# Australian woman denies murder of three relatives with death cap mushrooms amid trial revelations



An Australian woman is currently on trial for the alleged murder of three relatives by serving them a fatal meal laced with death cap mushrooms. Erin Patterson, 50, stands accused of intentionally poisoning her former in-laws, Gail and Don Patterson, both aged 70, along with Gail’s sister, Heather Wilkinson, who was 66. The incident occurred during a lunch at Patterson's home in Leongatha, Victoria, on July 29, 2023. Heather's husband, Ian Wilkinson, also consumed the dish but has since recovered after undergoing a liver transplant.

The prosecution asserts that Patterson deliberately included the toxic mushrooms in a Beef Wellington dish as part of a calculated plan, while Patterson claims the incident was a tragic accident. She has pleaded not guilty to three counts of murder and one of attempted murder, arguing that the mushrooms were meant to enhance the meal's flavour rather than to harm.

As the trial in Morwell progresses, it has attracted significant media attention, becoming a topic of fascination nationwide. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s coverage, for instance, has resulted in a prominent podcast that ranks as the most listened-to in the country.

In a recent testimony, Patterson acknowledged that she may have searched online for death cap mushrooms but could not recollect doing so. The prosecutors presented evidence of a search conducted on the citizen science platform iNaturalist in May 2022, which featured sightings of the dangerous fungus. Under cross-examination from prosecutor Nanette Rogers, Patterson was asked whether the online activity indicated an interest in the mushrooms, to which she ambiguously responded, “Depends what you mean by interest.”

Further complicating her defence, Patterson faced questions regarding her relationship with her in-laws, revealing text messages expressing frustration about their perceived judgement. The prosecution has suggested that Patterson maintained a façade of cordiality while secretly resenting her husband's family. A notable piece of evidence included her admission of misleading her guests about the purpose of the lunch which, she later stated, was initially billed as a gathering to discuss her supposed cancer diagnosis—a claim she later recanted revealing the true motivation was an impending weight-loss surgery she felt embarrassed to disclose.

Moreover, troubling details have emerged regarding Patterson’s actions following the meal. Despite suspecting that the dish contained foraged mushrooms that could be toxic, she failed to notify health authorities. Under questioning, she explained that she was disoriented and scared, fearing she would be blamed if her guests fell ill. This fear is compounded by her admission of discarding a dehydrator linked to the mushrooms and remotely wiping her phone to eliminate potential evidence.

Justice Christopher Beale has indicated that the trial, initially intended to last for six weeks, is likely to extend over another fortnight. With considerable public interest, the court is set to reconvene shortly, where Patterson will continue to give evidence before the jury.

The implications of this trial are profound, not just for Patterson, who faces life imprisonment if convicted, but also for public perception around food safety and the potential unintended consequences arising from personal grievances. With the courtroom proceedings continuing to unfold, the outcome remains highly anticipated across Australia.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/australia-erin-patterson-mushroom-poison-b2765098.html), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/00ea28021943fe4a56d2a3b30ad26598)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/australia-erin-patterson-mushroom-poison-b2765098.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/4f16f07cf2ab3dc159d7032841d302fa), [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australian-accused-mushroom-murders-cross-examined-by-prosecution-2025-06-05/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/australian-woman-accused-triple-mushroom-murders-breaks-down-court-2025-06-03/), [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/60b08cdcc496032499ec9676681289a5)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/australia-erin-patterson-mushroom-poison-b2765098.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/4f16f07cf2ab3dc159d7032841d302fa> - Erin Patterson, a 50-year-old woman from Victoria, Australia, is on trial for allegedly murdering three members of her former husband’s family and attempting to kill a fourth by serving them a meal laced with death cap mushrooms in July 2023. The victims were Don and Gail Patterson, both 70, and Gail’s sister Heather Wilkinson, 66. Ian Wilkinson, Heather’s husband, survived after undergoing a liver transplant. If convicted, Patterson faces life imprisonment for the murder charges and up to 25 years for attempted murder. The case has garnered significant public attention. During her testimony at the Victorian Supreme Court, Patterson, who has pleaded not guilty, claimed the poisoning was accidental. She also spoke candidly about personal issues, including struggles with self-esteem, spiritual changes, a difficult childbirth, and a growing estrangement from the Patterson family. The trial, ongoing for six weeks, saw the prosecution conclude its evidence presentation, with Patterson taking the stand for the first time during the defense phase. She is scheduled to continue her testimony on Tuesday. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/4f16f07cf2ab3dc159d7032841d302fa?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/australian-woman-accused-triple-mushroom-murders-breaks-down-court-2025-06-03/> - Erin Patterson, a 50-year-old Australian woman, is on trial for the alleged murder of her estranged husband's parents, Gail and Donald Patterson, and Gail’s sister, Heather Wilkinson, by serving them Beef Wellington laced with lethal death cap mushrooms in July 2023. She is also charged with the attempted murder of Heather’s husband, Ian Wilkinson. Patterson denies intentionally poisoning her guests, describing the incident as a tragic accident. During the trial, she broke down in court while addressing expletive-filled messages about the victims, expressing regret and attributing her frustration to issues with her estranged husband, Simon Patterson, particularly regarding child support. Erin became the first defense witness after the prosecution concluded a month-long presentation, which included input from relatives and mushroom experts. The high-profile case has garnered intense media coverage in Australia and beyond, with daily updates becoming leading content on national podcasts. The trial began on April 29 and is ongoing in Morwell, Victoria. Erin Patterson faces a life sentence if found guilty. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/australian-woman-accused-triple-mushroom-murders-breaks-down-court-2025-06-03/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://apnews.com/article/00ea28021943fe4a56d2a3b30ad26598> - Erin Patterson, an Australian woman, is on trial for allegedly murdering three of her estranged husband's relatives by serving them a lunch containing death cap mushrooms in July 2023. The victims—Don Patterson, Gail Patterson, and Heather Wilkinson—died after eating a beef Wellington meal at her home in Leongatha, Victoria, while Heather’s husband, Ian Wilkinson, survived after becoming critically ill. During testimony at the Latrobe Valley Courthouse, Patterson admitted the meal contained death caps but claimed the majority of the mushrooms came from local supermarkets. She acknowledged possibly mixing them with dehydrated wild mushrooms she had foraged earlier. A longtime mushroom forager, Patterson began the hobby during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown and had included foraged mushrooms in meals for her children. Though she initially lied about foraging, she now asserts the poisoning was accidental. Prosecutors argue her actions were deliberate and note suspicious elements like serving her portion on a different plate and disposing of a dehydrator. Patterson also expressed regret over hostile messages sent about her in-laws prior to the incident. She denies seeking revenge and maintains a close relationship with the victims' family. She faces life imprisonment if convicted and will continue testimony in the coming days. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/00ea28021943fe4a56d2a3b30ad26598?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australian-accused-mushroom-murders-cross-examined-by-prosecution-2025-06-05/> - Erin Patterson, a 50-year-old Australian woman, is on trial for allegedly murdering three elderly relatives of her estranged husband and attempting to murder a fourth by serving them a meal containing lethal death cap mushrooms in July 2023. The victims included her in-laws, Gail and Donald Patterson, and Gail's sister Heather Wilkinson. Heather's husband, Ian Wilkinson, survived the incident. Prosecutors claim Patterson deliberately weighed a fatal dose of the mushrooms on her kitchen scales before preparing the Beef Wellington dish that was served during the lunch at her home in Leongatha, Victoria. Patterson denies the charges, insisting the incident was a tragic accident. Under cross-examination, she acknowledged lying to authorities about foraging mushrooms and owning a food dehydrator later found with traces of death caps. However, she denied faking an illness or using a false cancer diagnosis to lure her guests. The trial, which has attracted significant media and public attention in Australia, continues in Morwell, with the prosecution having rested its case after a month of presenting evidence. Patterson’s cross-examination will proceed into the following week before the trial concludes later this month. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australian-accused-mushroom-murders-cross-examined-by-prosecution-2025-06-05/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://apnews.com/article/60b08cdcc496032499ec9676681289a5> - Erin Patterson, an Australian woman, is on trial for allegedly murdering her in-laws and a relative by serving them a lunch laced with deadly death cap mushrooms in July 2023. Three of the four guests died, while one survived. Prosecutors claim Patterson deliberately poisoned the meal to kill her estranged husband’s parents, Don and Gail Patterson, and Heather Wilkinson, after luring them to lunch under the false pretense of needing to discuss her alleged cancer diagnosis. However, Patterson testified that the incident was a tragic accident caused by a mix-up involving dried and foraged mushrooms. She claimed to have added the mushrooms to improve the flavor of a bland beef Wellington and said she herself fell ill after inducing vomiting post-meal. Patterson admitted she lied about having cancer to avoid revealing upcoming weight loss surgery. She also confessed to discarding a mushroom dehydrator and wiping her phone remotely from police custody to hide evidence, fearing backlash and the loss of her children. Patterson denies all charges, including attempted murder of Ian Wilkinson, and faces life imprisonment if convicted. The trial, held in Victoria's Supreme Court, continues with cross-examination by prosecutors. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/60b08cdcc496032499ec9676681289a5?utm_source=openai))