Story Idea: Mushroom picking

Summary: Picking mushrooms is a seasonal industry on the islands which provides work for local and visiting pickers. It is also a popular pastime for locals who are interested in gathering their own food.

Facts:
- The main species that is harvested commercially is the Chanterelle, (*Cantharellus formosus*) but there are several other common edible species such as Boletus, Oyster mushrooms, Shaggy manes, Hedgehogs, and the occasional Pine mushroom.
- The picking season is from late August until late October.
- Chanterelles are found mainly in second growth forest made up of hemlock and spruce trees.
- The best known area for picking is around Skidegate Lake on Moresby Island (about 45 minutes down the logging roads from Sandspit). Pickers from off-island frequently set up temporary camps along the shore of the lake.
- In the past, most Chanterelles were bought by agents for off-island companies and shipped directly to Vancouver and then on to the European and Asian markets. In recent years a local food coop has begun production of dried mushroom products in an effort to extend the mushroom season and pay fair wages to local pickers.

Suggested Itinerary: In September and October, visit the mushroom camp at Skidegate Lake to meet pickers and buyers. The logging road from Sandspit to Skidegate Lake can be driven in a car, but some rental companies may not allow rental cars on this road.

Try picking mushrooms only with someone who is experienced at identifying them.

Any time of year, visit the Haida Gwaii Culinary Co-op in Queen Charlotte to learn about mushroom processing and local food sustainability initiatives (make an appointment in advance to ensure that someone will be there for an interview). [www.hgccfoods.ca/](http://www.hgccfoods.ca/)

Further Information:
Lynda Dixon, President of the Haida Gwaii Culinary Co-op, can provide information on mushroom picking and processing. The Co-op may be able to connect you with local pickers (in season) to try mushroom picking yourself. [http://www.hgccfoods.ca](http://www.hgccfoods.ca) (250)559-8202

You can find more on the biology of the Chanterelle at [www.mushroomexpert.com/cantharellus_formosus.html](http://www.mushroomexpert.com/cantharellus_formosus.html)

Contact the Queen Charlotte Visitor Centre at [info@qcinfo.ca](mailto:info@qcinfo.ca) or (250)559-8316 to get current road information for the logging roads.