
Mycena News

Mycological Society of San Francisco

March, 2000, vol 50:3

MSSF's 50th Anniversary Morel Foray

April 28 - 30, 2000

(Reserve Now! Reservations Due by End of This Month)

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Membership and Subscription Information

To join the MSSF and receive this newsletter, send a \$20 check, payable to MSSF (\$12 for seniors 65 and over and full time students), to MSSF, c/o Wade Leschyn, 1609 Valley View Ave, Belmont CA 94002. Please include some contact information such as home and/or work phone numbers and email addresses. New and renewal memberships will be current through December of 2000. To change your mailing address, please notify Wade. MSSF members may also join or renew membership in the North American Mycological Association at a reduced rate by including with their MSSF check a separate check for \$17 payable to NAMA. Send it to Wade at the same address. For further information email Wade at leschyn@rahul.net or call at 650.591.6616.

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This year's special, celebratory morel foray—celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the MSSF—will be held the weekend of April 28–30, 2000 (Friday–Sunday). We'll have guest speakers, special programs, and lots of good fun.

The foray will be held in Groveland at the Pine Mountain Lake Resort (just off Highway 120 and about 25 miles from the north entrance of Yosemite National Park). This development has a lake, golf course, club house and a lake lodge. For this foray, the MSSF will be renting 2 and 3 bedroom vacation homes and condos.

We need EVERYONE to reserve spaces by the end of this month (that is, by March 28) so that we can reserve housing in this gated community. (Due to the fires of last year, many of the campgrounds where we traditionally stay will not be open by April 28).

The houses will open to us on Friday after-

noon. Saturday night dinner will be served at the Lake Lodge of the resort. Members should bring their own food for Saturday and Sunday breakfasts and lunches, as well as for Friday night dinner. Members may prepare their meals in the homes in which they are housed. Also, members must bring their own linens or sleeping bag.

The cost for the foray is \$88 a person which covers 2 nights lodging and the Saturday night dinner served by the Pine Mountain Lake restaurant.

Please make your reservation promptly by writing a check to MSSF and sending it to Tom Sasaki, 1506 Lyon St., San Francisco, CA 94115. Space is limited, so please reserve early. In your reservation, please indicate your preference for New York steak, chicken or vegetarian lasagna for Saturday night dinner.

— Tom Sasaki

Mills Canyon Foray of 1-17-2000 Samples 59 Fungal Varieties!

Twenty four eager persons descended on Fred Stevens and Bill Freedman at Burlingame's Mills Canyon fungal foray on Jan. 8th.

Too many people for a single lane trail system. We were forced to divide our guests into two groups to facilitate their introduction to fungi. Our weather was fine, we were impressed to learn that our database included about 59 species found in the 2-3 hours we spent on the trail. Sorry, no edibles this year. Just Amanita phalloides. We did find 15 species that had not been found here before.

We cannot recall a time in which more people called for information. It seems as if there are

many, many persons in our community who want to learn more about fungi than ever before. The rosters for four forays on the Filoli Nature program were filled in 3 weeks. By phone and Internet, we have been fielding numerous requests for information of all sorts. Local county park docent coordinators are asking for instructional hikes for their hike leaders. The local Boy Scouts have been requesting information. I would be interested to learn what members in other areas are experiencing. We felt so threatened by such a deluge of people that in the last week before the Mills Canyon event, we discour-

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President's Corner

Well we've finally settled on a location for the spring morel foray thanks to all of the hard work put in by Tom Sasaki. Unfortunately the San Jose camp will not open until June this year because of the fires. Instead we will be staying in private vacation homes that are rented out when not in use. Tom has written an article with details on registering. Please register early. Renting and assigning houses is not something that we'll be able to do at the last minute or even the last week. Register now. Fortunately there were fires and as long as the rains continue there is the potential for an abundant season.

Council news. At last month's council meeting a motion was made to create a Legal Advisor chair. The motion passed unanimously. Attorney Duy Thai has accepted the position and is our new legal chairperson. No other motions were proposed at the meeting.

Saturday's wonderful weather at the Salt Point foray allowed me to do some brainstorming with a couple of people regarding what kind of activities we'd like to see the society involved in next year. Some of the ideas that were thrown around included having a class on dyeing and papermaking with mushrooms, holding a couple of beginning mushrooming classes, and presenting some of the NAMA slide shows on different mushroom genera. An Amanita and a Boletus class in the fall perhaps and additional classes in the spring. It is fairly easy to get rooms at the Randall museum to hold classes. If you have an interest in presenting a class or lecture on something please let me know.

Thanks again to all of the volunteers who keep the society interesting and energized. Thanks to Mikki McGee for offering to teach the microscope classes and to Louise Freedman for the drawing workshop. Remember to sign up for the morel foray soon and I hope to see you out in the woods gathering fungi.

- Mark Thomsen

March 21, MSSF General Meeting: Dr. Dennis Desjardin

Confused by the frequent changes in the latin names of fungi?

Dr. Dennis Desjardin, the MSSF's Scientific Advisor, will be speaking at the March 21st general meeting. Dr. Desjardin will be giving a presentation on the current status of mushroom taxonomy. It will cover where we've been and where we're going. He will also talk about some of the new tools that are being used in taxonomy and how these changes affect amateur mycologists.

The MSSF's general meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month—September through May—at the Randall Museum on Museum Way (near Buena Vista Park) in San Francisco. Doors open at 7:00pm for mushroom identification and general conversation; the meeting proper begins at 8:00pm.

Nominations for Next Year's MSSF Officers Welcome

Elections are coming up for next year's MSSF officers. We are looking to the MSSF members for nominations. Feel free to nominate yourself or anyone else.

The specific positions for which we will be holding official elections include: **President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.**

In addition to these elected positions, there are a number of others positions for which we need volunteers next year: **Newsletter editor (for layout and/or content), Librarian, Books sales, Fungus Fair leadership.**

If you are at all interested in volunteering or nominating someone, please contact Mike Boom at 510.635.7723 or Larry Stickney at 510.885.0495.

[Note from newsletter editors Yu-Shen and Hilary: we've really enjoyed editing the Mycena News, but we're off to be married in September and to travel the world sometime next year. So, we need to find one or more persons to takeover the newsletter beginning with the September, 2000 issue. No experience needed! Call us at 650.813.9149 if you want to discuss what the job entails.]

Nominations for officers are due by **March 12**. Elections will be held at the May general society meeting. The new leadership will coordinate activities for the Society that, after the MSSF's summer hiatus, begin in September.

God Fungus (Grifola?) in Taiwan

Dear Bill:

Happy New year, Very thanks to your help. You are a nice man. People treat this fungus as a God. Nobody dare ate it. The underground is nothing but sand only.

I think you can read my attachment now. I resend more pictures that you share the joe of nature.

I will contact those people as you point out. If I know more I will let you know. I wish I was a free man too.

Thanks again.

— Jeff Lin (in a letter sent to Bill Freedman)

MSSF Cultivation Committee News

Many thanks to our 1999 Fungus Fair Volunteers

I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to all those who helped with the cultivation display at the 1999 Fungus Fair. The display was abuzz continuously throughout the show hours. **Matt Chrysler** and **Matt Binder** deserve special recognition for their enthusiasm and adaptability as we pulled together the last minute details for the displays, and for staffing the tables for many hours, answering a constant barrage of questions and helping out wherever and whenever needed. Their many hours of help and support were indispensable!

Many thanks to **Ken Litchfield** for bringing and setting up plants for the garden display and to his blond friend (whose name I missed, sorry) who hauled all those plants into the venue. **Ken** also helped with the transportation of cultivation materials back to their destinations after the fair, and has provided ongoing life-support for the cultivation committee throughout the year. **Al Carvajal**, you are an angel in the flesh – thanks for being there and helping out as needed – not only on the cultivation display, but for the entire fair! Your contributions are always appreciated.

Thanks to my dear friend **David Bartolotta** for his very special care and feeding of the wayward oyster mushroom log which got lost in the air cargo maze for several days, and is still in recovery (perhaps it will be back in good health in time for the S.F. Garden Show). The log got to spend the night with David's special brand of hospitality including a nice warm bath. (He didn't say whether he read it a bedtime story.)

Thanks to **Debbie Viess**, **David Rust**, and **Sydney Viess-Rust** for filling in as needed – and when it was needed, it was really needed! Thanks to **Tho Vong** for jumping in and becoming a loyal staffer behind the cultivation table – as a new member, he was already able to answer as many questions as he asked! Thanks to **Mark Lockaby** for answering way more questions than he asked, and for his bright

smile and endless charm! Many thanks to **David Sarasua** for sharing Portobellos, buttons, and “dirty white mushrooms”, helping sell kits (the used car salesman of mushroom kits, he was), for persimmons, wine and even chocolate prunes and for helping keep the cultivation staffers entertained. Thanks to **Dulcie Heiman** for helping with anything and everything. I'd also like to mention a thank you twice removed to **Dulcie** for her help in the kitchen, for she is often our very special behind-the-scenes angel at many MSSF events. Do angels get dishpan hands? Thanks to **Bill** and **Beryl** and **Robert Esposito** and all the other fair volunteers who helped with final cleanup! Next year, I hope we add to the roller-blade brigade – amazing what one can do with a broom and a pair of skates!

Robert Dixon earned special praise – although he was unable to attend the fair, he sent down agar plates for cultures, which allowed us to demonstrate sterile techniques and collect some cultures too. Thanks to **Brian Peterson**, a new member who jumped in and tried sterile techniques with no trepidation whatsoever. And it didn't seem to hurt a bit – I think we will be seeing much more of **Brian**!

Now, shouting my appreciation all the way to Canada, thanks to **Bill Chalmers** of **Western Biologicals** for providing excellent quality spawn for the displays. Bill also cut us a very good deal on the mushroom kits so that both new and experienced cultivators had the opportunity to try fruiting a new variety for minimal investment. Now, if in the chaos, and with my unreliable memory, I have failed to mention **your** help, you have full permission to throw a *Russula* at me the next time we meet in the forest, and I will know it is necessary to mention you in my next writing. Finally, thanks to all those who stopped by the display to learn, commiserate, and exchange ideas and information. It was fun and I learned a lot too. See you at next year's fair!!!

— Terri Beauséjour

MSSF Scholarship Winners

This year's winners of the Esther Colton-Whited-Harry D. Thiers scholarship are Elissa Swearingen of San Francisco State University and Lisa Grubisha of U.C. Berkeley.

Elissa Swearingen is studying the *Boletus edulis* complex in western North America—comparing it with related species in Europe. New names, fewer names, a better understanding of phylogenetic relationships are likely results.

Lisa Grubisha is studying spore dispersal and gene flow between mainland and Channel Island populations of *Suillus pungens*, *Rhizopogon ochraceorubens* and *R. subcaerulescens*. Despite appearances, these two genera are thought to be closely related. Spore dispersal strategies however are quite different. The spores of the below ground fruiting *Rhizopogon*(s) are spread by rodents while those of *Suillus pungens* are dispersed by wind. A hypothesis to be tested is whether mainland and island populations of *Suillus pungens* will be more genetically similar than the *Rhizopogon*(s) due to the mobility of their spores.

On completion of their studies, the scholarship recipients will present their findings at a MSSF general meeting.

— Fred Stevens

Gyromitra esculenta: Fungu of the Forest

As an avid eater of edible Amanitas, some might consider me to be a practitioner of what I call "extreme cuisine". But I don't attempt to eat poisonous Amanitas, only the known and delicious edibles. For real examples of extreme cuisine you need to look towards those that eat fugu, or blowfish sushi, and Gyromitra esculenta. Both these foods start out deadly poisonous and through various elaborate procedures enough toxin is removed to make them edible.

Fugu, improperly prepared and ingested, will kill you within 30 minutes. Through the fastidious ministrations of a highly trained Sushi Chef fugu is rendered edible. Torafugu, the most poisonous of the blowfish species, is also the most highly prized. The exquisitely deadly nerve toxin is concentrated not only in the liver, as in lesser forms, but also in the gonads, entrails, skin and muscle (what parts do you actually eat? you might ask). Torafugu is referred to as "the most delicious of all fish", its flavor no doubt enhanced by surviving its ingestion. The Sushi Chef leaves just enough nerve toxin to cause a tingle in the lips and mouth of the diner. For the thrill of beating death one can pay upwards of \$600 for a meal.

Eaters of Gyromitra esculenta, on the other hand, can obtain their hopefully death-defying meals for free. This mushroom contains the deadly toxin gyromitrin and its byproduct monomethylhydrazine (MMH). Poisoning can occur through the inhalation of the highly volatile MMH fumes produced during the cooking process, or through ingestion of sufficient quantities of cooked mushrooms. Repeated parboiling of Gyromitra (Don't inhale the fumes! Throw out the water!), followed by prolonged cooking renders them less toxic, but not reliably so.

Mushroom toxicity varies with location and season, and children are more sensitive to this toxin than are adults. Recent poisonings in Eastern Europe resulted in significant fatalities of 10-40%. Toxins are known to be cumulative and have their greatest effects in the liver and kidneys. There is a significant variation in individual susceptibility; it stands to reason that immoderate drinkers of alcohol would also have a greater susceptibility to this hepatotoxin.

West Coast mushroomers believe that their version of Gyromitra esculenta has fewer toxins than those of the Eastern U.S. and Europe. And this may be so. But in 1996 alone there were 62 reported Gyromitra esculenta poisonings. Marilyn Shaw, in her article on Gyromitra esculenta in Issue 65 of Mushroom, the Journal, spoke of her recent personal experience with 5 cases of Gyromitra poisoning in one weekend in Sand Pt., Idaho (It must've been a hell of a party!). Idaho seems kinda West to me, but of course it's not Coastal. Quibbling over just how much toxin your particular toxic mushroom has seems like arguing that you're just a little bit pregnant. It's an all or nothing deal.

That said, I must admit that I have succumbed to peer pressure and sampled Gyromitra esculenta. Once. A pair of intrepid and old time mushroomers (I will call them Mr. & Mrs. Mushroom), with whom my husband and I were newly friends, attended our annual spring garden party. Since they had just returned from morelling, they offered to bring Gyromitra esculenta to our potluck. I had some misgivings (and visions of my guests keeling over from the fumes) but because they knew so much more about mushrooms than I did I

agreed. Upon their arrival they proffered a zip-lock bag of moist brown brain-like mushrooms. Gingerly I touched one. "Eew, slimy!", I squealed.

Mrs. Mushroom looked at me with barely concealed contempt. "They've been par-boiled," she sneered.

"Oh, good," I replied weakly, relieved that my guests were safe from the lethal fumes. My duties as a hostess whisked me away from the kitchen.

When next I returned, Mr. Mushroom presented me with a bowl of freshly cooked Gyromitra esculenta. I peered suspiciously at it, reluctant to try one. Mr. Mushroom and Mike Wood stood by, apparently enjoying my discomfort. "Have you eaten them, Mike?" I asked, stalling for time.

"Sure," he said.

"Eat one now," I demanded. Mike graciously complied. There was no turning back. I reached into the bowl and plucked forth a little messenger of doom. It tasted like...butter. I did not eat a second one. "I'm glad that's over with," I thought. But it wasn't quite.

Here came Samuel, a dear boy of 12, whom I've known since he was a toddler, followed by his Mom, my good friend Jennifer. Samuel peered with interest at the bowl of mushrooms. "What're those?" he asked.

"Uh, wild mushrooms," I replied.

Jennifer, picking up on my discomfort, was instantly suspicious. "Does that fellow know what he's doing," she asked, glancing at Mr. Mushroom.

"Oh yeah", I said, "he's a much better mushroomer than I am". But I was still finding it difficult to endorse their consumption. Samuel was so trusting; he had avidly eaten Sierran puffballs that I'd collected on one of our mutual camping trips. How could I betray that trust? And yet, the cognoscenti seemed to think that they were safe to eat. I stammered out something about possible cumulative toxins and special preparations and that I thought that it was probably safe to eat just one.

At that Samuel eagerly ate one and Jennifer reluctantly followed suit. My heart palpitated just that much more rapidly. Thoughts of ambulances, liability, and general easiness raced through my head. But, fortunately, everything turned out to be a-okay. There were no problems.

To his credit, Mr. Mushroom shepherded that bowl about the party, ensuring that no one ate too many. But Lord, who needs the aggravation? They're just not that good. As Bill Freedman said, "By the time they've been boiled and cooked to remove the toxins they no longer have any flavor...so why eat them?"

Perhaps the extreme cuisine aficionados need that thrill of flirting

Continued next page...

Fruiting Mushroom Logs Needed ASAP!

Hi Friends:

If, between now and March 13th, you come across any fruiting mushroom logs, please consider bringing or sending them over to the Randall Museum for incorporation into the mushroom garden. More importantly, they will also be used in the "Mushrooms in the Garden" display at the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show in mid-March. If you are unable to transport them yourself, perhaps you could find a member in your area that could help (members are listed by area in the MSSF roster).

In case you don't already know, the mushroom garden at the Randall is along the far wall to your left as you face the entrance. Feel free to snoop around looking for fruiting mushrooms - there have been lots of things coming up over the last few months there.

You may place your offering in any location in proximity to the garden, provided it doesn't block an obvious pathway or damage an obvious planting.

Your contributions will be greatly appreciated, and will allow us to display a wide diversity of mushrooms at the S.F. Garden Show. For more information about the mushrooms displays at the S.F. Garden Show, please see the article elsewhere in this newsletter, or the calendar section.

— Terri Beauséjour

Has your Mycena News arrived Torn or Damaged?

Hello members! We've had a number of reports of newsletters arriving torn or badly damaged. In trying to assess the extent of this problem, we'd appreciate a phone call to 650.813.9149 with the details if you've experienced this problem. Please help us resolve this with your input. Thanks! -- The Editors

Gyromitra, continued from previous page

with death. I think I'll get my thrills wandering through fungal wonderlands and enjoy an honest meal of mundane mushrooms, with perhaps some nice safe Amanitas thrown in. And hey guys, if you attend another one of our potlucks, bring chips and dip, would'ja?

— Debbie Viess

Culinary Corner

The Monthly Feasts Continue to Delight All

The first dinner of the year, the century and the millennium fell on January 3rd, just a few hours past the celebrations. That gave us a smaller than usual turnout for the monthly meeting and dinner.

Still, this small group managed to bring an impressive number of appetizers to the dinner. Just to mention a few: we had a creative and interesting Morel humus by Bennie Cottone; a rich and creamy Liver Pate by Juanita Ilnicki; home cured olives by Nikola Ferats; a Pate with Onions and Radishes by Paul Menyhearth; an excellent Quiche by Bill & Beryl Durnell; Drunken Mushrooms by Arleen McDean; and then David Eichorn outdid himself and brought a Mushroom Pate, a Humus dish and a Herring dish, all of them delicious. We followed all that with a Mixed Greens salad with Mandarin Oranges, Pecans and Enoki put together by Wade Leschyn and Corn Bread Muffins provided by Bill Hellums. For the main dish Monique Carment fashioned a Baked Ham with a Mushroom Chutney (from Louise Freidman's book) that combined very well with the Baked Acorn Squashes with Portobello stuffing by Sherry Carvajal. All the while, we regaled ourselves with one of Leon Ilnicki's famous punches. For the dessert we had a selection of Persimmon Pudding cake with Cream Anglaise made by Pat George and Kathleen Madsen or Walnut and Poppy Seed rolls brought in by Ann and Remo Arancio. It was, as usual, an evening to remember.

The Chinese Year of the Dragon began on February 5 so the Culinary group responded by cooking up a ferocious number of appetizers. Just to mention a few, we had Spring Rolls by Adele Stiller, Curried Mushrooms by Monique Carment, Sausages from Bill and Carol Hellums, Steamed Chanterelles by Phil Brown, a Ham dip by Ann Menyharth, some splendid Soy Sauce Mushrooms from David and Jeanne Campbell, Polenta with Oyster Mushrooms by Luccia Paulazzo, and several dips, cheeses, pates, crackers, and quiches. We washed this down with Leon Ilnicki's Oriental Punch. Even though we were all full from so many appetizers, we savagely devoured David Bartolotta's Egg Drop Soup. For the main dishes Juanita Ilnicki produced a splendid B-B-Que Pork Chow Mien and Nickola Farat did a scrumptious Soy Sauce Chicken. Alvaro Carvajal steamed up some Sticky Rice and David Suurballe served Chinese Mushrooms with a heavenly Oyster Sauce. Dulci Heiman dished up Steamed Bok Choy with Shitakes. Although in a food coma, we fiercely attacked David Eichorn's Ginger Ice Cream and Fortune Cookies. We washed this down with the Rhodins Coffee and Tea. As usual, it was a delightful and filling evening.

The plan for this month is to celebrate the March Hare. A March Hare is a hare in breeding time so it is proverbially regarded as an example of madness. So let's go wild and try some new mushrooms!

-- Sherry Carvajal

Low Cost Cultivation Supplies

Available at MSSF General Meetings

Hi Friends:

I will bring some "Getting Started with Mushroom Cultivation" **starter kits** to future monthly general meetings at the Randall Museum. Each kit includes ingredients to make agar media (agar, maltose, dextrose, peptone, and calcium carbonate: 25g each), 10 pre-sterilized test tubes, 1 scalpel, and around 50 small autoclavable spawn bags, plus the detailed primer "Getting Started with Mushroom Cultivation - The Wisdom of Simplicity".

The kits are just \$15.00 each.

I created these kits for getting started because most of these items are expensive to buy retail - and to get discounts one must buy large quantities. This way you can try out cultivation for minimal investment to see if you like it first!

If you wish to purchase **additional quantities of media ingredients**, I can order them at wholesale prices from Spectrum Chemicals through MSSF. If you email me a few weeks in advance of our meetings, I can bring your order to the following meeting. For the ingredients mentioned, I can get them to you for around \$10.00 per 100grams/\$50 per 500 grams. Agar recipes generally use 5-20g of a given ingredient per 1 litre. One litre of media will fill a -lot- of test tubes, depending on the size of tubes. Optimal tube size for cultivation is around 15-30ml, which you would fill 1/2 full of media, then "slant". I'll let you do the rest of the math, if you are interested.

In addition, I have several "flea market" pressure canners obtained

by a friend of a friend who frequently finds them at flea markets. I will bring a few to the meetings as well. These are great for getting started with cultivation, as they are a fairly large size and may be obtained for minimal investment - I just need to reimburse my friend for his cost. They are \$20.00 if fully intact and \$10.00 if parts are needed. Parts are available online for Presto models - I am still looking into National and American Standard.

These work great - I have used them frequently myself! If you know you want one and will be at the next meeting, or if you want to arrange another time to get one, let me know at this email address (russula@home.com).

Please note that I am doing this on my own volunteer time through MSSF to help you get started and keep going with your cultivation hobby without investing a fortune in equipment and ingredients, which is easy to do if you go through standard retail channels. The prices I am quoting are just enough to cover cost and shipping. They are purchased via the MSSF cultivation committee budget. I just want to emphasize, to prevent any misunderstandings, that I am not in the business of selling cultivation supplies, and there is no personal gain involved for me. This is a service for MSSF members only, and for the most part will be available only at MSSF meetings and possibly at other events that I attend. I don't have time to get into the shipping nor delivery business, nonetheless, I will try to accommodate special requests as time allows.

Hope to see you at a future meeting, and happy cultivating!

— Terri Beauséjour

Maggie Rogers

Editor of Mushroom, The Journal of Wild Mushrooming

Members and friends attending our February General Meeting were treated to a most unusual presentation by Mushroom, The Journal editor, Mary Margaret (Maggie) Rogers of Portland, Oregon. Her widely appreciated quarterly column called Keeping Up lays out a great array of timely topics in a most engaging manner. She was no different in person, paying tribute to all those who had taught her something about mycology over the past 30 years and more.

She started in her home club, Oregon Mycological Society, praising Tom Priest and Lorelei Norvell, Don Goetz, and moving on to Orson Miller's first book, Dan Stuntz of Univ. of Washington, Kit Scates and the Key Council. When Kit suggested she wasn't ready for the demanding work of that group, she took up her camera and became a chronicler of all that was going on at forays and fairs.

Dick Sieger of Seattle, Sam Ristich of New York, Hal Keller of Texas, and Mike Beug of the Puget Sound club all appeared at a NAMA Foray at Fort Worden on the Olympic Peninsula, and each deepened

Maggie's connection with wild mushrooms. In later years the late Richard Homola of Maine, Bill Isaac; Chuck Barrows of New Mexico, Paul Kroeger of British Columbia, and Nancy Smith Weber challenged her mightily. And when Don Coombs inveigled her into working with him on Mushroom, The Journal, Maggie became a household word in North American mycological homes.

This night she brought us many loving portraits of her informal mentors. Concerning the cooking of fungi she reminded us that "When in doubt use cream," and just remember that "mushrooms cancel cholesterol." Maggie carried her memories to the Santa Cruz club the next night after being hosted here by Mr. & Mrs. John Lennie of Berkeley. None of us who heard her fast flowing remarks will ever catch up with her except briefly when she appears in print allowing us to savor every word and experience. She will always be welcome back if we are lucky enough to catch her with a free evening sometime before the next millennia.

— Larry Stickney

Lost: MSSF Library Copy of Mushrooms in the Garden.

Our library copy of *Mushrooms in the Garden*, by Helmut Steineck is missing. It was last seen on the pedestal near the mushrooms in the garden display at the fair. If you know its whereabouts, please return it to the MSSF library via Terri Beauséjour or Lorrie Gallagher.

Photo by Taylor F. Lockwood, Copyright 1999

Mushrooms in the Garden Display

At the S.F. Flower and Garden Show

For the first time this year, the Mycological Society of San Francisco cultivation committee will present a "Mushrooms in the Garden" display at the San Francisco Flower and Garden show. This display will be in addition to our traditional MSSF educational display, which focuses on membership and activities of the society.

We expect to display over 30 species of garden-friendly fungi. These will be presented as part of an 8' x 8' "vignette". The goal will be to present something of a "microcosmic-montage" including vegetable garden, complete with the ever-important (for both garden and fungi) compost pile, water gardens, shrubs, fruiting logs, paths, fences, and a variety of interesting and symbiotic plants and shrubs.

We are fortunate in having some very talented volunteers this year to ensure that the display is aesthetically appealing, as well as educational and informative. Mary Ellen Burdwood and her staff from Dirt Witch – a local "urban gardener", attended our Mushrooms in the Garden workshop last year, and is on the cutting edge with her passion for incorporating mushrooms into her garden plans. Ken Litchfield, master gardener at the Randall Museum will assist with the design, the water gardens, and has already been potting up a variety of plants from the Randall gardens for use in the display. Tom Bressan from Urban Farmer will assist with the lighting and sprinklers. Bill Chalmers of Western Biologicals will provide us with many of the mushroom cultures, along with donations of fruiting material from MSSF members. And, if you would like to volunteer to help in any way (design, setup, man the display, etc...), please contact me.

The S.F. Garden show will be held at the Cow Palace in mid-March. Please see the calendar section for show dates and times.

— Terri Beauséjour, Cultivation Committee Chair

FREE Microscopy Workshops

A workshop series is being offered where the relatively simple microscope can be mastered. Four sessions bring the work from beginning, useful preparation of material to final preparations of fine clarity and meaning. Simple methods are shown which reveal the rich details of fungi. In the final session, some special but simple and inexpensive "tricks" are shown. These "tupenny-ha'penny optics" methods permit the simple microscope to perform feats similar to much more elaborate and expensive instruments.

It is recommended that you bring to the first session a very fresh mushroom (button, from the store), a dried specimen (if you have one), a dissection kit (scalpel, forceps, needle-probes, scissors, and 2 eyedroppers), and box to hold slides, loupe, etc. Please bring \$5 to cover copying and supplies.

Sessions held at room 401 Hensil Hall, San Francisco State University, on:

Sat. 4 March	1-5 pm	Beginning specimen preparation
Thurs. 9 March	7-10 pm	Specimen preparation, clearing
Sat. 18 Mar.	1-5 pm	Staining, clearing
Thurs. 23 Mar.	7-10pm	Permanent mounts, "tricks"

Enrollment is limited, register early: 415.467.5285, or mikkimc@juno.com, leaving your name, return number or address.

Mushrooms Needed for Drawings for Key

Louise Freedman needs the following fungi to complete the Simple Key section of the Mykoweb site:

1. Two varieties of bird's nests.
2. One variety of "false truffles". (We have *Rhizopogon ochreorubens*. *Scleroderma* would be a good addition.)
3. Two varieties of true truffles.
4. Two varieties of "stinkhorns". *Clathrus rubens* would be fine,

I believe that the Randall Jr, Museum and Strybing Arboretum have them. She requires that they be fresh and clean examples. Call her and she will try to arrange a pick-up or drop-down site 650.344.7774 or loufreed@aol.com.

Thank you for your contributions!



Finding mushrooms is often an act of meteorological archeology. Although we might be quite impressed by the heavy rain that came down last night, the mycelia at work under duff and bark are more interested in what came down two weeks ago. It takes time for the water to soak deep into the substrate, time for mycelia to

form primordia, time for the primordia to grow into buttons, to tumesce as mushrooms stretching above ground in all their erumpent glory.

Weather history is why we find the surprising flush of king boletes under blazing sun in crackling pine needles, nourished by unseen rains weeks earlier. It's why that beautifully moist oak duff sports no fungi whatsoever: the mycelia below are still reeling from hot dry winds blowing for days before.

All of this was hard to remember in early February as Patrick Hamilton and I staggered through horizontal blasts of rain in Salt Point State Park, eyes to the gloomy forest floor with hopeful thoughts of black trumpets (*Craterellus cornucopioides*). The water raging down creeks that used to be trails, squishing in our boots, and running down our backs was nowhere to be seen weeks ago, and the mushrooms knew it. It was our job to pretend that we were crunching our way across parched forest floors, looking for small catchwaters that might have encouraged fungal fruiting.

And it worked - to a limited extent. After slogging through acres of beautiful but barren tanbark oak duff, we finally found a few nice patches of blacks alongside creek beds, protected by huckleberries, punctuated here and there by *Cantherellus infundibuliformis* (yellow feet or funnel chanterelles). Alas, a lot of water in recent weeks didn't translate to immediately intense fruiting. Perhaps the recent rains will trigger new fruitings, and we'll have more black trumpets in a few more weeks.

We saw little else in Salt Point compared to what's normal for this time of year: a fair number of *Gomphus clavatus* (pig's ears) with plenty of worms, *Gomphus floccosus* (scaly chanterelles), a few scraggly *Cantherellus cibarius* (golden chanterelles), translucent white *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum*, water-logged specimens of *Russula brevipes*, blackened stumps of *Russula albonigra*, and other fungal fruits too rotten to even begin to identify. The usually desolate redwood duff had splashes of *Hygrocybes* here and there: bright yellow *H. flavescens* and stoplight-red *H. coccinea*.

One friendly mushroom that has had a particularly sparse turnout this year along the Sonoma coast is *Hydnum umbilicatum* (the belly button hedgehog). It popped up cheerfully but only occasionally in its traditional haunts under huckleberries, smiling a buff yellowish-salmon, almost a beacon in the forest gloom.

Sometimes that beacon turned out to be *Camarophyllus praetensis*, a member of the family Hygrophoraceae that looks quite similar to

hedgehogs from the top. *Camarophyllus* has broad, arched gills instead of teeth, though, and it has a slightly waxy texture. It's considered a choice edible in parts of Europe. Since it's been relatively common this year, and worm-free for the most part (a rarity), I finally had a chance to eat it. The verdict? It tasted fine sauteed in butter with a pinch of salt and pepper. But then again, I love the taste of butter, salt, and pepper. I'll have to try it again in another venue - maybe the old scrambled eggs test.

One mushroom that did well in Salt Point at the end of January was *Lactarius rubidus*, the candy cap. This might be a new name to many of us used to *L. fragilis*, but fungal taxonomists have determined that the candy cap we get here on the west coast isn't the true *L. fragilis*. No matter - they taste just as sweet. And they came up in relative profusion (a sprinkling here and there), a balm to skunked black trumpet hunters. While Patrick and I were picking candy caps, we came across another fine sight: an impressive 10-foot fairy ring of white mushrooms with 12-inch caps: *Clitocybe candida*.

Back home in the East Bay, the recent rains have finally kicked off something like a real mushroom season. Debbie Viess and David Rust reported finding some decent fruitings of chanterelles (*Cantherellus cibarius*), but given the long fruiting time for chanterelles, they must have begun during the December-early-January drought. By early February, the candy caps started. I found them in profusion, and counted over two hundred under a single Monterey pine. Russulas are popping up here and there: *Russula sanguinea* and *R. emetica* under pine. Distinguished russulologist Terri Beauséjour reports finding *R. punicea* (similar to *R. silvicola*) and a few other oddities that require some microscope work before ID.

The wood chip pile down the road from my house has been fruitful: it's sported the brick-red *Hypholoma aurantiaca*, the pink-spored *Volvariella speciosa*, the black-spored, cottony-edged *Stropharia ambigua*, and assorted species of *Psathyrella* and *Tubaria*. Just yesterday (mid-February), I encountered a couple of very late-fruiting *Amanita muscaria* surrounded by young fruitings of *Suillus pungens*, an odd sight for late winter. And a few days before that, I became a very happy man when I screeched to a fast halt on an Oakland hills road to jump out of the car and pluck a fresh 11-pound *Sparassis radicata* (cauliflower mushroom) at the base of a Monterey pine. This is surely the most massive edible (very edible!) mushroom I have ever picked. I'm resisting the urge to have it stuffed and mounted over the fireplace - probably because I know it pales compared to the 50-pounders they occasionally find in the Pacific Northwest.

Reports from elsewhere: the intrepid Bob Mackler turned in a 55-entry species list in late January from the Rock Springs area of Mt. Tamalpais that includes a number of common species that I have yet to see this year: *Leucopaxillus gentianeus*, *Gomphidius subroseus*, *Galerina autumnalis*, and *Pluteus cervinus* (the deer mushroom). Further north (much further), Anna Moore tramped around Willits and came across a sorry sight: "The tan oak woods were full of matsutake (*Tricholoma magnivelare*) - huge ones, some up to a foot across the cap, and all were soggy and decaying. I was two weeks too late!" Willits-goers can take consolation, however, in Connie Green's report that the black trumpet season there has begun in earnest, although not as profuse as other years.

Continued from previous page.

Further south, in Marin county, the unseasonably warm rains have produced early fruitings of *Amanita velosa* (the spring amanita) and *Amanita novinupta* (the blusher) as reported by Lisa Bauer and independently by Irma Brandt. I have little input from folks hunting on the peninsula, but I can report some really large fruitings of *Suillus pungens* (slippery jacks) and *Chroogomphus vinicolor* (pine spikes) gamely popping out of the manicured lawns (next to Monterey pine, of course) of a Redwood City computer company. Let's hear it for infusing a little more fungal chaos into the cubicle farms of Silicon Valley!

I'll end this report with a couple more oddities for the year. Connie Green, who as a wild mushroom supplier for the best restaurants in the Bay Area probably sees more specimens of wild mushrooms from a wider area than anyone else I know, reports that she's seen no *Craterellus cinereus* (black chanterelles) at all mixed in with the black trumpets she gets from the Willits area. *C. cinereus* look almost identical to *C. cornucopioides*, but instead of a smooth hymenium on its underside has veins or blunted gills. I usually find them at a ratio of about one *cinereus* to 99 *cornucopioides*. Where have they gone?

The other oddity? Fresh fruitings of *Boletus edulis* around Pt. Reyes and Monterey - as if this hasn't been a banner year for *edulis* already. One of the things I like best about wild mushrooms is their

unpredictability. Every year brings on its gallery of mushrooms, and each year a new set of fungi takes starring roles while others fade to the background. I'm chomping at the bit to see who'll be starring in the Sierras this spring.

-Mike Boom

Calendar continued from page 10.

April 18th General Meeting. Lorelei Norvel will be our guest speaker.

Wednesday, April 19: Lichen Society Lecture – "Algae by Dr. Richard Moe." 7:00 p.m., University Herbarium, 1001 Valley Life Sciences Bldg. UC Berkeley. See Last months Mycena News for more details. Contact Judy Robertson, 707.584.8099 or jksrr@aol.com if you have questions.

Friday - Sunday, April 28-30: MSSF 50th Anniversary Foray. This special 3-day foray marks the MSSF's 50th anniversary, and will be filled with special guests, special events, and lots of good fun. Forays begin on Friday. See inside this newsletter for details. To volunteer contact Tom Sasaki at 415.776.0791.

Mills Canyon, continued from page 1,

aged people from coming, especially MSSF members, since there had been no rain here for 6 weeks, until just before the hike, and we felt that experienced mushroomers would be bored by finding only the usual fungi seen on our trips.

The most interesting fungi were small, all white, lobed truffles lying close to the surface of the soil. The skin was thin. When bisected, the contents included a mass of tiny golden coin-like material in the center, surrounded by moist gray matter. There were root-like mycelial strands at the base of the globular fungi. This was *Hysterangium coriaceum*, an underground relative of the stinkhorns. We left them before they began to stink! The majority of mushrooms found were in the *Lactarius* and *Russula* groups.

Considering the demand for introductory instructional mushroom

events, the MSSF must consider expanding our programs beyond week-end forays at distant places. What is being requested are local walks on weekends or holidays. In San Mateo, we will try to again offer hikes co-sponsored by Coyote Point Museum as we have in past years. East Bay and Marin members might lead more forays into their available park and trail systems.

Our popularity this season leads to the possible conclusion that the MSSF is having a definite and very positive effect on the citizens of our community. In view of the fact that fungi have been long-neglected by botanists and students of nature, we hope to make the public aware of fungi, how they contribute to all living things, to be acknowledged in their rightful place.

— Bill Freedman

Photo by Hilary Somers 2/20/99

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50 YEARS!

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Calendar

Saturday, March 4: Free Microscopy Workshop at S.F. State. This is the first half-day session of the four-session workshop. See inside this newsletter or contact Mikki at 415.467.5285 for full details. Enrollment is limited.

Saturday – Sunday, March 4 – 5: UC Davis Extension class on Mushroom Cultivation. See inside the Jan. 2000 newsletter or call 800.752.0881 for details. Cost is \$250.

Monday, March 6: Culinary Group Celebrates the March Hare (with Monthly Dinner): For information or reservations, contact George Repinec at 415. 731.5115 or Sherry Carvajal at 415.695.0466.

Wednesday March 15: Lichen Society Lecture – “Bryophytes by Mona Bourell.” 7:00 p.m., University Herbarium, 1001 Valley Life Sciences Bldg. U.C. Berkeley. There is no charge & refreshments will be served. Contact Judy Robertson, 707.584.8099 or jksrr@aol.com with questions.

Wednesday, March 15: S.F. Garden Show Setup. Help setup the “Mushrooms in the Garden” display from 10a.m.-5p.m. at the S.F. Cow Palace. For details, see inside this newsletter or contact Cultivation Committee Chair Terri Beauséjour at 510.278.5998 or russula@home.com

Thursday – Sunday, March 16 -19: S.F. Flower and Garden Show “Mushrooms in the Garden” Display. S.F. Cow Palace, 9-6:30pm

every day. For details, see inside this newsletter or contact Cultivation Committee Chair Terri Beauséjour at 510.278.5998 or russula@home.com

Monday, March 20: S.F. Flower and Garden Show breakdown and cleanup. 10a.m.- 3p.m. S.F. Cow Palace. For details, contact Terri Beauséjour at 510.278.5998 or russula@home.com

Tuesday, March 21: MSSF General Meeting. Dr. Dennis Desjardins will be our guest speaker. See inside this newsletter for details.

Monday, April 3: Culinary Group’s Monthly Dinner: For information or reservations, contact George Repinec at 415.731.5115 or Sherry Carvajal at 415.695.0466.

Saturday – Sunday, April 8-9: MSSF Cultivation Course “Mushrooms in the Garden.” See inside this newsletter for full details. \$45. Contact Charmoon Richardson at charmoon@trr.metro.net or 707.887.1888 for reservations

Monday, April 10th. Nominations next year’s MSSF officers are due to Mike Boom or Larry Stickney. See inside for details.

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For the most current Calendar information, call the MSSF hotline at 415.759.0495 or check the MSSF web site at: <http://www.mssf.org>