



SOMA News

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SONOMA COUNTY MYCOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
A NON-PROFIT 501(c)(3) EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY, DEDICATED TO THE MYSTERY AND APPRECIATION OF LOCAL FUNGI SOMAmushrooms.org

VOLUME 20 ISSUE 2

October 2007

2007-2008 SEASON CALENDAR

OCTOBER

Oct. 18 » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: Taylor Lockwood

Breitenbush Hot Springs 2007
Mushroom Conference
October 18 - 21: Thursday to Sunday
Reservations & Info:
www.breitenbush.com
Phone: 503.854.3320

NOVEMBER

Nov. 15 » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: Sveta Yamin-Pasternak

MSSF Mendocino Woodlands Foray
November 9 - 11.
Registration form available online at
www.MSSF.org/mendo
Info: mendo@MSSF.org, or either
650-728-9405 / 707-829-2063.

Mushrooms and Lichens of
Pepperwood Preserve
Nov. 10th, 9-2 PM
Dr. Chris Kjeldsen
Registration opens Oct 10th;
707-542-2080

David Arora's Annual Mendocino
Mushroom Foray
November 23rd-25th.
To register and for more details,
contact: maxfun@cruzio.com

DECEMBER

The fabled Mid-winter...
Mushroom Potluck Feast
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Don't miss it—Date TBA

JANUARY

"The 13th International Fungi and
Fiber Symposium and Exhibition"
January 7 - 12, 2008
For further details, please go to
www.mushroomsforcolor.com

SOMA Wild Mushroom Camp!
MLK Weekend!
January 19th—21st!
Register online at
www.SOMAmushrooms.org
(See pps. 8-9 for more on above)

SPEAKER OF THE MONTH



Taylor Lockwood October, 18th, 7 pm, Farm Bureau

Popular photographer and lecturer Taylor Lockwood, portraying himself as an 'aesthetic mycologist', will entertain SOMA members this month. Taylor is on a promotional tour of his new book, 'Chasing the Rain'. The book's subtitle 'My Treasure Hunt for the World's Most Beautiful Mushrooms' aptly describes his vibrant narrated slide show of digital images.

Lockwood's pioneering work has led to international acclaim from mycologists, mushroom enthusiasts, photography critics, and nature lovers. For over 20 years, and in over 30 countries, Lockwood has sought out the most striking and astonishing members of the fungal kingdom in order to share his own enthusiasm for the beauty of mushrooms, and to combat American's singular apprehension of them. His visits frequently garner headlines such as 'Photographer Attacks Fungal Phobia in America'.

NOTE: SOMA does not condone or encourage the ingestion of psychoactive mushrooms.

Always be 100% certain of the identification of any and all mushrooms before you eat them!



EMERGENCY MUSHROOM POISONING IDENTIFICATION

After seeking medical attention, contact **Darvin DeShazer** for identification at (707) 829-0596. Email your photos to muscaria@pacbell.net. Photos should show all sides of the mushroom. Please **do not** send photos taken with cell phones—the resolution is simply too poor to allow accurate identification.

A free service for hospitals, veterinarians and concerned citizens of Sonoma County.

SOMA OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Bill Hanson
(707) 837-8028

VICE PRESIDENT

Jim Wheeler

SECRETARY

Bill Wolpert

TREASURER

Julie Schreiber
SOMAtreasurer@SOMAmushrooms.org

COMMITTEES AND BOARD MEMBERS

BOOK SALES

Bill Hanson
(707) 837-8028

CULINARY QUESTIONS

Caitlin Marigold
SOMAculinary@SOMAmushrooms.org

CULTIVATION CLUB CHAIR

Jean-Pierre Nunez-Gonzalez
usbtopgun@yahoo.com

FORAYS

Bill Wolpert
SOMAwalk@SOMAmushrooms.org

MEMBERSHIP

Jim Wheeler
wheeler.j.d@att.net

MUSHROOM DYE COORDINATOR

Dorothy Beebee
SOMAmushroomdyes@SOMAmushrooms.org

MUSHROOM PAPER COORDINATOR

Catherine Wesley
(707) 887-0842

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORS

Darvin DeShazer
(707) 829-0596
muscaria@pacbell.net

Chris Kjeldsen, Ph.D.

(707) 544-3091
Chris.Kjeldsen@sonoma.edu

SOMA CAMP DIRECTOR

Chris Murray
chris@cyder.com

SOMA CAMP REGISTRAR

Linda Morris
SOMAregritar@SOMAmushrooms.org

SOMA NEWS EDITOR

Tom Cruckshank 
SOMAnewseditor@SOMAmushrooms.org

SOMA WEBMASTER

Dorothy Beebee
SOMainfo@SOMAmushrooms.org

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Julie Schreiber
julieschreiber@hotmail.com

SOMA's *Amanita muscaria* logo by Ariel Mahon

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

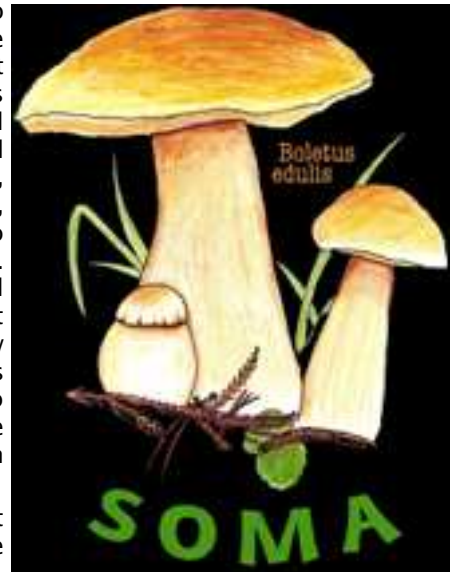
Some of the resources available to you as a SOMA member include this most excellent newsletter. In it you will find articles, recipes and tips on mushroom lore and more. You will also find directions to the official SOMA website. The Board of Directors, Martin Beebee, and his Mom, Dorothy, have worked to rebuild the web site to give it a fresh look over the last year. In it you will find links to other fungal organizations, clubs, research, past newsletters and the ability to renew your SOMA membership online. This year participants will be able to register for SOMA Winter Camp online and keep up with what is happening in our circle of knowledge.

Your annual dues support our guest speaker program and help pay the Farm Bureau fees for our meetings.

Your dues also pay for our newsletter and other expenses that keep our club healthy. Your support during our annual SOMA Winter Camp in January funds our scholarships and pays the major expense of putting the event itself on. With the help of you, our membership, SOMA Winter Camp has become a leader in mushroom related events. We have been told that the Winter Camp is unique in the fungal world. One of the benefits available, exclusively to SOMA members, is the ability to exchange your volunteer time for no-fee attendance at the Camp. Check out the web site for details of what SOMA Winter Camp is all about and consider joining us this coming January.

The San Francisco club (MSSF) would like to join with SOMA on more shared events. The first thought is a Clean-up day with a huge pot luck and foray. We always have fun together. Email any ideas you have for shared events with MSSF to me at: div4ab@sonic.net

See you in the woods,
-Bill Hanson



FORAY OF THE MONTH

Saturday, October 20th

Meet at the southern end of Fisk Mill Cove in Salt Point State Park at 10 AM.
\$6 daily parking fee per car now at SPSP!

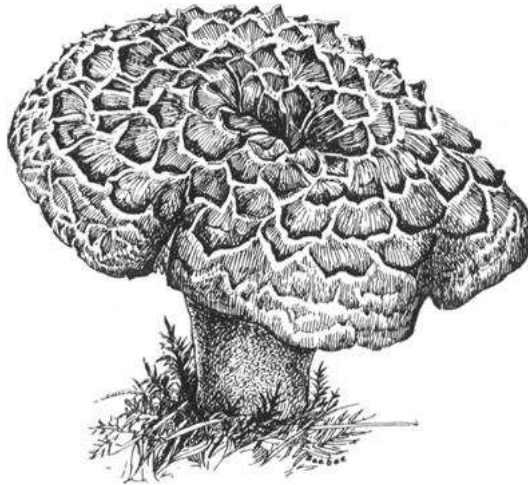
Bring a potluck dish to share; vegetarian dishes are always welcome! Please bring your own glasses, plates and eating utensils. Besides the positive environmental reasons and benefit to the gastronomic experience, it will help minimize the amount of trash to be hauled out. Contact foray leader Bill Wolpert at (707) 763-3101 for more information.

Members are asked to avoid hunting the club site for at least two weeks prior to a SOMA event. It's only through your cooperation that all members can enjoy a successful foray and experience the thrill of the hunt!



Well, it was inevitable... **The Book*** is done, and now I have to try and catch-up on 10 years worth of housework for which this tome has provided me with an excuse of not doing...(pardon my grammar, there's the truth of it!)

First, I'll start with the easy part: it is time to start spelunking in the refrigerator – yes, I have one of those old-fashioned kind that has to be defrosted every couple of months or so) ~ but what a treasure trove! – last year's cranberries, this year's blackberries, last month's chard, this month's lettuce, and the rest you do NOT want to know... And in the freezer compartment = Lo! Last year's MUSHROOMS! Whaaaat? (I can hear the "foodies" moaning...) Yes, last year's mushrooms: some red and orange gilled Dermocybes from Anna Moore in Oregon, some *Sarcodon imbricatus* from Judy and Gene – also from Oregon, and a solidly frozen bag of *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum*, for "pigment binder" from assorted mycophiles – to all a big **Thank You!** For you newbies, I don't eat mushrooms, I **DYE** with them! (don't forget the "e" in "dye"! something I am always having to explain if giving a talk on the subject.



Freezing is one of the best ways to preserve dye mushrooms, because not only does it preserve them for a later dye pot, in some cases (like for the Sarcodons) it actually *improves* their dye potential. I learned in Sweden that the best dyes from these toothed fungi come from the old rotten ones found frozen after the snows have melted. Freezing does somehow alter the chemistry, and Miriam Rice has noticed and noted that it also turns the red dyes

from Dermocybes more toward a "bluer" red, rather than an "orangey" red.... Some of these effects can also be produced with additives to change the pH of the dyebath, (such as adding white vinegar for acid or washing soda for alkali)... Life is just one big chemistry chart!!! Mushroom dyeing has provided the only table-top chemistry that I have needed these last 40 years!

So, what is **The Book* notation all about? We have finally finished preparing Miriam's latest book, "**Mushrooms for Dyes, Paper, Pigments, and MYCO-STIX™**" for publication by Mushrooms for Color Press this November!!! This really is a compendium of all of the work that Miriam has done over the years since 1980 when the now-out-of-print "Mushrooms for Color" was published by Mad River Press. It summarizes her preferred mushrooms for Dyes, and then goes on to explore the possibilities of Papermaking from polypores which she introduced in the early 1980s, and then achievement of the Myco-Stix™, which are like crayons which can be used for drawing or pastels, using fungal pigments for their color. Many SOMA members have benefited from these explorations in the classes that Miriam has given to SOMA Camp over the past years, and which have recently been taught by SOMA members, (dyes by Dorothy Beebee and polypore paper-making by Catherine Wesley). Bravo, Miriam!!!

For more upcoming information, keep checking the Website: www.mushroomsforcolor.com or write to me at dbeebee@sonic.net.

September Foray Report

Bill Wolpert © 2007

I know I am still a relative newcomer to foraging wild mushrooms, but this first foray of the season was the driest and least productive of my experience at Salt Point. Rain threatened, but not convincingly enough to bring out the Big Tarp. The ocean was flat and abalone divers shared the campground, but not the abs. Dorothy Beebee probably got a bigger score of mushrooms for her dye pot that anyone got for the cook pot. For the first time in a couple years, neither Patrick nor Aaron uncovered a perfect *Boletus edulis*. Still, a couple of people dug up a big handful of crisp little chanterelles. And, of course, we ate well.

That brings me to a point of mushroom etiquette. It is a great challenge to find chanterelles or matsutakes, or any mushroom that has not broken above the ground. That is just part of the game and the skill of identifying "shrumps". But we must avoid the temptation to "rake" the duff in search of our quarry. Sure, it's effective, but we are disturbing, if not destroying, the special habitat. The mycelial network is intricately woven through this layer that one is tempted to remove to get at the hidden treasure. What is left behind is not only ruined habitat, but an unsightly landmark identifying where you found mushrooms. Don't do it.

NOAA is forecasting La Nina conditions for the eastern Pacific. This translates to colder than normal ocean temperatures off our coastline. The results typically translate to more rain in the northwest and drier than normal conditions in the southwest. This is the opposite of El Nino when Southern California often gets flooded. I imagine we are somewhere in the middle, but who knows where that line is drawn?

I am enjoying the cool nights and warm days. It definitely feels like a change in seasons.

I am still looking for an assistant foray leader.

See you in the woods.

-Bill Wolpert
SOMA Foray Leader

Fungi Found at Sept. Foray

Amanita pachycolea
Amyloporus campbellii
Cantharellus cibarius
Fomitopsis pinicola

Phaeolus schweinitzii
Russula albonigra
Russula brevipes var. acrior
Trametes versicolor
Darv
SOMA Science Advisor
SOMAmushrooms.org



“Things—as in mushrooms—ain’t happening in a very big way round these parts,” muttered the old geezer who used to be a younger geezer; he was sort of a “geezer on the way” type of geezer back then.

And he is right, if not grammatically. Stuff just isn’t popping yet in our area and we all know and knew that. But how many of you know that Oregon is experiencing one of its best harvests in years?

And how many know how close it is to drive up for, say, a four day weekend of picking? Great trip packed full of roadside beauty it is. Curiosities too. “Confusion Hill’s” popularity is, well, confusing, to discerning adults—but who knows any of those?

Stop in at any of the Garberville pot growers’ stands along the roads near Redway. I think the tasting fee is waived if you purchase a certain amount. But I am not sure.

Detour to Ferndale and see where that Dustin Hoffman Ebola virus movie was made and buy local jewelers’ gee jaws.

In McKinleyville that great goat cheese, “Cottage Grove,” is made.

Trinidad has “Larrupin” restaurant and mustard and a very good smokehouse.

Patrick’s Point has a great name—and fine mushrooms, but illegal to pick.

In Redwood National Park there are lovely trails with giant ferns, huge skunk cabbages, old growth Doug-firs and redwoods, and lots (a whole bunch) of chanterelles. Can’t pick though. Very tall trees too. Tallest in the world.

The town of Orick can’t be missed. Nope. It is smack dab in the middle of the road and on both sides too. But there is nothing there. Nothing. Weird. Do not go hungry into that town.

Requa has those bear statues on the bridge over the Klamath and not much else but above Crescent city there is a very little known—but deserves fame—spot for boletes. A map to the exact locations where they grow can be purchased at SOMA Camp next January.

A detour to gawk at the Pelican Bay State Prison, home (home?) for the nastiest convicts in California, might be worth it (and that secret bolete place is very nearby. . .).

Now into Oregon we get to Brookings. Not the Institute at Stanford University, but the town where tons of black chanterelles and hedgehogs grow about 10 miles into the forests to the east. Just look for ragtag trucks along the dirt tracks. Watch out for the nasty sheriff. He’s known to be not nice to whom he perceives to be transgressors of his territory.

When you reach Reedsport you will be in the thick of coastal matsutake and porcini picking and a Mexican joint that serves margaritas in what must be ½ gallon glasses. Urp. I once hunted there for boletes with David Campbell and flashlights at night after imbibing. We had to crawl to find them. Not because of the margaritas. They grow there (not margaritas) underneath the *Pinus contorta ssp. contorta* and it is just kind of fun to look for them with little spotlights.

Back home. Darwin—our resident geezer-in-training—may be the most driven mushroom hunter in our group. Several times he has posted his findings and fine they have been. I think “geezerific” is descriptive. Just because. He never seems to tire of showing all of us his booty. Or is that “bounty?” Thanks!

Sulfur shelves are peeking (peaking?) right now.

Look for fog drip fungi here.

But if you’re still up in Oregon check out some lobster mushrooms in pine woods.

The road from Florence to Eugene has some great places to pull over and pick golden chanterelles. Again, a map can be bought at Camp.

And speaking of Camp—one of the things we can all do to donate/help is look for supermarket specials on button mushrooms. Oliver’s in Cotati oftentimes has them at half price in big bags. All you have to do is salt a pot, put in the washed mushrooms, stir a bit, cook for 5 minutes or so, chill, freeze in a proper ZipLock. Bring to Camp and we will deal with them.

More on Oregon. If the matsutake season is on and the commercial pickers are getting their just due at the buyer’s you should have a good chance at picking lots of porcini because they are not worth as much.

Blue chanterelles are fun to pick in the Cascades.

Cooking is fun too and never be blue if you have to do it. Recipe follows.

This popular Italian flat bread originated in Genoa and is known as schiacciata in Tuscany. A most dear, and sadly late, close friend of this reporter’s family’s famed restaurant in Boulder, Colorado makes this bread. We served it at Bill Graham’s memorial concert when he and I catered that event. We cut it horizontally into sandwich size sections and filled it with mozzarella, roasted red peppers, mushrooms, and pesto.



Mushroom Focaccia

Serving Size: 10 Preparation Time: 2:00

Amt.	Measure	Ingredient
1 1/8	pt	water
1	tsp	active dry yeast
2 1/2	tsp	kosher salt
1/3	c	extra virgin olive oil
1/4	lb	whole wheat flour
2	lbs	high gluten flour
2	ozs	rye flour
3 1/4	tbsp	olive oil
2 1/2	tsp	rosemary, fresh
1	bunch	scallions
1	c	mushrooms, any—sautéed

1. Combine first three ingredients--let sit 15 minutes.
2. Put this into the mixer bowl--add the oil.
3. Add the flours (pre-mixed) at low speed. Work until the dough is very loose and all (or most) of the flour is incorporated.
4. While still in mixer bowl allow the dough to rise until double (may remove the dough to make room for another batch). Punch down.
5. Cut into equal large pieces. Let rise again.
6. Put in sheet pans and let rise again.
7. Dimple the dough and pour olive oil, some rosemary, some scallion, and some chopped mushrooms on it.
8. Bake at 400 for about 15-20 minutes.

Press Release

Mushroom hunters know how hard it is to find the elusive matsutake. They hide in the forest duff, just peaking out with a small portion of their cap or only showing as a hump in the ground cover. In spite of their secretive nature, they are actively sought out by amateur and commercial pickers because of their exquisite taste and high commercial value.

Because of its unique flavor, the matsutake has been revered for hundreds of years in Japan and has become deeply ingrained in the culture. In recent years, the harvest of the Japanese matsutake [*Tricholoma matsutake* (Ito et Imai) Sing.] has declined and so the American matsutake [*Tricholoma magnivelare* (Peck) Redhead] is imported to fill the gap.

The chemicals that make up the exquisite taste of this mushroom have been the focus of many scientific studies on the Japanese species. In fact, the very first studies as to the compounds responsible for odors in mushrooms were done on extracts of Japanese matsutake. In 1936 and 1938, the Japanese scientist, S. Maruhashi isolated and identified two highly odoriferous compounds from matsutake extracts. The substance that is most characteristic of the distinctive odor of the matsutake is the ester, methyl cinnamate. Esters are pleasant smelling compounds and are found in many edible fruits. In this case the ester is related to the compounds that give cinnamon its spicy flavor, hence the origin of the name "cinnamate."

The other compound that Maruhashi identified as being important to the flavor of the matsutake was an alcohol. This compound has been dubbed, "mushroom alcohol," because it is found in many other mushroom species. The proper chemical name for this alcohol is 1-octen-3-ol, and it is responsible for the typical mushroom odor.

A recent scientific study explains why these two pleasant tasting compounds are found in the matsutake. In the September issue of *Biochemical Systematics and Ecology* [volume 35, 634-6 (2007)], William Wood and Charles Lefevre report the production and function of these substances in the American matsutake. The spicy ester, methyl cinnamate, is a potent slug repellent. The matsutake uses this compound defensively to protect the sporocarp from being eaten by slugs before it can release its spores.

The second compound, the "mushroom alcohol," is even more interesting. When Wood and Lefevre extracted mushrooms that were not cut up or crushed, they found this "mushroom alcohol" was absent. If they crushed the mushroom before their analysis, large amount of this chemical is formed. This is a second and equally potent way the matsutake protects itself from slug predation. Previous research by William Wood has shown that "mushroom alcohol" is a potent banana slug repellent (*Biochem. Syst. Ecol.* 29, 531). When a slug tries to eat a mushroom, the chewing causes this alcohol to be released, which repels the slug. It is interesting that these two chemicals, which humans find as flavorful, are in reality produced by the mushroom to protect them from slug predation.

Besides looking into the chemicals produced by the fruiting body or sporocarp, these researchers investigated the chemicals found in the mycelium of the American matsutake. This mushroom is mycorrhizal and only grows in association with the roots of trees. In this association, the

trees exchange sugars produced in their leaves for nutrients collected by the mycelium from the soil surrounding the tree roots. Because of this special mutualistic or symbiotic arrangement these mushrooms cannot be artificially grown and harvested.

As part of his Ph.D. studies Charles Lefevre was able to culture American matsutake mycelium in the absence of the symbiotic tree roots. These cultures were slow growing, taking a number of months to grow to a reasonable size. When these cultures were analyzed by William Wood, the chemist on this study, he found to his surprise that the slug repellent chemicals observed in the sporocarp were absent in the mycelium. The secret chemical life of the matsutake continued to unravel.

The major chemicals Wood found in the mycelium were of a type rarely found in terrestrial plants or animals, they contained organic chlorine compounds. These types of compounds are best known as substances that humans have used as pesticides, such as the insecticide DDT or the herbicide 2,4-D. Why are these compounds being made by the mycelium? This is the question these researchers asked.

The mycelium is not under threat of being eaten by slugs since it is growing underground with the tree roots. However, at this stage of its matsutake's life cycle, there is competition with other fungi for space on the tree roots. The chlorinated compounds found in the mycelium, 3,5-dichloro-4-methoxybenzaldehyde and 3,5-dichloro-4-methoxybenzyl alcohol are known to stop important aspects of fungal metabolism. They inhibit an enzyme that produces cell walls in other fungal species. These compounds also halt the production of fungal melanin, a pigment that protects fungal hyphae by forming a physical barrier between the cell and its surroundings. Chemical warfare between different fungi for space on plant roots is not frequently observed, but must be an important aspect of fungal life.

To exclude the possibility that these chlorinated compounds were only produced in the artificial medium in which the mycelium was grown, these researchers analyzed soil containing matsutake mycelium. They identified the most abundant of the chlorinated compounds in the soil, so these compounds are not artefacts and are produced by free-living mycelia.

Thus, the matsutake uses defensive chemicals throughout its life cycle. When it is underground and associated with tree roots, it fights off other fungi's mycelium with exotic chlorinated compounds. On fruiting, it protects the spores in the sporocarp with the volatile and spicy ester, methyl cinnamate. Furthermore, if slugs trying to eat this mushroom are not repelled by this potent ester, it releases large quantities of distasteful mushroom alcohol upon tissue disruption.

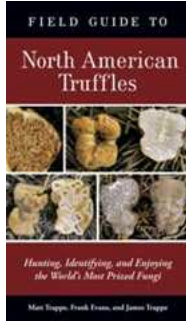
 Professor William F. Wood
 Department of Chemistry
 Humboldt State University
 E-mail wfw2@humboldt.edu



Tricholoma magnivelare

Book Review by Darvin DeShazer

This is sort of the second edition of this color field guide to truffles. The original publication was published by The North American Truffling Society (NATS) in 2005. Although that book had larger photos and an additional detailed close-up photo of each species, this new edition is superior with fifty percent more species and a slightly expanded text. The improvements include a few more tips on habitat, spore morphology, identification features and some additions to the comments section. New info is supplied about the geographical distribution and an edibility index for each species. The color pictures are good and included with each species is a rare photo of the spores which can be used to confirm the identification.



The most commonly encountered truffles are Rhizopogons and they are very difficult to identify to species. This book has an incredible twenty-four species and every species in

the book has color photos to help with identification.

Although used primarily to flavor other foods, truffles are one of nature's most delectable treats. They have a unique, alluring flavor that seems to be addictive. Many species in this book are listed as inedible but only one is marked poisonous, *Scleroderma cepa*. The edibility index ranges from delicious, to tasty, through palatable, to disappointingly insipid, and finally inedible.

SOMA members have enjoyed a taste of truffle butter made with *Tuber oregonense* at meetings, forays or the volunteer appreciation picnic. Aspiring truffle hounds can use this book to learn where to go, when to look and how to dig for truffles on their own. If you plan to hunt truffles, this book is the best place to start. It was written by west coast experts and contains information found no where else.

No other book offers the info and photographs found within this 136 page book. This guide is pocket size, easy to carry in the field and very affordable at \$17.



Fungee Over Easy
ovum speculativum

Found sunny-side up in the lightly salted hotbeds of the Yolkatan. Hatches from Fairy-chicken eggs and is done in minutes under the hot noonday sun or over medium on the Gas Range.



Halbritter's Plant-and Animal World

Addendum to Charmoon's article from last month:

For the sake of clarification, I want to explain the background of my article last month on the Mushrooms of Northern California. I realize that much, if not all, of the information presented is already known to most SOMA members, and some of you may have noticed that the article was written from an unusual, if not slightly puzzling, perspective.

The reason for this is that the article was written for the British Mycological Society, and was published over the summer in their quarterly journal, the "Mycologist News". I was contacted by the Society after they saw in the Mycena News (the MSSF newsletter) that I was giving a talk to the MSSF about the mushrooms of northern California, and they thought that was a topic that would be of interest to their readers. Thus the article's point of view - it was written for a European audience. And when I offered the article to Tom, our editor, I'd forgotten that I'd included a blurb about Wild About Mushrooms and the SOMA Camp at the end - I feel that was unnecessary for the SOMA News readership. But perhaps we will get some Brits at the SOMA Camp this year!



DON'T TOUCH THAT MUSHROOM

The spring issue of *McIlvainea*, the Journal published by NAMA, has an article by Dr. Michael Beug, who chairs the NAMA toxicology committee.

The article reports on mushroom poisoning in North America and among other things, it reported on a Washington man who carried a large *Sparassis crispa* in his bare arms for a couple of miles and broke out in a head-to-toe rash the next day, yet he never ate a bit of the mushroom.



Another person merely carried three *Amanita muscaria* in his hand and started itching and later became confused and paranoid.

I always thought that it was perfectly safe to touch mushrooms, even poisonous ones, and usually it is, but one never knows. I remember hearing that someone was affected adversely by shrimp when she just handled them.

Dr. Beug also reported that: "Morels poisoned the usual number of people who have eaten them before and then became sensitive from eating them one too many times."

Dr. Beug's main intention was to report on the mushroom poisoning for the past year. The number of poisonings (and subsequent deaths) has gone up substantially, though many happened in Mexico or to people from another land who misidentified the mushroom that caused the poisoning.

A majority of the poisonings was due to the consumption of an amanita. Many Maw members do not eat any species of amanita, though some species are quite safe to eat.

When poisoned by an amanita one is very likely to recover if treated promptly. There were a number of dogs who died eating amanitas.

There is apparently no way of preventing this if a dog is allowed to wander in woods that grows amanitas. A suggestion made was to muzzle your dog whenever he goes outdoors in order to prevent mushroom poisoning.

Jim Sherry, Editor: The Mycological Association of Washington, D.C.



Reprinted from the September 2007 *Potomac Sporophore*, the MAW Newsletter.

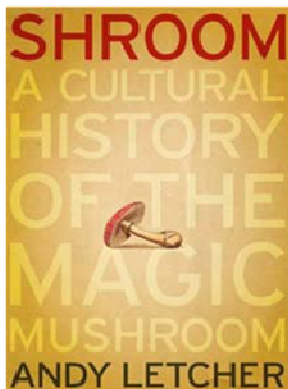
Shroom: A Cultural History of the Magic Mushroom

By Andy Letcher

Book Review by Jeffery Fisher

Hallucinogenic fungi occupy a singular position in the world of the mycophile: revered by some, avoided by many, but known by all. In his recent book, *Shroom: A Cultural History of the Magic Mushroom*, Andy Letcher investigates the human relationship to hallucinogenic fungi, arguing that, until recently, they have been largely unknown in most regions of the world. Letcher's book departs significantly from current widely held beliefs, which posit that ritual use of certain *Psilocybe* species and the *Amanita muscaria* had an instrumental role in early human religion. Instead, *Shroom* centers on the recorded history of hallucinogenic mushrooms and how, in light of this record, we might better understand the role that these mushrooms play in contemporary culture. Letcher uncovers scant evidence in the historical record for the use of hallucinogenic mushrooms in early human history, and in fact, his findings suggest that the current trend in hallucinogenic mushroom use is unprecedented. We, rather than any ancient society, are truly "the mushroom people."

Among the necessary prerequisites for meaningful mushroom intoxication is a cultural framework in which the "bemushroomed" individual can interpret the experience. Letcher illustrates that without such a reference point, seemingly desirable intoxication might just as easily be viewed as confusion, delirium, or insanity. A sixteenth cen-



tury Dutch physician, known as Forestus, commented that "a countrywoman fell after eating mushrooms into a state of 'grievous disorder.'" Among her symptoms was "a condition of pathological or uncontrollable laughter" (50). In 1830, an English family admitted themselves to the hospital after eating a soup made from locally picked mushrooms. They exhibited dilated pupils, increased pulse, and heightened awareness (56). These early reports, which evidence some of the common effects of psilocybin, were met with fear and distress among the affected individuals and the medical community.

Not until R. Gordon Wasson's 1957 *Life Magazine* article on the existence of indigenous psilocybin mushroom use in Mexico, and Timothy Leary's LSD proselytizing during the 1960s, was western culture sufficiently primed for a hallucinogenic mushroom trip. During the early 1970s, a group of American scholars aided the *Psilocybes* in their rise to prominence by identifying many of the native species; among this group were Andrew Weil and Paul Stamets. According to Stamets, by 1976 "hunting for magic mushrooms approached the status of a 'national sport.' He estimated that on any particular autumnal day there were probably thousands of people out collecting" (222).

The ascent of the psilocybin mushroom was cemented that same year when Terence and Dennis McKenna published *Psilocybin: Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide*. The simplified cultivation techniques contained therein made *Psilocybe cubensis* available to any industrious individual who could obtain the spores (a task that, with the advent of the Internet, has become even easier than growing the mushrooms).

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Alongside his detailed account of the psilocybin mushroom's rise in popularity, Letcher discusses the attendant theories regarding prehistoric mushroom use. Most notable among these theories is Wasson's hypothesis that the sacrament Soma, detailed in the Hindu *Rig Veda*, was the *Amanita muscaria*. Letcher casts considerable doubt on this theory (not least of all for the fact that *Amanita* psychoactivity is notoriously unpredictable), noting that Wasson's hypothesis depends on a specific translation of the *Veda*, as well as photographs of the mushroom that are known to have been doctored. Additionally, Wasson's choice not to submit papers to peer-reviewed journals in favor of self-publishing lavishly ornamented books as the vehicles for his theorizing helped insure that a favorably biased public would embrace the Soma hypothesis; and indeed it did. Letcher theorizes that when Wasson published *Soma: Divine*

Mushroom of Immortality in 1971, on the heels of the psychedelic '60s, enthusiasts willingly embraced the idea that a psychoactive mushroom lay at the heart of an ancient religion. Now, over 40 years later, this specious idea is still widely held.

Letcher similarly dismantles many of the far-out theories of the late Terence McKenna, in favor of a more pragmatic stance on psilocybin mushrooms. He posits that in our post-modern era, in which scientific rationalism has disenchanting many of life's mysteries, magic mushrooms are uniquely capable of reenchanting the world. If the last 50 years is any indication, the process has only just begun.

Letcher, Andy. *Shroom: A Cultural History*

Reprinted from: *The Mycena News*, MSSF Newsletter May 2007

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Important Announcement About Dues

SOMA Members,

We have held off as long as we could, but rising costs necessitate an increase in our annual membership dues. The new cost of an annual family membership to SOMA is now \$25. HOWEVER, we are instituting a tiered membership structure as follows:

\$25 for family membership (includes printed and mailed SOMA News, plus digital if desired)

\$20 for family membership who do not require a mailed Newsletter (digital subscription)

\$20 for seniors (60 years or over--please select digital subscription if you can!)

WE NEED YOUR FEEDBACK! How should digital subscribers receive the pdf version of the Newsletter? (1-2 MB)

1. As an email attachment sent out monthly?
2. Or as a download from the SOMA website via a password protected web page (with an email reminder that the newsletter is ready for download)?

Please send your vote for 1 or 2 above to SOMAnewseditor@SOMAmushrooms.org

If you have never seen a SOMA newsletter in color with much higher definition, then you are really missing something. It is SO much prettier! Go to the following link and check out past newsletters to see what you are missing and to see how you can save \$5 by not requiring a printed and mailed SOMA News.

<http://www.somamushrooms.org/news/news.html>

Currently, printing and mailing costs consume two thirds of our membership income from dues. This does not leave much for our scholarship goals as well as all the other costs of running our club. So, regardless of what subscription rate you choose, please consider forgoing the printed newsletter and print your own from the digital copy. Please note that all members, including those who must have a mailed version, are entitled to subscribe to the digital newsletter.

Please consider helping SOMA by selecting digital subscription. Its good for the environment!

Thanks from the SOMA Board of Directors

MSSF Mendocino Woodlands Foray

This year's annual MSSF Mendocino Woodlands Foray will take place on the weekend of November 9-11, at the Mendocino Woodlands camp, in the mushroom-rich hills above the town of Mendocino (northern Cal.). Brian Perry, an authority on the Mycenoid fungi, will be the foray mycologist. He will be assisted at the specimen tables by Norm Andresen and Mykweb's Mike Wood. Brian will also do a presentation Saturday night on bioluminescent fungi. Planned classes include mushroom dye, papermaking, identification, photography, and cultivation, including a mushroom kit making session. Fee of \$140 includes lodging, meals, and all forays, classes, and events. Kids under 13 half price (w/ adult), under 5 free. \$90 with offsite lodging.

Registration form available online at www.MSSF.org/mendo, or send check with names and all contact info to: Liana Hain - MSSF 49 Hancock St. San Francisco, CA 94114.

Questions? E-mail to mendo@MSSF.org, or call either 650-728-9405 or 707-829-2063.

The Mycological Society of San Francisco
presents the annual

Mendocino Woodlands Foray

FRIDAY - SUNDAY NOVEMBER 9 - 11

Foray Mycologist
Brian Perry
SF State



Forays!
Classes!
Fine Dining!

With classes on mushroom ID, drying, kit making, photography, paper making, cooking, and cultivation, specimen tables and evening presentations, Take-home mushroom kit making session!

Join us for this special event at the rustic Mendocino Woodlands Camp, located in the mushroom-rich hills above the town of Mendocino. Forays, presentations, classes, and more will be led by expert mycologists. A benefit for the MSSF.

Fee: \$140 includes lodging, meals, and all forays, classes, and events. Special rate of \$90 with off-site lodging. Kids under 13 half price, under 5 free.

Registration - send check with names, address, phone, and e-mail to:
Liana Hain - MSSF - 49 Hancock St., San Francisco, CA 94114
Registration form available online at: www.mssf.org/mendo

Further information: mendo@mssf.org / 707-829-2063

SOMA Membership Application and Renewal Form

THE SOMA PLEDGE

Regardless of what others may think of me, I wish to become a member of the **Sonoma County Mycological Association**; a non-profit 501(c)(3), educational society, dedicated to the mystery and appreciation of local fungi.

NAME: _____

DATE _____

ADDRESS: _____

APARTMENT #: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____

ZIP: _____

HOME PHONE: _____

CELL:

WORK:

EMAIL: _____

Please indicate below, any particular areas of interest or committee functions you may like to serve:

- New member
- Please change my mailing label and membership roster info
- Please do not release my information outside of the club
- Digital (Save \$5) or...**
- Mailed Subscription?**

Membership dues run a full fiscal year from time of application or from the date of expiration if renewing early. Please make checks payable to SOMA. Check one below:

- \$25 for family membership (includes mailed SOMA News, plus digital if desired)
- \$20 for family membership who do not require a mailed Newsletter (digital subscription)
- \$20 for seniors (60 years or over--please select digital subscription if you can!)

Return this form with your check to: **SOMA**
P.O. BOX 73
Cotati, CA 94931-0073

Check out the **SOMA website** for fabulous member benefits!

WWW.SOMAmushrooms.org

Look for application and renewal online; pay at the website, and save on mailing !

MORE ANNOUNCEMENTS

DAVID ARORA'S ANNUAL MENDOCINO MUSHROOM FORAY, November 23rd-25th.

Celebrate the fun in FUNgus by joining David Arora & special guest speakers from Thailand, Russia, and Oregon for a weekend of mushroom hunting, feasting, and lecture-workshops beginning the day after Thanksgiving. \$190 per person includes lodging and most meals. To register and for more details, contact: maxfun@cruzio.com

"The 13th International Fungi and Fiber Symposium and Exhibition", is being hosted in Mendocino, California, by a dedicated consortium of fiber artists from the USA.

January 7 - 12, 2008

- a.. The International Mushroom Dye Institute
- b.. Pacific Textile Arts
- c.. Mendocino County Hand Weavers Guild
- d.. Mendocino Art Center

...and with the support of and under the umbrella of the international fiber arts community of the IFFF, ("International Fungi & Fiber Forum").

It is timed to celebrate the 90th birthday celebration of Miriam C. Rice, our intrepid pioneer of mushroom dyes.

There will be good number of international fiber artists and mycologists participating, including Paul Stamets, who will be our keynote speaker.

If you are interested in the possibilities of mushroom based fiber arts, dyes, inks, painting, Myco-Stix™, polypore paper-making, felt making, and wild-crafting responsibilities, all these and much more fungi lore? This is the place for you!

For further details, please go to www.mushroomsforcolor.com

SOMA WILD MUSHROOM CAMP!

Save the date:

Martin Luther King Weekend, **January 19th, 20th & 21st**

Register online at www.SOMAmushrooms.org
or contact: SOMAcampinfo@SOMAmushrooms.org
or call (707) 773-1011

LOW FEES!!:

- \$275 Full Weekend
- \$215 with offsite lodging
- \$125 Sunday only

See website for early-bird special before November 15th!

Includes lodging in shared, comfy cabins, all meals, and great mushroom camaraderie. Three days of great fun!

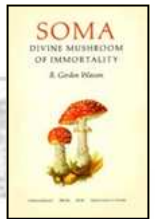
Expert participants include **Tom Volk, Else Vellinga, Taylor Lockwood, Mycochef Patrick Hamilton**—others TBA!

Forays, classes & workshops, artwork, specimen tables, feasting, presentations, mushroom chefs and much more!



Best of Hubble Picture 5 of 10:

The Hourglass Nebula, 8,000 light years away, has a pinched-in-the-middle look because the winds that shape it are weaker at the centre.



SOMA Members

The October Issue of *SOMA News* has arrived!

SOMA usually meets on the third Thursday of the month throughout the year (September through May), at 7 PM, at the **Sonoma County Farm Bureau, 970 Piner Road, Santa Rosa, California.**

Fungi are displayed at 7 PM, and speakers begin at 7:45 PM. Bring in your baffling fungi to be identified!

Directions to the Sonoma County Farm Bureau

Coming from the south

- Go north on **Highway 101.**
- Past Steele Lane, take the **Bicentennial Way** exit.
- Go over **Highway 101.**
- Turn right on **Range Avenue.**
- Turn left on **Piner Road.**
- At about 1/4 mile, turn left into parking lot at **970 Piner Road.**

Coming from the north

- Go south on **Highway 101.**
- Take the first Santa Rosa exit, **Mendocino Avenue.**
- Stay on the frontage road, (it becomes **Cleveland Avenue** after you cross Industrial Drive).
- Turn right on **Piner Road.**
- At about 1/4 mile, turn left into parking lot at **970 Piner Road.**

970 Piner Road is marked by a star on the map at right.

