

Safety stressed as mushroom-hunting season draws near

As the weather begins to warm and the previous winter's thaw moistens the ground, mushroom enthusiasts will take to the state's forests and meadows to hunt for those shy little fungi, especially the hunter's favorite – the tasty morel.

However, one must know the hazards and observe these tips offered by Michigan State Extension Service Mike Schira in a WWJ report.

Schira advises picking up a good mushroom hunting guide, or even have an expert – a mycologist or accomplished hobbyist – examine the specimen. Though some mushrooms in the state are extremely toxic, careful research and positive identification can help facilitate safety. As mushrooms can look very much like one another, the hunter must be able to differentiate. One example is the “false morel,” which is poisonous.

Never under any circumstances ingest a mushroom in its raw state – and if in doubt, cast it out.

Hunters can find mushrooms, namely morels, along fenced roads or wooded areas, Schira says. Morels tend to favor dead elm trees, which can be identified as a sort of an old-fashioned broom turned upside-down.

Schira also says mosquito activity is a good indicator of mushroom presence, as both fungi and those annoying pests favor the warm spring climate.

Morels can be dehydrated for long keeping, and are excellent additions to steaks when cooked properly.