



The Mushroom Hunters: On the Trail of an Underground America

Langdon Cook

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In the tradition of Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief*, and Mark Kurlansky's *Cod* - a renowned culinary adventurer goes into the woods with the iconoclasts and outlaws who seek the world's most coveted ingredient...and one of nature's last truly wild foods: the uncultivated, uncontrollable mushroom.

Within the dark corners of America's forests grow culinary treasures. Chefs pay top dollar to showcase these elusive and beguiling ingredients on their menus. Whether dressing up a filet mignon with smoky morels or shaving luxurious white truffles over pasta, the most elegant restaurants across the country now feature an abundance of wild mushrooms.

The mushroom hunters, by contrast, are a rough lot. They live in the wilderness and move with the seasons. Motivated by Gold Rush desires, they haul improbable quantities of fungi from the woods for cash. Langdon Cook embeds himself in this shadowy subculture, reporting from both rural fringes and big-city eateries with the flair of a novelist, uncovering along the way what might be the last gasp of frontier-style capitalism.

Meet Doug, an ex-logger and crabber - now an itinerant mushroom picker trying to pay his bills and stay out of trouble; and Jeremy, a former cook turned wild food entrepreneur, crisscrossing the continent to build a business amid cutthroat competition; their friend Matt, an up-and-coming chef whose kitchen alchemy is turning heads; and the woman who inspires them all.

Rich with the science and lore of edible fungi - from seductive chanterelles to exotic porcini - *The Mushroom Hunters* is equal parts gonzo travelogue and culinary history lesson, a rollicking, character-driven tour through a world that is by turns secretive, dangerous, and tragically American.

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