

Key to Alberta Edible Mushrooms

Note: Key should be used with "Mushrooms of Western Canada". The key is designed to help narrow the field of possibilities. Should never be used without more detailed descriptions provided in field guides. Always confirm your choice with a good field guide.

1	A	Has pores or sponge like tubes on underside	Go to	2	
	B	Does not have visible pores or sponge like tubes	Go to	22	
2	A	Bright yellow top, brighter pore surface, shelf like growth on wood	—————>		Leatiporus sulphureous "Chicken of the woods"
	B	not as above with pores or sponge like tubes	Go to	3	
3	A	Has sponge like tube layer easily separated from cap	Go to	4	
	B	Has shallow pore layer not easily separated from cap	—————>		Not described in this key
4	A	Medium to large brown cap, thick stalk, fine embossed netting on stalk	—————>		Boletus edulis
	B	Not as above with sponge like tube layer	Go to	5	
5	A	Dull brown to beige cap, fine embossed netting on stalk	—————>		Not described in this key
	B	Not as above with sponge like tube layer	Go to	6	
6	A	Dry cap, rough ornamented stem, with flesh staining various shades of pink to gray	Go to	7	
	B	Not as above	Go to	12	
7	A	Cap orange to red, never brown or white	Go to	8	
	B	Cap various shades of dark or light brown to beige/white	Go to	10	
8	A	Dark orangey red cap , velvety cap surface, growing exclusively with conifers	—————>		Leccinum fibriliosum
	B	Orangey cap, growing in mixed or pure aspen poplar stands	Go to	9	
9	A	Orangey - red cap, skin flaps on cap margins, slowly staining pinkish gray, earliest of the leccinums starting in June.	—————>		Leccinum boreale
	B	Orangey- red cap, skin flaps on cap margins, quickly staining mauve to grey, green tinges in stalk and occasionally cap edge.	—————>		Leccinum insigne
10	A	Cap various shades of dark brown or medium greyish brown	Go to	11	
	B	Cap beige to white, flesh white with possible slight pink tones.	—————>		Leccinum holopus Leccinum niveum

11	A	Cap dark brown , flesh white with some pink tones under skin, favors aspen	————>	Leccinum snellii
	B	Cap dull brown to grey brown , flesh white with pink to brown tones under skin, favors birch	————>	Leccinum scabrum
12	A	With sponge like tube layer, slimy or dry cap, with ring or veil though may be gelatinous when fresh, slowly disappearing leaving only brown spore ring.	Go to 13	
	B	With sponge like tube layer, slimy or dry cap, with no ring or veil , variety of stalk details	Go to 17	
13	A	Dry felty red-brown cap, slight ring in mature specimens, stalk yellow above ring, red brown stalk below ring, stalk is hollow . Growing in conifer/ larch bogs	————>	Suillus cavipes "hollow stalked suillus"
	B	Not as above, but with ring.	Go to 14	
14	A	Sticky brownish grey to olive green cap with slight knob or umbo. Thin gelatinous ring, large yellow angular pores turning brownish in age. Growing with pines.	————>	Suillus umbonatus "peaked suillus"
	B	Not as above, but with ring.	Go to 15	
15	A	Very slimy or sticky bright orange red to deep yellow cap . Large flaring yellow to white ring. Bright yellow flesh. Always growing with larches .	————>	Suillus grevillei "Larch bolete"
	B	Not as above, but with ring. All growing with pine.	Go to 16	
16	A	Cap is yellow brown and very sticky with translucent to white hairy veil remnants around cap edge. Stalk top yellow, bottom white, veil or ring may or may not be present.	————>	Suillus albivellatus "northern pine bolete"
	B	Not as above	————>	Not described in this key
17	A	With sponge like tube layer, slimy or dry cap, with no ring or veil , stalk has small brown (glandular) dots near the top	Go to 18	
	B	With sponge like tube layer, slimy or dry cap, with no ring or veil , stalk has no (glandular) dots.	Go to 20	
18	A	Sticky but not usually slimy, yellowish cap with dense coating of small hairs turning scaly in age or wet weather. Yellow flesh bruising blue . Very common.	————>	Suillus tomentosus "wooly pine bolete"
	B	Not as above but with glandular dots.	Go to 19	
19	A	Sticky, smooth, cinnamon brown to yellow brown cap. White flesh yellowing in age. Stalk is white with dots , sometimes turning yellow near top. Pores can have "milk" droplets.	————>	Suillus granulatus "Milk bolete"
	B	Not as above.	————>	Not described in this key
20	A	Sticky, smooth, cinnamon brown to tan cap . Yellow flesh. Short white stalk , sometimes pale yellow with no dots . Quite common	————>	Suillus brevipes "short stemmed bolete"
	B	Not as above but with no glandular dots.	Go to 21	
21	A	Cap is yellow brown and very sticky with translucent to white hairy veil remnants around cap edge. Stalk top yellow, bottom white, veil or ring may or may not be present.	————>	Suillus albivellatus "northern pine bolete"
	B	Not as above.	————>	Not described in this key

22	A	Mushroom has gills but not ridges, folds or veins.	Go to	23	
	B	Mushroom does not have gills, but can have ridges, folds or veins, teeth, or a smooth, wrinkled or pitted surface.	Go to	62	
23	A	Spore color is light. White, beige, cream to yellow, light violet, pink to dusty rose.	Go to	24	
	B	Not as above. Spores darker in color	Go to	54	
24	A	Spore color is white, beige, cream to yellow, light violet.	Go to	25	
	B	Spore color is pink to dusty rose.	Go to	52	
25	A	Fresh caps and stalks are crisp and fragile . Stalk breaks like chalk. May or may not exude a liquid or latex. Does not have ring or volva.	Go to	26	
	B	Not as above	Go to	38	
26	A	Typically, stalk white, gills white but can become beige or yellowish in age. Caps are a variety of colours, often thin enough to see the gill lines from top at outer edges. No latex.	Go to	27	
	B	Typically fragile or snappy, young or fresh specimens exuding a latex , in a variety of possible colours. Gills are usually decurrent . Caps often have zoned muted rings.	Go to	36	
27	A	Taste of flesh is tart or acidic especially on the tip of the tongue.	Go to	28	
	B	Taste of flesh is mild, not acidic at all.	Go to	29	
28	A	All russulas that are tart to strongly acidic are not considered edible even though strong blanching can neutralize the acid. The acid can cause upset stomach, vomiting and diarrhea.	—————>		Not described in this key
	B				
29	A	Flesh slowly discolouring light grey	Go to	30	
	B	Flesh remaining white	Go to	31	
30	A	Cap rounded like a 2/3 of a ball, color red- orange to yellow orange . Stalk is white, turning dirty white in age. White flesh slowly discoloring to light grey.	—————>		Russula decolorans "greying russula"
	B	Bright yellow cap with a tall white stalk which can have tinges of salmon colour. Usually in conifer woods but can grow in mixed. White flesh slowly discoloring to light grey.	—————>		Russula claroflava "chrome yellow russula"
31	A	Spore color is white to cream	Go to	32	
	B	Spore color yellow to deep yellow approaching orange	Go to	33	
32	A	Apple green to blue green cap with slight depression in centre. White stalk, sometime with green tinges. Free gills white to yellow, beige to tan spores. Associated with birch & aspen	—————>		Russula aeruginea "green russula"
	B	Not as above	—————>		Not described in this key

33	A	Deep red at first, fading to whitish (not orange) in age. Gills white & close when young growing to wide and yellow. Stalk white with pink blush. Spore print deep yellow to orange.	—————>		Russula borealis "northern russula"
	B	Not as above	Go to	34	
34	A	Purple brown cap fading brown in age. Gills white to tan with intermediates and forks. Stalk white blushing pink and purple. Flesh discoloring tan. Fishy smell. Associated with spruce	—————>		Russula xerampelina "fishy-smelling russula"
	B	Not as above	Go to	35	
35	A	Small (up to 2 inches) lemon yellow to golden yellow cap . White stalk and flesh. Spore print buttery yellow. Gills off white to yellowish in age. Growing in mixed woods.	—————>		Russula chamaeleontina "small yellow russula"
	B	Not as above	—————>		Not described in this key
36	A	Faded orange cap with concentric zoned rings. Gills are decurrent. Exudes a bright orange latex . Bruises and stains green.	—————>		Lactarius deliciosus "delicious milk cap"
	B	Not as above	Go to	37	
37	A	Concave reddish brown cap with a knob in centre. Decurrent, narrow, whiteish gills fading more like cap colour. Exudes cream colored latex. Flesh white. Growing with leaf trees	—————>		Lactarius subdulcis "sweetish milk cap"
	B	Not as above	—————>		Not described in this key
38	A	Gills are free from stalk	Go to	39	
	B	Gills are not free from stalk	Go to	42	
39	A	Ring present on stalk	Go to	40	
	B	Ring not present on stalk	Go to	41	
40	A	Large cap covered with brown shingles. As cap ages white below the shingles is exposed. Gills are white and free. Tall stalk, large felty ring & bulbous base. Flesh staining red if cut.	—————>		Macrolepiota rhacodes "Shaggy parasol"
	B	Not as above. Most of these white spored mushrooms with free gills and a ring are either Lepiotas or Amanitas. These genera contain some of our most poisonous mushrooms.	—————>		Not described in this key
41	A	The white spored mushrooms with free gills and volvas are Amanitas. Some Amanitas have rings others do not. This genera is holds our most poisonous mushrooms. Some field guides list a few of the Amanitas as edible. In Alberta all Amanitas should be avoided as the two possible edible one have variations similar to Aminata virosa.	—————>		Not described in this key
	B				
42	A	Gill are white or cream	Go to	43	
	B	Gills are not white or cream	Go to	50	
43	A	Stalks have partial veil	Go to	44	
	B	Not as above.	Go to	46	

44	A	Honey coloured to light to meduim brown cap, gills decurrent. Growing on wood at base of trees or on roots, usually in clumps. White partial veil with honey yellow hue belowveil.	—————>		Armillaria mellea "honeymushroom"
	B	Not as above.	Go to	45	
45	A	Large white veil on stalk with remnants left on cap. Large off white cap with notched white gills. Firm flesh. Strong, pleasant perfumey odour.	—————>		Tricholoma magnvelare "Pine mushroom"
	B	Not as above	—————>		Not described in this key
46	A	Growing on lawns or grassy areas among buried wood debris.	Go to	47	
	B	Not as above.	Go to	49	
47	A	Growing in dense clusters wih fused stalks . Large irregular cap shapes. White to straw coloured gills, slightly notched to decurent. White spore print.	—————>		Lyophyllum decastes F.chicken mushroom
	B	Not as above.	Go to	48	
48	A	Small to medium sized mushroom growing on lawns in rings or arcs. Beige color cap & gills. Gills distant with intermediates and wrinkles , almost free. Stalks tough.	—————>		Marasmius oreades "Fairy ring mushroom"
	B	Not as above. Make sure the mushrooms picked on lawns do not have decurrent gills or are LBM's. Consider these poisonous. Also watch out for herbicide and pesticide use.	—————>		Not described in this key
49	A	Growing on poplar or aspen . Cap and gills off white to ivory. Gills decurrent, stalk small or absent . Often growing in large clusters. Pleasant anise smell.	—————>		Pleurotus ostreatus "Oyster mushroom"
	B	Not as above. Watch out for Hypsizygos. A large mushroom growing in similar conditions, colour and shape, except Hypsizygos has long stalks and an absence of anise odour.	—————>		Not described in this key
50	A	Lilac coloured cap fading to tan in age. Violet gills notched. Stalks treaked with lilac and white, hollow when mature. Watch for violet mycellium at base.	—————>		Lepista nuda "Blewit"
	B	Not as above.	Go to	51	
51	A	Medium sized yellow to yellow brown cap. Close, notched, bright yellow gills. Pleasant aroma. White flesh.	—————>		Tricholoma flavovirens "Man on horseback"
	B	Not as above. Watch out for Tricholoma sulfureum. Similar looking mushroom with an unpleasant sulfur smell.	—————>		Not described in this key
52	A	Growing on wood, free gills, spore print pink to dusty rose. No volva.	Go to	53	
	B	Growing on wood or woody debris or rich soil, free gills, spore print pink to dusty rose. Has a volva. These mushroom are in the genus Volvalaria.	—————>		Not described in this key
53	A	Cap is light with dark brown fibers arranged radially. Stalk similar to cap colour with enlarged white base. Gills are braod and serrate.	—————>		Pluteus patricius Patrician deer mushroom
	B	Cap light smoky to very dark brown, radially streaked with an uneven surface. Stalk sometimes twisted.	—————>		Pluteus cervinus "Deer mushroom"
54	A	Spore print various shades of brown from rust to choclote.	Go to	55	
	B	Spore print grey or black	Go to	60	

55	A	Spore print rusty brown.	Go to	56	
	B	Spore print chocolate brown, crowded free gill. Stalk with ring.	Go to	57	
56	A	Bell shaped cap pale yellow, turning buff and orange brown, finally wrinkled with up turned margin. Stalk white with pale yellow and violet with ring which separates easily .	→		Rozites caperata "Gypsy Mushroom"
	B	Not as above	→		Not described in this key
57	A	White to beige large cap with large thick scales. Thick ring on stalk with upper and lower edges. Thick flesh white, staining slowly pinkish.	→		Agaricus crocodilinus "Crocodile agaric"
	B	Similar to above, without large thick scales.	Go to	58	
58	A	Cap smooth that can have some small, thin scales. Ring is collar like sitting lower on stalk. Thick flesh white, staining slowly pinkish. Commonly found on lawns in early summer.	→		Agaricus bitorquis "Spring agaric"
	B	Cap smooth with fringe on cap edge. Short stalk smooth above and below fragile ring. Thick flesh white, can stain pinkish. Commonly found in pastures in summer to fall.	→		Agaricus campestris "Meadow mushroom"
59	A	Spore print black. Liquifying as it ages. Cap often rolls up along margin or edges	Go to	60	
	B	Spore print grey to black. Cap slimy or glutinous.	Go to	61	
60	A	White cap tall, cylindrical with brown scales, never opening flat. Gills light turning black, then to ink. Cap edges rolling up. Flesh white and fragile. Growing in lawns or roadsides	→		Coprinus comatus "Shaggy mane"
	B	Bell shaped cap smooth, greyish white with brown on the crown. Stalk hollow, thin and tall. Gills white turning black, then to ink. Usually in clusters on old stumps, in shady areas.	→		Coprinus atramentarius "Inky cap"
61	A	Thick flat topped cap purplish to grey brown, glutinous. Thick gills decurrent. Thick tapering stalk, thick slimy opaque veil leaving glutinous ring usually dusted black with spores.	→		Gomphidius glutinosus "Slimy gomphidius"
	B	Similar to above. Cap is lighter pink, often with cracked pattern. Not as slimy. Tapered stalk has bright yellow base. Taste mild.	→		Gomphidius subroseus "Rosy gomphidius"
62	A	Fruiting body has folds or veins similar to thick blunted gills.	Go to	63	
	B	Fruiting body has teeth or a smooth or wrinkled surface, but definitely no gills or pores	Go to	64	
63	A	Solid, thick, tapering cylindrical shape with flat top. Purple to brownish grey colour. Most often growing in clumps with fruiting bodies fused together. Veins strongly decurrent	→		Gomphus clavatus "Pig's Ears"
	B	Not as above. Other chanterelle like mushrooms are rarely found in Alberta	→		Not described in this key
64	A	Fruiting body generally ball or sack shaped. Spores are enclosed inside and puff out through opening in skin when disturbed.	Go to	65	
	B	Not as above. Fruiting body has teeth or a smooth, wrinkled or pitted surface.	Go to	67	
65	A	Ball or pear shaped fruiting body with or without a stalk or stump	Go to	66	
	B	Ball or pear shaped fruiting body with or without a stalklike foot growing out of a sac like membrane which opens up leaving a cup with petal like fringe. These are earth stars	→		Not described in this key

66	A	Pear shaped, round headed fruiting body on a stumplike base with small spines or warts on surface. Flesh solid and white turning into brown spores. Growing in the woods.	————→	Lycoperdon perlatum "gem studded puffball"
	B	Large fruiting body like a flattened ball. Surface cracked into large jigsaw like pieces slowly spreading apart as it ages. Flesh white turning brown. Growing in fields/ meadows.	————→	Calvatia booniana "Western giant puffball"
67	A	Fruiting body with teeth or spines. Either with a stalk and cap or branches	Go to 68	
	B	Not as above. Fruiting body with a smooth or wrinkled or pitted surface.	Go to 70	
68	A	Growing on the ground with a cap and stalk.	Go to 69	
	B	Growing on wood with teeth or spines growing from long branches.	————→	Hericium ramosum "Toothed coral fungus"
69	A	Buff to yellow orange cap, underside covered with with teeth or spines. Stalk white, may be orangey in age. Flesh is not tough. Growing in the woods in late summer or fall.	————→	Hydnum repandum "Hedgehog mushroom"
	B	Not as above.	————→	Not described in this key
70	A	Surface smooth with wrinkles or deep pits.	Go to 71	
	B	Surface smooth to slightly granular, Most often shapped like an agaric with a funnel or depression on top. Bright yellowish green. Flesh firm to hard.	————→	Hypomyces luteovirens Green Lobster
71	A	Wrinkled cap resembles a thimble. Cap colour varies from tan to varying shades of brown. Tan stalk is tall, fragile and when young the core is filled with cottony pith. Hollow in age.	————→	Verpa bohemica "Early Morel"
	B	Cap and stalk are confluent. Fruiting bodies are hollow with deep honeycombed pits on the surface.	Go to 72	
72	A	Fruiting body is black in general apperance. Ridges are black, the pits are lighter shades of brown. Stalk is ivory when young toshades of tan in age.	————→	Morchella elata "Black morel"
	B	Fruiting body shaped like a yellow to tan coloured sponge. The ridges are lighter than the pits. Grows later in the spring than the black morel and usually larger and not as cylindrical.	————→	Morchella esculent "Yellow (sponge) morel"