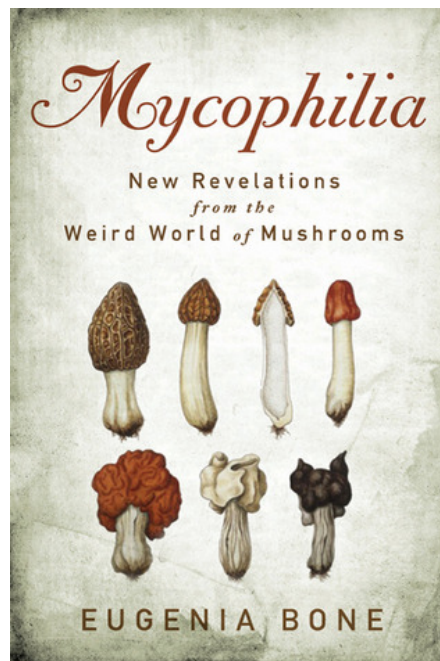




Mycophilia: Revelations from the Weird World of Mushrooms

Eugenia Bone

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An incredibly versatile cooking ingredient containing an abundance of vitamins, minerals, and possibly cancer-fighting properties, mushrooms are among the most expensive and sought-after foods on the planet. Yet when it comes to fungi, culinary uses are only the tip of the iceberg. Throughout history fungus has been prized for its diverse properties—medicinal, ecological, even recreational—and has spawned its own quirky subculture dedicated to exploring the weird biology and celebrating the unique role it plays on earth. In *Mycophilia*, accomplished food writer and cookbook author Eugenia Bone examines the role of fungi as exotic delicacy, curative, poison, and hallucinogen, and ultimately discovers that a greater understanding of fungi is key to facing many challenges of the 21st century.

Engrossing, surprising, and packed with up-to-date science and cultural exploration, *Mycophilia* is part narrative and part primer for foodies, science buffs, environmental advocates, and anyone interested in learning a lot about one of the least understood and most curious organisms in nature.

Mycophilia: Revelations from the Weird World of Mushrooms Details

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From Reader Review *Mycophilia: Revelations from the Weird World of Mushrooms* for online ebook

Caroline says

When I started this book, I was vaguely interested in mushrooms. I've always liked mushrooms from the culinary end, and I've taken photographs of mushrooms during hikes. But apart from that, I've never really given them a great deal of thought.

But this book has raised not my just consciousness into the wonderful world of mushrooms, but my level of interest as well. Who knew that mushrooms share about 80% of the same RNA as humans do? I certainly didn't. Or that the chitin that coats mushrooms so that they can push out of the ground without bruising themselves is the same thing that's found in crab shells and squid beaks? Or that mushrooms have more in common with the animal kingdom than the plant kingdom? I now know that there are mushroom conferences and mushroom hunting festivals around the world should I ever feel the urge to don a pair of wellingtons and root around animal dung or forest floors with company.

Apart from providing an indepth look at different mushrooms, both wild and farmed, their reproductive habits, their preferred habitats and how to hunt for them, I now know the symptoms of mushroom poisoning. I like the advice shared in the book about mushroom hunting ... just stand and take in the view. Especially in today's busy world, when we're all trying to multitask, just standing still, being quiet and letting our eyes take in the bounties of Mother Nature before us, is a task worth cultivating, and one that is bound to bring us a few moments of inner peace ... until we spy that one shy mushroom to leap upon!

If there's only one thing I'm taking away from this book alone, it's that I'm no longer going to be wasting my money buying expensive bottles of truffle oil. Want to know what? Read the book!

D says

It was a fun read. After reading a bit of Mary Roach, I hear a bit of Mary in Eugenia... that said, I found the book entertaining and informative. There is definitely a need for more biologists/scientists to be studying fungus more closely.

Delta says

I had no interest in mushrooms before I picked this book up, but I'm always looking for new and fascinating topics. And this was an excellent surprise. Bone shares her experience getting into the field and meeting fascinating people. Plus, mushrooms are so cool! Never would have thought.

Nina says

I read this book after seeing the review in the NYTimes. I'm a longtime mushroom lover (I'll never forget the crispy sweetbreads with morels at a riverside inn in Fontaine de Vaucluse) and buy mushrooms on nearly

every shopping trip.

This book took a very long time for me to read, uncustomarily. Unlike some of the spellbinding fiction I read, this book can be easily put down for a game of Angry Birds, then picked up later. The author seems like a real character (I love her name, for some reason. I'd like to write a limerick...Eugenia Bone, won't you pick up the phone, a mushroom is calling and it's right in the zone...but I digress).

This lady is obsessed, to put it mildly. Everything you ever wanted to know about mushrooms is undoubtedly contained in this book. I've never hunted for mushrooms, but reading this made me want to go out there and find some deliciousness. Unfortunately, Montclair, NJ is not a great hunting ground, so maybe I'll take a trip to Oregon one of these days.

I liked all the information, and I liked her anecdotes, too, like interviewing a mushroom expert naked in a hot spring. Unlike some self-promoting authors I could name who seem to pick a subject that will win them a publishing contract, Ms. Bone is truly in love with mushrooms. Her love and respect comes through quite beautifully, if you can get through all the scientific stuff, and all in all, it's a very cool book.

Adam says

Eugenia Bone is, from what I understand, a food writer who got into mycology as an eater and ended up as the President of the New York Mycological Society. She wrote this book to chronicle her exploits.

For anyone who's studied mycology at all or even read a number of other pop-mycology books (Mr. Bloomfield's Orchard, Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World, Magical Mushrooms, Mischievous Molds, The Kingdom Fungi, etc), this book will be old news. However, there are some rather nice aspects of the book. First of all, Bone has a fairly interesting personality and isn't afraid to let it come through in her writing - it's certainly not sterilized.

More importantly, she's done an awful lot of reading and searching in the primary literature for the book, and having all of that gathered into one place can be helpful and interesting. She's also included some of the most fascinating, up-to-date new discoveries, which I was unfamiliar with before. For instance, I was unfamiliar with the fascinating research being done on melanin as an pseudo "photosynthetic" molecule in fungi.

So yeah. It's always exciting to relive, vicariously, the discovery of the wonderful world of fungi (which is, of course, our own magical world). But there's nothing particularly special about this book other than its recent publication.

Ami says

Dense at times, heavy on the science, but the author's voice also came through the writing...which was sometimes good, sometimes bad. Bone is a pretty bougie Manhattanite, but can at times be fairly down to Earth (pun intended). Although I'm not planning to trip anytime soon, I admit that I found the chapter on psilocybin mushrooms most interesting, especially when Bone touches on the biochemistry & neuroscience behind the perception of religious/spiritual experiences. Altogether, an interesting although sometime slow journey through the world of fungi and the folks who love them.

Daniella says

I made it about 3 hrs into the audiobook and decided to return it. The author makes way too many comments about the appearance of the people she encounters in the midwest, which has nothing to do with mushrooms and all to do with her looking down her nose at people and I really was turned off by it. What little she covered in the first few chapters of the book about mushrooms was very basic and not terribly interesting. I definitely enjoy memoirs or books about the relationships they have with plants, but this book wasn't very well written.

S Napier says

Interesting but a bit too personal

I enjoyed the book and feel I learned quite a bit from it about mushrooms, but I was quite put off by the overly-sharey feel to the book. I know this was written as a personal narrative, but the author can be quite snarky at times, which really was distasteful to me. Her impressions of other people took away from the really good information in the book and disrupted the flow of the narrative. I was left with an overall disagreeable impression of the author, although I appreciate the knowledge imparted about fungus.

Laura says

A fun and thorough introduction to the world of mushrooms. I can tell a lot of research went into this book - at the same time, as another reader voiced, I didn't really enjoy some of the unnecessary details. Ex. the snipe about the Asian woman holding up the mushroom hunt with a persistent little smile seemed rude and unneeded. Still, a decent book to feed my love for mushrooms.

Oana says

The book starts out very delightfully, with the author's mushroom-hunting antics. But, like most books about one topic, Eugenia Bone feels like she has to cover every facet of the mushroom's intersection with human life. For such a broad topic, it's a little too much. I felt there was so much more to each chapter and it might have been fun for Bone to research and write more in-depth pieces.

It seemed especially as though Bone (a food writer) should have expanded on the culinary use of the mushroom. After looking up other books in her bibliographic endnotes, it seems like there are already many books on edible mushrooms; perhaps her editor asked for something that also took into account technological uses of the mushroom? Don't get me wrong, I did enjoy reading about different ways to use fungi. It just felt like a too broad overview.

Another reviewer on Goodreads pointed out that Bones' book covered familiar territory, while giving us updates on the latest in fungi spheres. For the contemporary reader, this is probably thus a great recent introduction to the topic.

One other note: some reviewers here felt chapter four was racist. Bone seems like a nice enough lady. I think she did make note of the mushroom pickers' ethnic backgrounds and was quite inconsistent in how she approached that chapter. The one thing I was surprised was for such a foodie, she hasn't discovered the different Asian cuisines apart from the Japanese and their matsutake (talking about how much you love their

food is always a good in when you meet people from different cultures) and felt distanced from her subjects. In fact, it's too bad she didn't delve more more into Chinese edible mushrooms. It would have been neat to find out more about wood ears, etc.

Daniel Stewart says

For anyone with a remote interest in mushrooms and the world of mushroom collectors, this book is for you. Although I found it informative, interesting, and well-written, I didn't connect to the author in any way (she seemed proudly self-centered at times), and that hindered me from truly enjoying the book as much as I could have. Certainly worth reading!

Carolyn says

This book started off promising - I was riveted by the first 100 pages but then it dropped off into a list of potential uses for mushrooms to do x - chapter after chapter.

Amy says

I've heard some criticism of this book, but to me it creates a complete view of mushrooms from one woman's personal experience and perspective. It may not be your own, and that's ok. As a mushroom enthusiast - not a scientist, not an expert, not a gatherer - I found the book truly fascinating. It gives a great base of knowledge in everything from history, to science, to culture, to future, to cooking. I'll be going back through and re-reading some chapters to further my understanding. Some parts of the book are memoir-esque and full of personal insight, experience, judgement, etc. - but I found that it only added to my enjoyment.

Rob Slaven says

For once I actually bothered to purchase a book and not just receive it free for review. Sadly, I wasn't thrilled.

What I expected out of this book was something much more science or even mushroom-oriented. Unfortunately, that was only about 20% of the total book's content. I put the breakdown at right about:

20% - Science, Cultivation and Habitat
30% - Personal anecdote and memoir
30% - Festivals, events and venues
20% - Cooking

In summary, I guess I should have expected some of this based on the description and the history of the author but really not my cup of tea. All that said, the author is witty turns a fine phrase but that doesn't help much when she's going on about exactly the wrong thing.

Jessica says

I love the topic, but I wonder what the author was thinking when she made the book as much about her experience of getting into mushrooms as it was about mushrooms. She includes so many topics and details I don't care about -- whether or not some attractive poetry-writing MA student attended some party at a mushroom conference -- and leaves so many interesting things to footnotes (the French mob is involved in mushroom poaching? There have been violent turf wars?!! -p125).

What's more, there's an entire chapter (Chapter 4) devoted to the culture of wild mushroom harvesting in America, and it's by far the most racist writing I've ever encountered in a non-fiction book. The author seems obsessed about the race of the various pickers she encounters (at one point she calls them "Gypsies" -- p108), and has no problem proliferating local racist opinion. To add insult to injury, it seems as though she's doing so completely casually and whimsically. Here are some sample quotes:

"I could guess their race by their body types: sturdy, big-headed Mexicans and slender, petite Asians."
(p102)

"There are a ton of rumors:... that the "Camboes" [Cambodians] cordon off areas with fake forest service tags..." (p107)

"It was very hard to make friends with the Asians, although they were always polite-ish." (p112)

If you'd still like to read the book, you should do so, just skip Chapter 4. It's relatively light on information anyway, and the main narrative involves how she was scared to go out into the forest because she was on her period and worried her period blood would attract a bear. (Yes you read that right.)
