked. At least 40 other species are poisonous if eaten raw, but are safe after proper cooking. Some wild mushrooms that are extremely poisonous may be difficult to distinguish from edible species.

REGULATION – CHAPTER 40-7-1 RETAIL FOOD SALES

40-7-1-.09 Sources, Specifications, and Original Containers

(6) Wild Mushrooms.

(a) Except as specified in (b) of this section, mushroom species picked in the wild shall not be offered for sale or service by a food establishment unless the food establishment has been approved to do so.

(b) *This section does not apply to:*

- 1. Cultivated wild mushroom species that are grown, harvested, and processed in an operation that is regulated by the food regulatory agency that has jurisdiction over the operation; or*
- 2. Wild mushroom species if they are in packaged form and are the product of a food processing plant that is regulated by the food regulatory agency that has jurisdiction over the plant.*

WHAT IS THE APPROVAL PROCESS?

A mushroom identifier is required to successfully complete a course on identification of selected species of harvested mushrooms, in addition to the appropriate harvest, storage and preparation of those species.

When selling the wild-harvested mushrooms, they must be able to show that the mushrooms have been inspected and identified by a certified mushroom identifier.

Individual harvesters or mushroom identifiers will not be required to receive a Food Sales Establishment License from the Georgia Department of Agriculture, if they are offering a raw/unprocessed agricultural commodity to the end consumer. If selling to a retail food sales establishment, the establishment must be licensed and adhere to record-keeping and traceability requirements, as well as labeling requirements.

When selling to a food service establishment (i.e. restaurant), please contact the Georgia Department of Public Health.

RECORD-KEEPING AND TRACEABILITY

To facilitate a traceback in the case of a foodborne illness investigation, the food sales establishment must keep records (e.g. tag or label), provided by the approved wild mushroom identifier, which must include the following information:

- Approved Mushroom Identifier Name;
- Address & Phone Number;
- Latin Binomial Name (Genus Species), and the Local or Common Name of the Mushroom;
- Harvest Date;
- Harvest Location (e.g., town, county, township, etc.);
- Harvest Weight; and
- Name of Forager, If Not Harvested By The Approved Identifier.

The tags/labels are to be attached to the original container in which the wild harvested mushrooms were received and stored, until the container is empty. These records must remain on file by the seller for at least 90 days from the last date of sale – when the container is emptied, or the product is otherwise discarded, and available upon request. This retention period accounts for potentially long asymptomatic latent periods (that can be up to 14 days from consumption). Diagnosis and investigation timeframes can take up to an additional 3 weeks.

Commingling of wild harvested mushroom lots is not recommended; as it serves to confound traceback and foodborne illness investigations, and could hinder efforts to remove implicated products from the food chain.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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If you are interested in getting a mushroom identification course approved, please see our *Criteria and Submission Requirements for Approval of Wild Harvested Mushroom Identifier Courses* document.

For a list of course requirements, please see our *Wild Harvested Mushroom Identifier Course Learning Objectives* document.