

Mushroom Foraging & Feasting: Recollections from a Lifetime on the Hunt

Victoria Romanoff

Sarah Adams, Photographer

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In *Mushroom Foraging & Feasting*, Victoria Romanoff shares tips, recipes, and charming anecdotes from her experiences collecting mushrooms.

Though she found her first mushroom at four, Romanoff's official foray into mushroom collecting began when her Russian mother took her into the woods just outside of a displaced persons camp following World War II. That environment allowed them to stretch their food budget via foraging. Her mother taught her to recognize the poisonous mushrooms, gather the edible ones, and keep the locations of good crops secret. Romanoff also learned to share the bounty; in exchange, others in the camp shared theirs.

Romanoff drew on these lessons when she moved to the US and began foraging there. The book itself exemplifies such sharing, as with its recipes to feed one's family and friends: a Raw Caesar Platter "should be outrageously large and the dinner company very special." She is a lively, good-humored guide through her subject who stops to note a flashy chicken, Hedy Lamarr; to remember gifting innkeepers with the fruits of her hunts in exchange for fresh biscuits; and to record woodland jaunts and the joyous meals and encounters they generated.

The book's recipes are easy to execute. They include pastas rich with cream; fresh dishes of raw mushrooms seasoned with fresh herbs, olive oil, and Parmesan cheese; and sauteed mushrooms over potato pancakes. Colorful pictures accompany the recipes.

Baked into the narration is a commitment to community. Every extra bag of mushrooms might be traded for freshly picked blueberries or some garden bounty. For Romanoff: mushrooms still bring the community, sustainability, and friendship that they did in the camp.

A memoir with recipes, *Mushroom Foraging and Feasting* shares bright stories of finding food in the woods and turning it into a lifelong hobby and community builder.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (July / August 2022)

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