



SOMA News

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 1

September 2009

*SOMA IS AN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO MYCOLOGY.
WE ENCOURAGE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS BY SHARING OUR ENTHUSIASM
THROUGH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND GUIDED FORAYS.*

2009/2010 SEASON CALENDAR

September

Sept. 17th » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: David Campbell

Foray Sept. 19th » Salt Point

October

Oct. 15th » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: Don Hemmes

Foray Oct. 17th » Salt Point

November

Nov. 20th » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: TBA

Foray Nov. 21st » Salt Point

December Potluck on the 11th.

SOMA Camp January 16-18, 2010

Please Note: The Annual Membership meeting month has been changed. It is now being held on the first meeting of the season in September. So come this month to participate in this meeting.



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.

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

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

SPEAKER OF THE MONTH

David Campbell

September 17th—7pm—Farm Bureau

Rocky Monsoon Mushrooms:

A peek at summer fungi of southwestern Colorado

David Campbell... has been collecting, studying, eating, teaching and writing about wild mushrooms for 40 years. He has served many years on the council of the Mycological Society of San Francisco (MSSF), including 2 years as president. For many years, David has served the San Francisco Poison Control Center for mushroom poisoning incident response in Marin County and the greater Bay Area. With a primary focus on edible and poisonous mushrooms, he leads innumerable fungal forays for MSSF and the Sonoma Mycological Association (SOMA). David was foray leader and event facilitator for several years at author David Arora's annual mycological field seminars. As an expert mycophagist (one who safely eats a wide variety of wild mushrooms) and experienced outdoor group foray leader, David is 'Foray Director' for Wild About Mushrooms Company, guiding organized wild mushroom adventures, locally and afar. He recently formed his own company, MycoVentures, Inc., expanding his horizons to include the rest of the planet, for events such as Porcini hunts in the Colorado Rockies and off-the-beaten-path truffle forays in Italy.



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SOMA's *Amanita muscaria* logo by Ariel Mahon

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dispatch From the Duff

Welcome to the 2009/2010 season. We are awaiting the forced decision regarding park closures and day-use fee increase. At this time, our thought is to continue the schedule of speakers on the third Thursday of the month and forays on the following Saturday. There is an exception in the fall. The speaker in November will be on Friday, the 20th and the foray the next day. A schedule conflict with the Farm Bureau caused the change. We are taking steps to prevent a future deviation.

In September, SOMA will again participate in a Trash Pickup Day in cooperation with the Salt Point Ranger Staff on the 19th. We have the required bags, safety vests and extra gloves. If Salt Point State Park is closed, we will notify you via email and post card. Let's hope it won't be necessary to cancel the day.

The coming mushroom collecting season appears in doubt, because of low rainfall. Multiple climate predictions for Northern California indicate that somewhere between El Nino, La Nina and prophesy of a disastrous fire season in the Northwest, the fungi season will not be plentiful. There is room for optimism, however. Predictions can be slightly off target. Thomas Watson, former IBM Chairman of the Board, at one time thought, "there's a world market for about 5 computers". The low estimate certainly turned out wrong. Perhaps the low rainfall prediction will too. So, we plan to have our wax paper bags, collecting baskets, hiking sticks, and good attitudes ready to go hunting once again.

The board postponed introduction of an online membership signup and renewal system. We will work with the other clubs in the area and try to share some of the expense with its development and implementation. Membership signup and renewal will continue as in previous years through forms, snail mail and the online website-Paypal. **Please note the request to renew memberships in September.** A single month renewal will greatly simplify membership record keeping and improve our ability to prepare an accurate budget for the coming year.

Looking forward to seeing everyone on the 17th,

Best regards,

-Jim Wheeler

IMPORTANT MEMBERSHIP NOTICE!!

Please take note: all membership renewals will occur in the month of September henceforth. **Please renew your membership now.** If you feel a proration of dues is required, please email the membership person, Jim Wheeler at wheeler.j.d@att.net or by phone at 823-1376.

FORAY OF THE MONTH

Saturday, September 19th

Meet at **Woodside Campground** in **Salt Point State Park** at 10 AM.

\$8 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 Ben Schmid at (707) 575-4778 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.

One rainy November weekend we invited a family to go mushrooming with us in Salt Point.

The kids were excited because the last time they'd gone there with us the electricity in our rented cabin had gone out. We had to cook our turkey in the fireplace, and, for lack of anything else to do in the candlelight, we played Catopoly till one in the morning. (Jim won, which sent the 11 year old into a sobbing breakdown.) And the next day we'd found an enormous Cauliflower mushroom growing on a stump beside the driveway. Jim insisted on cooking it, and the kids kept watching Jim for signs of impending death.

So off we went in rain hats and boots. Before we got out of the car we spied loads of mushroom in the parking lot. It was to be great day, in fact, our best mushrooming day ever. Julia, the 17 year old, found a huge brilliant yellow- orange Sulphur Shelf climbing a tree. What a sight. Once Gwen The Younger got her mushroom eyes she was unstoppable. We filled bags and bags with all kinds of mushrooms which we would later spread out on the table and try to identify with our guidebooks.

After we rounded up all the lost members of our party, we sat down on logs to devour our sandwiches and chocolate chip cookies. An entire deer family bounded into our picnic area surprising the heck out of everyone. That evening we cooked some hedgehogs that Gwen had found, and the death watch began again. Nothing more fun than waiting around for an adult to croak.

So, I'd say that the best way to get kids interested in mushroom is, first of all, take them with you on a promising hunt. Kids are great at spotting mushrooms. They are closer to the ground, and their eyes are trained to spot patterns. On a SOMA mushroom hunt we happily attended there were several children along. The very youngest, about 5, found a slew of black trumpets – just about the hardest mushrooms to see amongst the fallen leaves. Everyone was amazed and he garnered heaps of praise. It was fun for everyone to join in his joy and excitement.

Another fun thing to share with kids to pique their interest is the plethora of fantasy books about fairies and mushrooms. One of my favorite authors, Elsa Beskow, writes wonderful stories and the illustrations almost always include Fly Agarics. The little woodland elves are either sitting on them, resting under them, or wearing them for hats.

When I was a child, my favorite aunt used to read me fairy stories. Being brilliantly creative, she used to encourage me and her grandchildren to make fairy houses out of bits of sticks and moss and bark. We used acorn caps for fairy bowls and teacups for our fairy tea parties. But her most wonderful invention was a way to distribute fairy dust about the yard in hopes of getting fairy mushroom rings to appear. You take a piece of paper and fold it into a cone, securing it with lots of tape. (Kids love tape.) Then you attach one end of a string to the cone, and the other end to a stick. Cut a tiny hole in the pointed end of the cone after filling it with a mixture of salt, sugar and flour. Walk around the yard in a circle, shaking the stick as the fairy dust falls to the ground. Check every day to see if the mushrooms have come up. If not, there must have been something wrong with the formula you used – try another one.

Mushrooming is perfect for kids. Being out in the woods, balancing on downed logs, listening to the crows scold intruders, picnicking, getting muddy, looking at strange bugs, finding animal tracks and worrying about bears....it's just so much more fun than video games.

If you'd like to nurture some future mushroomers, and you lack readily available ones, think about sharing your interest at your local elementary school. Schools are almost always happy to have outsiders visit classrooms or assemblies. Science teachers especially. When my kids were in elementary school, I was in charge of securing bimonthly assemblies. I was always looking for people with passionate interests.

Mushrooms hold so much promise in the fields of medicine, bioremediation, nutrition....we need future scientists who'll unlock all the secrets they hold.

SOMA Wild Mushroom Camp 2010

For the 13th annual **SOMA Wild Mushroom Camp** we are planting a theme: **Trees and Mushrooms**.

Nestled in acres of oak, madrone, tan oak, redwood, and Doug-fir near Occidental, California, we will move breezily from class to woods to dining feasts, enjoying it all. There is so much to take in! Mushroom forays, gourmet mushroom cuisine, classes & workshops on mushroom identification, cooking, dyeing, paper-making, medicine making, photography, cultivation, and more.

Our delight is further assured with featured speakers:

Tom Bruns on Saturday evening and *Tom Volk* on Sunday night.

January 16-17-18, 2010 ~ Martin Luther King weekend.

Online registration available soon. <www.somamushrooms.org>
Please join us!

SOMA Mushroom Camp
Wild
NEXT EXIT
January 16-18, 2010
Martin Luther King weekend

Forays, Classes, Workshops, Wild Mushroom Cuisine

Register Here
www.somamushrooms.org

Guest Speakers
TOM VOLK Ph.D.
TOM BRUNS Ph.D.

Mushrooming

Sonoma County Mycological Association presents
the 13th annual SOMA Wild Mushroom Camp



Here we are, here we go again. Another beginning to SOMA's season. Will there be shining lights on our Broadway of mushroom treasures? Newly accessible spots to foray in (ah—probably not). Unknown species becoming known? Who knows? But we all care.

And since there has not been much happening around here except for a couple of reported *B. edulis* found in the East Bay Hills, some “fog-drip” chanterelles available under the pines (“pine-trells”) up along the coast, and various other fungi picked in the Sierras, I took off for a couple of weeks to the Mexican state of Oaxaca for some mountain mushrooming with friends from the US and from down there.

We were accompanied by mycologist Dr. Arturo Estrada-Torres of the University of Tlaxcala for the 3rd straight year and a great time was had by all. Over 90 different species were found even though that part of Mexico is experiencing a bit of a drought.

Maybe the prettiest was from the *Amanita caesarea* group—the *Amanita tecomate*, also called *A. yema*, pictures of which I've posted at Mushroomobserver.org. The locals with us who were Zapotec people call this mushroom tecomate. I do too (but have been “corrected” even though the name yema has not been published in any scientific paper). Ah—the difficulties with mushrooms are not just figuring out what is what but then what is called what.

Other fungi of note were the deadly *A. ocreata*, lobster mushrooms, *A. flavoconia*, lots of Tricholomas, a fabulous *A. magniverrucata* double that I picked in a really neat looking pine, oak, and madrone forest at around 10,000'. Huffing and puffing was found in our group too.

When Arturo i.d.'ed the fungi he most often would just write on the labels such stuff as “*Amanita caesaria* group” or “*Boletus sp.*” Or “*Russula olivacea* group” and not try to further name the species. We were obviously not in a lab and only rudimentary observations (albeit—educated ones) could be done where we were. And there is a lot of this “group” thing seemingly going around in scientific fungi circles everywhere. Better to be close in one's i.d. then to be wrong.

And as the science improves and as newly energetic experts get involved, do expect some changes in what you thought were the correct names of maybe even familiar edible fungi. There are at least five boletes now called “kings. . . .”

By the time you read this (or use the column for other purposes) Connie Green and I will be up in Cordova, Alaska, joining Dorothy Beebee, Steve Trudell (Univ. of Wash), and other mushroom folks for a Fungal Fest. Ms Beebee volunteered my name to be the guest chef when she was there last year and I have accepted the honor, the honorarium, and the free ticket and lodging. The power of food!

Below is one of the recipes we will be preparing there at the Reluctant Fisherman restaurant. Enjoy and start thinking of SOMA Camp. . . .



Roasted Maitake Salad

Serving Size: 4 Preparation Time :0:30

Amount	Ingredient	Preparation Method
The Mushrooms		
1 1/3 Ea	Maitake	cut into thirds
	Extra Virgin Olive Oil	
	S & P	
Vinaigrette		
2 Tsp	Sherry Vinegar	
2 Tsp	Balsamic Vinegar	
1/4 Tsp	Dijon Mustard	
2 Tbl	Extra Virgin Olive Oil	
	S & P	
Salad		
1 C	Mixed Baby Greens	
1/4 C	Pickled Onions	(See Directions)
1/2 C	Red Wine Vinegar	
4 Tbl	Grana Padano Cheese	thinly shaved



Photo of *Amanita tecomate* taken by Mycochef on a recent foray in Mexico

THE MUSHROOMS

oven to 425

Place the mushrooms cut into 1/3 pieces on a sheet pan. Drizzle with the oil, S & P. Roast until just crisp on the edges, about 10 1-2 minutes. Remove from heat and keep warm.

THE VINAIGRETTE

Mix all the ingredients and set aside.

THE SALAD

Wash the greens well. Pickle the onions by steeping them in simmering red wine vinegar for 3-4 minutes. Drain, chill, and set aside. Use a vegetable peeler and thinly slice the cheese and set aside.

ASSEMBLE:

Toss greens in a little of the dressing. Do not over dress!! Place on the center of the plate and put the warm mushroom just off to the side. Toss a few onions on the greens. Place some shaved cheese on top. Pepper?

Note: Maybe use a squeeze bottle for more dressing

The Mushroom Faire, put on by the McCloud Chamber of Commerce over the Memorial Day Weekend was a colossal disappointment. We'd been lured by promises of Spring Kings (boletes) gathered in the show of Mt. Shasta. We had very little for breakfast the first morning of the fair, thinking we'd gorge ourselves on mushroom goodies. We had coolers with us, the better to preserve dozens of fresh mushrooms for the rest of our trip.

I'd been imagining something like the Santa Cruz Fungus Fair.

There was one mushroom purveyor, and he had just a very small quantity of Spring Kings, which he kept hidden under his table to protect them from the heat. We would not have known he had any had we not asked. One vendor was advertising tri-tip steak sandwiches with sautéed Spring Kings, but he had only one 7" sauté pan on a single hot plate burner. Woefully, he couldn't keep up with the demand, small though it was.

There were two or three merchandise vendors. One person was selling small dog clothing and hand knitted alpaca socks. I bought some socks. I've been wearing them ever since so as to get my money's worth. Another person was selling tomato starts.

It was a very hot day, so we decided to beat it out of there. The nearby McCloud River Loop offered gorgeous waterfalls and easy hiking. That was fun, but crowded so we decided to head up Mt. Shasta. We'd find our own Spring Kings.

No such chance, not a mushroom anywhere. After hours of searching and driving, we headed to our Dunsmuir Motel. We

picked up a big juicy steak and salad fixings. We cooked the steak on the motel's Weber, and ate at a picnic table overlooking the Sacramento River. There are several very nice restaurants in Dunsmuir, but we were trying to see how little money we could spend on our 5 day vacation.

The town of McCloud is charming with its big old Victorian hotels and the magnificent Mt. Shasta as a backdrop. The geology of the area is fascinating and the hiking is good, so although it might not be worth a special trip to go to the faire, especially if it is a hot weekend, the area has much to offer. Had we splurged and had the Shasta Dinner train ride with its all mushroom menu, we might have a nicer memory – or maybe not.

What is a Spring King?

The Spring King (*Boletus rex-veris* sp.nov.) is a type of Porcini, or 'king bolete' commonly found in Western mountains in spring or early summer. It is small, fairly hard, and seems to be mostly used for drying. It can occasionally be found fresh in more adventuresome local markets, but we, of course, always looking for adventure, wanted to experience them on their home turf. We bought some from the sole purveyor, and cooked them up. They were nutty, a bit bitter, with lots of liquid to cook out. They deteriorated rapidly and we ended up throwing out a hideously stinky mess.

To read a fascinating account of Spring King harvest in McCloud, as well as other tidbits on mushroom hunting on public lands, read David Arora's article from *Economic Botany*, vol. 62, available by visiting David Arora's website.

Edible Mushrooms Sprout in Woman's Bathroom

Edible Mushrooms Sprout In Woman's Bathroom Wet Weather Means Mushrooming Mold

Jaclyn Allen, 7NEWS Reporter

POSTED: 2:59 pm MDT July 6, 2009

UPDATED: 9:32 am MDT July 7, 2009

DENVER –

Lurking inside Connie Lassman's bathroom lies something scarier than mold or mildew.

"I'm afraid of it," said Lassman. "The first time I saw it, I thought, 'Oh my God. What the ?'"

It was mushrooms.

For more than a week, the 10-inch fungi cluster has called the base of her commode home.

"It's gross," she said. "I don't know why it had to choose my apartment."

A local mushroom hunter identified the fungi as edible *Plerotus Ostreatus*, more commonly known as Oyster Mushrooms.

But after Colorado's second rainiest June in more than a century, mold, mildew and even mushrooms are popping up in homes across the Metro.

Normally, the state's low humidity prevents minor mold from spreading fast, but mold remediation workers said this year is different.

"With all the rain that we've had, saturated soils are causing problems in crawl spaces. The hail is causing leaks in roofs that are then causing mold problems," said Dave Banes, who does mold remediation and inspections with RMRC Services, Inc.

Lately, Banes said, he can hardly keep up with the calls.

"It's probably a 150 to 200 percent increase. Maybe more than that," he said. "We're seeing crawl spaces that have been dry forever all of a sudden getting wet."

He said not everyone needs to bring in the professionals, though.

"If it's less than 10 square feet, the EPA says just clean it up," he said.

He recommends not using bleach, but specialized chemicals, instead.

But that's a scary thought for Lassman, who hopes her landlord will do the dirty work.

"I'm not touching that thing," she said.



<http://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/19970194/detail.html>

There seems to be an ongoing temptation amongst mycophagists and chefs to serve mushrooms raw or barely cooked. Generally speaking, this is not the best of ideas.

The mycochitin composition of mushroom cell walls, as opposed to cellulose walls of plant cells, is difficult for humans to digest. Our stomachs resent indigestible items, and often forcibly reject them without further ado. Cooking helps break down fungal cell walls, rendering mushroom flesh not only more readily digestible, but also releasing significant nutritional value contained within the cells.

Further, many mushrooms considered edible contain irritating or toxic components readily destroyed or eliminated by cooking. Therefore, common and valid mycophagical wisdom dictates that all edible mushrooms should be cooked prior to consumption. Exceptions are made only if one has specific knowledge that a particular pristine species is safe to eat raw. With these few 'au naturel' exceptions, the 'pristine' part becomes especially important. Environmental or microbial contaminations to the mushroom flesh may pose potential health hazards. By dramatic example, a few free-spirited youths in Hawaii a few years ago blithely consumed blue-staining psilocybes as they went, collecting from cow patties. What a downer it must have been a short while later, when the doctor told them they had nematodes!

Bear in mind, there is much yet to be learned about eating mushrooms; wild or tame, cooked or raw... the research is in progress, and we the mycophagists are, by default, the guinea pigs. What we know of mushroom edibility is primarily the result of shared anecdotal information, as compiled and recorded over the course of human history. Hardly do we rest on hard science or a complete body of knowledge when we decide whether or not to eat a given fungus. In fact, another good general reason for cooking one's mushrooms is the blind stab it represents at protecting us from the unknown.

The list of edible mushrooms considered safe for raw consumption is quite short. Even species commonly eaten raw, especially the ubiquitous Button Mushroom, *Agaricus bisporus*, have their drawbacks. 'Buttons' and many other edible mushrooms contain various hydrazines, a group of chemical compounds generally considered carcinogenic. For the most part, these compounds are heat sensitive, readily volatilized and expunged from the fungal flesh by proper cooking. This basic understanding is employed by some more adventurous mycophagists to justify eating the False Morel, *Gyromitra esculenta*, a deadly poisonous mushroom according to every published description I've read. Those who so indulge in this species believe the hydrazine compounds present (naturally occurring gyromitrin converts to monomethylhydrazine, or MMH when heated) to be effectively removed, at least to large degree, by thorough cooking, provided one stands well clear of the fumes during the cooking process. The more conservative mycophagists consider this practice questionable, at best, and argue that gyromitrin is never completely eliminated, that there may well be harmful cumulative factors associated with repeat False Morel consumption... I say, to each his own in decisions such as this, cautioning only that the innocent and unaware should never be arbitrarily included in mycophagical experimentation.

The kicker with *Agaricus* species, including the 'Buttons', is that one of their primary hydrazine components, along with gyromitrin, is 'agaritine', a substance somewhat resistant to cooking heat, with a significant percentage (25-75%) of agaritine material typically remaining after being subjected to various methods of cooking. So, the question, as far as avoiding hydrazines in

Agaricus is concerned, actually becomes whether to eat members of this genus, at all.

We need to keep in mind that lab tests and subsequent conclusions drawn concerning carcinogenic/mutagenic health hazards of hydrazine involve massive doses of isolated extracts administered to mice in a concentrated time frame. Similarly disturbing test results are likely to be found with many substances present in many, many foods humans commonly eat without suffering or even worrying about any particular health concern. The relatively unblemished human history of consuming edible *Agaricus* species suggests we may continue to do so. The science may suggest we should not over indulge, but we already knew that... As I know of no one stricken by cancer or any other malady as particular result of eating *Agaricus*, and since the genus includes some of the most delectable of all edibles, there are several wild *Agaricus* species that remain firmly ensconced on my preferred edibles list.

Unfortunately, the Button Mushroom industry routinely promotes the use of their product raw, especially on salads, perpetuating the myth that mushrooms need not be cooked. A recent Poison Control Center incident with *Gyromitra montanum* purchased at a California Whole Foods store demonstrated the broader danger of public misconception about the safety of indiscriminate raw mushroom consumption. The blithe and unwitting "victim" reportedly took a nice chomp from her just purchased 'Bull's Nose' as she walked out of the store! As far as I know, this mushroom contains hydrazine compounds that may be quite similar to those found in *Gyromitra esculenta*, but in sufficiently reduced concentrations to be listed in many published mushroom guides as edible, if cooked. In this case, the immediate effects induced by consumption of the raw *Gyromitra* flesh easily trumped any long-term health concerns.

Cooking of mushrooms generally reduces the likelihood of gastrointestinal irritation, and allergic reaction. Popular comestibles such as Morels (*Morchella* sp.), Hedgehogs (*Hydnum repandum*) and Oyster Mushrooms (*Pleurotus* sp.) will almost certainly make one ill if eaten raw. Chanterelles (*Cantharellus cibarius*, *formosus*, etc.) are generally considered stomach irritants in the raw. King Boletes (*Boletus edulis*) are known to cause many people gastro disturbance even when cooked, but are nonetheless popular raw in the hard-button stage. Diners served a raw Porcini salad are well advised to eat just a tad... or else.

Some small and/or gooey mushrooms are often eaten raw, mostly because they hardly lend themselves to cooking. The Witch's Butters (*Tremella mesenterica*, *T. foliacea*, *Dacromyces palmatus*) and Toothed Jellies (*Pseudohydnum gelatinosum*, *Phlogiotis hellvelloides*) are good examples of fungi commonly eaten 'as is', sans ill reported effect, or at least, I've heard no dire reports. Part of the safety in occasionally consuming oddball species such as these is we never really eat all that much. In fact, key to safe consumption of any and all mushrooms, aside from proper ID and sufficient cooking, is moderation.

Prized hypogeous fungi, Truffles, that is, are typically eaten raw or barely cooked, with few complaints. Note that Truffle quantities consumed tend to be rather slight, due to intensity of flavor and aroma, not to mention expense.

Somewhat ironically, given the nefarious reputation of the genus at large, one of the more readily digestible, or at least more innocuous mushrooms to eat raw, by my experience, is the Coccoli (*Amanita calyprata*). I generally eat these mushrooms raw because they so remind me of oysters (mollusks, not the fungus), in that the more you cook them, the less desirable they

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(Continued from page 6)

become. In all fairness, I should mention that I do chemically cook my Coccoli "ceviche" with citrus marinade... Of course, you are not likely to see edible Amanita specimens for sale in the market, nor should you, methinks. Our markets and the public both lack the knowledge and sophistication to safely trade a product so easily confused with its lethal cousins!

Other methods of chemical cooking, aside from citric acid, involve brining or pickling. I lack personal experience with this form of mushroom processing, but I have heard and read it is used to apparently satisfactory effect in many cultures, notably Russia, where many kinds of freshly collected Russula and Lactarius species are reportedly tossed collectively into the brine barrel, to be directly retrieved and munched later. Of interest with this method is that some of these species so prepared are considered poisonous when cooked by conventional heat application.

As stated above, cooking with heat destroys many toxins and irritants found in mushrooms. Toxins present in various red-sponged species of the genus Boletus, for instance, may allegedly be neutralized with prolonged cooking. Ibotenic acid and related toxic compounds present in *Amanita muscaria* are not heat-sensitive, but are soluble in boiling water. This mushroom may be rendered edible by properly leaching the mushroom toxins into boiling water, tossing the water, and eating what's left of the mushroom. I have been party to this process several times while participating in David Arora's annual Mendocino seminars,

where we often served properly processed Fly Agaric, sliced and boiled, to the assembled throng, free from toxic effect.

Make no mistake, however. Deadly amanitin toxins present in the Death Cap and Destroying Angel (*Amanita phalloides*, *A. ocreata*, etc.) are oblivious to heat and leaching processes, retaining their virulent properties regardless of cooking methods applied. Cooking or not makes no difference with these toadstools; they remain fully capable of killing any sad soul who egregiously partakes, regardless.

Morel / Golden Beet Salad — Featured at the Volunteer Picnic
From David Campbell

Rinse, re-hydrate in minimal quantity of water, and sauté w/ oil and/or butter generous scoop of dried Morels.

Congee cooked Morels with sauté of chopped onions in reduction of Morel soaking liquid plus splash of zinfandel, pomegranate juice and a few dried cranberries.

Boil a few Golden Beets; slice, dice, or julienne, as desired.

Pan-roast one small handful of Pecans.

Chop one small heirloom tomato, and balanced portions of baby arugula, chives, parsley, fresh thyme, Comte cheese.

Assemble above on serving dish; en mélange (or composed).

Finish with sea salt, black pepper, olive oil, lime juice

My Best Culinary Discovery Ever

Mary Olsen © 2009

Shortly after our introduction to mushrooms and truffles at the Santa Cruz Fungus Fair, we visited Todd Spanier, The King of Mushrooms, at his warehouse in Daly City. We bought our first truffles, Italian Whites, and, on Todd's recommendation, a very small jar of Truffle Salt. He also gave us a small tin of fennel pollen.

It was almost too much excitement for one day. All the way home I had my head stuck in a small paper bag, inhaling the fabulous aroma of the truffle. I made Jim promise that if I had an oxygen tank on my death bed that he would find a way to get a truffle into the tank. We have bought all kinds of truffles since then, and enjoy them tremendously on baked potatoes. Todd Spanier is a wholesaler, and his truffles and wild mushrooms are sold at the Monterey Market in Berkeley, so happily we don't have to make the voyage to Daly City very often.

But we do go when we are out of Truffle Salt. Truffle Salt is my finest ever culinary discovery. It is just about as good as shaving a truffle over something, and it lasts a very long time with no degradation in flavor or aroma. I have no idea how that works. One of Todd's recommendations was to sprinkle it on POPCORN!!! Now who ever breathed the words popcorn and truffle in the same sentence? Well, take my word for it, it is wonderful. It is great on any kind of meat, of course, and just the tiniest bit is needed. The little jar lasts a long, long time. I think it was about \$17.00, but worth its weight in gold. You don't have to go to Todd's place to buy it - it is widely available on the internet for various prices. And in fact Todd doesn't always have it in stock. His website is www.kingofmushrooms.com - well worth perusing. However, if you call ahead for a visit, you won't regret it. But be sure Todd himself is there and can talk with you. He's one charming 7 foot tall guy. I had him picked out for my daughter until I found out he is married.

We use the fennel pollen Todd gave us on grilled fish and it is terrific. It tastes a lot like fennel seed, but it is not as hard on the teeth.

Truffle salt - how did I ever live so long without it?



Photos by Douglas Smith

SOMA News Editor's Note: Third installment from Life Magazine article, June 10, 1957, on the remarkable adventures of R. Gordon Wasson. Read more next month or if you cannot stand the suspense you may read the entire article here:
<http://www.imaginarium.org/wasson/life.htm>

◆-----◆
Meanwhile the Señora and her daughter were not idle. When our visions were still in the initial phases, we heard the Señora waving her arms rhythmically. She began a low, disconnected humming. Soon the phrases became articulate syllables, each disconnected syllable cutting the darkness sharply. Then by stages the Señora came forth with a full-bodied canticle, sung like very ancient music. It seemed to me at the time like an introit to the Ancient of Days. As the night progressed her daughter spelled her at singing. They sang well, never loud, with authority. What they sang was indescribably tender and moving, fresh, vibrant, rich. I had never realized how sensitive and poetic an instrument the Mixteco language could be. Perhaps the beauty of the Señora's performance was partly an illusion induced by the mushrooms; if so, the hallucinations are aural as well as visual. Not being musicologists, we now not whether the chants were wholly European or partial indigenous in origin. From time to time the singing would rise to a climax and then suddenly stop, and then the Señora would fling forth spoken words, violent, hot, crisp words that cut the darkness like a knife. This was the mushroom speaking through her, God's words, as the Indians believe, answering the problems that had been posed by the participants. This was the Oracle. At intervals, perhaps every half hour, there was a brief intermission, when the Señora would relax and some would light cigars.

At one point, while the daughter sang, the Señora stood up in the darkness where there was an open space in our room and began a rhythmic dance with clapping or slapping. We do not know exactly how she accomplished her effect. The claps or slaps were always resonant and true. So far as we know, she used no device, only her hands against each other or possibly against different parts of her body. The claps and slaps had pitch, the rhythm at times was complex, and the speed and volume varied subtly. We think the Señora faced successively the four points of the compass, rotating clockwise, but are not sure. One thing is certain: this mysterious percussive utterance was ventriloquistic, each slap coming from an unpredictable direction and distance, now close to our ears, now distant, above, below, here and yonder, like Hamlet's ghost *hic et ubique*. We were amazed and spellbound, Allan and I.

There we lay on our mat, scribbling notes in the dark and exchanging whispered comments, our bodies inert and heavy as lead, while our senses were floating free in space, feeling the breezes of the outdoors, surveying vast landscapes or exploring the recesses of gardens of ineffable beauty. And all the while we were listening to the daughter's chanting and to the unearthly claps and whacks, delicately controlled, of the invisible creatures darting around us.

The Indians who had taken the mushrooms were playing a part in the vocal activity. In the moments of tension they would utter exclamations of wonder and adoration, not loud, responsive to the singers and harmonizing with them, spontaneously yet with art. On that initial occasion we all fell asleep around 4 o'clock in the morning. Allan and I awoke at 6, rested and heads clear, but deeply shaken by the experience we had gone through. Our friendly hosts served us coffee and bread. We then took our leave and walked back to the Indian house where we were staying, a mile or so away.



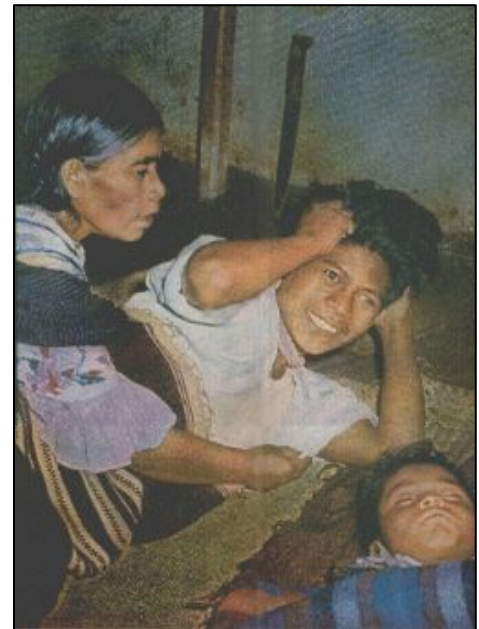
HOLDING a candle made of virgin beeswax before the smoldering embers of copal, an ancient native incense, Eva Mendez invokes the saints. Children were always in the room though they did not take active part in the ceremony.

A strange, solemn rite and wonders in the dark

For two strange timeless nights in almost complete darkness, Wasson and Richardson sat in an underground room with the curandera, Eva Mendez. On the first, both partook of the sacred mushrooms, and both saw visions. On the second Richardson refrained; instead he set up flash equipment and, aiming his camera at sounds in the blackness, recorded on film parts of the ceremony.

In a solemn musical chant, Eva Mendez began with an invocation to the mushroom in the name of Christ and the saints. She proclaimed her own good intentions and then, impatiently, entreated the spirits, "I'm a mouth looking for you, but you are not paying attention. Come." As the ritual proceeded Wasson lost himself in wondrous flights of fancy which moved him to say afterward, "For the first time the word ecstasy took on real meaning. For the first time it did not mean someone else's state of mind."

Continued Next Issue...



AT THE CLIMAX of this session, at about 3:30 in the morning, Eva Mendez ministers to her ailing 17-year-old son. As he lies lost in the ecstasy of his visions evoked by the mushrooms, she asks divine help for him. The child at right, perhaps soothed by the rhythm of the chanting, is sleeping quietly through the ritual. About a dozen Indians remained in the 20 by 20 foot room throughout the night. A few of them sat up but most lay on reed mats.

SOMA Membership Application and Renewal Form

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), Corporation dedicated to the promotion of the knowledge and appreciation of local fungi.



(Please Print) New Member Renewal
Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone(s): Home: _____ Cell: _____
E-mail: _____

- SOMA will not share your info!
Date: _____
- \$25 for family membership (mailed SOMA News, plus website download if desired)
 - \$20 for family membership who do not require a mailed newsletter (**website download only**)
 - \$20 for seniors with mailed newsletter (60 years +) (plus website download if desired)
 - \$20 for seniors—**website download only**, (help SOMA and the environment out!)
 - \$250 for **Lifetime Membership** with website download!

I am interested in participating in the following activities (Check):

Culinary Group _____ Mushroom Forays _____ Cultivation _____
Mushroom Dyes _____ Mushroom Papermaking _____ Newsletter _____

Other ideas/comments: _____

Checks to: **SOMA**
P.O. Box 7147
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

www.SOMAmushrooms.org

YOU CAN NOW RENEW/JOIN ONLINE AT THE WEBSITE!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The current issue of *Mcllvainea*, NAMA's annual journal of American amateur mycology, is now online. By clicking on the links in the sidebar, you can open section after section in traditional format. This issue includes articles by Else Vellinga, Brandon Matheny Ron Petersen and Karen Hughes, Michael Beug and Marilyn Shaw, Andrus Voitk, and a Voucher Report for the last two annual forays.

http://www.namyco.org/publications/mcil_journal.html

Registration is now open for the NAMA 2009 foray in Lafayette, LA, November 26-29, 2009. To learn more, visit this page on the NAMA website:

<http://www.namyco.org/events/index2009.html>

Great article by Else Vellinga on Shaggy Parasols and the like on the BAMS site:

http://www.bayareamushrooms.org/mushroommonth/shaggy_parasol.html

There will be a memorial service for David Bartolotta on Saturday, September 12th at 10AM at Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco, 150 Eureka St., San Francisco, Ca. 94114. The memorial notice will be in the San Francisco Chronicle on Sunday, Sept. 6th and Friday, Sept. 11th. If you want to pass the word, please feel free.

Deadline for the October 2009 issue of SOMA News is September 21st. Please send your articles, calendar items, and other information to: SOMAnewseditor@SOMAmushrooms.org

VOLUNTEER

On July 11th the SOMA Board and all of the volunteers who helped at the mushroom camp or other activities during the year were invited to the 4th annual volunteer appreciation day picnic. The event was held at the Riverfront Park on Eastside Road between Windsor and Healdsburg. The SOMA Board (and yet more volunteers) prepared a feast that included raw and barbecued oysters, chicken, sausages, coleslaw, potato salad, baked beans, fruit, ice cream, and of course cheese from the Cheese Dude and beer from Rowbear. Following the food there was a raffle where everyone won fabulous prizes supplied by the SOMA book store.

Special thanks to the entire SOMA Board for another wonderful event.

More importantly, thanks to all our volunteers who helped out throughout the year – we need you!! As a solely volunteer run organization, we depend on our volunteers to keep SOMA running. Soooo, please consider volunteering in some capacity this year.

Our next big event will be our Mushroom Camp in January – more on this event to come in our next newsletter. Please contact me or a Board member if you want to become more involved.

Thanks!
Gina

Gina Kuta
Volunteer Coordinator
somavolunteers@yahoo.com



Photo by Linda Morris

SOMA News

P.O. Box 7147
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

SOMA
DIVINE MUSHROOM
OF IMMORTALITY
& Gracie Wynn



SOMA Members

The September 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 Ave.
- Turn left on Piner Road.
- At about ¼ 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, Hopper Ave/Mendocino Ave.
- Stay left on the frontage road, (it becomes Cleveland Ave after you cross Industrial Drive).
- Turn right on Piner Road.
- At about ¼ mile, turn left into parking lot at 970 Piner Road.

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

