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Fungus of the Month - June 2011



Lactarius eucalypti

Lactarius eucalypti is found in most forests and woodlands throughout southern Australia. In the south west it is common in both karri and jarrah forests. In jarrah forest it is often found at or near the base of living trees. The cap is 15-35 mm diameter, red-brown in colour with a smooth rubbery-looking appearance. The gills are pale creamy brown and often speckled with rusty spots. They are arranged in sets of various lengths (see above) with the longest gills reaching to and running 1-2 mm down the stem. The stems are up to 35 or 40 mm long and about 5 mm wide. It has the same red-brown colour of the cap but the surface is often covered with a powdery white coating that is easily brushed or washed off.

Species of *Lactarius* are easily recognised by a milky white substance (latex) that exudes from damaged flesh or gills (see above). Species of *Lactarius* and *Russula* are very similar in appearance, but *Russulas* do not exude latex. However, *Lactarius eucalypti* differs in appearance from other species of *Lactarius* and *Russula* with its rubbery look and slender rather than stout structure.

The scientific name refers to the latex exudate and its habitat. *Lact-*: milk, *-arius*: pertaining to or possessing, *eucalypti-*: refers to eucalypt trees or forest.