

Speaker for May
MSSF Meeting

Elio Schaechter

Mushrooming in museums
can be a demanding sport

Elio Schaechter received awards for contributions to amateur mycology from the Northeast Mycological Foray in 1991 and NAMA in 1993. He published "In the Company of Mushrooms" (Harvard U. Press), a book on "what are mushrooms" and their connection to humans. Elio edited the Bulletin of the Boston mushroom club for 20 years, and taught courses on mushroom field identification and the use of the microscope. In his other life, he was a microbiologist who spent most of his career at Tufts University before retiring to San Diego in 1995. He helped found the San Diego Mycological Society, and is currently working on a registry of mushrooms in western paintings that has over 300 entries thus far.

Elio will present some of his thoughts of mushrooms found in works of art and books and discuss what these reveal about the relationship of people of various cultures and ages to mushrooms. He will illustrate examples with slides and give tips about how to go mushroom hunting in museums.

As quoted from his article in the Spring 2002 issue of "Mushroom the Journal", "Mushrooming in museums, large or small, can be a demanding sport because the pickings tend to be slim and may require extensive searching. Think of it as going into the woods after a prolonged drought. With hard work and sufficient patience, sightings are sometimes possible".

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Mycena News

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Mushroom Picking Permits in the Lassen National Forest

By Herman Brown

I have been working, with input from Mike Boom, on the upcoming mushroom-picking permits in the two forests near where I live, and have had some success in the Lassen on making a permit that should be fair to everyone.

All the National Forests have been instructed to come up with a permit for removing mushrooms, but weren't told what to issue. When I found this out, I offered my assistance and also asked for Mike's input.

The result, as far as the last word from the Lassen NF goes, is that they will be issuing a free permit for personal use with mail-in capability to obtain the permit, increased limits that are specie specific, and a handout composed by Mike Boom, to help make the pickers more considerate of the mushroom habitat.

When a permit is issued, the permit applicant will be given an explanation of the purpose of the permit requirement with pictures of the mushrooms that will be limited to 20 lbs total maximum per day (morels and Spring King Boletes), a permit, and the handout from Mike. The permit will cover March 1 through December 31, be unlimited for mushrooms other than the two specie listed and will be FREE! The information was also sent to the Plumas NF and hopefully will influence their new permit requirements. I think it will, as it should appear to the Plumas NF that Lassen knows what they are doing.

Here is the text of the first page:

Mushrooms 2002

The following is a brief explanation of the mushroom product plans for 2002:

The last two years have shown that mushroom picking is limited even with the potential for mushroom growth on several fire areas. There have been only "several" commercial permits purchased in the last two years and a few more for personal-use.

The anticipated surge of commercial pickers did not materialize. The lack of mushroom use on our forest has shown what a professional mushroom society already indicated...this is not a large commercial area. Unfortunately, in an attempt to regulate the potential of commercial pickers, we have unknowingly impacted users who are traditionally "personal household use only". These users leave light, if any tracks, do no resource damage, nor produce law enforcement issues.

We basically have two "commercial" species (Morels and King Boletes) that need to be controlled and limited if conditions are such that buyers are attracted. These species have a short window of time for picking in the spring but other non-commercial species mushrooms continue to emerge throughout the

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More Civilized, Less Atavistic

By Bob Sommer

Has mushrooming become too popular? This question will appear strange to people living in areas with little interest in fungi, where they will be the only ones out collecting. However, the situation along the Sonoma Coast in Northern California, where I have hunted mushrooms for several decades, is very different. I have watched with dismay as, one after another, my favorite locations have been closed to foraging.

Before the boom in wild mushrooms, I knew that it was against the rules to disturb plants on state lands, but I rationalized that fungi belonged to a third kingdom, and I was removing a renewable resource that others would not notice or miss, during a time when few visitors came into the forest. Mushrooms were “the flowers of the plant” that would renew itself by means of mysterious white filaments buried underground. I could pretend that plant protection regulations did not apply to me.

More troubling than the “No mushrooming” signs popping up like mushrooms in our favorite woodlands has been the increased competition from other collectors, local residents, and from professional foragers. Amateur mycologists are “people like me”—probably members of a local mycological society, who in this area visit coastal woodlands in winter when it is cold and rainy. This is the reverse schedule of tourists who flock to the coast in summer and hardly ever hike in the woods during winter. When amateur mushroomers were few in number and spread over a large area, our presence went largely unnoticed. Local residents placed us in the same category as birders and whale watchers. We provided a source of income for motels and restaurants hard hit by the decline of the timber industry.

Twenty years ago, residents of upscale developments rented us their second homes without caring too much about what we did in our free time. Fungi were not a focus of their attention. Because there was no commercial market for forest mushrooms, there were no professional foragers. All this changed slowly and imperceptibly, until it became a tidal wave of regulations and competitors.

I won't discuss possibilities of habitat destruction, including the loss of mycelial filaments, due to increased mushrooming. Although I see an occasional broken branch or crushed plant, these are national forests and hiking trails intended for public use. I have seen no destruction remotely comparable to that produced by logging these same areas. Evidence is far from clear that mushrooming or hiking degrade forest habitat or even the fungal resource we seek. These are empirical questions which require research-based answers, with systematic comparisons between foraged and non-foraged habitats. These studies are taking place in some locations with

assistance from amateur mycologists who make the counts. There is not a scintilla of evidence that our collecting has led to species extinction. What is beyond dispute is habitat loss for mushroomers to do their collecting.

Initially I was delighted to see increased public interest in fungi. I promoted amateur mycology as a challenging hobby and as a subject for nature study. I brought friends to the forest, introducing the more adventuresome to wild mushroom dishes, presented water color paintings of fungi to friends as gifts, and proudly displayed impregnated mushroom logs sprouting delectable fungi. Major developments were occurring nationally. The number of amateur societies increased as did membership and attendance at fungus fairs. “Mushroom, the Journal of Wild Mushrooming” started in 1983. Alternatives to *A. bisporus* began to appear on the shelves of upscale markets. First came shitake, enoki-dake, and oysters, previously available only in Asian specialty stores, and then new varieties of *A. bisporus* carrying fancy names like crimini and portabello. All later found their way into mainstream supermarkets. To keep ahead, gourmet shops began offering foraged wild mushrooms, including chanterelles, boletes, and morels. As there were no quality standards in place, these were often over-the-hill, buggy specimens, sometimes misrepresented (*C. infandibularis* sold as “chanterelles” and *H. lacunosa* as “spring morels”), that looked out of place on brightly lit store shelves.

Wild mushroom dishes began to appear in trendy restaurants, first as garnishes for the main course and later, with pasta, as the token vegetarian dish. Strangest of all was the wild mushroom soup. Tiny pieces of overcooked anonymous fungi floated in glutinous liquid. If questioned, neither the waiter nor the chef could identify the mushrooms by species names. Flavor was never an issue as these watery, overcooked pieces had none.

How things have changed. When there were few collectors, no professional foragers, and many available forests, other mushroomers were kindred spirits, trailmates, compatriots, as well as sources of information. As their swelled ranks invaded the woods in organized groups, clubs, societies, and classes, friends became competitors in the forest marathon. We were pushed deeper into the woods, away from marked trails, and into collecting less familiar varieties.

North Coast residents fall into two categories who depend upon, but do not particularly like one another – locals and owners of second homes. Foraging has become a lucrative sideline for locals, and a main income source during winter months when jobs are scarce. Instead of sitting around the house watching TV and drinking beer, some laid-off woodworkers are out in the woods collecting boletes and chanterelles. I don't include these part-timers in the ranks of professional foragers, about whom I will have more to say in

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Mushroom Picking Permits

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year. I believe this is the product we are tracking. In the last two years we have tracked this group of "personal household use only" pickers and have been in contact with many of them.

This year's change in the product plan is in response to the local mushroom communities comments. I have evaluated this use in relation to previous years permits that limited picking time and amounts of mushrooms that could be picked and believe the personal use free permits for 2002 will more realistically serve those in need of the product. This permit, along with the use of existing commercial use permits will provide improved opportunity for personal home use of mushrooms, over-use of the resource will still be protected, the product will be tracked, and the parameters are in place to control commercial species picking if growing conditions warrant.

MUSHROOM SPECIES CONSIDERED COMMERCIAL ON LNF:

And below was a picture of some morels and a bunch of *Boletus pinophilus*.

Here is the text of the Mike Boom's handout, which he had rewritten from an old Mycena News article, which you may probably recognize:

Picking mushrooms is an enjoyable activity that takes no more than a simple basket, a knife, and a good knowledge of the forest and its fungi. To make it enjoyable for everyone, please consider the following picking tips:

- Don't leave holes in the duff. It dries out the fertile ground underneath. Mushrooms are the fruit of a mycelium, an invisible web of threads that lives in the ground year round. Holes in the duff can dehydrate and shrivel the mycelium so that it eliminates mushroom fruiting. If you pick up duff to check out a promising mound or you leave a hole when you pick a mushroom, put the duff back when you're done. And be sure not to rake the duff to look for mushrooms – it's very damaging to the mycelium.
- Do carry your picked mushrooms in a basket, mesh bag, or bucket with holes drilled in it. A picked mushroom continues to drop spores. By carrying it in an open-air container, you help it distribute spores so the mushroom can reproduce. Carrying mushrooms in a closed container eliminates spore dispersal. Not only that, it often ruins the mushrooms. A non-breathing plastic bag full of mushrooms can quickly turn into a bag full of mush!
- Don't uproot, overturn, or smash mushrooms that you don't want. A mushroom stands upright so that it can drop

reproductive spores and protect its spore-bearing underside from the rain. An upside-down waterlogged mushroom is not a successful spore disperser, and it's ruined for anyone else who wants to examine it closely, photograph it, or eat it if it's edible. If you pick a mushroom to examine it and decide you don't need it, put it back in the ground stem down so it looks like it was never picked and can continue to drop spores. Better yet, try to identify the mushroom by feel before you pick it. If you're looking for boletes, for example, and feel gills under the cap there's no need to pick it.

- Do bury your mushroom trimmings under the duff if they're unsightly. Although mushroom trimmings decompose pretty quickly, they look like trash while they're in the open. And if you're a mushroom picker who likes to keep your favorite picking site a secret, mushroom trimmings are the best advertisement that you've found a nice spot. Bury them and let them decompose under the duff.

An artful mushroom picker leaves no trace of their presence in the woods – a practice that helps the mushrooms, other pickers, and yourself.

Happy picking!

So this should help to illustrate that we can make a difference if we can get in contact with those making the decisions and offer our help.

Morel Weekend In The San Bernardino Mountains

(near Los Angeles, California)

May 10-12

The Los Angeles and San Diego Mycological Societies are working together to put on the 4th annual LAMS/SDMS Morel Foray in the San Bernardino Mountains. Building on the success of three previous forays, LAMS and SDMS have collaborated to put together a weekend of mushroom collecting, camaraderie and good food.

We will be staying at the Camp de Benneville Pines high in the San Bernardino Mountains. Delicious meals from Friday evening through Sunday morning will be included in the cost. The cost for the weekend will be \$115 per person and will be accommodated on a space available basis.

Questions about the foray or the camp facilities should be directed to Nathan Wilson, (818) 848-4643 or velosa@cinenet.net

To register please send check, payable to LAMS to:

Nathan Wilson, 1037 N. Rose St., Burbank, CA 91505

Include your mailing address, phone number, and the number of people.

Cultivation Corner

By Ken Litchfield, © 2002

March was a busy month for the MSSF's Cultivation Group. Besides the Presidio workday we discussed in the last issue, we had a SLUG gardening seminar and the SF Garden Show. We had our second annual spring "Mushrooms in Your Garden" workshop at the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners' demonstration "Garden for the Environment" at 7th and Lawton in San Francisco on Saturday afternoon March 16th. SLUGs' Carrie Craddock organized everything and registered the 15 to 20 people who showed up for various aspects of how to incorporate mushrooms into their gardens for culinary, medicinal, aesthetic, and composting purposes. We toured the various plots and areas of the garden for fungal friendly microenvironments. We added more mulch and woodchips and sawdust to the mushroom garden area we created last year and showed the students how to use plugged logs for a raised vegetable bed. This time Enrique Sanchez and I predrilled the logs for plugging since the battery operated drills on site at last year's seminar weren't very successful. Lots of Garden Giant, *Stropharia rugoso-annulata*, mycelium was infiltrated in the garden mulch from last year. In addition we found eggs of *Clathrus rubra*, the stinky red whiffleball in the eucalyptus woodchip mulch, shaggy manes, *Coprinus comatus*, growing out of the base of the compost bins in the compost area, and shaggy parasol, *Macrolepiota rachodes*, in the duff under the juniper tree. Attendees took home their own starts of garden giant and plugged logs and took more plugs to use at home.

The Garden Show was very successful this year. For the third year in a row we had a fine 8'x16' "Mushrooms in Your Garden" vignette in the main hall of the East Building at the Cow Palace. This year we had a core structure of a bunch of turkey tail logs from the Presidio garden with multitudes of blue, gray, tan, orange and yellow flowery brackets. To this we added polypores and reishis from our dried collection, brown, blue, and king oysters, shitake, maitake, and lion's mane cultures from Tobe Garrone, and fleshed it all out with wild gold and black chanterelles, red *russulas*, and other colorful wild accents specially foraged by Mark Lockaby. Everything was edible or medicinal except for a dash of Amanita for contrast and lurid discussion with the public. Thanks go to Sherry Carvajal, Enrique Sanchez, Debbie Collins, Melinda Adams and daughter Alexandra and friend Paige for their contributions to the setup and take down of the exhibit.

You may be pleased to know that our educational booth at the Garden Show is now an award winning display, having earned an "Exceptional Educational Exhibit Award of Merit" plaque. No doubt this was due to Len Coleman's triptych backdrop and sporeprint kits, Mike Wood's latest Mykoweb CD running on the computer, Lorrie Gallagher's MSSF banner sign, Mark Lockaby's basket of fresh foraged and dried fungi, David Bartolotta's mushroom motif tablecloths, Sherry Carvajal's culinary mush-

room books, Debbie Viess's Arora posters, and Don Simone's kit of fruiting button mushrooms, not to mention the staffing of the booth for five days by Earl Hazelton, Monique Carment, Beryl Durnell, Mahon McGrath, Tom Sasaki, Bill & Louise Freedman, Herb Levine, Sandy Waks, Fred Stevens, Al Carvajal, Mike Wood, Jane Wardzinsky, Lorrie Gallagher, Dennis Arttus, Michael & Carol McMillan, JR Blair, Jan Tiller, Remo & Ann Arancio, Mark & Jake Lockaby, Carol Hellums, Herb Levine, Elisabeth Heidorn, David Rust, Debbie Veiss, and Carol Hochberg. Special thanks go to Jack Aldrich for a timely promotional article in the Saturday Garden section of the Chronicle that also talked about our Presidio mushroom garden.

Besides these events I'd like to make mention of an interesting fungal oriented exhibit recently at the Exploratorium. Phil Ross, Artist-in-Residence at the Exploratorium and the guy with the weird artistic reishi display at the Oakland Museum Fungus Fair, curated April's second Wednesday Art Series called Hot Rod Crops, a botanicoartistic exploration. Diane Whitmore, a 7 year staffer, put on a "botanical" display of oyster mushrooms growing on motor oil as a demonstration of bioremediation. Rather than just show the various ways she grew them, she constructed a mock "oyster bar" where six visitors at a time could sit down at barstools and "sample" with magnifiers and dissecting tools the fruit and petri dish mycelium of oyster mushrooms growing on hay and agar lubricated with motor oil. The mock culinary setting and motor oil dressing was almost gag inducing in its impact. Diane managed to show how the motor oil as it was spread on the substrate would smother the mycelium on its initial application and then over hours and days the mycelium would reemerge from the oil and infiltrate and feed on it. To help with the demonstration we provided several cultures from the Presidio lab and will work with Diane on some kind of semi-permanent fungal bioremediation exhibit for the Exploratorium.

For the summer months much of the society goes into aestivation with the fungi: no general meetings, no forays, no culinary, no newsletter. We have a picnic and the commentary about fog drippers and huitlacoche on the mssf@yahoo.com egroup. But the warm summer months are the best time to grow out cultures of fungi in the MSSF laboratory and garden at the Presidio without all the many other MSSF attractions of the wet season. We will be scheduling a series of seminars and workshops to introduce members and the public to the facilities and their use. The first session will be an orientation to introduce attendees to the facilities and how to use them and share them respectfully, and keep them clean and organized for everyone's use. Next will be an agar cooking and test-tube inoculation session, then a spawn cooking and inoculation class, then a substrate and ramping up the mycelium class, and then a growing out and fruiting class, and of course the culinary graduation party. Each session will be intended to train you to be able to perform each activity without supervision so that you can use the facilities on your own, train others, and participate fully in our programs

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The Foragers' Report

By Patrick Hamilton, MYCOCHEF@aol.com

Last month I asked what should we do with this column, in regard to the fact that so much foraging information is now available, much more timely, on our online groups list, and I got several responses. One was rather personally invasive but a few I thought were good.

David Rust suggested that next year we include a Mushroom of the Month section, detailing a specific fungus that is expected to fruit when that Mycena is read. This would be good for new members especially. Any suggestions and further information about the mushroom (where found, habitat, exactly when, food preparation method if applicable), will be appreciated. Jeanne Campbell wrote to remind me that subscribers to Yahoo number less than one-fourth of us (I believe it to be about 140 of our 600 or so members). She also told of long drives for few morels. I will gladly accept further ideas for next year. You can email or write or call—all info is in the roster.

On to the foraging: One member informed me of loads of *velosas* but to not tell anyone else where they were found. (I will never reveal where you find something if asked not to. And I will not go to any of your patches unless you take me there. Really.) Other folks too have mentioned the abundant springtime *Amanitas* in the East Bay hills. I know of no other year in the past 10 or so when so many have been picked. As always, be very careful.

In the Spring 2002 issue "Mushroom, the Journal of Wild Mushrooming" there is a picture on the back cover of this fine edible and on the page preceding there is this warning by Jack Hausotter: "There are so many fun and fascinating things to do in this world, I find no need to bungee jump from bridges, date tattooed women, or eat Amanitas."

Morels will have been picked by the time you read this but more will still be out there for those who go. Remember to keep on looking higher in the mountains as we get deeper into the spring. Controlled burns can be as good as forest fires but rarely as well known nor as much visited. Several years ago David Campbell found one and told folks about it. That burn produced thousands of morels for at least two years. Many other members were lucky to also be there—even found a note left by this reporter stuck in a burnt stump exclaiming that more than 100 morels were found therein.

In addition to your mushroom field guides I hope that many of you also have books on the geology of where you might be, on all the trees and wildflowers, on the mammals and birds, the weather and the stars. There is a lot to do out there so go do it.

For those who like to travel for fungus try a trip in May to Oregon. The Cascades for great varieties of mushrooms in mossy forests or the Blue Mountains near John Day

Wilderness for morels. Look in New Mexico and Colorado in July and August for red-capped *edulis*. Alaska's Southeast and Canada's Yukon can be great for your favorites, and then some, in the late summer and early fall. Mexico is full of fine food and great foraging opportunities.

Some folks go vacation for golf courses, others for mushroom patches. See you next year.

Cultivation Corner

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while making friends and sharing in the camaraderie. The course will be free to members and \$25 for the general public, which will include a "free" MSSF membership. We will have ongoing activities all summer, many of which will take place at other locations where we are rhizomorphing out.

If you're a MSSF member and haven't yet registered at - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mssf/> - then you should. There you can get the discussions about where and when *rachodes* and *comatus* and *augustus* are popping up, which market has huitlacoche, and what's happening with the cultivation group. You can also contact me on a regular basis to find out the latest of what we're up to.

The Randall museum courtyard isn't due to be ripped out for remodeling until after Bug Day on Saturday May 18th so you have at least until then to come up and get any more salvias and other courtyard plants remaining. If you want any of these contact me to find out what you can take since some people have already dibbed some of it.

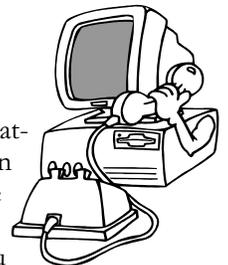
When we see you at the Randall for the September general meeting things around here should be quite a bit different. Here's looking forward to it.

Ken Litchfield

415-863-7618

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MSSF Discussion Group on Yahoo



The MSSF discussion group that is facilitated through Yahoo is a great way to keep in contact with other members. If you're unable to attend all the meetings, or the various walks and forays we sponsor, you can at least get a heads-up on current fungal activity and breaking news through the discussions group. It's an increasingly useful way to exchange and receive information quickly.

To join, go to the MSSF web site: <http://www.mssf.org/>, and click on the link that says: Click to subscribe to the MSSF mailing list.

Any MSSF member who would like a copy of the Council Minutes, please contact Jeanne Campbell at yogidog@earthlink.net or 415-457-7662.

Culinary Corner

By *Al Carvajal*

For the month of April, the culinary group wanted to explore the cooking of the Balkans and Greece. We centered the dinner on an Easter Lamb Roast, Easter being the main feast of the year on the Orthodox Church calendar, the most common faith in that part of the world.

In the year 1054, the bishops around Constantinople threw off the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church and formed the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Eastern Orthodox Church, with which the Greek Church is affiliated, has no pope and permits its priests to marry. The long black robes and flat-topped brim-less stovepipe hats of their priests is a distinctive feature of the Greek scene. The priest's head gear was designed to accommodate the hair, which according to the religion is not to be cut and hence must be rolled up in a bulky bun and worn inside the hat. It is no accident that the tall white chef's hat so closely resembles that of the Eastern Orthodox priest. The story goes that a white hat patterned after the priest's black one was originally worn by the cooks in Byzantine monasteries. Later this hat became the symbol of "chefdom" around the world.

The Greek Orthodox calendar is studded with feast days and holy days but the most important is Easter. Easter is preceded by Lent, which lasts seven weeks and is observed with fasting and prayer. On the eve of Easter Sunday, the entire village troops to the church, each person bearing an unlit candle. Even those who are not customary churchgoers attend the ceremony. Exactly at midnight, in the dark church, the first candle, the Resurrection light, is lit by the priest from the light at the altar while he pronounces "Christos Anesti", or "Christ is risen". The flame is transmitted to the candles of the altar boys and one by one to the entire congregation. It is said that when a girl lights her candle from one held by a single man, she will marry him within a year. As the church grows from dark to dim to dazzling, all of the possible noises of the villages assert themselves: rockets and firecrackers spurt and crackle, factory whistles blow, air-raid sirens scream and fire engines clang. The candles twinkle thought the midnight streets as the worshipers stroll homeward to partake of the traditional Eastern morning meal.

The candles are set on the table and mageritzza, the meat soup that breaks the Lenten fast, is brought forth. The principal ingredients of this soup are lamb parts (liver, heart, tripe and even the heads), dill and green onions, and is always flavored with avgolemono sauce. Another food of the Eastern morning repast is lambropsomo, a yeast bread sprinkled with sesame seeds and topped with five red-dyed eggs in the design of the Greek Cross - one for the center and four for each of the equal-length arms.

The Easter Sunday dinner is one of the great feasts of the year. It is sure to feature spit-roasted lamb preceded by elaborate mezes, more mageritzza, and kokoretsi (highly seasoned lamb parts grilled over charcoal). The meal will close with koulourakia (rich butter cookies sprinkled with sesame seeds), baklava, and Greek coffee.

But of course, the culinary group outdid the simple fare of the Greek villagers. We started with Carol Hellums' wonderful Greek style punch. However, I decided very wisely not to enjoy too much of it this time. Then, we followed with an almost incredible array of appetizers. We had home-cured kalamato olives (Nikola Farats); a bread made of mushrooms and feta cheese (Carol Reed); mushrooms stuffed with feta, olives, cilantro and pine nuts (Marshall Kause & Timo); Tzatziki (yogurt, cucumbers and garlic) with crackers (Dulcie Heiman); a salad of bamboo shoots, olives, tomatoes and feta (Paul Menyharth); a Bulgarian cheese pastry (Nihaela Zhexona) and Greek pizza with feta, mushrooms and olives (Tom Sasaki).

We also had several dips, each one delicious: Cranberry pecan with stuffed pimientos (Phil Brown), Spinach with water chestnuts (Sue Witt) and a Clam, Enoki and olives (Roy Yakota). Because of the dinner theme, we also had several types of humus: Cilantro (name unknown), Porcini flavored (Dulcie Heiman), Roasted red pepper humus (Amy Hellums) and Black bean (Amy's friend).

We started the dinner with Jeanne Campbell's delicious Greek salad and Ken Litchfield's Avgolemono soup, both accompanied with warmed pita bread supplied by Fred Kron. The soup and salad alone would have made a very good dinner. But, after a brief break, we dove into the second part of the dinner: Leg of lamb Croatian style roasted by Nikola Farats, roasted potatoes with rosemary and garlic expertly prepared by Honoria Sarmento, and Sherry Carvajal's outstanding Moussaka. The lamb was studded with garlic cloves and roasted to perfection. It combined very well with the potatoes and the moussaka.

We finished the dinner with David Bell's Galatoburikko, a pastry made of egg custard between crusts of buttered filo layers, and Remo Arancio's wonderful coffee. It was indeed a dinner to remember. I believe that the dinners are getting better and better each time.

The next dinner will be on May 7th, and we will be celebrating the American cuisine, something that we always take for granted but that is quite unique. Come and join us.

More Civilized, Less Atavistic

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a moment.

Owners of second homes drive to the coast on weekends and holidays when their houses are not rented. Twenty years ago, they did not pay attention to mushrooms fruiting on their property and second-home developments made no distinction between owners and renters in foraging. All this has changed. Some owners of second homes make it a point not to rent during peak mushroom season and upscale developments have closed off their woods to foragers. It's a Silent Winter trying to find choice edibles in developments like Sea Ranch, where property owners have become [shudder] knowledgeable about fungi. They know what they have and want to protect it. Can't say that I blame them.

Professional foragers, otherwise known as "Those Who Vacuum the Forest", operate mostly on national forest land north of here (Humboldt and Del Norte Counties), where country grocery stores and gas stations buy wild mushrooms and resell them to wholesalers. Some foragers migrate south during peak season. Evidence of their presence can be seen along the back roads – pickup trucks with cartons full of fungi, serious groups in the woods carrying plastic garbage bags. No careful wrapping of individual specimens for these busy folks. Along the trail are white *russula* kicked over in the search for prized matsies, and varieties such as *C. floccoccus* and *A. bondensis* which bear a superficial resemblance to choice edibles, dumped at the side of the trail when the picker learns that they lack commercial value.

It is satisfying to see one's hobby recognized by others, to no longer be regarded as odd, to find new mushroom clubs established in the area, to have additional sources for identifying uncommon fungi, including Web sites with beautiful color photographs, to be able to buy spore for cultivating exotic varieties, to have a choice among several varieties instead of one at the supermarket, and to see different species mentioned by name on restaurant menus. On the debit side, I am less special, my knowledge less esoteric, and finding fungi in the woods is more competitive.

There are no villains in this story, nobody to blame, shame, or sue. The locals are supplementing meager incomes, owners of second homes are exercising their property rights, parks and forest managers see themselves as protecting a valuable public resource, professional foragers are trying to earn a living, as David Arora has shown, working outdoors with independence and dignity, and my fellow mushroomers are practicing what I have done all these years. I accept my share of responsibility for publicizing and promoting amateur mycology. Too well, I suspect. Crowding is a sign of popularity.

I have several options. I can wait for the wild mushroom boom to subside but this may take a long time or never. The trend toward cosmopolitan food tastes among the American public may be irreversible. I can travel to distant places where there is less competition. I can relax and enjoy the many positive changes that have occurred. My hobby has become more civilized, less atavistic. Mushrooming is more social, better regulated, and less individualistic hunting-gathering. Welcome to the 21st Century.

This article was previously published in the Spring 2002 issue of "Mushroom, the Journal of Wild Mushrooming."

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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.

The library needs your advice

Back in December I put a notice in the Mycena News about selling two rare books that the society owned. The same notice also appeared in several other places. I'm glad to report that the sale was a great success and raised over \$1750. No one from the MSSF itself expressed any interest in the books.

Some of the library's duplicates were given to Norm Andresen who sold them like hot cakes at the Oakland Fair and raised another \$500. With these two windfalls, the library can begin filling the gaps in its collection. Please give me suggestions for what we should have.

John Lennie, librarian@mssf.org or 510-525-1623

Some Mycofodder Updates

By James Baker, Paul Bayman, and Bruce Campbell

It was a pleasant surprise to see David Campbell's informative article on molds, "Mycophile or Mycofodder?", appear in the April 2002 issue of Mycena News. David introduces two of the more notorious mycotoxins, aflatoxin and ochratoxin A (OTA); which just happen to be a focus of several research projects of the Plant Mycotoxin Research (PMR) Unit at the USDA's Western Regional Research Center in Albany, CA. However, the topic of the danger posed by these toxins to the U.S. and world food supplies is only briefly mentioned in his article with the statement, "molds as food contaminants have long been studied and are rather well understood."

Actually, recent research findings have shed some new light on what was known about these two mycotoxins. For one thing, it has been customary to name mycotoxins after the species name of the fungus assumed to produce them; which generally was the primary fungal species involved in contaminating the food. This custom does not always work, especially in the case of ochratoxin. It is now being reported around the world that only a minority of isolates of *Aspergillus ochraceus* (the fungal species after which ochratoxin was named) are toxigenic. Numerous other species of *Aspergillus* are now known to make OTA. More significantly, *Penicillium verrucosum* has been reported as the main source of OTA in cases of food contamination in temperate climates. Originally, in 1969, *P. viridicatum* was reported to produce OTA. It was not until 1985 that it became clear that this identification was erroneous and the OTA-producing *Penicillium* was correctly identified as *P. verrucosum* (common across Northern Europe and Canada, but thankfully not in California.). Subsequent work has shown the majority of *P. verrucosum* isolates to be toxigenic.

In research findings of PMR, scheduled to appear in the May 2002 issue of Applied and Environmental Microbiology, none of the isolates of *A. ochraceus* found in California (and it is quite common) produced OTA. The fungus that has been found to sometimes produce large amounts of OTA on spoiled California figs was identified to be *A. alliaceus*.

As a result of modern molecular technique used in taxonomic analysis, *A. alliaceus* was recently removed from *Aspergillus* section Circumdati (where *A. ochraceus* and several related OTA producing *Aspergilli* reside) and placed in section Flavi along with the aflatoxin producing *Aspergilli*. The black ascostromata (containing the ascospores of its teleomorph *Petromyces alliaceus*) made by *A. alliaceus* appear very similar to the black sclerotia of *A. flavus*.

Recent developments in aflatoxin research seem to parallel that of OTA. In most surveys of *A. flavus* (the fungal species after which aflatoxin was named) as many or more strains are found to be non-producers of the toxin as those which are toxin-producing. In most places, *A. flavus* makes only one type of aflatoxin, aflatoxin B, in varying levels. A closely related species, *A. parasiticus*, is often found on dried fruits

and nuts. While not quite as common as *A. flavus*, essentially all isolates of *A. parasiticus* are high producers of both B and G aflatoxins. At the 14th Annual Aflatoxin Elimination Workshop in Phoenix, AZ, held last October, findings from a PMR project examining the fungi and aflatoxins on commercially processed almonds were presented. The findings showed a large proportion of aflatoxin on nuts rejected during processing to be aflatoxin G. This finding matched the finding that *A. parasiticus* was present on the rejected nuts. Other species of *Aspergillus* have recently been added to the list of aflatoxin-producers, further complicating the matter of determining exactly what species is responsible for contamination in any particular situation.

To summarize, the point we have tried to make is simply that the more we learn about mold-mycotoxin associations in food contamination, the picture becomes more complicated. We still have much to learn concerning the identity and taxonomic relationships of fungal toxins and species. It is nowhere close to being a "well understood" situation.

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Chanterelles and a Diamond in the Duff

By Debbie Viess

Our friends, Kevin Sadlier & Xander Wessels (MSSF members "Green Jeans") are engaged. Kevin, ever clever, wished to present Xander with a beautiful, and nice size, diamond in a memorable fashion.

So, off they went, mushroom hunting near Salt Point. Kevin spied a beautiful patch of golden chanterelles, and placing the ring in the duff, called Xander to come and see them. She, however, was happily picking a short distance from him, and paid him no mind. Despite his continuing pleas for quite some time, she ignored him. Realizing that she was not going to come over until she was darn good and ready and fearing that the ring might be lost, Kevin wedged it into the cap of a chanterelle and decided to move a short distance away, keeping his eye on "the spot." Still Xander did not surrey forth. After what seemed an eternity, she finally moseyed on over, and Kevin heard her gasp, "Oh, my God, look...someone los..." whereupon she realized what was going on and Kevin, grinning, popped the puffball.

When Dr. Robert West, longtime MSSF member and friend of Kevin's, heard the tale he said, "Why, when asked, she should have said, 'I chanterelle tell him for another day!'"

Will Draw for Mushrooms

Phil Frank, local mushroom hunter and professional cartoonist, encourages us to send him any mushroom cartoon ideas (and any extra dried or fresh morels lying around) to:

500 Turney Street, Sausalito, 94965
or email him at baba@sfchronicle.com

For the most current Calendar information, call the MSSF hotline at 415-759-0495 or check the MSSF web site at:

www.mssf.org

For the online copy of the Mycena news and the member area of mssf.org, use the following logon and password:

logon: **mycena** password: **pura**

The new password will apply to both the current Mycena News and the member area of the MSSF website.

2002-2003 Nominations

The MSSF nominating committee is happy to announce a full slate of candidates for this coming year. Officer nominations for a one-year stint starting in July, 2002, are:

President: David Rust
Vice-president: Mark Lockaby
Secretary: Carol Hellums
Treasurer: George Collier

Councillor nominations for a two-year stint starting in July, 2002, are:

Peter Werner
J. R. Blair

We're very happy with the exceptional quality of these candidates, but want to remind the general membership that nominations are open to anyone wishing to serve. To nominate a candidate, submit a nomination with the signatures of at least five MSSF members to the current MSSF secretary, Jeanne Campbell, before the May general meeting. If there is no more than one nominee for a position, the nominating committee's candidate is considered elected to that position.

Signed,

Michael Boom, chair; Debbie Viess; Michael Wood

Scholarships Awarded

Each year the Mycological Society offers scholarships to graduate students majoring in mycology. These scholarships are given in honor of Esther Colton Whited and Dr. Harry Thiers. Esther Colton Whited was an early member of the Mycological Society, a talented illustrator, and dedicated student of the fungi, while Dr. Harry Thiers was the Mycological Society's first scientific advisor. The purpose of the scholarship(s) is to encourage the study of higher fungi, particularly taxonomic studies of poorly known groups, but all proposals are considered. A requirement of receiving the scholarship is the presentation of research results at a general meeting MSSF. This year there are two scholarship winners: Denise Gregory of San Francisco State University and Matt Smith of U.C. Davis. Denise Gregory is undertaking a much needed study of the genus *Clitocybe* in California, while Matt Smith is studying the occurrence of *Armillaria mellea* in Golden Gate Park and its implications for park management. The MSSF gratefully acknowledges a generous donation from Robert Clothier which helped fund this year's scholarships.

WANTED: Morel Beetles

I'm taking a class in insect taxonomy this semester and would be really interested in finally putting a clear identification on those morel beetles so many of us have puzzled over in previous years.

If you're from the Bay Area and bring back morels, and while cleaning them find beetles (or other insects clearly living within the morel), it would be a great favor to me if you could save them for me in a vial or jar. (I will drive out to where you are to pick them up.) Please note the date and location of where they were collected. No, this isn't a scheme to find everybody's morel patches. I only need approximate location info.

I will try to key them down at least to family and hopefully to genus. (If any of you are familiar with insects, you'll know why I'm not saying anything about keying to species. Keying out most insects to genus is comparable in difficulty to keying *Mycena* to species!)

I will investigate what is known about the ecology of these beetles and their relationship to morels and report my findings in an upcoming Mycena News. I am also interested in the millipedes that often live within morels, so if you come across those, I'm also interested.

If you find some morel beetles that you can give me, I can be contacted at pgwerner@sfsu.edu or (415) 289-0168.

Peter Werner.



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MSSF Calendar, May 2002

Friday-Sunday, May 3-5, San Jose Camp Foray: Annual San Jose Camp Foray, 2 nights in tent cabins with electric lights and meals served from Friday night to Sunday lunch. Cost for MSSF members is \$90, \$100 for nonmembers. Contact foray coordinator, Tom Sasaki, 415-776-0791

Tuesday, May 7: 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

Tuesday, May 14, MSSF General Meeting:

The May general meeting will be held on the second Tuesday of May, instead of the traditional third Tuesday. Our speaker will be Elio Schaechter, author of "In the Company of Mushrooms." The meeting will be held at the Randall Museum, doors open at 7, lecture starts at 8 pm.

Saturday-Sunday, May 11-12, Antelope Lake Burn Area Foray: In Plumas County or the surrounding vicinity, conditions permitting. For information, directions and camping possibilities, call foray leader Herman Brown who lives in the area, 530-284-6241 or email at herman@fungi-zette.com.

Wednesday and Thursday, May 22-23, Chinook Restaurant: David Campbell reports that Chef/owner Sunita Dutt will once again mastermind a mushroom menu just for us mycophagists, this

one a morel indulgence. Call restaurant for details and reservations. Chinook Restaurant, 1130 4th St., San Rafael (415) 457-0566

Thursday, May 28, Ross Valley Brewing Company: David Campbell also reports that "the Chef Sven Ravel mans the pans, whipping out his version of morel heaven". Call restaurant for details and reservations. Ross Valley Brewing Company, 765 Center Boulevard Fairfax (415) 485-1005

Sunday, July 28, Annual MSSF picnic, Joaquin Miller Park, Oakland: For further information, please call the MSSF info hotline or check the web site.

Thursday-Sunday, September 19-22, Northeast Mycological Federation Foray: Nevele Grande, Ellenville NY, September 19-22, 2002.

See web site :

<http://uhoffmann.home.mindspring.com/nemf2002/>.

Contact Paul Sadowski at:

212-348-3092 or pabloski@earthlink.net

Tuesday, September 17, next MSSF general meeting: Have a great summer!

Thursday-Sunday, October 10-13, NAMA foray in Oregon: The 2002 NAMA foray will be held at Diamond Lake in Southern Oregon. Check their web site for details - <http://www.namyco.org/>.

**Date
Change**