



Mushroom: A Global History (Reaktion Books - Edible)

Cynthia D. Bertelsen

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Known as the meat of the vegetable world, mushrooms have their ardent supporters as well as their fierce detractors. Hobbits go crazy over them, while Diderot thought they should be “sent back to the dung heap where they are born.” In *Mushroom*, Cynthia D. Bertelsen examines the colorful history of these divisive edible fungi. As she reveals, their story is fraught with murder and accidental death, hunger and gluttony, sickness and health, religion and war. Some cultures equate them with the rottenness of life while others delight in cooking and eating them. And then there are those “magic” mushrooms, which some people link to ancient religious beliefs.

To tell this story, Bertelsen travels to the nineteenth century, when mushrooms entered the realm of haute cuisine after millennia of being picked from the wild for use in everyday cooking and medicine. She describes how this new demand drove entrepreneurs and farmers to seek methods for cultivating mushrooms, including experiments in domesticating the highly sought after but elusive truffles, and she explores the popular pastime of mushroom hunting and includes numerous historic and contemporary recipes. Packed with images of mushrooms from around the globe, this savory book will be essential reading for fans of this surprising, earthy fungus.

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