

# WHAT MOTHER NATURE REALLY INTENDED

"I wouldn't eat that if I were you. That's a poisonous one."

Ed, "The Fungi," grabs my arm just before I reach some white mushrooms at the base of an enormous oak tree. They look just like the ones I usually buy at Stop and Shop.

"Those are Amanita Phalloides, otherwise known as Death Caps. Nasty suckers."

Contemplating my near demise, I wince as I follow behind him, traipsing my way through this damp northern California forest.

"Did you know there are over 10,000 species of fungi that produce mushrooms? You got your poisonous ones, your edibles, and of course, my favorites, the magic ones."



Ed is a big burly guy with a full beard that seems like it

hasn't been trimmed since the summer of Woodstock. He lives in an RV, currently tucked away in the woods, complete with a full kitchen, bathroom and probably a big bag of weed stashed somewhere behind the driver's seat. He seems to be the point person for a collection of mushroom zealots that scour the forest floor in search of these little earthy treasures. I'm scouting this hunt to see if it will make a good segment for our show, *"Emeril Live."* Thanks to Ed's enthusiasm, I can tell it will.

"Aha! Here they are!" he gleefully announces.

Ed reaches down toward the bottom of a beautiful Douglas fir tree, digging up some glorious golden mushrooms.

"Smell this. It's got an almost fruity aroma," he insists. "It's a chanterelle."

He hands me a delicate, yet cold and firm mushroom that I actually recognize. I've mostly seen it in its dried out and travel weary form at Dean and Deluca's for \$24.00 per pound.





“Just inhale. Chanterelles are best cooked. Raw ones might upset the old tum-tum.”

Again, here’s another warning about the toxins that seem to surround me.

“You’re sure smelling is okay?” I ask to make double sure.

“Yes, a good whiff of chanterelle never hurt anybody.”

He’s right. The mushroom does have a fruity smell—almost like an apricot. I had no idea that this meaty and fragrant fungus was what a chanterelle should really be like.



This isn’t the first time my eyes have been opened to the value of having something fresh from the earth. My television infused culinary education has not only treated me to a backstage pass into some of the great kitchens in the country, but it has also given me an opportunity to meet some of the most passionate farmers, foragers, and food enthusiasts. It always amazes me how much depth of knowledge they have about a single crop or about the minerals of a certain terroir or

where in a vast sea you can find that big tuna that would much prefer to keep on swimming. But more than anything, it's those memorable bites of tasting something in its purest form that makes you realize this is the way Mother Nature intended it to be.

—Excerpted from *GETTING SAUCED—How I Learned Everything I Know About Food from TV*