

HOW TO MAKE A SPORE PRINT

Of *Agaricus bisporus* (the cultivated mushroom)

Mushrooms produce millions of spores, which are similar to the seeds of flowering plants. Spores are made on the 'sheet-like' gills underneath the cap of this mushroom. When the mushroom is mature its cap expands and the gills are seen. Spores can then drop from the gills and are carried away by wind currents. Spores are so small that you normally need a microscope to see them, but with a spore print, thousands of spores are deposited together, giving a pattern that resembles the gills of the mushroom.

You will need:

A mushroom

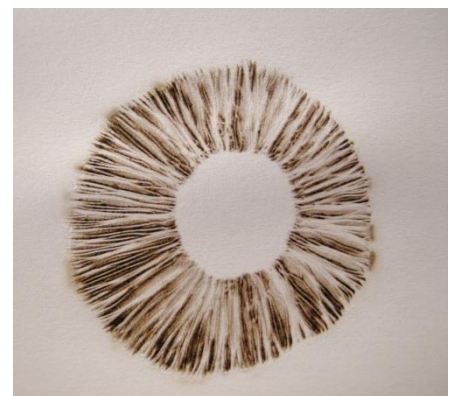
A piece of white card

A bowl to cover the mushroom

Hair spray (optional)



Place your mushroom face down on the card and cover it with a bowl.



This is what your spore print should look like

What to do:

1. Gently place your mushroom cap, face down on the piece of card. There is no need to press it down.
2. Cover the mushroom with a bowl (to stop it drying out and to reduce air currents that might spoil your print by blowing the tiny spores around).
3. Leave everything where it is for at least 2 hours or longer (overnight).
4. Carefully remove the bowl and the mushroom cap. You should see a pattern on the card that matches the pattern of gills on the mushroom!
5. You have successfully made a spore print. To prevent smudging, 'fix' your spore print with hair spray.

Did it work?

If there is no pattern the mushroom might be too old or too dry, or you may need to leave it for longer (sometimes fungi take up to a day to release their spores). Are all fungus spores the same colour? Why not try a spore print with Oyster mushrooms? Is the spore print of a different colour?