



Artist: Louise Freedman

Mycena News

Mycological Society of San Francisco

March, 1999, vol 49:3

H & J Ranch Foray Review

January 16-17, 1999

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Society Officers:

President: Mark Thomsen	510.540.1288
Vice Pres: Terri Beauséjour	510.278.5998
Secretary: Anna Grajeda	415.564.4811
Treasurer: Zöe-Amy Caldwell	510.569.1554

Select Committees:

Forays: Henry Shaw	925.943.3237
Book Sales: Chris Thayer	510.283.4858
Membership: Wade Leschyn	650.591.6616

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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.

Editors: Yu-Shen Ng & Jessica Koeppl
 Page Layout: Hilary Somers
 Printing/Mailing: Mother Lode Printing,
 Jackson, CA

Although the leaden skies and accompanying drizzle were a welcome sight to Bay Area mycophiles after weeks of cold rainless weather, they did not bode well for a pleasant weekend of mushroom hunting on the north coast. Nevertheless, an intrepid band of new and experienced forayers ignored the weather and weekend forecasts and set out in mid January for a weekend foray at the H&J Ranch in Point Arena, home of Lori Hubbard and Greg Jirak. Beating all expectations, the sun broke through the clouds around 8:30 am, as I was passing through Jenner, and the skies cleared to the west over the Pacific. Perhaps this wasn't going to be such a bad weekend after all!

Lori and Greg had graciously invited the Society to stage a foray on their property, which stretches east from Highway 1, up into the mixed redwood, fir, tan oak, and madrone forests of the coastal terraces. They are attempting to return their rather extensive property to some semblance of the original ecological community of the area. Lori, is the outgoing president of the local chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and has been doing a comprehensive survey of the flora present on their land. Both Lori and Greg want to add fungi to their catalog of species, and hope to enlist the Society to help in that endeavor.

Both the weather and the company on Saturday turned out to be splendid. Despite our low expectations for finding much in the way of fungal diversity because of the extended dry

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S.F. Flower and Garden Show

March 18-21, 1999

As described in detail in last month's issue of the Mycena News, the MSSF has two special opportunities to exhibit at this year's San Francisco Flower and Garden show, from March 18 to March 21. The MSSF will sponsor both its traditional educational exhibit as well as a special 'Mushrooms in the Garden' display.

Volunteers are needed to help provide materials and staff for the educational MSSF exhibit at the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show. Specifically, the show will be March 18-21 at the Cow Palace, hours from 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM. Volunteers will work in pairs for four hour shifts and be admitted free to see the other displays and gardens. This would be a great way for you and/or a friend or partner to contribute to the MSSF, while at the same time you can also experience the S.F. Flower and Garden Show. Sixteen people are required on a first come basis. Call Paul Koski at 415.564.6518 or email pkoski@muse.sfsd.edu. Thanks.

This year's 'Mushrooms in the Garden' display will be similar to the display at the MSSF Fungus Fair, but on a grander scale. Please refer to the Cultivation Column in this issue for more information about participating in this display.

President's Greeting

I hope you've had a chance to look for mushrooms lately. The local oak stands are filled with chanterelles and somewhat smaller quantities of candy caps. I've found more chanterelles than I've seen in the 9 years that I've been looking for them in most of my East Bay spots. Most likely Marin and the Peninsula are the same.

I'd like to plug a business in my column, that I think would be of interest to many of you. You have to have internet access in order to use it. The web address or URL is <http://www.ebay.com>. This is an auction web site, generally of second-hand goods, and there are hundreds of things for sale that might interest mushroomers. I did a quick search on a few items and came up with the following for sale today. This is probably a representative sample of the types of things you might find:

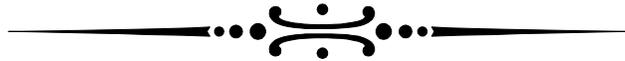
microscope	232 items (microscopes in every size, shape and price range)
mushroom	184 items (lots of mushroom dishes, salt and pepper shakers, lamps, postcards, etc...)
mushroom stamps	1 item (a collection of 50 worldwide stamps)
mushroom stamp	1 item (a single stamp)
mushroom book	4 items
slide projector	84 items (all shapes and sizes of projectors)

You have to poke around a bit to find some items and the more generic a description you use for a search, the more you're likely to find. Most things are open for bids for approximately 1 week, after which they are sold to the highest bidder.

Dr. Desjardin will be speaking at the March general meeting. He is always one of the year's most engaging speakers and will be presenting some of his research from Indonesia. Details on the talk are elsewhere in the newsletter.

Last, we're looking for someone to chair this year's fair. The March 9th council meeting will be partly devoted to discussing the fair and I'd like to have a chairperson by then. Last year's fair was fairly easy to put together and there is a large group of experienced people that will do most of the work for you. Most of the job is just making sure that all of the different pieces of the fair are being managed by others and to lead a monthly meeting beginning in August. Please contact me immediately (my number is on the front page of this newsletter) if you're interested. I hope to see you in March.

— Mark Thomsen



Wild Mushroom Dinners in San Jose

In a Feb. 10th SF Chronicle Food Section story by Kim Severson, she laments the decimation of Golden Chanterelles by our recent winter freeze. Nothing could be further from the truth as East and South Bay hunters can tell you. Despite the quote from Anna Moore saying that she is starting to hear good reports, Severson goes on about the high prices, (actually at the lower end of the usual scale), about the small crop, (she hasn't been out looking obviously), and about the frost's hidden fungal victims. Knowledgeable forayers know better. One local collector averaging dozens of pounds every week being shared with his best restaurant customers and their faithful clientele took umbrage with Severson's assessment and teamed up with a restaurateur to prove otherwise.

Chef Mark Hopper of Paolo's in San Jose (333 West San Carlos Street) and Steve Bowen, Mycologist, from Lincoln High School, paired up to present the first in a series of wild mushroom dinners on Saturday, Feb. 13, 1999. With 20 lbs. of Chanterelles gathered from the San Jose area by Mr. Bowen, the Chef sold out his offering after 30-40 presentations of the menu below. Steve sent this menu to the Chronicle, instead of a Letter to the Editor, just to prove his point.

- 1) Chanterelle Pudding with White Truffle "Foam" (Pureed Chanterelles cooked in Veal stock, served in a small coffee cup topped with cappuccino-like steamed white truffle-oil;
- 2) Seafood Salad of vinaigrette marinated rounds from cibarius stalks, crab salad, salmon carpaccio with herbed Chanterelle vinaigrette;
- 3) Foie Gras filled Tortellini with a Chanterelle-lemon cream;
- 4) Chanterelle crusted baked sea bass with slow cooked Maui Onions, Onion Glaze;
- 5) Chanterelle Sorbet, Ruby Red Grapefruit, and a Basilico.

The dinners will continue with whatever species appear in adequate numbers. If you are in the South Bay ask Paolo's at 408-294-2556 when the next mushroom feast may be held.

— Larry Stickney

Cultivation Committee News

The cultivation committee is now pinning down the details for several upcoming activities, some of which will come to fruition in the next few months. If you are interested in growing mushrooms, please read on!

Introduction to Cultivation Workshop Series

Fred Stevens will conduct a series of three introductory cultivation workshops during March and April. Students will experience the entire process of growing oyster mushrooms from initial inoculation through spawn culture, to final fruiting. All workshops will be held at the Randall Museum at 7 p.m. The cost will be just \$10 per session or \$25 for all three.

Session 1. Thursday, March 4: Making Agar and Learning Sterile Transfer Techniques

The first step to cultivation is inoculation of a sterile medium with a tissue culture. This session will provide a step-by-step, hands-on demonstration of media preparation and transfer of the culture to the media. Students will receive handouts describing the techniques, and will take home their very own cultures to monitor development in preparation for transfer to spawn during session #2.

Session 2. Thursday, March 18: Making Grain Spawn and Learning Sterile Transfer Techniques

A lecture will describe required materials and the cooking and sterilization process, followed by a hands-on demonstration of transferring the cultures created during session #1 to spawn jars. Students will receive handouts describing the techniques, and will take home their very own cultures to monitor development in preparation for transfer to straw compost during session #3.

Session 3. Thursday, April 8: Growing Oyster Mushrooms on a Straw/Sawdust Compost

With grain spawn from the previous session, students will inoculate pasteurized compost.

The lecture will discuss the various substrate possibilities, pasteurization techniques, and appropriate conditions to induce fruiting. Students will receive handouts describing the techniques, and will take home their very own compost 'kits' to watch their mushrooms grow through the substrate, and, if kept in the proper conditions, to see their mushrooms fruit!

San Francisco Flower and Garden Show

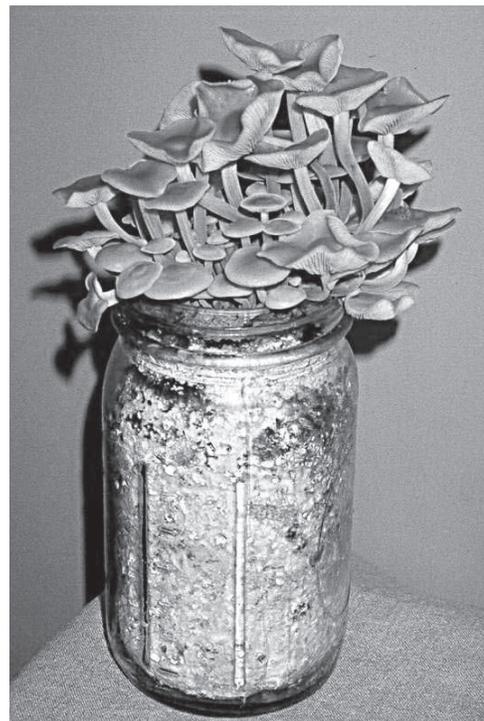
The cultivation committee will create a "Mushrooms in the Garden" vignette at the 1999 San Francisco Flower and Garden show, in addition to our traditional educational display. If you were unable to attend our planning meeting on February 24, but would still like to participate, or donate or loan appropriate plants, trees or fungi, please call or email the cultivation committee chair. Show setup is March 16th and 17th – the show itself is the 18th – 21st. Please see the calendar section for more details about the exact times.

Shiitake Cultivation Workshop in late May

David Jackovich, MSSF member, Bay Area resident, and proprietor of a successfully operational Shiitake farm in Wisconsin, will present a lecture and workshop for cultivation of Shiitake mushrooms through log cultures. The lecture will discuss some of the available strains of Shiitake and the requirements and timeframes for their production. The hands-on workshop will demonstrate log-plugging techniques and display actual logs in the fruiting stage. This workshop will be held sometime toward the end of May. The precise dates and times are TBA. Sign-up sheets will be available at the March, April and May general meetings, or you may call or email the cultivation committee chair for more details or to sign up.

Donations

The cultivation committee continues to receive donations of lab supplies and media. These supplies are critical to keeping down the cost of our workshops, and to allowing our limited funds to be used for educational displays such as the Mushrooms in the Garden Display at the San Francisco Flower and Garden show. Thanks to all who have made generous donations and have taken the time to put them in the hands of the cultivation committee! If you know of cultivation-related supplies that are 'destined for the dumpster', please do consider a donation to the cultivation committee.



'Flammulina velutipes' grown and photographed by Bolek Kusnik

H & J Foray Review, continued from page 1

period we had suffered, the group found a respectable number of species (see below). We also managed to gather a nice assortment of edible varieties in quantities sufficient to both take home and to contribute to the community dinner.

Greg and Lori went beyond the call of duty, and not only invited us to foray on their property, but also opened their lovely home to our motley band of mushroom lovers. That evening, thanks to the use of Lori and Greg's kitchen, we feasted on cream of morel and chanterelle soup brought by Catherine Greer, craterellus-stuffed roast chicken assembled by Henry Shaw, bread, and salad. Lois Lutz provided a wonderful dessert. In contrast to most of our overnight forays, which typically end up around a campfire, this one featured dining and conversation around an indoor fireplace in Lori and Greg's living room. I just hope that the newcomers in the group do not now have unrealistically high expectations for what to expect on future forays!

On behalf of the Society and everyone who attended the foray, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Lori and Greg for being such wonderfully hospitable and genial hosts. I hope that we will be able to organize similar events in the future, and continue to contribute to the goal of making an exhaustive catalog of species on the H&J Ranch.

— Henry Shaw

Species found on H & J Ranch, Jan 16-17, 1999

Agaricus californicus	Hydnum umbillicatum
Albatrellus pescaprae	Hydrocybe conica
Amanita aspera	Hygrocybe psittacina
Amanita muscaria	Hygrocybe punicea
Amanita pachycolea	Hydrocybe flavescens
Camarophyllus pratensis (?)	Laccaria laccata
Camarophyllus rusocoriaceus	Laccaria sp.
Cantharellus cibarius	Lactarius deliciosus
Cantharellus infundibuliformis	Lactarius rufulus
Cantharellus subalbidus	Lactarius uvidus complex
Cortinarius sp.	Lactarius xanthogalactus
Craterellus cornucopiodes	Leccinum manzanitae
Dermocybe phoenicea	Leotia viscosa
Gyromitra infula	Lepiota sp.
Hydnellum peckii	Marasmius sp.
Hydnellum pseudogelatinosum	Pleuteus cervinus
Hydnum repandum	Ramaria botrytis
	Ramaria sp.
	Rhizopogon sp.
	Numerous varieties of
	Russula sp.
	Trametes versicolor

March 16th General Meeting: Dr. Dennis E. Desjardin

Dr. Dennis E. Desjardin, Professor at San Francisco State University and scientific advisor to the MSSF, will be speaking on "Mushroom collecting in Java and Bali" for the March general meeting of the MSSF. He will be giving an overview of his team's recent expeditions to Java and Bali, discussing what he collected, where he collected it, and how he performs field work in such environments. This should be a fun and educational travelogue with a smattering of taxonomy and phylogeny supported by nice slides.

INCREDIBLE GRILLED BOLETE, GARDEN TOMATO, AND ASIAGO SANDWICH

Serves 1

- 6 ea. bolete slabs, about 3' long by 2 wide, sliced 1/4
- 1 ea. tomato, large, warm off the vine if possible, sliced 3/16
- 1 tbl Asiago cheese, freshly grated
- 2 ea. Wheat or multi-grains bread, slices, really good
- 4 ea. basil leaves, large, cut chiffonade
- 1 tsp Dijon
- 2 tsp mayonnaise, low fat
- 1 tsp extra virgin olive oil, really good
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Lightly brush the oil on each side of the boletes and grill them over medium high heat until golden brown on the sides, darker on the edges, and soft inside. about 8 minutes. keep warm and set aside.

- 2. Toast the bread the way you like it. keep warm.
- 3. Put the grated cheese on one slice of bread and put it in the micro (or under a broiler) just until it begins to melt and really smell good.
- 4. On the other slice of bread apply the mayo and Dijon. place the boletes on this, then the tomatoes, the chiffonade (sliced thinly after rolling the leaves together) of basil, salt and pepper and deftly plop the cheesy piece of bread atop this pile of wondrous stuff.

P.S. It will not squish nor be inserted into the mouth easily and might be best eaten in the privacy of your own home.

— Patrick Hamilton

S-U-I, S-U-I, S-U-I

The Cooking Column

So it's late fall and I'm up hiking and hunting Boletes at 7000' in the central High Sierra. This is where Ponderosa pines and Incense cedars give way to Lodgepoles and Red firs which is a kinda neat transition zone and worthy of thoughtful reflection regarding the wonderment of it all but instead all I'm thinking about is babushkas and hog calling.

Yep, Russian scarf hats and Midwestern farmers yelling at pigs in my same thought balloon and maybe only I know that it's not all that weird.

You wouldn't either if you had had my clues.

I have knowledge of some of the arcane stuff that is there for us to decipher if we are curious enough, or strange enough.

Odd, I said to myself when I spotted the first of many cut and discarded wormy Suillus. Hmm, I hummed, and in tune too.

My 12 week old Australian Shepherd pup Danny Boy gave me an appreciative glance up from his own mushroom hunting as if to say, Right on dad, you da man, orf, whatever.

Why, oh why, so many Su-illi? S. brevipes are said to be the best of the Slippery Jack types but, hey I'm picking Boletus edulis by the bushel and I'm seeing lots and lots of cuts—but not a not very well hidden Bo-lete midden. Unhuh, unsightly piles of pellicly impaired shrooms—slimy and sticky and slippery and strewn every here and there. Go figure, so I did some, and not that far away either.

Just back to the babushkas. . . . There are folks from Russia and other Eastern European countries who do enjoy Suillus very much. I know this because I have prepared some for them sautéed with potatoes, sour cream and onions in a hard cider reduction sauce. I bet some of their family and friends have worn scarves as hats while mushroom picking.

I was thinking backwards and forwards visiting memories and possible future thoughts trying to make sense of all of this so that I could write about it and you all could easily understand just how this

prose gets to paper in such an intelligent manner.

I had to suffer through way too many years of Latin in high school and besides remembering, sophomorically, that Caesar, in his salad days, was galling I recall that the word for pig was something like suillus.

So, when those farmers are calling their hogs by hollering, Sui, sui, we know now that they are actually speaking a form of Latin, maybe Pig. . . .

Maybe I'm not much of a visionary but I can't see them wearing OshGosh coveralls and babushkas while doing so.

I wouldn't have known that particular porcini area (nor had any idea of the aforementioned gobblygook) if not for my partner (blame her) Kathy. With her business partner Diane they broke the key. She knew that Boletes grew at the 5000' elevation in Spring close by to where I ended up picking so they did some drive by Bolete hunting up the mountain the week before and did indeed spy some emerging buttons. And they took over 30 pounds of #1 beauties. Without me. Woe I was.

Larry Stickney (the former food writer of this column and so much more) taught us the methode de morilles a few years back and we have used it ever since. Kinda like fishing—if you don't get a bite real soon get on down the stream. If we don't see a mushroom or suspect real strongly a good habitat from the vehicle we are likely to move on by and not waste any time.

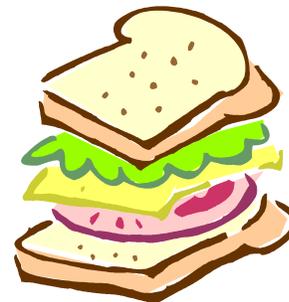
Really, all that we have in this world is time. To use it wisely by spending most of our lives mushroom hunting is one of God's gifts to us. Sort of. At least to me.

My editor usually asks about now where the recipe is in this cooking column. Don, I don't have the answer yet but give me a few more paragraphs. We could talk about our upcoming wild mushroom cooking contest with those swell prizes and all. I do hope that many of you will enter, once we figure out how to do that.

Last weekend I did come home with a bunch of baby boletes and even after dropping off bagsfull at Wine Forest Mushrooms of Napa I had enough to cook for myself. What to do, what to do?

Well, I made the best sandwich I'd ever had while on a diet. So herein I present the low calorie, nutritious and delicious.

— Patrick Hamilton



See previous page for recipe of the delicious sandwich



Don't forget!

Join us at the Mushroom Photography Workshop. It's Tuesday, March 23rd, at 7:00 pm in the Randall Museum.

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



Mushrooms do possess an air of mystery. This accounts largely for the intrigue and fascination that people feel for them, and also the reticence some experience, myself included, towards casually embracing certain alleged edibles unequivocally as righteous, healthful food. I have a history of being slow, in fact, to cozy up to a new-to-me species, and I recently came across a rather sobering commentary which corroborates my mycophagal concerns. This from mycologist Alexander H. Smith in text included in *The Biology and Cultivation of Edible Mushrooms*, compiled by Chang and Hayes:

“...in an overall review of the diversity in fleshy Basidiomycetes and Ascomycetes, edibility as a taxonomic character has a place along with all the other features of a species. Throughout the present discussion I have tried to emphasize the diversity in the fleshy fungi, and the variability of many of the taxonomic characters. The question of edible vs. poisonous properties follows the same pattern of variability and diversity, and is judged, to make matters more complicated, against the great diversity in the testing organism (the human being). This is the crux of the confusion in much of the mycological literature on poisonous and edible fungi. We now know that the amount of poison in a species varies considerably with the strain or race tested (Tyler *et al.*, 1966), and that apparently, in some edible species geographic races are known which are mildly poisonous (see *Pholiota aurea*). It is also known (Simmons, 1971) that people vary in their tolerance to at least certain poisons.... The testing of new strains or species should, it now appears, be done on the basis of a tester trying the species every day for about a week, and also testing it on many different people. As records accumulate on the eating of wild mushrooms, we find more and more cases of “mild” poisoning from supposedly edible species. This situation might be referred to as double variability since a variable organism is being tested against another variable organism. Species collected in the wild and sold on the market present a special problem. The commercially grown... strains marketed today are those with a long history of reliability as edible species” (Smith 25).

So, my fellow testing organisms, are we keeping up on our geographical races lately? Spring Boletes are said to be more flavorful when collected from Pipi Valley; some years in various places morels are not quite so savory; in Europe the Shaggy Mane (*Coprinus comatus*) should not be consumed in the company of alcohol whereas that precaution doesn't seem to be an issue here on our continent; several people this year (I've seen 'em myself) have reported black chanterelles (*Craterellus cornucopiodes*) that are in fact a pale peachy color; the Shaggy Parasol (*Macrolepiota rachodes*) sometimes exhibits disturbing and inexplicable greenish hues on the underside; and then, if you get my drift, consider what tricks the Amanitaceae might have up their collective sheaths!

Given that conspicuous variations occur within a species, innocuous deviations from the expected nature of a given mushroom are probable. The nature of such deviations is generally unknown.

Of mention, the tenured cultivated mushrooms, and the highly popular and plentiful wild fungal staples such as chanterelles and porcini, have withstood the test of time and culinary wisdom deems them safe. Eating the more obscure “edibles,” however, is indeed a walk on the wild side.

Helvella lacunosa, the Elfin's Saddle, has generated a lot of e-mail chatter this season. I credit this fungus with turning me on to mushrooms, when some thirty years ago, while hiking on Mt. Vision, I came across a strange fungal form that suggested a cluster of knuckles tightly stretched inside a black rubber sack... how could I not be smitten for life? People have been surprised to find it growing with oak in addition to its generally acknowledged pine habitat. It is edible provided one adheres to detoxifying procedures similar to those used when preparing *Gyromitra* species. It contains the toxins MMH and Helvellic acid, both of which are readily released by vaporization upon cooking. Some people are quite fond of it, but I've enjoyed it only one or two times out of the ten or more times I've tried it. Something in the flavor I don't quite accept, and I don't really trust it with my body. Charmoon Richardson concurs: “Regarding eating the elfin saddles – I know many people do it – but my experience with eating it, twice, was that I got a very subtle but perceptible ‘weird feeling in my bloodstream.’ It happened both times I tried it. Something just felt a little off. And I think that I cooked it well – it seemed ‘done’, at least. So now I avoid them.”

Debbie Viess and David Rust have been spending some quality time with their mushroom baskets lately. Collecting in the South Oakland hills, and also in the Clayton/Morgan area, they presented at the February MSSF general meeting a modest cornucopia of fungal flora, including *Boletus zelleri*; *B. dryophilus*; *Cantharellus cibarius*, which are apparently exploding in the extensive East Bay taboo habitats – providing myriad photo opportunities, no doubt, for all you imaginative hands-off mycophagists; *Amanita vaginata*; and *Amanita ocreata*. The deadly *A. ocreata* needs to be especially differentiated from the edible Spring version of *A. calyptata*, which manifests in quite a pale yellow hue, which can be mimicked by the yellowish stain that the whitish *A. ocreata* sometimes develops. Occurring now as well all around the Bay Area is the delicious *A. velosa*, which along with *A. vaginata*, and *A. calyptata*, possesses distinct, naturally formed striations at the margin (edge) of the pileus (cap). These striations, under normal conditions, do not exist on *A. ocreata*, or *A. phalloides*. The possibility must be noted that environmental conditions can simulate these striations, such as when dehydration shrinks the skin of the cap down around the gills below. No single detail is ever grounds for complete ID, especially when dealing with Amanitas. Study well, and when in doubt, throw it out!

Also at the general meeting's display table were a rather gnarly pair of Dead Man's Foot (Feet) (*Pisolithus tinctorius*). This is an excellent

Continued next page

dyeing fungus of questionable edibility and zero appetite appeal. Aurora says: "In Europe it is known as the 'Bohemian Truffle' and used as an aromatic seasoning when unripe, and in China it is employed medicinally" (*MD* 712). Not to be confused with the even less appetizing Dead Man's Hand (*Scleroderma geaster*), which may be poisonous and often shares the same bleak habitats – asphalt, waste places, sand and gravel, hardpack dirt, ditches, and such. Typical places that we explore on our way to the end of the earth, getting back to nature with mushrooms!

Other mushrooms currently popping around the bay include the Blewitt (*Clitocybe nuda*), Pine Spikes (*Chroogomphus vinicolor*), the Panther (*Amanita pantherina*), Black Trumpets (*Craterellus cornucopiodes*), Candy Caps (*Lactarius fragilis*), Jack-o-Lanterns (*Omphalotus olivascens*), Oysters (*Pleurotus ostreatus*), *Stropharia ambigua*, and perhaps *Leucopaxillus albissimus*, pending the outcome of Mike Boom's "how high does it bounce?" test.

— *David Campbell*

Calendar continued from last page

Thursday - Sunday, March 18-21: San Francisco Flower and Garden Show. Participate in the MSSF's numerous displays at this important show. At the San Francisco Cow Palace, 9am-9pm Friday and Saturday, 9am-6:30pm Thursday and Sunday. See inside for details about how to participate.

Saturday, March 20: Joaquin Miller Park (Oakland) beginners' walk. Meet at 10:00am at the Sequoia Arena. Call Norm Andresen if you have questions: 510.278.8998.

Sunday, March 21: Mushroom Madness in Marin. Postponed till April.

Tuesday, March 23: Mushroom Photography Workshop. This workshop will be held at 7:00pm at the Randall Museum. See last month's *Mycena News* for full details.

Sunday, March 28: Land's 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. Heavy rain cancels the walk. Call or e-mail Henry Shaw if you have questions: shaw4@llnl.gov, 925.943.3237.

Thursday, April 8: Introduction to Cultivation, Session 3. Growing Oyster Mushrooms on a Straw/Sawdust Compost. Randall Museum at 7pm. See inside this newsletter for details.

Sunday, April 18: Mushroom Madness in Marin. See last month's *Mycena News* for details. Also look for an announcement in an upcoming newsletter issue.

Early May: The MSSF springtime "Morel-fest" at San Jose Camp, Stanislaus National Forest. Dates to be announced next month.

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

Ode to Rot

Der Gut Herr Gott
said, "Let there be rot,"
and hence bacteria and fungi sprang
into existence to dissolve the knot
of carbohydrates photosynthesis
achieved in living plants.
Forget the parasitic smuts,
the rusts, the scabs, the blights, the wilts,
the spots.
The mildews and aspergillosis -
the fungi gone amok,
attacking living tissue,
another instance, did Nature need another,
of predatory heartlessness.
But benign; without it, how
would the forest digest its fallen timber,
the woodchuck corpse
vanish to leave behind a poem?
Dead matter else would hold the elements in thrall
nitrogen, phosphorous, gallium
forever locked into the slot
where once they chemically triggered
the lion's eye, the lily's relaxing leaf.

All sparks dispersed
to that memory where the dream of life
fails to recall, let rot
proclaim its revolution:
the microscopic hyphae sink
the fangs of enzyme into the rosey peach
and turn its blush to a yielding brown,
a mud of melting glucose:
once staunch committees of chemicals now vote
to join the invading union,
the former monarch of constitution routed
by the riot of rhizoids
the thalloid consensus.

The world, reshuffled, rolls to renewed fullness;
the oranges forgot
in the refrigerator "produce" drawer
turn green and oblate
and altogether other than edible,
yet loom as planets of bliss to the ants at the dump.
The banana peel tossed from the Volvo
blackens and rises as roadside chicory.
Bodies loathsome with their maggotry of ghosts resolve
to earth and air,
their fire spent, and water present
as a minister must be, to pronounce the words.
All process is reprocessing;
give thanks for gradual ceaseless rot
gnawing gross Creation fine while we sleep,
the lightning-forged organic conspiracy's
merciful counterplot.

— *John Updike*

Call for Content! The *Mycena News* welcomes content contributions from all corners of the mycological world. What's more, you don't have to be an expert to contribute. If you have ideas, stories, feedback, news, art (especially drawings), or anything else to contribute, please contact mycena-news@mpath.com. You can also Fax to 650.424.1355 or call 650.813.9149.

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Calendar

Thursday, March 4: Introduction to Cultivation, Session 1. Making Agar and Learning Sterile Transfer Techniques. Randall Museum at 7pm. See inside this newsletter for details.

Saturday, March 6: Joaquin Miller Park (Oakland) beginners' walk. Meet at 10:00am at the Sequoia Arena. Call Norm Andresen if you have questions: 510.278.8998.

Sunday, March 7: Land's 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. Heavy rain cancels the walk. Call or e-mail Henry Shaw if you have questions: shaw4@llnl.gov, 925.943.3237.

Saturday, March 6 or Sunday, March 7: Mushroom Cultivation Class in Santa Cruz. On March 6, Don Simoni of Mushroom Adventures will hold a beginner's class on cultivating mushrooms. Cost \$35. Call 415.586.4082 for details. On March 7, an advanced class will be held.

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 Buzard Lagoon Rd. Corralitos CA 95076 Tel 408.763.3848 E-mail permasc@sasquatch.com

Saturday, March 13: Soquel Demonstration Forest Foray (Santa Cruz Co.). Meet at 10:00am at a location to be determined. (Some roads in the area are currently closed at the time of this writing.) Heavy rain cancels the walk. Call or e-mail Henry Shaw for details: shaw4@llnl.gov, 925.943.3237.

Tuesday, March 16: MSSF General Meeting at the Randall Museum in San Francisco. Doors open at 7:00 pm for mushroom ID and Books Sales; Meeting proper begins at 8:00 pm. Speaker: Dr. Dennis Desjardin.

Tuesday, March 16 and Wednesday, March 17: Preparations for the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show Display. See inside this newsletter for details.

Thursday, March 18: Introduction to Cultivation, Session 2. Making Grain Spawn and Learning Sterile Transfer Techniques. Randall Museum at 7pm. See inside this newsletter for details.

Calendar continued on page 7

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>