

Compare: Wild food has played a significant role in the cultural food practices of Thailand and Japan

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概要

Food is essential for humans. People used to foraging plants in the forest close to their houses. Wild mushrooms can be classified as non-timber forest products, representing a significant economic resource for many nations. Wild mushrooms have been consumed throughout human history (Suazo & Viana-Lora, 2022). Foraging for wild mushrooms is a practice enjoyed in many countries worldwide. It is often rooted in tradition and culture, allowing people to connect with nature, enjoy unique flavors, and participate in community and family activities. Whether for personal consumption or culinary excellence, wild mushrooms hold a special place in the diets and cultures of these regions. For example, the most popular wild mushrooms in the world have unique flavors and aromas. They can be very expensive, like truffles, widely recognized and celebrated in Western cuisine and often associated with luxury and high-end dining. At the same time, matsutake is a highly sought-after delicacy in East Asian countries, particularly Japan, valued for its specific autumnal flavor and cultural significance.

キーワード：Wild mushrooms, 異文化接触、言食文化、翻訳可能性、インターラクシオン

1. Comparison of Mushrooms in Thailand and Japan

In this case, we will compare the cultural foraging of wild mushrooms in Thailand and Japan, which have similar and different characteristics in Table 1.

(1) Termite mushrooms

The flavor and aroma of termite mushrooms can vary depending on the species and how they are prepared. Termite mushrooms are known for their earthy flavor, reminiscent of the forest floor. A mild sweetness often accompanies this earthiness. They may also have subtle woody notes, enhancing their overall earthy character. Many termite mushroom species have a pronounced umami taste, which is often described as savory and meaty. This umami quality adds depth and richness to dishes.

When properly cooked, some termite mushrooms

Table 1. Comparison of the cultural foraging of wild mushrooms in Thailand and Japan

Similar/different characteristics	Thai wild mushroom (Termite mushroom)	Japanese wild mushroom (Matsutake)
Natural condition in which mushrooms grown	Sand, loam, termite mounds	????
Cultivation characteristics	grow naturally	grow naturally
Time to Spoilage	Perishes easily. Food preservation must be provided.	?????
Specific taste/smell	Flavor and aroma combinations	Pine aroma
Type of food	Salad, Soup	Soup, in rice
Seasonal Food	rainy	autumn
Pricing compare with cultivate mushroom	Higher than typical mushroom	Very expensive
Mushroom Festival	Yes	Yes
Traditional food	Usually have in September to October during Vegetarian Festival	Special occasion or New Year
Secret method to foraging	From family	
Mushroom foraging tour	No	No

can develop nutty notes in their flavor profile. This nuttiness can be subtle but adds an extra layer of complexity. The texture of termite mushrooms is unique, often described as spongy or sponge-like. This texture can absorb the flavors of other ingredients in dishes.

These foods, foraged from natural environments like forests, rivers, and mountains, have been part of Thai cuisine for generations and play a significant role in traditional dishes. Here are some examples of wild foods in Thailand that are fundamental to its cultural food heritage.

(2) Matsutake

Matsutake was historically plentiful in Japan, with production exceeding 6,000 tons in the early 1950s. Since the 1960s, domestic production has dropped to less than 100 tons. Japan now relies heavily on imports to meet demand, with China supplying the majority (60-70%) of Matsutake in the Japanese market. Matsutake are the fruiting bodies of ectomycorrhizal fungi, fungi that live mutualistically with the roots of certain species of trees. They are eaten as a gourmet delicacy, primarily in Japan. Humans find the mushrooms elusive for a variety of reasons. The matsutake fungus is difficult to pin down geographically, having been discovered with a range of different hosts in sites as far-flung as Turkey, Korea, Canada, Japan, China, Norway, and Mexico (Wang et al. 1997).

The primary host of matsutake fungi in Japan is the red pine (*Pinus densiflora*). However, they have also been found in relationships with other kinds of pines and with some oaks, firs, spruce, cedar, chinkapin, and other trees. Despite considerable scientific efforts, matsutake has thus far eluded humans' attempts at their cultivation. They fruit fleetingly and unpredictably, evading human plans for control and instead popping up in relation to their life-world agendas.

They are also challenging to find. Hidden in the forest duff, they are often invisible to the untrained eye. The challenges of procuring the mushrooms have made them prohibitively expensive for most consumers. Moreover, because matsutake growth depends on fungal relationships with trees and other forest dwellers, scientists and would-be cultivators need help to



Figure 1. Termite Mushroom and Termites [6]

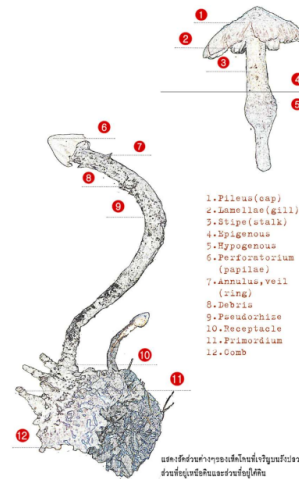


Figure 2. Termitomyces, Comb, Epigynous, and Hypogynous [6]

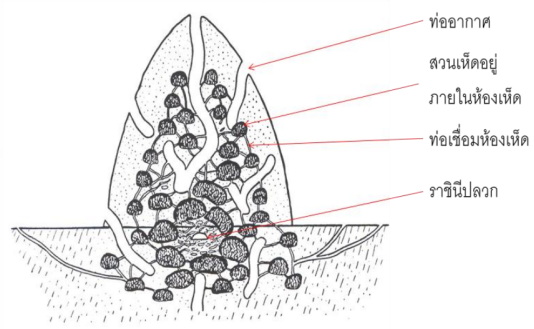


Figure 3 Fungus growing termite (Source: Bels & Pataragetvit, (1982 cited in Sangwanit, 2024))

conceptually isolate the mushrooms from the web of natural-social relationships through which they grow.

2. Conclusions

Foraging for wild mushrooms is becoming a form of travel and leisure activity. This unique and innovative form of tourism, known variously as "mushroom tourism," "mycotourism," or "mycological tourism," offers a distinct experience for travelers. (Suazo & Viana-Lora, 2022). In Thailand, the municipality of Kanchanaburi province organizes the Termite Mushroom Festival every year, but sometimes, the mushrooms cannot bloom during the event. However, organizing the foraging for wild mushroom trips as food tourism will be a challenge. Which is similar to Matsutake's trip to Japan.

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