
Mycena News

Mycological Society of San Francisco

April, 2000, vol 50:4

Night in a Rainy Forest

Debbie Viess

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Membership and Subscription Information

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

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In 1946 I began backpacking with a packboard, a canvas sack, a diamond hitch, a few dry goods, several cans of food, a friend and a trout rod. Forests and mountains were my friends. Such familiarity breeds carelessness.

Last mushroom season, my wife and I went up to mushroom in Oregon towing a Toyota Forerunner behind our RV. After poor picking inland, we headed to the coast. Ellen took the RV and I took the car. Just one or two stops might help.

Finding two dirt roads near the coast about 4:30 pm, I took one and saw two pick-ups. Aha! Commercial pickers! Leaving most everything in the car (including a cell phone which GTE thought had been cloned so that it needed to be re-programmed), I took a light pack just to look around. Logs were covered with a dozen different fungi. The ground was colored with patches of Russulas and up the hill was a light orange beacon of Chanterelles.

Ignoring my cane and boots (despite a bad back and left ankle) and going without canteen, a British Bobbie "thunderer" whistle, ground cloth, hat, "space blanket", matches, salt or food bar I went up the hill with a light pack. At least I had a mushroom knife, my "bearing compass" around my neck and a wind-breaker.

Five beautiful chanterelles! Up and around a bend were a few more. It was a cloudy day, but there had been no rain and it began get dark so I hobbled as best I could from patch to patch. Now all I had to do was go straight back to the road 180 degrees from the direction I came in (plus a few degrees) so I would enter the dirt road to one side of the car and would not have to hunt for it around a possible bend. Easier said than done. There was no way through a wall of Devil's Club, that delightful thorny "pest" of the Northwest.

At that point I felt the first twinge of panic.

Continued on page 4...

50th Anniversary Morel Foray at Groveland

Reservations Due!

We'll be heading to the Sierras for this extraordinary celebration of the MSSF's fifty years of history. This is a foray not to be missed. We'll be morelling, and will also enjoy some special presentations, food, and good cheer.

Those of you who have already made reservations but did not indicate your dinner choice for Saturday night, please let me know immediately.

For other members, you'd better hurry if you are planning to attend the 50th Anniversary Morel Foray. The foray will be held in Groveland during the weekend of April 28-30 (Friday - Saturday), and only a limited number of spaces are available.

The cost for the weekend is \$88.00 per person

and includes Friday and Saturday night lodging and a buffet dinner Saturday night with a choice of New York steak, chicken or vegetarian lasagna. A program will follow.

Reminders to all participants: you will be housed in a vacation home and will need to bring your own towel and linen or a sleeping bag. Also, bring your own food for Friday night dinner if you are arriving early and for weekend breakfasts and lunches.

For your reservation, make a check out to the MSSF and mail to Tom Sasaki, 1506 Lyon Street, San Francisco, CA 94115 and be sure to include your choice for Saturday night dinner. Or, to volunteer or obtain any other information, contact Tom at 415.776.0791.

— Tom Sasaki

President's Corner

With the gorgeous weather that we've been having I'm getting itchy for more season to begin. About this time each year, when the hills are green and the wildflowers in the Bay Area are in full bloom my mind begins to turn to the Sierras. There's something about morels. They are absolutely my favorite mushroom to hunt and to eat. By now the first trip of the spring to the mountains is a ritual, usually involving a stop in Yosemite on the drive home on Sunday. Of course the first trip is always just a bit too early with snow along Evergreen road and only a few morels to be found. I'm not patient enough however to wait. Make sure to join the MSSF on its 50th anniversary morel foray on the last weekend in April. Get your reservations in early to Tom Sasaki. Detailed instructions follow in the newsletter.

At the March council meeting we didn't pass any new resolutions. The council agreed to continue allocating more money for speakers next year.

This year we increased the speaking budget from \$1000 to \$2000. We also agreed to share speakers with the Fungus Federation of Santa Cruz. Much of this year's credit for bringing in speakers goes to Phyllis Cole of the Fungus Federation. She helped to arrange Lorelei Norvell, Walt Sundburg, Maggie Rodgers and Orson Miller. Open council positions for next year were also discussed. We are looking people to fill the following positions: **T-shirts, book sales, newsletter editor(s) and help for the membership chair.** If you're interested in any of these jobs please contact me and I can fill you in on what is involved.

As I only have two months left as president I'd like to thank the newsletter editors for doing such a great job. You'll be missed. I'd also like to thank Terri Beauséjour for all of the work she has put in as the cultivation chair. Terri is one of the driving forces behind much of what the society does. I'd also like to thank Mike Boom, Larry Stickney, Lisa Bauer, Terri Beauséjour, Bill Freedman and Tom Chester for all of the helpful advice that they've given over the past two years. Their collective wisdom was a lifesaver and made it much easier to sleep at night. In parting I hope that over the last two years the speakers have been enjoyable, the forays numerous (thanks to Norm and Henry), and the fairs educational.

— *Mark Thomsen*

MSSF 50th Anniversary T-Shirts

For those of you who special ordered sweatshirts and long sleeve shirts, the MSSF's General Meeting in April is your last opportunity to pick up your items. Any of these items which are not claimed by the time the meeting starts will be made available to the first takers at the conclusion of the meeting. The T-shirt committee thanks you for your support over the last 2 years.

- *Lisa Bauer*

Officer Nominations for 2000-2001

This year's nominating committee (Mike Boom, David Bartolotta, and Larry Stickney) proposes the following slate of MSSF officers for 2000-2001:

President: Terri Beauséjour
Vice-President: David Rust
Secretary: Not Yet Determined
Treasurer: Sherry Carvajal
Councilor, 2000-2002: Mark Lockaby
Councilor, 2000-2002: Ron Pastorino

If no other nominations are received for these positions before the May general meeting, the proposed slate will take office in July of 2000.

Retiring president Mark Thomsen will take a seat on the council as Past President. The other council seats are filled by committee chairs, who are appointed by the incoming president.

Found: A men's, blue, large Columbia jacket with black trim and black lining. Probably found during last November's Mendocino Foray. Call Sherry at 415.695.0466.

Mushroom Madness in Marin

Sunday, May 7th & Sunday May 21st

Back by popular demand, Loraine Berry is continuing her tradition of hosting a spectacular food fest afternoon — Mushroom Madness in Marin — on Sunday, May 7 and Sunday, May 21. Reservations are essential for this occasion.

The cost is \$27 for MSSF members, or \$30 for non-members. Reservations can be made by contacting Loraine at 415.454.0914.

The May feasts will carry on the hands-on, participatory culinary tradition with an afternoon dinner at Loraine's lovely home in Ross, CA. Please arrive at 1:00pm, and please bring an apron and a beverage to share; the event truly is participatory. Microbrewed beers and house wines will be provided.

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

A New Policy

(Originally published in "Mushroom the Journal of Wild Mushrooming", Winter 1999 issue).

It was just before sunset, a time when the sides of a rainbow trout and sides of the sky oftentimes reflect the same splendid shimmering brilliance.

Can be and has been.

Yep, especially lakeside at 6500' in the High Sierra. Here I was casting to delectable, elusive, beautiful, heavily regulated and controlled by the Department of Fish and Game fish and I began to think. . . .

In my lifetime the limit of trout in possession has gone from 15 per day to a lot less. And, in my life, times have changed. I no longer often keep trout, salmon, steelhead, etc. unless I need them for eating or maybe to give as gifts after smoking them.

We used to proudly display our stringers full of fish, especially to anybody who had less than we did. And, remarkably, hid those same things from those who had more, bigger, etc. It is a wee bit like with mushrooms. Sort of, but the opposite.

Who amongst us shows off the pickin's to boost their ego to total strangers? Now, with fish it is the way it is. "Hey there, look over here at the size of my take. Probably a few more than you have, right?"

That just doesn't happen with mushrooms (unless you are with me and I know you very well and I just can't help myself).

Usually the proper and accepted method of deception is, in fact deception. Show no one nothing. Zero, zip, nicht, nein und null, nada darn thing. We don't need signs to stick on our puffed out egos. That would be wrong and, more importantly, it would give others reasons to learn about our patches.

With fish maybe there at one time were so many of them that it's been historically okay to brag about the haul. Or perhaps a particular body of water is so large that giving strong clues, like hanging upside down a trophy marlin, is not harmful to future personal takes.

We know that it isn't so with mushrooms. Ever see a spectacle like an upside down hanging 5 pound porcini in a mushroom camp? Deer yeah, but just not with trophy fungus. At least not with my mushrooms near their patches.

Because the Department of Fish and Game here in California a while back introduced a program for the best trout waters in the state I propose a similar policy for mushrooms in the best patches—"Catch and Release."

Sounds crazy, but remember that here is where you read it first. In some streams only a single barbed hook is allowed, to make it more difficult to catch and to make for easier release, so I'm thinking an eye patch, over your good eye, to hinder the hunt; and large holes in the bottom of your basket to make it easier for the mushrooms to get away.

Continued on page 6...

April 18, MSSF General Meeting: Dr. Lorelei Norvell

Taking the Fungal Pulse of America's Forests

The last decade of the millennium has seen a rise in ecological research of forest fungal communities... but how are do we collect, identify, and compare such communities?

Dr. Lorelei Norvell will present an overview of methodology and a glimpse of the macrofungi found in four different forest types. She is an early designer and coordinator of the Oregon Mycological Society's Cantharellus study on Mt. Hood, current Coordinator of the Fungal "TWIG" for the All-Taxa Biological Inventory for Tennessee/North Carolina's Great Smoky Mountains National Park, conducts (as a partner of the USDI-BLM) two epigeous mycorrhizal basidiomycete studies in Oregon Douglas-fir forests, and has collected frequently in California's redwood forests. A specialist in the agaric genus *Phaeocollybia*, she also evaluated 41 Basidiomycete species as part of the US government's Northwest Forest Plan.

Current Editor of *Inoculum* (newsletter of the Mycological Society of America) and on the editorial board of the *North American Mycological Association*, she is (with Dr Scott Redhead) also coauthor of the controversial "Askus" column in *Mushroom, The Journal*. Member of the International Association of Plant Taxonomy's Nomenclature Committee for Fungi, Lorelei also directs the Pacific Northwest Mycology Service, a scientific and taxonomic consulting firm in Portland, Oregon.

We look forward to our esteemed speaker's presentation about macrofungi in various forest ecosystems.

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

SOMA Offers College and K-12 Scholarships

The Sonoma County Mycological Association (SOMA) is currently offering \$500 scholarships for college students and \$50 scholarships for K-12 students. The scholarships are for students involved in or interested in mycology, and the deadline is June 15, 2000. Please see the SOMA web site for full details: <http://www.metro.net/biologist> Applications are welcome!

— *Darvin DeShazer, of SOMA*

Rainy Forest, continued from page 1...

How much time did I have to get out of here? Two more detours around Devil's Club, a quickly darkening sky and now I was definitely panicky. A little thought and I decided to go down a near-by ravine displaying ash and willow. There should be at least underground water and if that were not available, presumably the potential waterway would lead to the sea and perhaps an easier walk on the beach.

All day I had forgotten to sip any water and had skipped lunch. My mouth was dry; not a good sign since I had taken a blood pressure pill that morning and probably now had a low blood pressure because of volume depletion. Hallelujah! I scratched some twigs and duff away with a walking stick I had made and there was a small stream 3-4 feet down! My arm couldn't reach it. No problem. Just go down the stream bed and find where it surfaced. It didn't and digging again, I could not find no water in the gloom. A very hollow feeling passed over me and I told myself to relax. It's really not a bad spot. I have camped alone occasionally after a day's hike into the wilderness. (Don't depend on a ranger; he will go on leave and put your note in a drawer that his replacement never uses). Now it was really dark and I knew a night in the forest was the only rational decision. It was very peculiar, but once I had clearly decided to make a bed and stay in the forest for the night, I actually felt rather relieved and almost good about it.

I started out of the ravine and about half way up became faint with low blood pressure. I sat down and tried to remember if drinking urine ever helped. It would at least replete some volume, so I urinated in a small container I had for delicate specimens and drank it. Foul? No. Bitter, yes! Waiting awhile, I felt less faint and crawled up the slope to a slightly sloping place with nice duff, a mound above that would push any water to the side and a small Douglas fir to rest my pack on temporarily. I made a water runway on each side of my bed and cleared it of twigs and rocks.

I lay back, relaxed again and listened to the forest noise, the song of a bird, a squirrel in the brush. Life went on. I worried about my wife, Ellen, worrying about me. Then it began to rain, lightly at first and then drenching me as the water came through the "weather resistant" windbreaker. Thoughts of what I had done in life and what I hadn't done began to haunt me as I shivered. I became colder and colder in the driving rain, so I took off my water soaked heavy cotton shirt and put the windbreaker back over the undershirt. The cotton shirt I put over the Doug fir branch to lessen the force of the raindrops. One sleeve I repeated wrung out into my mouth as a water supply.

Then I began to feel a wondrous glow. Ah! I knew that was the start of hypothermia, so all that miserable night when I began to feel euphoric or stopped shivering; I induced shivering by first moving my leg muscles. I got better and better at doing it voluntarily with my thighs, even to the point where my whole body shook. My "bed" itself felt like down, but I suspect that my backside was so numb I couldn't have felt a rock. Twice I heard what sounded like a motorcycle on the highway in the distance towards the north.

At daybreak the rain let up and I very slowly got up to find I was so stiff I couldn't stand at first. Then I slowly emptied my pack of all my mycological specimens, but kept the chanterelles. I put the heavy flannel shirt on again and realized that I had been a little confused. What was a "motorcycle" doing north of me? The highway was east. This time I had a plan. Forget the damn car. No going in straight lines,

only zigzag. First go east toward the highway, then when I hit Devil's Club go north; when around the Devil's Club, go east again. No east or north available, go a little left (almost all right-handed people go in anti-clock wise circles anyway). Stick to the plan! It worked like a charm, but I got more and more tired. So out went all my beautiful chanterelles! At the next stop, off went that heavy soggy shirt. Finally I was so tired, I crawled 2 or 3 times and was ready to throw away the pack. Then above me I saw the berm of the first dirt road and the joining of the highway. There were some road workers in orange on it. I could barely say "help, I need help" (not something a male likes to do, anymore than he likes to ask for directions).

One of the "workers" came down the sharp slope and asked "Are you Tom?" I croaked "yes"—even my vocal cords were shot. He was a rescue worker and had been out all night looking for me with his team. They were just about to change shifts but, at least, I had a little pride left. I had found them and not vice versa, but thank God for them. They almost had to drag me up the bank. All I could have done without them would have been to drag myself to the side of the highway and lain there until someone either ran me over or became a good Samaritan.

They got me into the rescue truck, which had a heater in back. One of the searchers (a young woman) said to strip everything off and don't worry about being embarrassed, as if I could really care. To get warm, I would have stripped on the internet. A couple of towels were tossed my way and then 3 or 4 blankets. They had actually shmoozed (I can think of no better verb) through that forest that night on all terrain vehicles; that, you idiot, was the "motorcycle". The rest, however, was strictly low-tech. They had no low-reading thermometer, so the mercury never moved. Not sure just how hypothermic I was, they sent for an ambulance.

In the ambulance, of course, the siren went on, thereby engendering a Class III emergency bill, if I remember rightly. Without a hot washcloth, no veins were found until I reached the ER. Then I had a nice re-warming blanket and a less nice IV, later followed by warm apple juice, toast & jelly and hot chocolate that had never tasted so good in my life. The sheriff gave Ellen a ride to the hospital regaling her with stories of past rescues (only one death at the bottom of a ravine found a year later). One local had actually lost himself three times in that heavy forest; once more and the sheriff promised him a nice clean jail cell. Ellen was very optimistic about my survival skills, so she fully expected me to be alive, but was very glad that I was unhurt.

Did I learn anything? Well, one becomes awful nice to people and very careful for a few weeks and then some relapse sets in. But I do some odd things from time to time like talking to street people about the lousy weather and donating a little here and there. Life can always be shorter than you might think. Also think about what's in your pack. Don't carry survival gear just for an expedition; carry it up the next rise if you're alone. You rarely, if ever, sprain your ankle going up or down a mountain; you sprain it in plain sight of your camp when you are relaxed and safely home.

PS: also, GTE says that 911 always works if you are in a cell zone — even if your cell phone has been cloned (no matter how wrong GTE may be about that).

— Tom Duffy

Culinary Corner

The March Hare Banquet was definitely a mad event. The group cooked up a wild number of appetizers. Just to mention a few, we had Black and Gold Chanterelle Pate with Morel Sauce by Jeannie and David Campbell, Cucumbers Stuffed with Tomatoes and Caviar by Tom Sasaki, Mushroom Pizza by Monique Carment, Spiced Pecans by Dulcie Hieman, Wagon Wheels with Portobellos by Bennie Cottone, Ham and Cheese by Fred Kron, Pickled Mushrooms by the Menyharts, Artichoke Hearts by Peter Hart, Pickled Mushrooms with Danish Blue by Larry Stickney, Salmon by Virginia, Stuffed Mushrooms with tomatoes by Ann Waters, Chanterelle Frittata by the Eichorns, Celery Root Salad by Ana Uznanska and Nuts from David Suuraballe and Honoria Sarmiento. While frantically downing all these appetizers, we imbibed Leon Ilnicki's Extraordinary Punch. Fred Kron, on the other hand, decided to celebrate Mardi Gras and supplied each of us with Mardi Gras beads. All the beads were bright colored and mismatched with our clothes. We must have appeared as crazy as Mad Hares to any outsider!

I was certain that everyone would be too full to eat dinner! Wrong! Everyone "hopped" to get David Bartolotta's Rabbit with Porcini sauce served beside great mounds of Luccia Paulazzo's creamy Polenta. The plates were colored with Karin Roos' and Mary Ann Swazo's Asparagus. Hal Waterman prepared a Salad of Greens, Chanterelles and Criminis and Bill and Carol Hellums supplied dinner rolls with Truffle Butter. By this time we were only able to waddle around because we were so full but you should have seen the frenzied race to get the Eichorn's Lemon Sorbet served with the Fazio's Cheesecake! The Rhodin's supplied Coffee to drink with our dessert. As usual, it was a wildly exciting evening.

Another interesting culinary event was the "Exotic Mushroom Feast" at Millennium Restaurant in San Francisco. I will vouch that it was "Exotic" and it was a "Feast"! Several society members hosted a MSSF informational table, among them Terri Beauséjour, Yu-Shen Ng, Hilary Somers, Monique Carment, Todd Spanier and Al

Carvajal. We were kept busy all evening talking to other diners about mushrooms, the society and its programs. Chef Eric Tucker, one of the most exciting chefs in the Bay Area and a mushroom enthusiast, started us with an array of Roasted Pom Poms wrapped in Ginger, grilled Maitakes with Candy Cap Kejap, and smooth Button Mushroom Ceviche accompanied by Matsutaki Sake or Candy Cap Ale. He continued with a choice of appetizers. You could select Roasted Chanterelle Ravioli with Balsamic Mushroom Syrup or Funghi di Mare (Clamshell, Oyster and Cinnamon Cap mushrooms) with a Potato-Thyme wafer. The choices of entrée were a Black Chanterelle Purse or Huitlacoche Pecan Tamale. The first one was a combination of Black Chanterelles, French Lentils and Butternut Squash en Papillote (paper) served over Roasted Barley Risotto with a Cashew-Truffle-Beet Foam (mmmm). The latter was a Corn Smut and Pecan Tamale filled with Cactus, Chayote and Tempeh. The Tamale was steamed in banana leaves and served over a Porcini, Pecan and Chipolte Sauce with a side of Citrus-Agave Salsa. For dessert, Chef Tucker served a Candy Cap Coconut Flan over Cinnamon Apple Cake. This was drizzled with Caramel Sauce, Apple Mint Relish and Candied Cloud Ears. The meal was divine, as all participants will attest!

According to David Bartolotta, there can be no Easter this year because we ate the Easter Rabbit at our last culinary dinner. That is just not acceptable. To overcome that small obstacle, we are having a Greek Easter Lamb Roast at our April culinary group dinner. The idea is to prepare and many "Greek" (or anything that passes for Greek) mushroom appetizers as possible. As an interesting aside, Greek Orthodox priests dress distinctively in long black robes and black, flat-topped, brimless, stovepipe hats. The priests are not allowed to cut their hair so they roll up their hair into a bulky bun and wear it inside the hat. Cooks in Byzantine monasteries wore a white hat patterned after the black ones. Eventually this white hat became the symbol of chieftom around the world.

— Sherry Carvajal

Recipe: Mushrooms Florentine

serves 4 as an appetizer

12 to 16 medium mushrooms any with caps (Gypsies would be wonderful—but just don't buy a horse from one. . .)

1/4 lb butter, melted
olive oil

1 1/2 tbl onions, minced
1 tbl shallot, minced

3/4 cup, fresh spinach, cooked until just limp throughout, pureed
(optional) 1/2 cup fowl or pork, cooked and chopped small

1/4 tsp nutmeg, freshly grated

1/2 tsp salt

1/8 tsp black pepper, freshly ground

2 tbl Parmigiano or Asiago or similar cheese, freshly grated

1. Preheat oven to 375F.

2. Wash the mushrooms and remove the stems. Dip the caps into 6 tablespoons of the melted butter and place them upside-down in a

buttered (or oiled with the olive oil) baking pan.

3. Chop the stems small and sauté them in a little butter and olive oil mix with the minced onion until the stems have lost their water and the onions are limp. Add the minced shallot and cook for 5 minutes more.

4. Add the spinach which has been squeezed very dry, meat (optional), nutmeg, salt and pepper. Stir and warm through.

5. Fill the caps with the spinach mixture. Sprinkle the grated cheese over the top of the filling and bake for 15 minutes. Transfer to an attractive serving platter and while passing them engage your guests into a discussion of "Catch and Release" and they will be impressed.

(This recipe has been adapted based a recipe from the New York Times Cook Book)

— Patrick Hamilton

New Policy, continued from page 3...

“Fly fishing only” is posted in a lot of hot stretches of precious waters so what can be done to hinder the hunt for mushrooms in similarly hot patches? Perhaps “only walking backwards” through the best picking grounds. I am not sure of the relationship of fly fishing to walking backwards, but you get the idea. . . ?

Using heavy monofilament with an oversized rod to enable easier taking of fish is certainly frowned upon by ethical fishermen so why do we allow big ole Buck knives to hack away at the stipes of some stubborn shrooms? That shouldn't be allowed. We need to have “pen knives only” or maybe even “butter serving knives only here” and a time limit for how long it can take to cut the stems or you have to leave them alone, let 'em get away.

Night time hunting for black chanterelles (they kinda glow) is well known amongst the cognoscenti of pickers. So is crawling for boletes with a flashlight under the shore pines up north an accepted fine method of spotting trophies. But heck, isn't this a little like a deer in the head lights? Shouldn't be allowed, unless it is for simple pure sport and all mushrooms taken this way would be immediately released unharmed.

Diving for abalone is very popular here along the Sonoma and Mendocino coasts and the attendant restrictions are well monitored by gun-toting binocularized wardens. Fines are heavy and jail time for major infractions are not uncommon. If an undersized “ab” is mistakenly removed from its rock you must replace it right where it came from.

I'm thinking that too small shrooms (or even too many) should be placed back into their same environment, into the same exact spot. Gosh, then wouldn't the Native Plant Society be happy with us pickers?

This new policy of “Catch and Release” needs some work and anybody can see where this is going—heading to the food part of the food column.

After working hard on a new classic like my “Catch and Release” policy I can really get an appetite going for a classic mushroom dish. I think that an old favorite appetizer to serve our old favorite guests would be nice. We don't have to call this an “old dish” nor call any of our female guests the same. That wouldn't be right, unless it's true.

....

— *Patrick Hamilton*

(See page 5 for recipe)



LAMS/SDMS Southern California Morel Foray

For those of you who are unable to avoid travel obligations to Southern California, you can console yourself somewhat by participating in the morel foray to the San Bernardino Mountains jointly sponsored by the Los Angeles Mycological Society and the San Diego Mycological Society on May 5-7, 2000. (Note that this is the weekend following the MSSF morel foray.)

MSSF members and others are welcome. With the weather we have been having lately it may not even be necessary for you to bring your own morels!

Morel Weekend In The San Bernardino Mountains May 5-7, 2000 —Sign Up Now!

With recent heavy snows in the San Bernardino Mountains the conditions appear favorable for a large fruiting of morels and other spring fungi. Building on the success of last year's acclaimed morel foray, Steven Pencall and Nancy Mirr, President of the San Diego Mycological Society, have collaborated to put together a weekend of mushroom collecting, camaraderie and good food.

We will be staying at an organizational group camp high in the San Bernardino Mountains. Delicious meals from Friday evening through Sunday morning will be included in the cost. Jeff Kramer, chef and culinary advisor to the Los Angeles Mycological Society will be our principal foray chef. Participants are expected to help prepare meals. The camp has heated cabins, indoor dining facilities, flush toilets and hot showers, lounge with fireplace and comfortable furniture. Private rooms are not available—cabins sleep from 8-10 although depending on the final number of participants, we may be able to spread the group across several cabins to house a smaller number in each cabin.

The cost for the weekend is \$80 per person for reservations received by Monday, April 3. Reservations received after April 3 will be \$90 per person and will be accommodated on a space available basis. Late registrations will be returned if space is not available. For those that have to cancel at a later date, refunds will be available if we are able to obtain a minimum of 30 people staying at the camp. Complete directions to the camp and a list of essentials to bring will be sent to registrants in late April.

Please indicate your name, complete address with zip code, daytime and evening phone numbers and email address if you have one, and the number of persons who will be in your party.

Questions about the foray or the camp facilities should be directed to Steven Pencall, 909.781.8993 or SPencall@genesisnetwork.net.

To register: Please send check, payable to “LAMS” to:

Steven Pencall
1410 Kearney Street
Riverside, CA 92501-1648

— *Steven Pencall*

A Sampling of Past Mastheads of the Mycena News



by
**Mike
Boom**

Spring in the Bay Area is the A season for me. Not because it's the best part of the mushrooms season, but because it's filled with mushrooms that start with "A:" *Agrocybe praecox* popping up in wood chips everywhere, *Amanita novinupta* blushing at the altar of oak, *Amanita velosa* in sunny oaken peripheries accompanied by scattered

Amanita ocreata, and *Agaricus* of all different stripes.

Agaricus is a genus that likes it warm and wet. If fall rains sweep in on a warm front, we often get significant fruitings of various *Agaricus* species at the beginning of the mushroom season. You can also find them during the summer in fog drip along the coast. For me, though, the true *Agaricus* season is spring. Lengthening days, gentle rains, and downright balmy weather pop up radiant *Agaricus* while winter fungi fizzle into a funk of rot and oozing spores.

I'll pause now to confess to heresy. If I can safely identify a mushroom as an *Agaricus*, I will often eat it without positively identifying it to species. Here's why, and why I don't recommend it for all people:

Mushrooms in the genus *Agaricus* are very distinctive and easy to identify as *Agaricus*. They drop a dark chocolate brown spore print (never rusty or light brown). The young gills are pallid or pink, they mature to chocolate brown or almost black, and are free or nearly free of the stipe. The gills are covered with a partial veil that breaks to form an annulus and there's no volva (except for a ring that may be sheathlike on *Agaricus bitorquis* and related species). Think of the classic white button mushroom, *Agaricus bisporus*, as a typical example of a young *Agaricus*. The popular portabello mushroom (also *Agaricus bisporus*) is an example of a mature *Agaricus*.

Identifying an *Agaricus* to species isn't nearly as easy as getting it to genus. Color, shape, cap texture, and size can all vary across a wide spectrum depending on humidity, exposure to sun, substrate, and numerous other factors. Staining reactions are a key identifying feature, but excessively moist or dry mushrooms don't always stain. Odor is another key feature, but may be hard to pick up, especially for anyone with hay fever or a cold. The quality of the partial veil or resulting annulus is a more reliable identifying feature, but won't—by itself—take you all the way to a species name.

Fortunately for us, taxonomists have provided a tool midway between genus and species that allows us to fudge: the section. When the species within a genus fall into distinct groups, systematic mycologists may give the groups section names. The genus *Agaricus* contains seven sections. One section is poisonous to most people, the others are safe to eat for most people. I say "most people" in each case because there are always some people with allergies and strong reactions to any mushroom, even one as typically benign as a button or oyster mushroom. And there are a few people who can eat *Agaricus* species that would have most other people writhing and running for the bathroom. There are, fortunately, no deadly poisonous *Agaricus*—just a few that can make you sorry to be alive for a few hours if you're susceptible.

I eat *Agaricus* without always identifying to species because I can identify them to section—or at least as *not* in the one typically poisonous section. That poisonous section is *Xanthodermati*, named after one of its most prominent members: *A. xanthodermus*. In northern California, the section contains only three other common members: *A. hondensis*, *A. praeclaresquamosus*, and *A. californicus*. To check an *Agaricus*, I first scratch it at the base. If the scratch turns yellow and then fades to brown, it's probably in section *Xanthodermati*. I then subject the fruiting body to complex chemical analysis: I sniff it. If it smells like phenol, it's certainly a member of *Xanthodermati*.

What does phenol smell like? Some say library paste, but I've never smelled it. I find a phenolic odor extremely unpleasant, metallic, and cutting; I'm extremely sensitive to it and often smell it when others can't. As a result, I trust smell to identify *Xanthodermati* but don't recommend it as a technique to everyone.

If you can't easily pick up the smell of phenol, take heart. If you try to sauté phenolic mushrooms, you have a much better chance of smelling them. The odor gathers strength and storms through the kitchen, quashing—at least for me—any gastronomic inclinations. When I recently tried to sauté a batch of *A. praeclaresquamosus*, the smell was so bad I took soap to my cast iron pan to remove the pan's seasoning and the fried-in smell. A good friend of mine (who shall remain nameless, but looks a lot like Patrick Hamilton), a man of acute palate and smell, cooked the same mushroom and ate it with gusto in a spicy fish taco, no ill effects. I'm jealous.

One warning: if you eat an *Agaricus* in a new section for the first time, eat a small dose to find out if you're adversely affected. This means you'll have to safely try at least one *Agaricus* in each of the non-phenolic sections before you can simply start eating non-xanthodermatic *Agaricus*. People who can safely eat one mushroom in a section are usually safe eating the other mushrooms in the same section. To learn the six edible sections, consult David Arora's excellent introduction to *Agaricus* on pages 310–314 of *Mushroom's Demystified*. And don't forget to at least *try* to identify your *Agaricus* to species. Many of them, like the delicious *Agaricus augustus*, are easy to ID.

Now that I've wasted most of the column by talking about *Agaricus*, you may wonder what mushrooms have been out there this month. I'll be brief.

In mid to late February, members of the chanterelle family were the objects of fungal lust along the Sonoma coast: *Craterellus cornucopioides* (black trumpets), *Cantherellus tubaeformis* (yellow-feet or funnel chanterelles) and *Cantherellus cibarius* (golden chanterelles) accompanied by a toothed fungus, *Hydnum umbilicatum* (the belly-button hedgehog). It hasn't been a banner year for these fungi, but folks at the MSSF Salt Point foray found enough to have a very good time.

In the East Bay, *C. cibarius* finally made a decent appearance, not nearly as flush as in years past, but fruiting in decent numbers in limited spots. I don't think they completely recovered from the very dry December and early January. *Lactarius rubidus* (candy caps), on the other hand, did very well, popping up in nice flushes first under Monterey pine, then oak. They were often accompanied by purple *Laccaria amethysteo-occidentalis* and *Lepista nuda* (blewits), sprinkled here and there with *Helvella lacunosa* (fluted black elfen saddles) and

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treacherous patches of poison oak, leaves freshly budded.

East Bay *Amanitas* also made a significant appearance by mid-March: *Amanita novinupta* (the blusher), *Amanita velosa* (tasty but you must *always* identify without a doubt to species), and the deadly but beautiful white *Amanita ocreata*. I also found anachronistic fruitings of typical fall and winter *Amanitas*: *A. pantherina*, a few brilliant *A. muscaria*, and a surprisingly pristine and huge *A. phalloides*. Bob Mackler reported *Boletus chrysenteron*, *Omphalotus olivascens* (jack-o-lantern), *Astreus hygrometricus* (an earth star), *Calvaridelphus occidentalis*, *Clavaria vermicularis*, *Tricholoma dryophilum*, and others around Briones reservoir. Monterey pines in the Oakland hills sported teepee-like pink-spored *Nolanea stricta* and one of my favorite contorted fungi: *Clavaria rugosa*.

News from Marin has been sparse, although I've heard people have found golden chanterelles and *A. velosa*. Reports from the peninsula are non-existent, but if the season there is anything like Soquel forest in the south bay, it's been dismal. There have been a few *C. cornucopioides* collected there that I know of, but very few, and when I was there a few days ago with my friend Arthur Evans, we spent most of our time listening to frogs singing, a tiny bit of time picking a few paltry black trumpets that looked like the ends of exploded cigars, and a lot of time wondering why there weren't any other mushrooms at all around.

Now that it's warm and sunny, it's time to hit the fields for *Agaricus* and giant puffballs. Jeff Roberts reports *Agaricus bitorquis* coming up somewhere in the East Bay under eucalyptus, and I managed to find a few *Agaricus arvensis* (horse mushrooms) on a roadside in Sebastopol. If I were you and had *Agaricus* on the brain, I'd head for the coast and look under cypress, where you might find a few *Macrolepiota rhacodes* in the bargain. Or in cow pastures, where you might find *Agaricus osecanus* dotted among the wild irises. Just be sure to sniff well what you pick. If you don't find anything at all, it's time to start daydreaming about the upcoming morel season in the Sierras.

— Mike Boom

Calendar, continued from last page...

explains the physiology and ecology of this high elevation mammal. There is no charge for the evening. Refreshments will be served. Please contact Judy Robertson, 707.584.8099 or jksrr@aol.com if you have questions.

Sunday, May 21: Mushroom Madness in Marin. A participatory, afternoon culinary feast in Ross, CA. Contact Loraine at 415.454.0914 or see inside this newsletter for details.

Thursday – Sunday, June 8-11: NAMA Foray, Beaumont, Texas. Hosted by the Gulf States Mycological Society and NAMA. Deadline for registration is May 1, 2000. Contact plewis@jas.net for more information.

Thursday – Sunday, August 10-13: Northeast Foray, Connecticut. Hosted by the Northeast Mycological Federation, this foray brings many New England mycologists together. Contact Harley and Terry Stoleson for details: 203.268.3023 or htstoleson@systec.com

Wild About Mushrooms Back In Print — Online

Fans of the MSSF's own Louise Freedman's fine mushroom cookbook *Wild About Mushrooms* will be pleased to know that it's finally back in print, and it's free — as long as you have an Internet connection. Just point your web browser to the MSSF's web site at <http://www.mssf.org> and click on "Cookbook" on the left side of the page.

Mike Wood, the MSSF webmaster, has worked with Louise to turn her classic cookbook into an online edition, complete with all the original text and illustrations by artist Teeda LoCodo. You'll find a culinary introduction to mushrooms, basic mushroom recipes, and recipes and cooking tips for specific mushroom species. These include some species sadly neglected by most commercial cookbook publishers. A collection of miscellaneous resources provides mushroom names, organizations, and more tips about mushrooms.

Thanks to Louise for writing this book, to Mike Wood for converting it to Web pages, and to his team of MSSF proofreaders for bringing *Wild About Mushrooms* back into print.

— Mike Boom

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50 YEARS!

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Calendar

Monday, April 3: Culinary Group's Greek Easter Lamb Roast. For information or reservations, contact George Repinec at 415.731.5115 or Sherry Carvajal at 415.695.0466.

Saturday – Sunday, April 8-9: MSSF Cultivation Course “Mushrooms in the Garden” – Cancelled. Unfortunately, this course on April 8, 9 is being cancelled. It may be rescheduled for a later date. If rescheduled, details will appear in this newsletter or on the mssf@onelist.com email list.

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

Tuesday, April 18. MSSF General Meeting. Randall Junior Museum, S.F. Doors open at 7pm for mushroom identification, book sales, cultivation tables, and various displays. See inside for details.

Friday - Sunday, April 28-30: MSSF's 50th Anniversary Foray - Morels at Groveland. We'll be heading to the Sierra Mountains for this extraordinary celebration of the MSSF's 50 years of history. Details about how to sign up and what to bring are inside.

Monday, May 1: Culinary Group's Monthly Dinner: For information or reservations, contact George Repinec at 415.731.5115 or Sherry Carvajal at 415.695.0466.

Friday – Sunday, May 5-7: Southern California Morel Foray. Sponsored by LAMS and SDMS. To be held in the morel hotspot of South-

ern California—the beautiful San Bernardino Mountains. Cost: \$80/person until April 3, \$90 after. Cost includes lodging and meals. For more info, contact Steven Pencall, 909.781.8993 or SPencall@genesishnetwork.net

Sunday, May 7: Mushroom Madness in Marin. A participatory, afternoon culinary feast in Ross, CA. Contact Loraine at 415.454.0914 or see inside this newsletter for details.

Tuesday, May 16: MSSF General Meeting. Walt Sundberg will be the guest speaker.

Wednesday, May 17, 2000: Lichen Society Lecture – “Ecology and Physiology of the Usnea-eating Snub-nose Monkey by Dr. Nina Jablonsky.” 7 p.m., California Academy of Sciences, University Herbarium, 1001 Valley Life Sciences Bldg. University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Jablonsky, Curator and Chair of the Department of Anthropology, distinguished author and editor of numerous books and papers, and current editor of the *Journal of Human Evolution*, has been studying the Snub-Nose Monkey for 14 years. We will learn how the Snub-Nose Monkey can exist on a diet of Usnea as Dr. Jablonsky

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