

REGIONAL VARIETES OF

FRENCH MUSHROOMS

THE VAR REGION



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Introduction...

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My husband is a professional forger, a family tradition for several generations. Foraging four varieties of wild mushrooms amounting to almost 20 kg. The variety includes porcini, Sanguine, little greys, Sahin and le crête de coq, (the roosters crest.)





"Les petits gris""Les petits gris" refers to certain small, grey mushrooms commonly found in the wild, especially in France and other parts of Europe. This term is often used by French foragers to describe several types of edible and inedible wild mushrooms that have a grayish appearance. Here are some of the mushrooms typically associated with this term:

. **Petit-gris de sapin (*Tricholoma myomyces*)

- This mushroom grows under conifers like fir trees, often in mountainous regions. It has a grey cap, sometimes with darker streaks, and is slightly sticky when wet.

Edibility: Though some foragers collect it, it is not considered a choice edible mushroom due to its mediocre flavor.

Gris de feuillus (*Tricholoma sculpturatum*)**

- Found in forests of broadleaf trees like beech and oak, this small, grey mushroom has a more delicate texture and mild taste.

Edibility: Often considered edible, but it's crucial to differentiate it from toxic look-alikes.

Petit-gris** (a colloquial term for young, grey Oyster Mushrooms)

- Oyster mushrooms, which are commonly cultivated in France, come in a variety of colors, including grey. When young, they are sometimes called "petits gris."

Edibility: Highly prized in cooking, they have a mild, slightly sweet taste and tender texture.

Cortinarius and Entoloma Species**

Some Cortinarius and Entoloma mushrooms also have grey caps and are often mistaken for edible varieties. However, both genera contain several toxic species, and these mushrooms should only be collected by experts.



"Sanguine" mushrooms, also known as *Lactarius sanguifluus*, are a prized variety in many parts of Europe, especially in France and Spain. These mushrooms are part of the *Lactarius* genus, commonly called "milk caps" because they exude a colored "milk" when cut or damaged. *Lactarius sanguifluus* is well-known for its distinct reddish to blood-red juice, giving it the "sanguine" name.

Key Characteristics of *Lactarius sanguifluus* (Sanguine Mushroom)

- **Cap**: Reddish to purplish-brown, often with greenish or bluish hues, especially when aged. It typically has a slightly depressed center with wavy edges.
- **Gills**: The gills are attached to the stem and range from pinkish to deep red. When bruised or cut, they exude a dark red or blood-like milk.
- **Stem**: Thick, short, and cylindrical, matching the cap in color with hints of red or purple.
- **Flesh and Milk**: When cut, the flesh and gills

produce a reddish milk that slowly darkens. This milk, along with the mushroom's vibrant colors, makes it quite unique.

- **Odor and Taste**: It has a mild, earthy, and slightly fruity odor, with a taste that is sometimes a bit spicy when raw. Cooking brings out a more robust, nutty flavor.

Habitat and Foraging

- **Location**: *Lactarius sanguifluus* thrives in Mediterranean climates and grows in pine forests, often found under pines and sometimes in oak woods.
- **Season**: These mushrooms are typically found in late summer through autumn, though timing can vary with regional climate.

Culinary Uses

- **Preparation**: In Mediterranean cuisine, sanguine mushrooms are highly valued and are often grilled, sautéed, or added to stews. They pair well with olive oil, garlic, and fresh herbs.
- **Flavor**: When cooked, they develop a savory, earthy taste with a rich, meaty texture that works well as a meat substitute in vegetarian dishes.

These mushrooms are popular among European foragers but should be identified with care, as other *Lactarius* species can be toxic.



Porcini Mushroom:

Cap: The cap is a light to medium brown with a smooth surface, slightly convex, and appears somewhat spongy or cushiony.

Pores: Instead of gills, it has a sponge-like layer of pores underneath, which is characteristic of boletus mushrooms.

Stem: The stem is thick and sturdy, typical of **Boletus** species, and tapers slightly towards the base.

Identification Tips

To confirm that this is an edible **Boletus**, here are a few things to check:

Pore Color: The pores should be white to yellow in young specimens, darkening with age.

Blue Staining: Many inedible or toxic boletes bruise or stain blue when cut or handled. **Boletus edulis** does not change color when bruised.

Odor: It should have a pleasant, mushroomy aroma rather than a sour or chemical smell.

It is considered one of the best-tasting mushrooms and is widely used in cooking. However, as with all wild mushrooms, it's recommended to consult a local expert or a mycologist before consuming, as some **Boletus** species can be toxic.



"Safrané" (meaning "saffron-colored") mushrooms, due to their distinctive orange color and the saffron-like orange milk they exude when cut.

AKA **Lactarius deliciosus**, are a popular type of wild mushroom in France and other parts of Europe.

Key Characteristics

- Cap: Ranges from orange to reddish-orange with darker concentric rings. The cap is often slightly funnel-shaped as it matures, with a dimpled or indented center.
- Gills: Bright orange gills that turn greenish when bruised or aged, which is a good identifying feature.

Stem: The stem is also orange with small, dark specks, and it turns greenish when touched or as it ages.

Flesh and Milk: When cut or broken, the flesh exudes a bright orange or saffron-colored milk, which slowly turns green when exposed to air.

Odor and Taste: It has a pleasant, earthy, slightly fruity smell. The taste is mild, though it can become slightly bitter if overcooked.

Habitat & Foraging

Location: *Lactarius deliciosus** grows in coniferous forests, particularly under pine trees. It has a symbiotic relationship with the roots of certain trees.

Season: Typically found in late summer through autumn, depending on the climate.

Culinary Uses

Preparation: In French and Spanish cuisine, safrané mushrooms are often grilled, sautéed, or used in stews. They're commonly paired with olive oil, garlic, and fresh herbs.

Flavor: They have a mild, nutty flavor with a slight earthiness. When cooked, the texture is firm and meaty, making them a great addition to dishes like risottos, sauces, or as a side. These mushrooms are considered a delicacy, but they should be identified with care since some inedible **Lactarius** species have similar appearances. Always consult a mushroom expert if you're foraging them for the first time.



"Le crête de coq," or "Cockscomb," is the fleshy red crest on top of a rooster's head, but it also refers to the edible flower known as *Celosia cristata*. This plant, with its striking, vibrant colors—ranging from deep reds to purples, yellows, and oranges—has a texture that resembles a rooster's comb, which inspired its French name.

In French cuisine, "crête de coq" can also refer to the actual comb of the rooster, which is occasionally used as an ingredient in traditional dishes. When prepared, it's typically braised and is known for its unique texture. This preparation is considered more of a delicacy and might be encountered in very traditional or haute cuisine.



It sounds like you're referring to **girolle blanche**, which is French for "white girolle" or "white chanterelle." These are a type of edible mushroom, also known as **Cantharellus subalbidus**, a sister of the yellow chanterelle (**Cantharellus cibarius**). White girolles are found mainly in North America and are prized for their mild, earthy flavor and dense, *almost crunchy* texture when cooked.

Compared to regular girolles, white girolles have a slightly milder taste and are often used in gourmet dishes. They work well sautéed with butter, garlic, and herbs or in creamy sauces paired with meats or pasta. Let me know if you're curious about any recipes or more details on foraging and using them!