

# Morel Mushroom Experts

For a grocery store, restaurant, or farmers' market to sell wild morel mushrooms to the general public, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) requires all mushrooms be inspected by a certified mushroom expert. The Department of Inspections and Appeals have recently adopted rules that allow anyone who takes a short, three hour course to become certified.

The department said this minimal requirement for morel inspectors in Iowa is sufficient and will maintain safety for people buying or eating the mushrooms from a retail es-

tablishment or farmers' market. There are some false morels in Iowa that do look similar to morels that can cause illness; however, we have very few mushrooms that can be mistaken for morels.

Since 2008, only individuals who were certified mushroom experts with an advanced degree could sell or serve morel mushrooms. This new rule allows any Iowan to complete a short, inexpensive course and sell or serve the mushrooms to food establishments. This will open up a new market for Iowa's wild morel mushrooms.

To become certified, a person must take a three hour course offered through Iowa State University (ISU) Extension every three years. The certified mushroom expert must then inspect every mushroom before they can be sold or served.

ISU Extension has already held two courses, one in Cedar Rapids and one at ISU in Ames. The training is being conducted by Dr. Mark Gleason, ISU Department of Plant Pathology. For more information, contact Dr. Gleason at 515-294-0579 or [mgleason@iastate.edu](mailto:mgleason@iastate.edu).