



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet

Pacific Golden Chanterelle (*Cantharellus formosus*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Chanterelles (*Cantharellus formosus*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/chanterelles-cantharellus-formosus/

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There's gold in those hills – that is golden mushrooms

Pacific Golden Chanterelles became the Oregon State mushroom in 1999. And no wonder, Oregon harvests over 500,000 pounds annually!



Chanterelles (Royalty free from Unsplash)

Chanterelles are one of the most popular wild edible mushrooms and tend to command a high price in both restaurants and specialty stores. Their rich, distinctive taste and aroma often puts them into the same gourmet fungi short list with truffles and morels.

Where do Pacific Goldens Grow?

Chanterelles are live Pacific Northwest conifer forests that include western hemlock, Douglas-fir, and Sitka spruce (and live oaks in California). It forms a mycorrhizal mutually beneficial (symbiotic) relationship with these trees.

Pacific Gold Chanterelle is one of several chanterelle mushrooms. It is sometimes hard to tell one from another. The Pacific has a long, graceful funnel-shaped stem that tapers to the base. The wavy cap has tiny, dark scales on the pinkish orange-yellow surface. The false gills look like forked wrinkles with a pinkish hue. The scales and pinkish colors are sometimes absent in wet conditions. Look for a distinctive fruity apricot aroma.

Not the Same

Recent DNA work helped identify the differences between ‘Cantharellus cibarius’ (Golden Chanterelle), ‘Cantharellus formosus’ (Pacific Golden Chanterelle), and other related species. At one time all chanterelles in the Pacific Northwest were considered ‘cibarius.’ Turns out they are not. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chanterelle>.

The cibarius for instance grow in clumps among the moss in coniferous forests. Some grow in grasslands, mountainous birch forests, or beech forests depending on the location and specific species. Cibarius are yellow or golden, funnel-shaped, and meaty. Gill-like ridges run down the stem under the cap and they may smell fruity, woody, or earthy. For more information on these findings see: The Wild Mushroom Expert (https://www.mushroomexpert.com/cantharellus_formosus.html).

Lookalikes

Mushrooms can be difficult to identify and several, like the cibarius and formosus, look very similar. There are other mushrooms that look like these including the false chanterelle which is darker almost orangeish with a dark center that grades out towards light edges. False chanterelle is not dangerous, but could upset your stomach. It also tastes bad.

Jack-o-lantern mushrooms are toxic and sometimes mistaken for chanterelles. The gills of a jack-o-lantern mushroom are much thinner, deeper, and delicate than the smooth, blunt, and shallow gill-like ridges of a chanterelle.

Cooking

Fresh chanterelles are the best to cook with. They dry well, but can become a bit chewy when reconstituted. Chanterelles can be dried and ground to a flour or frozen for short amounts of time.

Cooking releases the complex flavors of a chanterelle, especially when cooking with wine and butter. There are several fabulous recipes around to experiment with (like in sauces, sautés, soups, etc.). Look for Chanterelles at local farmer’s markets, gourmet stores, and gift stores.

The key to enjoying mushrooms is making sure that you have the right one. Some are poisonous (see chart at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mushroom_poisoning). Most poisonous mushrooms will cause vomiting and diarrhea with no long-term damage. Other mushrooms can be deadly and cause damage kidneys and liver. Do your research, learn how to safely identify your target, and lookalike, mushroom species.