

Mycena News

Mycological Society of San Francisco

January, 1999, vol 49:1

Alert: Last Chance to Renew Your Membership!

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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 1999. 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.

Mycena News is the newsletter of the Mycological Society of San Francisco and is published monthly from September through May. You can send newsletter submissions by the 15th of each month to Mycena News, 4148 Briarwood Way, Palo Alto, CA 94306, phone 650.813.9149. Or, most preferably, email them to mycena-news@mpath.com.

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Memberships for 1998 have expired. If you have not yet renewed your MSSF membership, this will be your final Mycena News newsletter. Please check the mailing label for your dues status.

The 1998-99 MSSF Roster and Member Handbook has been printed. It will be mailed to all members on record at this time. The membership list in the roster however was prepared at the end of August, and lists members current as of that time. Please check your entry and mail any corrections to the Membership chair at the Belmont address below.

The MSSF membership dues year is from January to December. New members joining this fall (September through now) are automatically considered members for 1999, though their joined date will be 1998. Dues paid last winter or spring are considered membership for 1998, and expire at this December. Your dues expiration date is printed on your Mycena News mailing label. If your dues are expiring this December, please send your renewal dues in now. Rates are \$20 for adults and families, and \$12 for seniors (65 and over) and full time students. Checks should be made out to MSSF.

Some MSSF members also choose to join NAMA. The MSSF pays NAMA a club dues based on our total membership, making the MSSF a NAMA affiliated club. In turn, NAMA offers MSSF members a 15% discount for joining NAMA. Regular NAMA dues are \$20, but are \$17 when included with your MSSF dues. NAMA dues sent without an MSSF renewal or for a member without current MSSF dues status for 1999, will be returned. A separate check for the NAMA membership is required, made out to NAMA. Please note: for NAMA members who are renewing, the NAMA renewal letter has an error in my address. Please mail all NAMA memberships to the Belmont address.

Mail to: MSSF c/o membership chair Wade Leschyn, 1609 Valley View Avenue, Belmont, CA 94002. Your canceled check is your receipt.

January Meeting: Dr Harold "Hal" Burdsall

At the January 19th MSSF General Meeting Dr. Harold "Hal" Burdsall of the Forest Sciences Lab in Madison, Wisconsin will speak on several of his ongoing research projects including work on the speciation and distribution of species of *Armillaria* and *Laetiporus*. He will also present some results of his biodiversity work in the National Parks in Alaska.

Dr. Burdsall is best known for splitting *Armillaria mellea* (the honey mushroom) into about a dozen species. He is interested in any local *Laetiporus* that you might find (a.k.a. Sulfur shelf or chicken of the woods). According to "Mushrooms Demystified" *Laetiporus sulphureus* favors conifers and oaks in November-December time frame. There is a second rare variety *semialbinus* which has a salmon-colored cap, white pores, and a frequently rooting base. If you know where any might be fruiting, please bring them to the meeting. See you there!

President's Greeting

I'd like to thank everyone who helped make the fair a success. This is the second year in a row that we've held a two day fair. As it was we were hard pressed to fit in all of the speakers and lectures. There were 1200 people who paid at the door and at least 200 more who volunteered to help out for part or even all of the fair.

I'd especially like to thank Tom Chester, Terri Beauséjour and Monique Carment for the endless hours they spent before and during the fair. I'd like to thank Lisa Bauer for organizing the volunteers so well, Jane Wardzinska for feeding everyone on Friday evening, Loraine Berry for preparing all of the food for volunteers on Saturday and Sunday, Dennis Desjardin for the identification expertise and for the help of his students from SF State, Henry Shaw for setting up all of the forays for the fair, Norm Andresen for three days worth of work, Anna Grajeda for arranging all of the greenery and for transporting everything and Al Carvajal for three days worth of work and for setting up the speakers and keeping things running. I'd also like to thank Zöe Amey-Caldwell for taking care of the finances, Jeannie Campbell for her three days of help, Louise Freedman for the wonderful drawing table, Beryl for her cooking with mushrooms table, Mo Mei Chen and Chester Laskowski for their medicinal mushroom tables, and the whole list of others who spent the better part of the weekend making it a success. Thanks goes to Chester Laskowski, Mike Wood, Fred Stevens, Len Coleman, Wade Leschyn, Larry Stickney, Paul Koski, Chris Thayer for keeping the books well stocked and up to date, Lorrie Gallagher, Yu-Shen Ng, Hilary Somers, Bob Mackler, Marina Hsieh, Steve Aaron, David Rust, Beryl and Bob Durnell, the Lichen Society, Dan Olson, Bernadette Mele, Frank Mele,

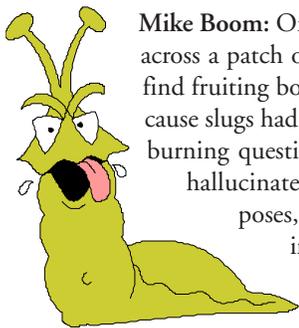
Atik Retuowati, Denise Gregory, Debbie Viess, Sydney Viess-Rust, Ariel Mahon, Dulcie Heiman for her ever generous help, JR Blair, Peter Chan, Chuck Gee, Leon Ilnicki, Kenton Hoover, Gene Ersfeldt, Chris Craig, Karen Saginor, Richard Doell, David Moore, Tania Lysenko, Marina Lysenko, Pwyll from Oregon, Margaret Grace, Richard Rhodes, Bob Sommers, Barb Sommers, Bill and Carol Hellums, Richard Doell, Jans Miller, John Leet, Val Kositky, Arlene Dean, Andy Wilson, Barbara Lachelt, Miyo Hall, Judy Robertson, Janet Doell, Bill Hill, Tom Sasaki, Brian Perry, Chris Shirley, Connie Lewis, and Ken Litchfield. I'd also like to thank Miriam Rice for her table on mushroom dyes and papermaking.

I'd especially like to thank Patrick Hamilton for putting on a cooking demonstration on Sunday with little advance notice, Frances Wilson of Lalimes for her third year of cooking at the fair, David Arora for his slides and lectures on mushrooming around the world, Paul Stamets for sharing his expertise in cultivation and psychotropic mushrooms, Richard and Janet Doell of the Lichen Society of California for two days of presentations, Scott Hajicek-Dobberstein for his lecture on Amanita muscaria use in Buddhist tradition and Bob Mackler for his introduction to fungi presentation. Thanks as well to Mo Mei Chen for her lecture on the cultivation of medicinal mushrooms.

Last I'd like to thank Maria Moon for the generous portions of food and for coffee for the volunteers. Thanks as well to anyone that I may have missed. See you at the January meeting or out in the woods.

— Mark Thomsen

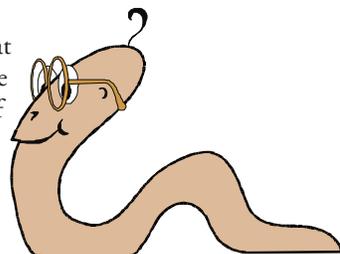
A Fanciful Report From the Psilocybe Fields



Mike Boom: On a recent photographic field trip, I came across a patch of *Psilocybe cyanescens*. It was tricky to find fruiting bodies in good shape for a photograph because slugs had eaten most of the gills. It left me with a burning question: do slugs have enough of a brain to hallucinate? And if, as at least one theorist proposes, eating *Psilocybes* caused man to evolve into intelligent life, are there now super-intelligent slugs sliming their way through the forest?

I'd appreciate any answers. A direct reply from a hyper-evolved slug would be best, of course.

Paul Stamets: My opinion is that slugs which consume *Psilocybes* are on a rapid-track of evolution, and if we are not careful, in a billion or two years (plus or minus a decade or so) they will take over the mycological societies.



Land's End Foray Coordinator and Volunteers STILL Needed

The Society is still looking for a few good men and women to lead mushroom walks on Sundays at Lincoln Park (Land's End) in San Francisco. The walks have traditionally begun at 10am on Sundays, and last about two hours. (Length is up to you.) It's a wonderful way to spend a Sunday morning in one of the most beautiful spots in city.

You need not be an "expert" to be a leader. The society has a nice listing of all the species you are likely to encounter, and identification of 99% of the specimens your fellow walkers will find is a simple matter of elimination. Needless to say, it's a great way to learn to identify a few species yourself.

If you would like to volunteer as the coordinator or as a leader, please contact Henry Shaw at 925-423-4645 (days) 925-943-3237 (evenings) or via e-mail at shaw4@llnl.gov.

Regarding the New MSSF Member E-Mail List

I am speaking here as 1998 MSSF Vice-President, regarding MSSF's 'official' position concerning the content of the 'MSSF members only' e-mail list. Let me begin by unequivocally reiterating Michael Wood's introductory statement upon initiating the mailing list, that it is an 'unmoderated' forum. He made it very clear that there would be no mediation nor censorship of any material prior to its release to the group, and he strongly urged participants to use the list responsibly, and for the intended purpose of sharing information which would be of general mycological interest.

The MSSF is supportive, in principle, of this forum within the context stated above. However, it must be clearly understood by all, that the content of this forum is in no way necessarily reflective of any 'official' position on any subject or issue brought forth through this medium. It is equally important and essential to understand that the -lack- of any 'official' MSSF statement on any subject or issue presented by any individual here, in no way represents nor implies agreement, concordance nor acceptance of any such content. Finally, let it be known that any individual contribution made here by any member, including past and present officers of the MSSF, is to be considered an individual, personal contribution and in no way an 'official' representation of the organization itself. The cooperation of all members and officers in abiding by these guidelines is essential to its continued availability as a member privilege.

Unfortunately, some recent commentary that was posted in the mailing list by a prominent MSSF member contained several negative and inflammatory statements involving another prominent member. Although these statements were not intended for public consumption, they inadvertently found their way into the public arena, and it is understandable that they were deeply troubling to the offended member. As some of you may already know, the offended party was none other than David Arora.

It has now come to my attention that the lack of an 'official' response from the MSSF may have implied concordance with the opinions or details expounded in that commentary. This is absolutely and unequivocally false, and I deeply regret this perception. The statements made were those of the individual alone, they were neither reviewed, approved nor substantiated by any official representative of the MSSF,

and the MSSF deeply regrets any personal pain or damage that the statements may have caused.

I must confess that when I personally read the troubling statements and subsequent discussion, I gave very serious consideration to whether an official response should be made. The MSSF membership has not elected, nor has the council appointed, any individual to speak for the organization in an official capacity on issues raised in such a forum, nor was the forum designed or structured to accommodate such monitoring or censorship as might result. Several members had already taken it upon themselves to publicly criticize communications of a personal nature in this forum, and soon the discussion turned to more appropriate topics of general mycological interest. So, I chose instead to send a private correspondence to David, to personally assure him that the statements were in no way sanctioned by the MSSF and to reinforce our gratitude for his participation and contributions.

In my experience, David has always proven to be a very reasonable, thoughtful and respectful individual. He has been very generous in fulfilling requests to speak at MSSF events when asked, if his schedule would allow, and has even gone so far as to rearrange his schedule at times for our benefit. He has also expressed his enjoyment of and appreciation for the 1997 and 1998 MSSF fairs, and was very gracious in expressing this both to me personally and to his audiences. As far as I am concerned, his participation in any MSSF event is more than welcome, and we will continue to consider it an honor to have his support and good will.

It would be a grave disappointment, and certainly a loss to our organization and its membership, if he continued to harbor ill-feelings toward us, or to feel wronged by the statements of individual members. Members are all certainly entitled to their opinions and constitutional rights of free speech. However, I would strongly urge the consideration of and sensitivity to the potential damage to individuals and to our organization which can result from negative or carelessly placed correspondence of a personal nature.

Sincerely,
Terri M. Beauséjour

Letter to the Editors:

I want to offer my hearty congratulations to the many volunteers who took time off from their busy lives to make the Mushroom Fair happen. As the creator and producer of a successful mushroom fair for many years, I have some understanding of the incredible work involved. Without your efforts, there would be no fair, and of course, I would not have had the opportunity to speak to such a lively and interested audience.

In just a few years, the MSSF mushroom show has morphed from a rather desultory affair seemingly out of touch with the changing population to the second-best mushroom fair in North America (exceeded only by the fall mushroom festival in Eugene, Oregon). This transformation has occurred through an impressive infusion of new talent and vitality, as well as from the innovation and guid-

ance of older, more experienced members.

Louise Freedman's table where all the kids were drawing mushrooms is a wonderful example of what can be accomplished when we focus on ideas instead of personalities. As humans continue to radically transform the landscape, more and more children grow up without any direct experience of nature. Giving them a *mission* to examine, draw, and identify a single mushroom instead of wandering aimlessly around the exhibit is an ingenious way to provide a directed (if not direct) experience of nature in an urban setting. Engaging the young is obviously crucial if mushrooms and their habitats are to be valued and appreciated in the 21st century. May the MSSF Mushroom Fair continue to get better. May it engage, delight and inform the public for many years to come!

— David Arora

Mycochef's Eccentric Cooking Column Again (MECCA)

Contributed by Patrick Hamilton, the MycoChef, and is reprinted from his column in "Mushroom the Journal of Wild Mushrooming"

Down a narrow valley where the Petaluma-Pt. Reyes Station Road runs through (which has always looked good for chanterelles but, alas, is all private dairy lands owned by folks who hunt with guns) I beheld a tom turkey strutting all puffed up. Problem was, as I saw it, only a couple of cows and me were there to witness his displaced display and they all appeared, well, bemoosed. And that isn't, and there wasn't, any bull. Truly.

These departures into syntax silliness, these homonyms, similes and metaphors, this stuff that I write, this column, why? Well, it has been brought to my attention by a very important and much appreciated mushroom author friend... that perhaps one reason I write is for the notoriety, to be the first to publish something or other. But this is just not true. I write because it makes me and others laugh.

Those in the scientific community have an important job in discovery—to find something out for the first time. They like to be the first to write about that. They help us all figure out and to explain what is already going on around us—but we didn't know how to understand it. Those folks do research and they deserve their plaudits and lauds. I cook and then write about what I cooked. I make jokes. They make objective data. I make sometimes objectionable caca. If I have offended anyone with my cavalier attitude and insouciant behavior, well, I apologize publicly.

Back to the madness I call the cooking column. We are going to Alaska in a few weeks but by the time you read this we will have already been bounding about and probably picked zillions of incredibly wonderful mushrooms in fantastically beautiful forests. Jeez, the holiday life of the fungal madman.

My vacation schedule seems now based a bunch on mushroom seasons. It's the same for a lot of you too, I betcha. Where and when I go surely depends on mushroom activity there. Used to be a fishing destination thing and for some I know it's still exotic golf courses and for others maybe even factory outlet strip malls, doily stores, or dirigible factories; but for me and my traveling companions (the same Kathy and Connie with whom I went to the Queen Charlotte Islands—remember?) it is the thrill of finding fungus in new locales that guides our holiday purpose.

And, I suppose, the ego deal associated with writing about these adventures. If our egos are not massaged and assuaged regularly they will rot and fall off. My daddy told me that. Course he also said that if I had ever learned to be embarrassed I would have been a better man. What the heck did he know anyway?

We are going to spend a day foraging and cooking with Ken Moss in Juneau, a reader of MushMag, and an avid picker of delectables I am told. By the way, a network does exist for us in the business of seeking pleasure in mushroom hunting—I will meet Ken this way. If you want to travel to some area away from your usual stomps merely start making phone calls or email folks there and if you have an ebullient personality or a fat wallet or favorite spots to trade the invitations will come.

The Recipe Contest

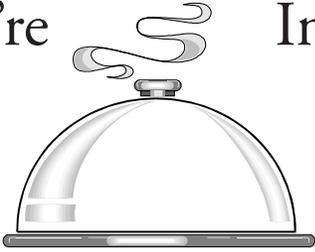
I was hoping that maybe up there in Alaska's Southeast we might find mushroom preparations that will be a bit different from ones that I am familiar with. Like most folks who do have some knowledge in a given area I know mushroom cooking fairly well. Having been a chef who was meticulously taught the various classic cuisines and a cook who continues to pursue an understanding of the possibilities and scope of varied mushroom dishes I sometimes wish for a more facile, even serendipitous, enlightenment—a surprising new culinary perspective presenting itself into my path—kinda like that tom turkey parading around in paragraph one. So, how to do? Maybe like this.

Readers out there who might be too timid to send a letter to MushMag exhorting their favorite mushroom recipe might just enter a contest with me as one of the judges and a dinner at my house as one of the prizes (wine included, transportation not). Why not hold a MushMag Best Ever Mushroom Recipe contest?

Okay then, since I heard no negatives, I say let's do this: Send to me at MycoChef@aol.com an email of your very best mushroom dish; I will check it out and then forward it to Maggie and Don and my mentor Larry Stickney who shall serve as the other judges. I am sure that Don will add to the kitty with really expensive goodies like 3 year subscriptions to MushMag and Maggie will think of something wonderful to give from her book stash and Larry might call you up and reveal his favorite bolete and morel spots. (You don't suppose some of those are now mine do you?). Talk to me first Larry.

But for those of you who read this to actually get what it is supposed to give I present a salad made for me first by my buddy David Campbell. It has changed slightly but so have I.

For salad recipe see bottom of next page...

You're  Invited!

Culinary Group Dinners

The MSSF Culinary Group welcomes you to special dinners on first Monday of every month. Just \$12 for each dinner. Bringing of mushroom appetizers is encouraged. For reservations, contact George Repinec at 415.731.5115. Questions, concerns or ideas: contact Lucie Paulazzo at 415.584.0852.

Mushroom Madness in Marin

Sunday, February 21

January's Mushroom Madness in Marin© has been so popular that it has already sold out. Never fear, the February 21 Mushroom Madness in Marin is just around the corner. As usual, Loraine Berry will host the hands-on, participatory culinary demonstration and afternoon dinner at her lovely home in Ross, CA.

The cost of the event is again \$22, and reservations are required. Moreover, preference will be given to those who have previously been turned away due to insufficient space. Please bring an apron and a beverage to share; the event truly is participatory.

All profits are generously donated to the Whited/Thiers Scholarship fund of the MSSF.

Please call Loraine for reservations and particulars: 415.454.0914. Also, please indicate if you have vegetarian needs. Your check will serve as your reservation.

The exact date and time of this event are Sunday, February 21, 1:00-6:00 p.m.

Sample Menu, depending on availability of ingredients:

Cheese and Potato Pierogi with Tomato Porcini Sauce

Portobello Pizza

Beet Barcz with Polish Mushrooms

Broken Drum Salad with Mushrooms

Osso Bucco with Sage Polenta & Crimini

Chicken Thighs in Bourbon Creme with Cardamon Seeds, Morels and Black Chanterelles

Home Grown Green Beans in Tarragon Butter

Candy Cap Biscotti

Joseph Schmidt Chocolate Truffles

Morels, Beets, and Feta Cheese

Serves 4 as an appetizer

1 large bunch 4-6 beets, chioggia preferred, fresh
 1/2 cup morels, dried or 2 cups fresh
 1 tbl olive oil
 1 tbl sherry, dry
 1/4 cup feta cheese, crumbled into large pieces
 1 tbl balsamic vinegar
 3 tbl extra virgin olive oil
 Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper

1. Cut the greens off the beets but allow at least 1 inch left on each beet top (reserve these greens for another time because they are delicious cooked like spinach). If you cut too close to the beet root it will bleed and vegetable Band-Aids can't fix them and they will lose all that pretty color.

2. Boil the beets until done (about 35 minutes for medium size), remove from the water, allow to cool a bit and then peel with a sharp knife. slice thickly (1/4") and set aside.

3. Soak the morels if dried like one should do but add the sherry to the hydrating water. saute either the soaked and squeezed dry ones or fresh morels (with the sherry added) in the olive oil until cooked thoroughly. add a little salt and pepper—not too much because the feta will be salty. set aside.

4. Make a vinaigrette by putting a little salt in the vinegar (a touch of Dijon is good here too) then adding the oil while whisking until it emulsifies.

5. Place in a decorative bowl the beet slices with morels and feta atop. drizzle the dressing over and grind some black pepper. Voila.

Fancy Fungus Food Writers Should Study Before They Go Public

Each year people send us recipes found in newspapers which misadvise the best uses for wild mushrooms in the dining room. One writer for the S.F. Chronicle recently included a "Truffled Wild Mushroom Salad" utilizing raw fresh porcini, portobello, chanterelles, shiitake and/or Amanita caesarea and enoki, over which is generously drizzled truffle oil. (Olive oil with sulfur dioxide added)? And there have been photos of misidentified fungi.

Let's analyze the recipe given above. First, Amanita caesarea doesn't grow on the West Coast and I am not even certain if it is sold on the market in Southeastern USA, where it does occur naturally. This recipe was either the product of someone's imagination or the author read about it somewhere else. Second, the simultaneous combination of arugula, garlic, lemon, chives, shallots, parsley, Balsamic vinegar and shavings of Parmesan cheese. Whoever concocted this mélange of tasty food-accenting flavorings apparently has never relished the subtlety and delicacy of some of the mushrooms mentioned. You cannot treat chanterelles without respecting their delicate qualities if you really want to enjoy their unique flavor and texture. They will be overwhelmed and lost under the excessive use of food accenterers. The goal of most mushroom gourmets is to create dishes that highlight rather than obscure the particular flavor of the special mushroom or mushrooms used. Third, fresh wild fungi are expensive, and combining them at random is wasteful of their truly beautiful individual visual and culinary qualities. You'd be wasting your money. Fourth, responsible and veteran mushroomers caution that when a person eats a new mushroom, it should be prepared by itself and eaten in small amounts. As with any new food or medicine introduced into the body for the first time, one should look for any unwanted reactions. If a person eating this salad reacted unfavorably, there would be no way of knowing which fungus was the culprit, to be avoided later. This recipe advises the ingestion of mushroom species usually not eaten raw by knowledgeable fungophiles. Fifth, we have seen several brands of imported and local "truffle oil" composed of nothing but olive oil and sulfur dioxide, the chemical compound which in nature gives the Italian white truffle its distinctive flavor. An expensive and great treat?

Let's talk a little bit about eating mushrooms raw. While some mushroom lovers think eating some raw mushrooms is ok, there is a more cautious group who advise that raw fungi, even the common store-bought variety, have been reported to be cancerogenic or tetragenic to laboratory animals. This group only eats them cooked. Mushroom proteins, vitamins and nutrients are found inside the cottony fine mycelial threads of which the mushroom is composed. The outer wall of these cells is made up largely of chitin, the exoskeleton of insects. Our bodies do not have the enzymes needed to break down mycelial walls to release mushroom food elements for our absorption. So we obtain little of food value from raw mushrooms.

I have personally tried raw chanterelles. After the second bite, my esophagus and stomach tingled and burned. After a third nibble, I had uncomfortable indigestion. I have repeated this several times, because of their seductive apricot or peach-like odor and they were so

clean and solid and tasty-looking. A belly-ache always followed. As a general rule, cooking brings out the best flavors and releases the mushroom's nutrients, and for myself, I find that recipes presenting a single species provides the strongest appreciation of its flavor and texture.

Finally, several authors have commented about issues surrounding eating of mushrooms raw. Both Lincoff and Mitchel's mushroom poisoning book and Denis Benjamin's Mushroom Poisons and Panacea advise us not to eat raw fungi wantonly. Heat, vaporization and loss of fluid from mushrooms while cooking helps to eliminate a variety of chemicals which have been shown to poison humans and animals in the raw form. In laboratory experiments, mice have been given each of several toxic chemicals and given raw mushrooms to eat, with the production of a number of tumors and cancers. Even though the risk for cancer for humans due to ingestion of raw mushrooms has not been proven, those who study mushroom poisons recommend we avoid raw ones until they have been proven to be safe.

The S.F. Chronicle printed a follow-up on the recipe discussed above cautioning people about trying new foods after a number of our members alerted the paper about the risks of eating raw wild fungi.

More recently, we have received reports from several angry people regarding recent recipes written by a New York Times Food Editor. This writer denigrates wild mushrooms while simultaneously advising readers to eat them. Here are some quotes:

- "The first time I tasted a wild mushroom, I understood the flavor of fear and how, when you think you're about to die...."
- "that thick gnarled porcini" (ever see a gnarled porcini?)
- "I watched him beam maniacally as he massaged the mushroom with olive oil."
- "Convinced of my imminent demise, I savored the smokey, musky flavor, the hints of pine and humus, the meaty substance of my last meal."
- "To this day, I cannot taste a wild mushroom without a frisson [French for "chill"] of fear, as well as a memory of heartache."
- "...if chanterelles are cooked over a high flame, they sigh and disintegrate."
- "Japanese hon shimeji (also called "honey mushrooms). Not quite accurate: the scientific name for the usual "honey" is *Armillaria mellea*. Shimeji are related to the oyster mushrooms."
- "A brief lexicon of weird mushrooms." Mushrooms are natural, humans are weird.
- And at the end of the article, lines I cannot quite comprehend: "White mushrooms can be innocuous or quite pronounced. But they are truly tender and willing to assimilate the exotic, even the frightening. Like a 22 year-old girl." (Her introduction to mushroom cuisine took place when she was that age); and finally, "...mushrooms add an element of danger and a dash of decadence to the ingredients that surround it."

continued next page...

Fancy Fungus, continued from previous page

Strangely, another article by the same author is entitled, "Mycology Today." Mycology means the study of fungi—we could have suggested the use of the proper word, "Mycophagy", which describes the eating of mushrooms.

Here's yet another case of insufficiently informed culinary recommendations. On November 18, 1998, a recipe for "Morel Quesidillas with Mild Red Chile" was offered in the Food Section of the S.F. Chronicle: "if using fresh mushrooms: soak in cold water for 30 minutes. Drain well. Discard the liquid." Included in the list of ingredients were: garlic, olive oil, ground New Mexico or California chile, ancho chile powder, cumin, ripe peeled tomato, juice from 1/4th lemon, cayenne pepper, oregano, jack cheese and cilantro leaves. The recipe further advised: if using dried mushrooms, "soak in hot water for 30 minutes. Drain well, then strain and reserve the soaking liquid for another use..."

The first time my wife and I collected fresh morels, a cookbook advised a salt water soak for 10 minutes to remove fly larvae. We discarded the fluid. In doing so, we removed all the flavor of the fungi. They tasted like cardboard. We are convinced that much of the flavor for this delicacy is found in the spores. After soaking 30 minutes, you will not be able to taste them, even if you don't add the overflavoring abundance of materials in this recipe.

After soaking dried morels, to get the full flavor, it is much better use the liquid in the dish you are preparing to get the full flavor. Saving it for another dish will deprive your initial morel dish of the famous morel taste.

Morels have mild and unique flavor qualities. These will be lost when used with strong flavoring agents. Clean fresh morels rapidly with a minimum amount of water or a dry brush the caps if you have collected them carefully. Treat them gently; they are expensive.

The person who concocted this recipe for the S.F. Chronicle seems to have had little experience cooking and eating morels.

Mycologists and members of amateur societies have been studying and learning to identify fungi especially with respect to edibility for many years. They have, for the most part, learned to be cautious. They compare experiences, especially about uncomfortable reactions. It seems best that others who have had little experience and not much knowledge about the subject should write for the public following some research. Eating wild mushrooms has become a fad. Like eggplant. Locally, there are now at least one wild mushroom dish and an eggplant dish everywhere we dine out. The chefs, competitive and trying to be creative, usually override the mushroom flavor with sauces, condiments and other strongly tasting foodstuffs. And they mince them until their textural qualities vanish. But they don't usually offer recipes accompanied by an ambivalent, threatening and misleading attitude.

After reviewing the articles in question, I think that we should suggest that food writers and chefs in San Francisco and elsewhere who advocate the ingestion of new wild types contact local mushroom societies to double-check the safety of specific mushrooms, and how to get the most satisfying results from their preparation.

—Bill Freedman, Toxicology Committee Chair

Calendar, continued from page 10

hosted indoors. For more information, call the FFSC hotline at 408.684.2275. For information about volunteering, contact Lee Yamada at 831.438.5749 or email yamacole@cruzio.com.

Saturday, January 23: Joaquin Miller Park (Oakland Hills) beginners' walk. Meet at 10:00am at the Sequoia Arena. Call Norm Andresen for details (510.278.8998).

Sunday, January 31: Lands End Walk, Lincoln Park, San Francisco. Meet at 10:00 by the water fountain in the parking lot, in front of the Palace of the Legion of Honor. Contact Henry Shaw (925.943.3237, shaw4@llnl.gov) for details.

Saturday – Sunday, March 6 - 7: Paul Stamets "Gourmet and Medicinal Mushroom Cultivation Seminar". To be held in Santa Cruz at UCSC Arboretum. Fee is \$325, Paul's normal fee is \$500 for this 2-day event. Participants receive spawn for growing seven production quality species. Contact Permaculture Santa Cruz, 348 Buzzard Lagoon Rd. Corralitos CA 95076 Tel 408.763.3848 E-mail permasc@sasquatch.com

Thursday -- Sunday, August 12 - 15: The 1999 NAMA foray. This foray will be held at the Shawnee National Forest in Missouri. Mark your calendars!



More Thanks to Fair Volunteers

This is a very heartfelt and emphatic thank you for the excellent work you all did as volunteers at this year's MSSF mushroom fair. Thank you all.

So many of you volunteers worked past the designated shift to which you were assigned, or were willing to be shifted from one responsibility to the next without issue. Many of you worked both days, or did double shifts on the day you were at the fair. I need to say a special thanks to those grad and other students of Dr. Dennis Desjardin, without whom many of our species tables would have been unstaffed. The full concert of all of you working in each of your different capacities allowed us to have a very smooth, attractive and professional fair.

The consensus seems to be that this year's fair was one of the best we've ever had, and the success was due in very large part to the tireless efforts and hard work of all of you. It was an honor to have worked with all of you, and I thank you again for your efforts. You made the fair work.

— Fair Volunteer Coordinator

THE MUSHROOM SCOOP

This monthly column solicits input concerning mushroom collections of particular interest, rarity, or amazement.

E-mail me at yogidog@earthlink.net to contribute.

- David Campbell



A little knowledge is a dangerous thing – drink deeply or not at all.

At our very swell MSSF Mushroom fair, a woman asked me about how to take a spore print in the woods. It seems she had been frustrated by finding a possible edible while hiking, and there were a lot of them but she did not want to fill her swag bag and carry them home until she was sure of their identity.

Hmmm, let's see, I thought...I guess you could create a portable field station, rig up an environmentally controlled enclave, somehow isolate some spores in sufficient quantity to discern their color, then utilizing modern technology, perhaps a lap top computer providing instant access to the wisdom of the entire lexicon of historical and current reference of known and suggested edible mushrooms, say Yeah! Pick 'em!

I chuckled, and managed to suppress my first impulse to say that mycological knowledge and MTV are very different—though, the more I thought about it, I realized that was the essence of the most important understanding I could possibly convey to her.

Mushrooms are a life-long path. She does need to take her specimens of uncertain ID home and take a spore print. It's good for her to spend some quality time with her new fungal friend before she plunges deeper into what could become a most regrettable relationship. Next time out, she can find that species again, and collect it with a little more authority. Take it home. Re-identify it. Maybe still not eat it. Maybe get a knowledgeable mycophile to take a look-see.

Wild mushrooms are wild. That means we don't really know them, and we do not control them. We've all experienced the frustration of failing to find that favorite mushroom that just really should have been there. The good news is that that very wildness also means that THEY (the Powers that be) don't control them. If THEY did control them, we would not get any ever, except at the store, for money. It is our plight and delight to frolic in the woods trying to figure out when and where the fungal phenoms might be, take our personal failures and successes in stride, try to make sense of it all. Several years ago, I expressed this mushroomer's dilemma to the inimitable Dr. James Trappe, saying that my friends and I had been repostulating our theorems of understanding mushroom fruiting patterns on an alarmingly regular basis, like every season for years. How long did he think it takes to get the big picture? "1200 years," he shrugged.

Over the *years*, one accumulates a "library" of mushrooms that one eats with confidence, along with an internal "spot" map of where to get them. Once you really know a mushroom, a spore print is seldom necessary.

A refreshing energy at the MSSF fair was provided by the incessant horde of children coursing from one display table to the next, in

wide-eyed search of the mushroom that matched the drawing they had just rendered at Louise Freedman's mushroom art studio table. Bravo!

Another kudos worthy sight: MSSF scientific advisor Dr. Desjardin temporarily abandoning his microscope station to bring some neophyte fellow over to the Cantharellaceae table (near where I was waxing rhapsodic over the ins and outs of the displayed Amanitas) and, with a Russula in hand, explaining to him at considerable length the small, yet significant, difference between a true and a false gill. Great dedication and patience shown here, I thought. Way to be, Dennis.

Correction: in speaking with Darvin Deschazer while he manned the SOMA society display at our fair, I came to understand that I have misconstrued something: he *does not* eat the Shaggy Parasol (*Macrolepiota rachodes*) raw, as I stated in last month's column. So, we are back to the unanimous—insofar as anyone I've heard from—opinion that this mushroom needs to be well cooked before consumption.

Bob Mackler reports finally getting around to checking out an intriguing habitat near his neck of the wood—a demonstration forest east of St. Helena: Dec. 1 Angwin (Douglas Fir, Ponderosa Pine, Tanoak, Madrone). It was very wet after a storm and warm enough for lots of mushroom activity. Species found were: *Agaricus hondensis*, *Agaricus semotus*, *Amanita franchetii*, *Clavulina* sp., *Collybia* sp., *Dacrymyces palmatus*, *Entoloma* sp., *Gomphidius glutinosus*, *Hypholoma fasciculare*, *Lactarius rubrilacteus*, *Lepiota atrodisca*, *Lepiota rubrotincta*, *Lycoperdon perlatum*, *Mycena leptocephala*, *Russula brevipes*, *Russula albonigra*, *Suillus caeruleus*, *suillus lakei*, *suillus fuscotomentosus*.

The *Lactarius rubrilacteus* is a good one for needy mycophagists to cozy up to. Distinguished by its red lactose, green staining, and the zonate carrot colored cap, it is a frequently ubiquitous mushroom that enjoys little fame as the excellent comestible it is capable of being. I've been party to much discussion of its culinary qualities of late (along with the similar *L. deliciosa* – orange latex, green stain, generally not considered quite as delectable), and the consensus opinion is that long (30 minutes) slow cooking or grilling renders a most enjoyable taste treat.

For those of you who do not know, the Christmas Angel did not join us for the MSSF Xmas chow down, but he did bless us from afar. I refer to David Bartolotta who, in full knowledge of his inability to attend, oversaw the conception of menu, procurement of key ingredients, contracting of chef and support crew, and just for good measure, provided the chocolate torte desert. What does David get out of this? Don't tell me, please tell him.

Scoop continued next page...

Scoop continued from page 8

After a two week absence, I finally got back out into my own backyard (read: all of Marin) on December 19th, visiting a few favorite chanterelle zones. I sighted, for the first time this season, scads of "Phloyd's" *Amanita phalloides* – the Death Cap. Do take note: they are among us now.

MSSF Holiday Dinner Cooking Process

The wild mushroom medley sauce was based on dried aged porcini and black chanterelles, reconstituted, sauteed with onion, and returned to the soaking liquor with a couple bottles of pretty nice red wine – I do try to take good care of my mushrooms! Whilst that vat got to boiling – the frying pan entertained a succession of fungi of the day. Using butter and olive oil we sauteed Fresh Ceps (*B. edulis*) and Men on Horseback (*T. flavorisens*) in the mix, followed in diminishing order by chanterelles, *B. aureus*, *Lactarius rubrilacteus*, *deliciosus*, (bleeding milk caps), *fragilis* (candy caps), *Enteloma madidum* (Midnight enteloma) *Tricholoma magnivelase*, and *Hydrum imbricatum*.

All these were promptly ushered into the boiling vat as they left the pan. And when the desired consistency of primordial ooze was achieved, we introduced a fresh herbal sheaf for a short time, then pulled it from the heat, added a couple knowbs of butter, corrected the seasoning, and ...wow, everything else was ready, too!

— *David Campbell*



Special Honors for Dr. Dennis Desjardin

The Envelope, Please...

MSSF science adviser Dennis Desjardin received an unprecedented pair of honors this year: the William H. Weston Award for Excellence in Teaching; and the Alexopoulos Award, given annually to young mycologists who have made outstanding and noteworthy mycological contributions. The Mycological Society of America presented these awards, a high honor coming from Dennis's peers — some of the most accomplished professional mycologists in universities and institutions through the country. Dennis is the first person ever to receive both awards simultaneously.

For those of us who have attended Dennis's excellent lectures at the MSSF general meetings or have taken a course from Dennis through San Francisco State, these awards come as no surprise. His thorough knowledge of mycology combined with excellent organization and willingness to help his students puzzle out the mysteries of the kingdom fungi have made him a very popular professor at SFSU. His thorough research has earned him National Science Foundation grants to study fungi first in Hawaii and now in Indonesia and Bali.

We at the MSSF are extremely fortunate to have someone of Dennis's caliber working with us. If you helped at the fungus fair on Friday or the weekend, you probably saw Dennis poring over any one of thousands of fungal specimens to put an accurate label on it. Or perhaps you saw him going from table to table to work with a troop of his graduate students, folks who also performed a great deal of work for our fair.

If you haven't had a chance to hear or work with Dennis, I have a couple of recommendations. For a quick fix if you have web access, check out his website devoted to Agaricales of the Hawaiian Islands: <http://www.mycena.sfsu.edu/hawaiian/Agaricales.html>. The work presented here will be part of a new book coming out soon (co-written with Don Hemmes) on the Fungi of Hawaii. For a more in-depth experience, consider taking one of Dennis's courses. He teaches a week-long class on Sierra Fungi each June at the Yuba Pass field campus of SFSU. And every other year he teaches a higher fungi class at SFSU that is open to the general public — as long as you can spare a Monday afternoon each week of the fall semester.

Congratulations, Dennis!

And thanks for all the work you've put into the MSSF.

— *Mike Boom*

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January, 1999 vol 49:1

Calendar

Thursday – Sunday, Dec. 31 - Jan 3: New Year's Weekend Foray (Manchester, Mendocino Co.). This will be a limited enrollment foray put on by the Wild About Mushrooms Co. A \$150 fee will be charged. See the Nov. *Mycena News* or contact Charmoon Richardson (707-887-1888) for details.

Friday, January 1: Joaquin Miller Park (Oakland Hills) beginners' walk. Meet at 10:00am at the Sequoia Arena. Call Norm Andresen for details: 510-278-8998 (These walks will be held every other Saturday — unless otherwise noted — until the end of the local mushroom season.)

Sunday, January 10: Lands End Walk, Lincoln Park, San Francisco. Meet at 10:00am by the water fountain in the parking lot in front of the Palace of the Legion of Honor. Call Tom Sasaki (415-776-0791) for details.

Thursday, January 14: Lands End Walk, Lincoln Park, San Francisco. Meet at 10:00am by the water fountain in the parking lot in front of the Palace of the Legion of Honor. Call or e-mail Bob Gorman (650-340-8986, mycoforager@att.net) for details.

Saturday - Sunday, Jan 16 -17: Point Arena foray (Mendocino Co.) Foray on 500+ acres of private land owned by one of our members. There will be some space for sleeping indoors, and camping space may be limited. Contact Henry Shaw (925-943-3237,

shaw4@lntl.gov) for details and to reserve a place.

Saturday - Sunday, Jan 16 -17: SOMA Wild Mushroom Camp (Anderson Valley) Forays, evening programs, classes & workshops, and more fantastic food than we will be able to eat. Please contact Charmoon Richardson (707-887-1888) for details and to reserve a place.

Saturday – Monday, Jan 16 -18: Sonoma Co. Mycological Association Winter Mushroom Camp in Philo, CA (Mendocino Co.). See Nov. *Mycena News* for details. Cost is \$125/person. Send reservations and payment to: SOMA Camp, P.O. Box 1088, Forestville, CA 95436.

Saturday – Sunday, January 16 -17, The Fungus Federation of Santa Cruz's 25th Annual Fungus Fair will be held at Loudon Nelson Community Center in downtown Santa Cruz. This is located on Center Street, at Laurel Street, in Santa Cruz. The entire event will be

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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>