

“Excrements of the earth:”  
Attitudes towards mushroom-eating in seventeenth-century England

From the full English breakfast to the chicken and mushroom pie, mushrooms are a staple of modern British cuisine. In the seventeenth century, however, English dietary writers expressed vocal aversion towards the eating of mushrooms, viewing the practice as unnatural, debauched, and (perhaps worst of all) French. The language these authors used to discuss mushrooms was often viscerally hostile, drawing upon images of filth and decay. This session will consider texts from a range of genres – including herbals, dietary advice literature, and recipe collections – to explore how culinary tastes can serve as microcosms of wider cultural anxieties.

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