

**Abstract:** Whether you call it pine mushroom or matsutake (or simply the more affectionate nickname “matsi”), there can be no question that *Tricholoma magnivelare* is one of the most highly prized in the world. It can be an acquired taste to Westerners (I personally love them!); among Japanese the mushroom is king, with prices for top specimens fetching kings’ ransoms. Annually, Japanese matsutake mavens will spend US\$50-100 for a single top quality specimen and prices many times this are regularly reported. Because the demand far exceeds the supply in Japan, commercial pickers descend upon North America (especially in the Pacific Northwest) every autumn with hopes of striking gold. Commercially speaking, in British Columbia pine mushrooms are the leading non-timber forest product export.

“Matsutake” refers to a loosely defined circumboreal (northern hemisphere) species complex in the genus *Tricholoma* whose mycelia form an extensive “white domain,” or “shiro” as they establish a unique ectomycorrhizal relationship with conifer and broadleaf trees. With a matsutake mushroom in hand, identification is made easy by the spicy, organic (not earthy or mushroomy) smell; the mushrooms are white with brownish areas making them look almost dirty and slightly shaggy; gills are white and as with all members of the Tricholomataceae, the spore print is white.

Based on DNA sequence analysis there are three main groups of matsutake mushrooms in the northern hemisphere: western North America, Mesoamerica, and a third, widely distributed group in Asia-Europe-North Africa-eastern North America.