



Contents

Introduction: Pig-Dog Gulch	1
1. <i>What Are Morels?</i>	3
The World Is a Fungal Jungle	3
The Mycelium	4
Mushrooms Are Spore Factories	5
The Morel Life Cycle	7
Mushroom Growth	11
Types of Morels	12
2. <i>False Morels, Verpas, and Other Spring Mushrooms</i>	21
Dead Bugs	21
False Morels Are Poisonous	23
Distinguishing False Morels from True Morels	28
Types of False Morels	31
Verpas	36
Other Spring Mushrooms	39

3. <i>Where and When to Find Morels</i>	45
Morel Season Lasts All Year Long!	45
USA Steak Buffet	47
When Will They Get Here?	48
Indicators	52
Where Can I Find Morels?	53
Ash Trees	54
Dead and Dying Elm Trees	57
Tulip Trees	58
River Bottoms and Flood Plains	59
Apple Orchards	60
Burn Sites	62
Landscaping Morels	67
4. <i>Hunting Morels</i>	71
MIS: Morel Insecurity Syndrome	71
Equipment	74
Acquiring New Spots	75
Picking Morels	79
Does Picking Morels Threaten Their Survival?	82
Mesh Bags and Other Feel-Good Strategies	86
5. <i>Eating Morels</i>	89
Cleaning Morels	89
Cooking Morels	90
Preserving Morels	94
6. <i>Morel Hunters</i>	97
The Sickness	97
Economic Implications	98
The Waiting Is the Hardest Part	99
Count the Pickup Trucks	100
Lone Hunters	102
Hunting Mushrooms Together	103
Morel Championships and Festivals	106
7. <i>Theorizing Morels</i>	117
Rain and Temperature Don't Matter?	117
Mayapples and Water Witches	120
Natural Indicators as Angst Relief	124
An Experiment Wish List	125

A Reality Check and Some Notes on Morel Culture 128
The Jackhammer Experiment 130

8. *The Science of Morels* 133

A Jigsaw Puzzle 133
Culture Studies 133
We're Outta Here! 136
What Do Morels Do in Nature? 143
How Many Species and Where Are They? 146
The Morel Data Collection Project 151

9. *Taxonomy* 157

"A Phallus with an Egg-Shaped Head" 157
Morchella 162
Verpa 184
Gyromitra 186

References 201

About the Photographers 205