

Mycena News

Mycological Society of San Francisco

February, 2002, vol 53:2

Amanitas Crossing in the Night

By Debbie Viess

Debbie Viess, our amanitarita, initiated an extended & interesting dialogue with a posting on the MSSF online yahoo group list in December of 2001. The subject was on the genus Amanita and the possibility of species crossbreeding.

We think it is worthy of inclusion in the Mycena News, and we also would like to encourage more MSSF members to tune in to the yahoo group list. It's a great medium for instant information, provocative as well as reasoned discussion, and - most importantly - notice of mushroom sightings.

Occasionally, a topic comes up on yahoo-groups, the MSSF's online source for late-breaking mushroom news that stirs everyone's blood. This was certainly the case back on December 10th, when I made this posting:

Fellow amanita eaters and other interested parties,

I received some interesting and disturbing information this weekend at the Fair. An older woman, whose name I did not catch, obviously knowledgeable and a former MSSF member who has retired out of the Bay Area, told me that the dark brown forms of Amanita lanei (of which several were collected for the Fair) may actually be a cross between lanei and pantherina.

Supposedly a Larry Cook from Mendocino, a former Professor of Mycology at Mendocino College, did a study that illustrated their ability to intergrade. I would love to see a copy of this; she didn't know where or if it was published. The study was undertaken because of Pomo Indian folk knowledge, a local tribe that commonly ate Coccora, but would not touch the dark brown forms. So Coccora eaters, exercise extreme caution and eschew those dark brown forms until we can prove or disprove this theory; pantherina is NOT a good edible, as graphically illustrated by Stamets' hair-raising story of an experimental ingestion.

Anyone that can shed some light on this topic can contact me directly.

At the same time, I also sent a message to Rod Tulloss, our North American amanita expert. The responses poured in. Rod, and several other MSSF members, offered the scholarly opinion that the two species were too distantly related to cross. Rod's message was as follows:

The idea of crossing mushrooms may work with varieties or cultivated variants of the same species, but it should not work at all between species. And...certainly never between species in two different sections

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Speaker for February

MSSF Meeting

Michelle Seidl, PhD.

Unveiling *Cortinarius*:

Past, Present and Future



Cortinarius is the largest genus of mushrooms having the most number of species. For the newcomer, the February 2002 lecture will introduce the ubiquitous, brown-spored

mushroom, which includes slimy, colorful, and at times "totally tedious" LBMs. For those with a more artistic eye, the genus also includes some incredibly beautiful and interesting species. Dr. Seidl will give a brief history of *Cortinarius* in this country, musings on *Cortinarius* characters, and a view of growth forms and habitats. For the more advanced mycophile, Dr. Seidl will give a general update on current research, where it seems to be headed, and a discussion on relationships and conservation issues.

Dr. Michelle Seidl lives in Seattle, Washington and is currently a research associate at the University of Washington working halftime in the fungal herbarium. She is also a botanist for the U. S. Forest Service where she works part-time as the local fungal clearinghouse for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie and Olympic National Forests Survey and Manage Project, which is part of the Northwest Forest Plan. She is also an independent contractor for the Bureau of Land

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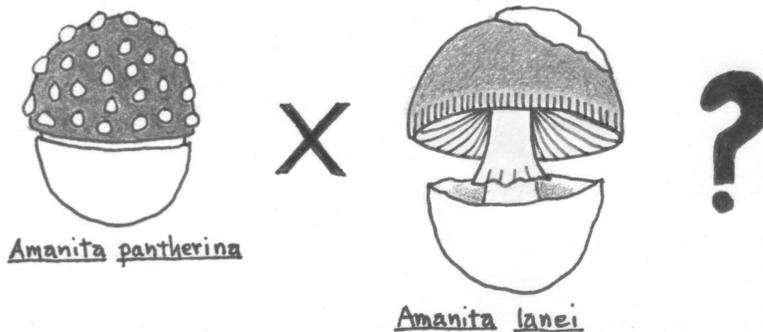


Illustration by Debbie Viess

President's Column

By David Rust

The beginning of the year is a good time to reflect on the halfway point of being the MSSF president, and a good time to consider the future. The members of our volunteer organization have been busy in the past six months. Mike Boom was able to produce a long overdue roster. Mike Wood created and modified a member's only area of the website, and created a whole new vision of Mykoweb, expanding the scope to California species. Through the hard work of Tom Chester, Paul Koski and a host of others, we put on our best looking and most well attended fair in years. We have an eye-catching membership brochure, which, as David Bartolotta reports, has been used for 90% of new memberships in the last month. Al Carvajal is converting the cumbersome membership database to Microsoft Access. It is now easy to enter new member records, renewals, track activities and payments.

We have excellent speakers scheduled for general meetings for the remainder of the year: *Cortinarius* specialist Michelle Seidl in February, Jim Trappe visits in March, Paul Stamets in April (look for details on a special meeting at the Oakland Museum), and a change in plans and a special treat in May for our annual meeting - we hope to bring Scott Redhead down from Canada.

There is a lot to do in the coming six months. We still need a permanent solution to the quirky answering machine, although it has been near impossible to find equipment as sophisticated as the one we purchased only three years ago. We desperately need a permanent place for our library. We need to overhaul the bylaws, as they haven't been officially updated since 1980, during one of Larry Stickney's presidencies. It would be great to get a complete list of email addresses onto the member's only area, and that may happen soon.

Some of my original goals were to bring new programs to the MSSF for the benefit of our members. I'd like to see beginning identification classes three or four times during the year, and more advanced ID classes on specific genera. I'd love to see more science in the Mycena News, and organized forays with real instructional content (as well as social time, which is one of our main reasons for being). The January SOMA foray in Navarro should serve as our model - they planned a terrific program.

If you didn't have a chance to visit the recent Santa Cruz Fungus Fair, try next year. Their displays are smaller, but packed with informative nuggets of information on topics that just keep getting better each year. There is a greater focus on vendors, food and food demonstrations, and the whole fair has a homey feeling, like everyone there knows one another. During the recap of our 32nd Fungus Fair with the coordinators, it was suggested that we should form a "think tank" group to consider incorporating some new ideas for displays, education, and presentations.

If you have ideas and energy to help mold (no pun intended) the MSSF into a world-class organization, let me know. I'd be glad to discuss them.

The recent *Amanita phalloides* poisonings in Watsonville serve as a reminder about our role and purpose as a mushroom society. When I first joined the MSSF, I was admonished by several of our

longtime members to learn to identify *A. phalloides* first, so I'd never make the mistake of eating one. It is a message we can't repeat often enough among ourselves and to the general public. We as a mushroom society can't prevent people from eating deadly mushrooms, but we can provide more education to parks managers and the public. We should send out press releases each fall warning about the danger. All trailheads leading into oak woodlands in the Bay Area should have warning posters. We can do more.

Agaricus Workshop

The Agaricus workshop originally scheduled for November will be held Thursday, February 28th, 7PM, at the Randall Museum. Fred Stevens will present slides and show how to key out common Agaricus species. No sign-up is required, but seating is on a first come basis. Cypress-dwelling Agaricus species should be still be fruiting, so bring any you find to the workshop.

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Membership and Subscription Information

To Join the MSSF and receive this newsletter, send a \$25 check, payable to MSSF (\$20 for seniors 65 and over and full time students), to MSSF Membership, 2750 Market St., Suite 103, San Francisco, CA 94114-1987, Attn: David Bartolotta. Please include contact information: home and/or work phone numbers and email address. New and renewal memberships will be current through December of 2002. To change your mailing address, please notify David. 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 \$32 payable to NAMA. Send it to David at the same address. For further information, email David at david@bartolotta.com or call at (415) 621-3166.

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Amanitas Crossing

Continued from page 1

of the genus (as in pantherina and lanei). . . There is a range in cap color in some species (the American "pantherina" for example that can be observed in a single collection), but this doesn't imply hybridization. Variation in intensity of pigments can happen. The pileus of one specimen is orange, another red, another yellow-orange, etc. in the "muscaria" of the east coast. But I don't see any indication of hybridization there. Also, some pigments in caps of amanitas are altered by UV in sunlight. This can be very confusing.

Rod Tulloss

Indeed it can, Rod. But I was not wholly convinced that this was merely a color phase of the Coccora. Beneath the fearless facade of an amanita eater there often lies a frisson of fear. Several MSSF members sent me worried e-mails about the safety of eating brown-capped Coccora that were already in their possession. I advised caution until we had the issue resolved. A former MSSF president sent me a private e-mail claiming that a prominent and knowledgeable member of our group (who shall remain nameless) had ingested brown Coccora eggs and experienced an altered state. "Aha", I thought, "Proof!" However, when I contacted said ingestor, he confessed that it was not a case of toxic Coccora but rather a case of misidentification. Apparently, there were some *Amanita gemmata* eggs nestled within his Coccora patch. *Gemmata* contains the same psychoactive toxins that are found in *pantherina*. Another dead end.

Larry Stickney also corresponded with Rod Tulloss on this topic, and forwarded Rod's further musings on the possibility of a cross:



Amanita muscaria

In summary...HIGHLY unlikely. [about Amanita cross-breeding]

It would be a very interesting piece of natural molecular chemistry (jumping genes)...but what would be the mechanism??? The species are not at all closely related; and even closely related amanitas appear not to cross.

There is another angle. It is perfectly conceivable that the brown lanei has more differences than just cap color (with regard to the orange-brown one). Maybe there is a toxin of some kind. I think the probability of that is low, but it's more likely than a cross.

Rod Tulloss

My anecdotal trail was getting cold, and the weight of scientific evidence was winning out. Finally, the MSSF's Peter Werner presented the most telling argument:

I'd like to see this study [by Larry Cook], but I think this idea is erroneous. While there is some documentation of the ability of fungi that have been separated by millions of years of evolution to be able to cross, this is typical of very closely related species separated by geography, for example, the high rate of inter-fertility between North American *Armillaria mellea*-complex and European *Armillaria mellea*-complex, or between California *Agaricus bisporus* and feral cultivated *A. bisporus*. Conversely, closely related species that geographically overlap show little or no inter-fertility.

And when you're talking about mushrooms as widely separated as *A. pan-*

therina and *A. lanei* you are talking about two entirely different sections of the genus *Amanita* (section *Amanitae* and section *Cesarae*, respectively) which are separated by some rather large evolutionary distances. I've never heard of successful cross-breeding between fungi this highly divergent. In fact, I've never even heard of any kind of crossing even between *A. pantherina* and *A. muscaria*, which are much closer relatives.

Another thing is that for years now there have been many people eating *A. lanei* (that is, *Coccoli*) and there have never been any reports of poisoning, from ibotenic acid or other toxin. If *A. lanei* could successfully hybridize with *A. pantherina* and produce a toxic mushroom that looks just like a *Coccoli*, there certainly would have been reports of poisonings by now.

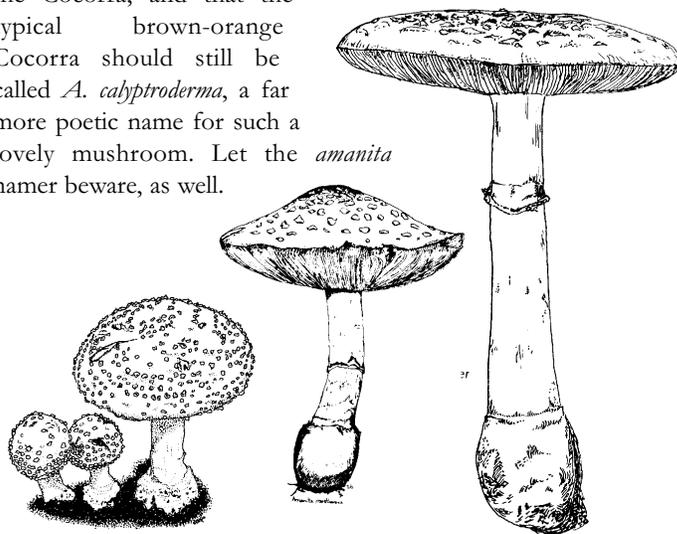
I heard this "intergrading" issue come up in the late '80s, though at the time it was held that *A. lanei* (at that time *A. calypttrata*) was hybridizing with *A. phalloides*, which was supposedly an explanation for green *Coccoli*. No evidence for this either. This whole thing seems to add up to a mushroomers urban legend, really.

Peter

So, I'm convinced that the dark brown Coccora is just a Coccora after all. Even Arora lists the brown form as a known color phase. Apparently, color is one of the least significant attributes in *amanita* identification. There can be tremendous color variation in a number of *amanita* species - *muscaria*, for instance, can range from red through orange to yellow and even has a white form. Current scientific evidence indicates that the brown *pantherina* may well be the same species as the yellow *gemmata*. So, if you run across the yellow-green Coccora, don't go assuming that it's the product of a cross with *a. phalloides*. But harmless Coccora or not, I still wouldn't eat it. When selecting *amanitas* for the table, I like to stick to type specimens. Perhaps the Pomo taboo against eating dark brown Coccora was just a little insurance against making a stupid mistake. Hey, it can happen to anyone. A little paranoia when eating *amanitas* is a good thing. There are far worse consequences to a mistaken *amanita* identification than an unintended trip. Let the *amanita* eater beware, but let good sense and science, not myth, be your guide.

Debbie Viess

Note: On the eve of the Mycena News deadline I was informed by David Arora that *A. lanei* was the name given to the green form of the Coccora, and that the typical brown-orange Coccora should still be called *A. calyptroderma*, a far more poetic name for such a lovely mushroom. Let the *amanita* namer beware, as well.



Amanita Pantherina

From Our Readers:

Hello

I'm surprised your websites, <http://www.mssf.org/> and <http://www.mykoweb.com/>, do not have any information on mushroom gathering rules and regulations. It's not that I feel mushroom collecting is an issue at any of the parks in San Francisco that require instituting strict rules and regulations.

While mushroom hunting today at McLaren Park, I met up with a gruffy-looking man, walking his dog who claimed to work for McLaren Park. He stared at my small plastic bag of mushrooms and angrily told me that I can not be taking mushrooms from public parks. Are there such rules and regulations on mushroom collecting, or was it just my bad luck of meeting that nasty and overly protective man?

I feel mushroom hunting and collecting at most local parks, whether someone does it for the fun of identifying them or for food, should not be prohibited for two reasons. One, it is a worthwhile way for people to learn what their park has to offer and in making better use of them, they'll see there is greater value in protecting the parks than to turn them into parking lots or housing. Two, mushrooms are plentiful and they grow back every year even if people picked them (or so I've read). I therefore feel mushroom collecting at most parks is OK. The exceptions would be parks that have high traffic, where there is greater value for many people to see them than for a few people to collect them.

I believe learning to love and enjoy our parks more and with each person having consideration on level of impact of what he or she does on the parks and on other people who share the park is a more effective way to protect them than by rules and regulations. By instituting and relying on rules and regulations, we are devaluing and weakening people's sense and ability to give social consideration on the impact of their actions on each other.

Sincerely, Gordon Z.

Dear Fellow Mushroom Lovers

I need your help! I am attempting to elucidate the species of *Clitocybe* in California. A monograph done by Bigelow in 1985 on the North American species of *Clitocybe* is our only treatise, and it doesn't include California *Clitocybes* for the most part.

The help I need is in obtaining specimens. California spans 158,706 square miles. If you are familiar with *Clitocybes* and happen to see them, please call or email me so that I can go and collect them. Or, collect them yourself if you're willing, and include a few notes (or a picture) describing the mushrooms and their habitat and put them in the fridge. I will be happy to pick them up from you.

Thank you everybody!!!

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Italian Mushroom Fair

By Bob Mackler

This info comes via MSSF member Al Sanguinetti who belongs to the Gruppo Micologico Avis in Bologna. They put on their 24th fair. Here is some data gleaned from their newsletter dated December, 2001:

Although 2001 was one of the worst years for the growth of mushrooms in Italy, the fair was successful because of good organization and the help of friends in other parts of Italy (Trentino, Lombardia and Toscana). They were able to show 460 species including some "unusual" items. This writer can testify to a slow season. There was virtually nothing in Tuscany in late September and early October and members of local mushroom societies told me their concerns.

The species list is formidable. Notable are 23 *Amanita*, 16 *Boletus*, 34 *Tricholoma*, 37 *Cortinarius*, 27 *Lactarius* and 57 *Russula*. Not bad for a poor year.

Learn to use chopsticks - save money!

By Taylor Lockwood

I flew to Seoul to watch the printing of my book and OK press checks. They had picked me up at the airport and arranged for a hotel and at lunchtime took me up to the cafeteria for a free lunch.

Now, many American business people coming over here wouldn't know what to do if they had to mime to communicate, eat foreign food, or use a squatter. So they booked me into a "western style" hotel which probably gives you a kitchen that cooks bad American breakfast, a "sit-down" toilet, and has someone who can say "hello" as you walk in - for three times the price.

Up in the cafeteria, I ate kim chee, worked the chopsticks as well as they did, and slurped my soup just like I was born here. After a few minutes back down in the main office, they tell me they've booked me in another hotel - at the "locals" rate!

For the most current
Calendar information, call
the MSSF hotline at

415-759-0495

or check the
MSSF web site at:

www.mssf.org

The Foragers' Report

By Patrick Hamilton

We who read the reports on yahoogroups know some things and wish to share it with any of you computer challenged folks--there are fungi out. That's not to say that those who do not subscribe to mssf@yahoo.com do not pick and report their pickens, slim or not, to your forager reporter, but email postings sure make it easy for us to share.

It seems to be becoming a banner year for Candy Caps (brown bagsfull picked with hubris in the East Bay hills, smaller amounts north and west), but alas, a bad year, so far, for chanterelles (but they can fruit early or late so for good luck keep your mycelia crossed). We have had lots of *Amanitas* like Coccoli and Grisettes to cherish and eat and more *Amanitas*, like *phalloides* and *ocreata* to not. Oyster mushrooms continue to fruit (for some they might be boring to eat, except those found on Central Valley Cottonwoods, but try this--simply brush the gills with a mixture of good olive oil and butter, gray sea salt and black pepper, broil or grill them that side up until cooked tender and they are nice and crispy at the edges of the gills, slice, then dip in a red pepper or pesto aioli).

Shrimps are still popping under Doug-fir. These can chopped and sautéed and then put with a typical beurre blanc sauce (perhaps begun with 1 part white wine, 1 part vermouth and 1/2 part white wine vinegar, shallots, some tarragon and other fines herbs--chervil, parsley and chives) over pasta or rice. They are great in tempura too, maybe with a dipping sauce like a Ponzu (4 tbl lemon juice, 1/2 c. rice vinegar, 2 tbl Mirin, 1 lemon zested. Another type of Ponzu adds light soy sauce).

With all the Coccoli this past fall and early winter there might be lots of the late winter/spring version too. Quite a few Italian folks and others in the know eat this raw, sliced thin, then dressed with a gremolata (1 tbl lemon zest, 1 tsp finely chopped garlic and 3 tbl finely chopped Italian parsley, salt) and drizzled with very nice extra virgin live oil.



Armillaria mellea

Fine fungal information was available this past month from one who understands as much about the where and what of edibles as anyone that I have known--Larry Stickney. He shared this with us: "It is my long time observation that the weather from a previous year has a direct effect upon the current year's fruiting of

chanterelles. Collected amounts from that earlier year do not have a bearing on current fruitings. Last year was terribly dry, so despite the heavy rains at present we should expect, and are finding, poor fruiting this season. I don't believe the same about morels, but I am worried about the amount of precipitation we can expect in the spring in the light of the amounts we have seen already here and in the mountains. Yearly averages are just are not likely to be exceeded, so if we find that average already met during the winter, we can expect very little rain in April and May. Then only a very late deep snowmelt can be very helpful."

There are a lot of reports of the deadly poisonous *A. ocreata* and

A. phalloides fruiting in way too many places. Hundreds of the Death Caps were sighted in West Marin. (I once left several of these closed up in the back of a truck and after a warm few days they produced an all time obnoxious odor. I say, don't check it out.)

Sightings of morels in wood chips occurred twice this past month. By the way, soon this column will be giving its much-awaited-for first annual "Top Places To Pick Morels This Spring" list. I know that all my secret sources will be emailing and calling me with their recommendations. I am, and more importantly, the Society is, counting on that.

It is soothing to me that I can just simply say "morels" and nobody really seems to care if these are the same that appear in France, Turkey, Michigan or in our own Sierra.

Not with Porcini. Lots of dialogue on, "Are they this or are they that?" Because I probably never will recommend to you folks where to pick them in Italy, I will continue, in this column, to name the boletes which we pursue in May, June and July in the High Sierra "Spring Boletes." The other ones are "Sierra Fall Boletes" and "Coastal Fall Boletes." More professionally mycologically minded individuals can argue their "actual" names, and question if these are the same mushroom species that grow elsewhere.



Boletus edulis

This just in from the evidently indefatigable Bob Mackler: "I hope this is in time for the Feb. deadline. The following fungi were identified to species on the MSSF Beginners' Foray at Bear Valley, Point Reyes National Seashore on Jan 12: *Agrocybe praecox*, *Amanita constricta*, *A. gemmata*, *A. gemmata* var. *exannulata*, *A. novinupta*, *A. pachycolea*, *A. phalloides*, *A. vaginata*, *Armillaria mellea*, *Auriscalpium vulgare*, *Boletus truncatus*, *Bulgaria inquinans*, *Calocera cornea*, *Camarophyllus russocoriaceus*, *Cantharellus cibarius*, *Clavulina cristata*, *Cortinarius violaceus*, *Crepidotus mollis*, *Dacrymyces palmatus*, *Entoloma ferruginens*, *Galerian autumnalis*, *Fomitopsis cajanderi*, *Ganoderma applanatum*, *Helvella crispa*, *H. lacunosa*, *Hgrocybe acutoconica*, *H. conica*, *H. flavescens*, *H. punicea*, *H. psittacina*, *Hypholoma fasciculare*, *Inocybe geophylla*, *I. geophylla* var. *lilacina*, *Lactarius rubidus*, *L. xanthogalactus*, *Leucopaxillus albissimus*, *Lycoperdon perlatum*, *Mycena elegantula*, *M. iodolens*, *Phaeolus schweinitzii*, *Phylloporus rhodoxanthus*, *Pleurotus ostreatus*, *Pluteus cervinus*, *Psathyrella hydrophila*, *P. longipes*, *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum*, *Ramaria ochraceovirens*, *Russula amoenolens*, *R. silvicola*, *Sarcocypha coccinea*, *Stereum hirsutum*, *Stropharia riparia*, *Trametes versicolor*, and *Xylaria hypoxylon*. Not identified to species were specimens of *Fomes*, *Inocybe*, *Lactarius*, *Mycena*, *Polyphorus*, *Russula* and *Tricholoma*.

Today, January 13, another report came in, this from Salt Point, recounting the discovery of Candy Caps in good shape, Black Chanterelles in good size (!), very nice Matsutakes hiding completely under a shrump that was so unpromising that this person actually kicked at it with a foot and broke a section of a beautiful cap (stupid--who could that have been?), Yellow Feet and a huge and spectacular Oyster Mushroom fruiting on a fallen Tan Bark log.

The season is upon us.

Get out while the getting is good.

That's all for now folks!

Cultivation Corner

By Ken Litchfield, © 2001

As you may have noticed the demolition portion of the museum remodeling plan is progressing, including the cutting of the trees in the courtyard. We have been digging out stuff from the garden and still have plenty of red, purple, and magenta hummingbird sages, hummingbird lobelia, mints, he-shou-wu the Chinese immortality vine and great salad vegetable, and others that we have been moving to the new garden and giving away to SLUG and individuals. We still have several vigorous patches of garden giant and shaggy parasol mycelium that we are moving after Mushroom Day. According to the published schedule the work in the courtyard begins at the start of April so everything we or anyone else may want has to be out by then. If you want anything contact me about it.

The new mushroom garden is looking very mushroom friendly. With a month of solid rain all the logs and wood chips are soaked and mycelium is fuzzing all over the place. Next to where we had a big flush of blewits a couple of months ago a patch of soft bluish mycelium has spread to the surface of the wood chips and compost. Many of the logs are sprouting turkey tails, *Stearium*, oysters, and orange jelly. The bed of garden giants that was disturbed to sell at the Fungus Fair is growing back through again and after Mushroom Day we will spread around a lot more of it to new areas to ramp up the mycelial mass. Around the grotto area we have some digging to do to put in some trees for mycorrhizal experiments. Lots of stuff from the museum grounds is ready to go in the ground. Sunday the 13th we had a very productive work day for the whole community garden especially repairing a huge gully that formed from the December rains and a major reworking of the parking borders with wood chips and logs so it now looks very nice and much more practical. We have plenty to do at the garden and plan to have just about every Sunday as a mushroom garden workday unless it's raining. Call me by midday Saturday to confirm if the following Sunday is on for a workday.

Thanks to Terri and Norm the lab is now cooking. We spent two holiday weekends along with Enrique getting the lab up and running, organizing the culture library, and pressure cooking up several runs of jars of substrate for spawning. And thanks to Terri's frugalist scrounging by the time you read this we should have moved into place some more donated computers, lockable metal cabinets to use as fungarium cases for voucher specimens from the park, a bunch of book cases for vertical spawn storage, some lab tables, and more.

We had several recent planning meetings with the park folks and will have some more interesting progress coming down soon. Right now we are planning for the Mushrooms in the Garden display at the SF Flower and Garden Show in the Cow Palace March 20-24. We now have a questionnaire to email to anyone interested in mushroom cultivation projects. Contact me if you would like to participate in any of these projects. The museum's email provider was bought out again so we now have a new domain name.

Ken Litchfield
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Culinary Corner

By Al Carvajal

We had our first culinary meeting of the year on Monday January 7th. I guess that the switch from first Tuesday to the second Monday confused some people, and as a result we had a smaller than usual crew, but I have to say that what the attendees lacked in number they made up with enthusiasm.

The potluck's theme was "soup, salads and homemade breads". We thought that a simple dinner would provide some relief from the excessive feasting, drinking and eating that are the hallmarks of the holiday season. But I tell you, this crowd doesn't know how to cook anything simple.

To start the evening we had some appetizer dishes: tomatoes and fresh mozzarella topped with roasted porcini and chanterelles (Mark Lockaby), and a dish of baked blue-lip mussels by Tina and Albert Gaw.

In the salad department we had several salads of assorted greens by Lucia Paulazzo, David Eichorn, David Bell, and Monique Carment. Each was different, each with a plethora of interesting flavors. You could also try a hedgehog, candy cap and golden beet salad by David Campbell or a watercress and pork salad by the Turnbaughs.

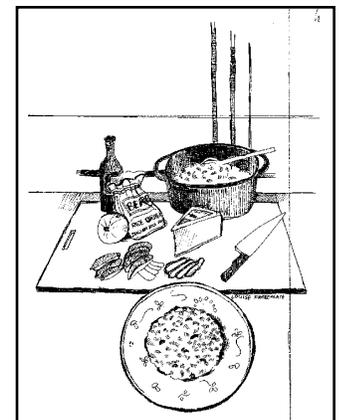
For the soups, you could choose from a potato leek (Elsa Crumley), a sausage and vegetable (Toni and David Bell), butter squash, peppers and crab, sopa de pan (the Colliers) or David Campbell's famous porcini, porcini, porcini soup. Each soup was worthy of being a full dinner. Combined, it was pure heaven for soup lovers.

To go with your soup and salad, you could choose from a selection of black chanterelle corn bread (Carol Hellums), a corn bread with buttons (Ken Litchfield), a wheat bread (Menyharts) or portobello bread (Sherry Carvajal). Needless to say, it was not an easy choice. Since it is matsutaki season, we had a couple of rice with matsutaki dishes made by Roy Yakote and Jeanette Larsen.

To top the dinner we had with some delightful biscotti with pistachios (Nikola Farats) and Remo Arancio's good and strong coffee.

Again, the group managed to put together a veritable feast, with more interesting dishes than it would be wise to try on one sitting; all looking so sumptuous, all smelling so delicious, that you can't resist and go ahead and try, just a little bit, of each one. And then, you end up with an evening of excessive feasting, drinking and eating.

Our next meeting will be on the 5th of February. We will be celebrating the arrival of the New Year with that more than haft of the world population that adheres to the lunar calendar. For that, we are planning an excellent menu centered on piglets roasted Chinese style. We expect all the culinary members to experiment with all those exotic mushrooms used by the Far Eastern cooks. Come and join us.



Toxicology Committee Reports

By Bill Freedman

1. A local man, his wife and daughter, experienced in hunting wild mushrooms, returned home after finding large numbers of several varieties of edible fungi. After relishing a delicious supper, they fed the leftovers to their hungry female dog, who ravenously gobbled down the welcome gift. The dog then lay down, began to retch, shake all over, sweat, and they could see her abdomen squeezing in strong spasms. The family was horrified and frightened. "My god, we've been poisoned!" They rushed to the local hospital emergency room and requested to have their stomachs emptied. After enduring this painful procedure and being given a charcoal slurry, they returned home. When they opened the door, they found that their dog had given birth to five fine puppies.

2. This really happened:

On January 8th, two visitors from the country of Jordan went mushroom hunting with their hosts in Watsonville. They ate early, about 4:00 P.M., preparing food including four gorgeous delicious good-sized whitish mushrooms. 6 or 7 hours later they experienced nausea, cramps, vomiting, and then diarrhea. They waited until the next morning to visit the Emergency Room at the Watsonville Community Hospital.

Fortunately, the doctor on duty was willing to consider mushroom poisoning and enzyme tests revealed liver damage. (This was reasonable since four young people in Watsonville in 1998 and again in 1999 ate raw *Amanita phalloides* in an attempt to "get high". The most ill of them were transferred to San Francisco hospitals for observation. All recovered uneventfully). In the Emergency Room, the Jordanians were given IV fluids and a oral slurry of charcoal to adsorb the toxins. That day, 1/10/02, hospital personnel watched the couple closely and decided they were not doing well, so they were dispatched the following morning to the California Pacific Hospital in San Francisco where they were admitted to the Liver Transplantation Unit.

Their conditions were rated as "guarded" and their laboratory tests were closely followed. Penicillin C, mucomyst, and an oral preparation derived from the Spilt Milk Thistle were given orally. The man began to develop kidney malfunction, so renal dialysis was instituted to allow for better excretion. By 1-13-02, the 5th day, they were well enough to be transferred to the ward for further convalescence.

This report is incomplete. The attending physician has generously agreed to complete a Flow Sheet prepared for this event, and the standard form with which we notify the North American Mycological Association national mushroom registry of all cases of poison mushroom ingestion brought to our attention. We do not know what the visitors thought they were picking. Were the caps green, yellow, grey, brown or white? *Amanita phalloides* can appear in all those colors. What was the exact chemical extract derived from the thistle? How high were the liver enzyme levels and what was their course? Were the prothrombin times useful in determining the severity of their conditions?

These cases have, as usual, evoked considerable media attention. The web was not neglected. It is not easy to gain all the informa-

tion we desire so as to prepare ourselves to assist physicians in caring for such incidents. Most doctors never see mushroom poisoning in the USA. It is up to those who study toxicology within our organizations to help MDs understand the sequence of events that take place when people are poisoned, if the doctors wish to contact us. NAMA has set up a network of physicians and others who are willing to identify mushrooms throughout the USA for this purpose.

Treatment in the USA is essentially watchful waiting and liver transplantation if a patient appears to have destroyed that organ. This depends primarily upon how much poison was ingested and the general condition of the liver. At the onset, we do not have any data on these factors. The medicines are given, as a rule, because doctors want to feel they are doing what other doctors have done, but there is no certainty that these procedures have been proven to have spared a patient's life. Speed is important. 48 hours is the critical time for the most severe damage to the body. So early recognition on the part of the physician is essential. The general support given with early fluid replacement and electrolytes is of great value in stabilizing the patient's general condition.

Next month, when we hope to have more exact and pertinent data, and the case histories have been concluded, we will share what we have learned with our readers. In the meantime, play it safe, don't feed your leftover mushrooms to your pets.

Unveiling *Cortinarius*

Continued from page 1

Management verifying *Cortinarius* specimens.

Her interest in mushrooms began with Dr. Dave Largent at Humboldt State University as an undergraduate. His excellent organizational and teaching skills, coupled with his vast knowledge of fungi and great collecting trips got her hooked. After graduating, she worked for 4 years at the Forestry Sciences Lab in Corvallis, Oregon on various projects including a few with the mycology group, then headed by Dr. Jim Trappe. After that, she went on to pursue a Master's degree with Dr. Harry Thiers at San Francisco State, where she was his last mushroom student. Dr. Seidl's thesis was titled "The Higher Fungi of Wunderlich Park, San Mateo County, California." After graduating, she worked at the UC Berkeley Herbarium as assistant curator of the cryptogams (lichens, bryophytes and fungi) and aided in moving specimens off-campus while the Life Sciences building was renovated. When that job ended, she went on to pursue a Ph.D. at the University of Washington with the *Dermocybe* and *Cortinarius* expert Dr. Joe Ammirati. In 1999 she successfully completed her dissertation entitled: Systematic Studies in *Cortinarius* Subgenus *Myxaciium*, Sections *Myxaciium* and *Defibulati*. During the past few years, she has worked on monographing *Cortinarius* subgenus *Myxaciium* for western North America, which now has to be completed in her spare time! Besides the monograph, Michelle has various side projects including spring fungi of Washington State and studies on *Myxaciium* of Costa Rica in collaboration with Dr. Joe Ammirati.

Michelle Seidl was MSSF vice president during John Lennie's presidency in 1990 and was involved with the fungus fairs at Coyote Point and the Hall of Flowers. She was twice a recipient of the Esther Colton Whited Scholarship.



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of San Francisco

Well... wouldn't you know it.
The Mossbecks have traded
their toadstool for a big new
Bolete! Humpf!



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MSSF Calendar, February 2002

Tuesday, February 5, Culinary Group's Monthly Dinner: At the Slavonic Cultural Center, located at 60 Onondaga Avenue in San Francisco. For reservations, please contact Zoe Caldwell at (510) 569-1554 or e-mail Karin Roos at karo@sprintmail.com.

Saturday, February 16, Soquel Demonstration Forest foray: Thomas & Tina Keller will lead a foray in the Soquel Demonstration Forest for black trumpets. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Summit Store on Summit Road, about 4 miles east of Highway 17. E-mail tkeller@worldnet.att.net or call (408) 879-0939 for further information.

Tuesday, February 19, MSSF General Meeting: Randall Museum, doors open at 7, lecture starts at 8pm. The speaker is Dr.

Michelle Seidl, who lives in Seattle, Washington. She is a research associate at the University of Washington and a botanist for the U. S. Forest Service. She will speak on the genus *Cortinarius*.

Thursday, February 28, Agaricus Workshop: Randall Museum at 7 pm, Fred Stevens will present slides and show how to key out common Agaricus species. Free, no sign-up required.

Tuesday, March 5: Culinary Group's Monthly Dinner: At the Slavonic Cultural Center, located at 60 Onondaga Avenue in San Francisco. For reservations, please contact Zoe Caldwell at (510) 569-1554 or e-mail Karin Roos at karo@sprintmail.com.