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Poisonous-edible look-alike mushrooms in Sri Lanka and how to avoid them

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Although only 1% of the more than 14,000 known species of macro-fungi produce fruiting bodies that are deadly or potentially deadly to humans, hundreds of people worldwide die annually from mushroom poisoning. Insufficient knowledge, unclear taxonomy, rising consumption of fungi, and misleading folklore are all contributing factors to these deaths. As a mycophilic country, Sri Lanka is home to various species of edible mushrooms, such as *Calvatia candida*, *Pleurotus giganteus*, *Schizophyllum radiatum*, *Termitomyces heimii*, *T. microcarpus*, and *Volvariella volvacea*. Potentially poisonous mushrooms are reported in the genera; *Amanita*, *Inocybe*, and *Chlorophyllum*. *Amanita* is frequently confused with edible mushrooms, such as puffballs and *Chlorophyllum* species, particularly the common toxic *Chlorophyllum molybdites* (the green-spored parasol or vomiter), which are often mistaken for prized edible mushrooms like the true parasol mushroom (*Macrolepiota procera*). This article aims to compile Sri Lankan macrofungal species known to be responsible for poisoning and raise awareness of food safety issues related to poisonous mushrooms, as well as increase the knowledge based on this topic for the general public and scientific community. We list the potential toxic mushrooms found in Sri Lanka, along with case studies that provide their main distinguishing features, ecology, and distribution. We also highlight the danger of look-alike edible species, aiming to raise awareness and caution among our readers. Additionally, we discuss methods for preventing future instances of poisoning and the necessity of developing regional-level educational and awareness programs, especially in rural areas where they would be most beneficial.

Keywords: Awareness, Ceylon, deadly fungi, macro-fungi, mushroom poisoning

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