

**Book Review: *Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms*, by Ian Hall, Peter Buchanan, Wang Yun, Anthony Cole.**

Don't open this book unless you can afford to buy it. The superb photographs, two to four to an opening and about natural size, are compulsive. But it is a serious work with ingenious radial keys for identifying and all information sourced in seven pages of references.

It is not just a book for naming: there are chapters on fungus hunting, cultivating saprobic and mycorrhizal mushrooms and statistics about market values and consumption world-wide that often astonish. Are we missing a lot (apart from extra trips to the loo) by being so cautious in what we eat? It is surprising how often the sign for edibility appears and most of us will heed the warning that cooking is a safety factor and if spores are ripe that the cap is too old for the pot. Like so much else, mushrooms have been bred for appearance and shelf life and the standard of culinary excellence remains with the wild field mushrooms that you cannot buy.

To get the best pictures the net has been widely spread but the senior author Ian Hall has contributed most. Maybe research in his student days on the mycorrhizas of rata and kamahi, which contributed much to the Otago hypothesis that mycorrhizal dependency can be assessed by measuring root hairs, turned his attention to truffles and to establishing commercial crops where we have limey soils. His success has brought many invitations to travel abroad and the book benefits with pictures of edible fungi in cultivation and much information that adds to the interest of the text.

AGMARDT (publishers) have helped to keep the price down to fifty dollars. Yes, open it!

Geoff Baylis.