



SOMA News

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 7

March 2010

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

WINTER/SPRING 2010 SEASON CALENDAR

March

March 18th » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: Jennifer Kerekes

Foray March 20th » Salt Point

April

April 15th » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: Mia Maltz

Foray April 17th » Salt Point

May

May 20th » Meeting—7pm
Sonoma County Farm Bureau
Speaker: Peter Werner



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

Jennifer Kerekes
Thursday, March 18th
7 PM at the Farm Bureau

**A look at the diversity and ecology
of saprotrophic fungal communities**



Jennifer Kerekes is a PhD candidate studying the ecology and diversity of saprotrophic fungal communities with Dr. Tom Bruns at the University of California, Berkeley.

Saprotrophic, or decomposer, fungi play very important ecological roles in litter decomposition and nutrient recycling. However, saprotrophic fungal community diversity and function are still not well understood. The goals of her current research are to characterize the species and functional diversity of the basidiomycete component of the saprotrophic fungal communities in both natural grassland and forest ecosystems.

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SOMA's *Amanita muscaria* logo by Ariel Mahon

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dispatch from the duff . . .

The mushroom season of "ought nine and twenty ten" will be known as one of the better fungi harvests in Northern California. Many, many members are finding edibles in quality and quantity. The previous lean two years had prepared everyone for this bounty. We have expressed our appreciation for the opportunity to collect many times. Most of our experienced SOMA members think the "good crop" will continue through April and are looking forward to the next two months.

The lineup of members who have volunteered to serve on the SOMA Board of Directors is taking shape. Please consider joining the SOMA Board this year. Board members spend various amounts of time . . . from 2-3 to 10-15 hours per month, working for the membership.

There are four positions to fill. You are all invited to consider spending a few hours a month helping to carry out the business of SOMA with a group of very able and very compatible mushroomers. Please email me, wheeler.j.d@att.net, and tell me your interests or which Board position you would like to consider. Many thanks.

The Found on Forays Section:

Not much response to December's list. However, the barrette comb and wood handle fork were claimed . . . although I forgot to bring the fork to return it . . . but there is always next month. So, still in the garage:

- Green, SPC Solar carry-bag with a lot of stuff; white paper shopping bag with a lot of stuff. (Check previous newsletters for details).
- From February's foray, wine glasses with stems of various quality; plastic drinking cups with textured surface (non-slip) of above average quality; crackers, and one "Rouge et Noir" Brie. If unclaimed by March 5th, the Brie will be consumed . . . there will be no crumbs, nor fingerprints, to identify those who enjoyed it.
- A pair of reading glasses . . . interesting.

Best regards,

-Jim Wheeler



FORAY OF THE MONTH

Saturday March 20th 2010

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 Michael Miller at (707) 431-6931 for more information.

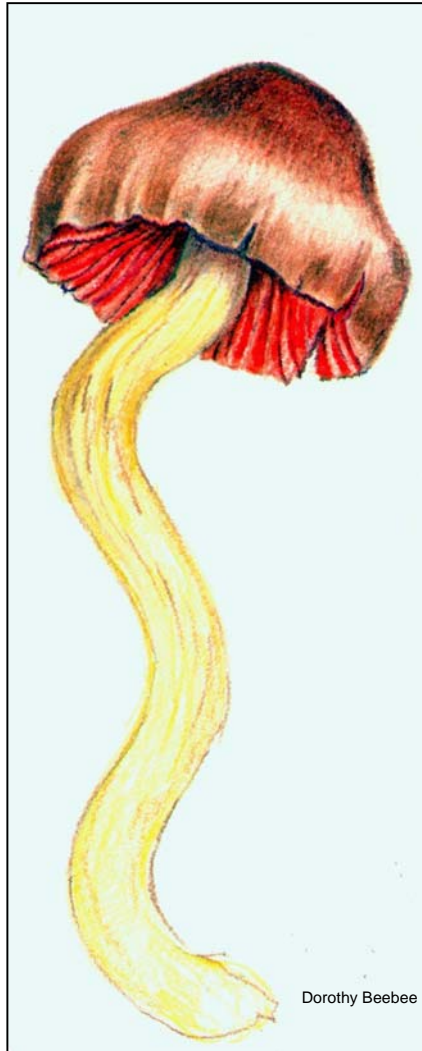
Members are asked to avoid hunting the club site for at least two weeks prior to a SOMA event. It's only through your cooperation that all members can enjoy a successful foray and experience the thrill of the hunt.

Imagine towering palm trees growing among live oak, torrential pounding rain whisked away by blue sky and rainbows, to be followed 10 minutes later by more of the same, over, and over..... and that describes my mushroom foray spent last Saturday in Felicita County Park north of San Diego, in the good company of my hostess Janet Fraser, and Les Braund (both previous SOMA Campers by the way!)

With the opportunity of being a guest presenter at the annual San Diego Mycological Society's Fair on February 21 (you can guess what my colorful topic was...) came the experience of participating in one of the collecting forays on the day before, and setting up the display tables all of that evening. It brought back many good memories of when SOMA used to put a premium on local public education and do fine Fungus Fairs in Sonoma County (... sigh). Yes, it was a lot of work for a 6 hour Fair, and they only asked for a donation of \$1, but they had well over 700 enthusiastic visitors to Rm. 101 of the Casa del Prado in the San Diego's splendid crown jewel of Balboa Park, even on a tempestuous rainy day. Small baskets of identified fungi were tastefully arranged by spore color and genus, a good showing thanks to recent rains. Enthusiastic myco-mavens and masters answered endless questions, and identified endless mushrooms brought in by the inquisitive public.

I must admit that my interest was in seeing what dye mushrooms would turn up, and I was not disappointed in the huge amount of giant *Omphalotus olivascens* that appeared. I had taken down some dried *Dermocybe phoenicea* that Debbie V. gave to me at the Point Reyes Fair, so at least I had 2 types of mushrooms with which to demonstrate the

mysteries of mushroom dyes. Purple and red dyes always get peoples attention! There was only one *Pisolithus tinctorius* on display, and I didn't dare hijack that lone specimen!



A local basket weaver brought over some unusually long Canary Island Pine needles to see if they would take up a dye. I had a little canister of pickling alum from a grocery store (*Ammonium alum* rather than the *Potassium alum* which I normally use, and no cream of tartar this time). So, I concocted an alum mordant in which a small handful of pine needles simmered for an hour, then added the dried red *Dermocybes* with some wool & silk samples into the alum mordant bath to simmer for another hour. This was rather than set up a separate dyebath, since I only had 2 small enamel pots with me, and I wanted to use one of them for the Jack O' Lantern mushrooms.

Adding the *Dermocybes* straight into the alum mordant bath, contributed to the dyes on the wool and silk being much more orange-red than the usual rose-red. (The pH of the mordant-dyebath had changed from 7 to 4.5 when I added the alum). I left the dyes to steep while I went off to give my 35mm slide presentation, and upon returning, was quite pleased to see that the light yellow pine needles dyed a nice rusty red – very similar to the color of the *Dermocybe* dye on the yellow cedar bark given to me by the Haida basket-maker last summer! I think that the secret to using mushroom dyes on this type of non-protein fiber may be to do successive dyes, with a complete drying of the fiber between the dyebaths. Thank you San Diego for providing my first opportunity to try mushroom dyes on pine needles! Something new for SOMA Camp next year???



Mushroom Hunt

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HUSROOMM	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
PLCEOSYBI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SULSUSRA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Unscramble each of the clue words.

Take the letters that appear in boxes and unscramble them for the final message.

"I Say Velosa and You Hear Virosa"

Edgy. . . .
My pee pee having been smacked mightily and my more sensitive insouciance smacked down also your, I suppose, too cavalier reporter now must look at life's potential terrors with a different vision.

"Personal Responsibility"—what a good idea. When I was an avid mountain biker on Mt. Tam years ago I learned that some jerk's handlebars broke and he then sued Mt. Tam State Park for his ensuing injuries. Result? Mt Tam closed most of its trails to mountain biking. Nice. Not.

Folks who eat bad things . . . ? Maybe they should sue mycological societies for not preventing that occurrence. How can societies let that happen? Maybe people who can't tell a velosa from a virosa should be removed from our gene pools. Ooh—maybe that does happen. There is a God.

More than a couple of times in my life I've been asked (and I am sure most of the readers of this column have too): "How in the heck can you tell this mushroom from that? Usually I scratch my head until the flakes of dandruff become too distracting to continue intelligent discourse (okay—kidding about that but it does read sort of yucky funny) and I embark on something that I told my brother-in-law once.

He and my sister moved to a ten acre place off Tilton and Sexton in most west Sebastopol and I went with them on a mushroom walk years ago to show the remarkable assortments of fungi under their pines and firs, (planted) holly, live oak, madrone, etc. Ron, of a car dealer family ("Silveira" in Healdsburg), kept asking me how I can tell this from that and I stopped and reflected (rather cleverly I felt) about how in the Hell can he tell a Buick Skylark from a Regal, or from a Special? He said something like, "Well—that's easy." Hmmm.

Our esteemed SOMA news editor is about as pushy as pushy can be in my life (and still be my friend) and so we-who-do-this writing stuff for SOMA do buckle under his yoke (I almost spelled that "yolk" and wouldn't that have read weird? Like what—"a sunny side up joke?"). Is this sentence going anywhere understandable?

Well—yes it is: To the food part. Actually, wait—best golden chanterelle year in years. And blacks should still come up in April. And a friend of mine found a porcini last Sunday (February 30th) at Pt. Reyes. What?

And now—the food part of the column. . . .

Remember that Thai style incredibly fabulous mushroom and coconut milk soup which was served by your humble chef and his even more humble (is that possible?) staff on SOMA Camp's Saturday night? You don't? Never mind then.

For the rest of you:



Tom Kha Kai, Kinda (10)

Serving Size : 10 Preparation Time :2:00

Amt—Meas	Ingredient	Preparation Method
3—Oz	shiitakes, dried, hydrated	sliced 1/4" thick
1—Lb	carrots	sliced into rounds
1/2	Bunch celery	sliced 1/4" thick
2—Ea	Onions, Med	chopped small
1 1/2—Tbsp	oil for frying	
2 1/2—Tbsp	laos powder or galangal, fresh	sliced
1/4—C	basil	chopped small
2 1/2—Tsp	Ginger Root	minced
40—Oz	Coconut Milk	
30—Oz	Chicken Stock, Canned	
1 1/2—Pt	Water	
	Black Pepper	
1/2—C	Cilantro Stems and Roots	chopped small
1—Ea	Lemon	Zested
4—Ea	Chiles—Serranos	(About 2/3 C. Minced) -- chopped fine
1 1/2—Tsp	Salt	
10—Ea	Kaffir Lime Leaves	
1 1/2—Oz	Fish Sauce	
2—Oz	Lemon Or Lime Juice	
2—Ea	Limes	cut in 6 pieces
1/2—C	Cilantro Leaves	chopped large



Amanita velosa photo by Jeff Michel

1. Saute the shiitakes, carrots, onions and celery together in oil about 10 minutes. Set aside
2. Put the mushroom and veggie mix, coconut milk, the laos, ginger, basil, veggie stock, water, pepper, cilantro stems and roots, lemon zest, chiles, salt and kaffir leaves into a pot. Bring slowly to boil and simmer 20 minutes or so, stirring occasionally.
3. Remove from the heat and add the fish sauce and lemon (or lime) juice.

adjust seasonings

garnish with cilantro leaves--serve some more in a bowl

serve the lime pieces in a bowl alongside.

have extra chiles minced in a bowl

With the forecasts predicting rain at Salt Point for the February 20th foray, Jim Wheeler dutifully strapped the tent poles on his roof rack, packed up the big awning and arrived early at Woodside campground to provide shelter to the incoming mushroom hunters.

The tent poles stayed strapped to the roof as we were all treated to a beautiful sunny day at the coast. As the new foray coordinator, I was confident that Jim and I could handle the 30 shroomers gathered in the parking lot. Then there were 40. Then there were 65. As I looked around wondering who to ask for help, Bill Hanson and Karen Tate both stepped up to lead forays up Kruse Ranch Road and the Stump Beach Trail.

The mushroom Gods were highly co-operative, with plenty of Hedgehogs, Black Trumpets, Yellowfoot Chanterelles and some Repandums and Golden Chanterelles for good measure. One guest was duly dubbed "The Wood Nymph" when she literally danced for joy (I am NOT making this up) after emerging onto Kruse Ranch Road with her basket filled with booty. 3 year old newcomer Ella proved highly proficient at crawling into the dense

huckleberry bushes to retrieve *Hydnum umbilicatum* that her parents could not reach.

We returned to Woodside where we said "Let There Be Food and Drink" and it was good. After preparing all the ingredients for a great Foray Feast dish, Mycochef Patrick Hamilton experienced back problems and could not attend. Luckily he passed the ingredients to Julie Schreiber who whipped it all up on-site. The result was the sensational Thai soup we all loved at Camp. Many other excellent dishes, hot and cold were enjoyed by all. I have never heard so many exclamations of "This is SOOOO good!" outside of the Camp Feast.

Our own Science Advisor/Guru Darvin DeShazer held forth around the I.D. table to instruct us all, and to relieve the anxiety of newcomers concerning edibility.

Maybe it was the beautiful day. Maybe the smiling faces and festive atmosphere. I don't know but this was one of my all-time favorite forays.

Photos by Michael Miller



Industrial Strength Fungus

By Adam Fisher on 8 February 2010 in Time Magazine

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1957474,00.html>

At an organic farm just outside Monterey, California, a super eco-building material is growing in dozens of darkened shipping containers. The farm is named Far West Fungi, and its rusting containers are full of all sorts of mushrooms--shiitake, reishi and pom-pom, to name a few. But Philip Ross, an artist, an inventor and a seriously obsessed amateur mycologist, isn't interested in the fancy caps we like to eat. What he's after are the fungi's thin, white root-like fibers. Underground, they form a vast network called a mycelium. Far West Fungi's dirt-free hothouses pack in each mycelium so densely that it forms a mass of bright white spongy matter.

Mycelium doesn't taste very good, but once it's dried, it has some remarkable properties. It's nontoxic, fireproof and mold- and water-resistant, and it traps more heat than fiberglass insulation. It's also stronger, pound for pound, than concrete. In December, Ross completed what is believed to be the first structure made entirely of mushroom. (Sorry, the homes in the fictional Smurf village don't count.) The 500 bricks he grew at Far West Fungi were so sturdy that he destroyed many a metal file and saw blade in shaping the 'shrooms into an archway 6 ft. (1.8 m) high and 6 ft. wide. Dubbed Mycotectural Alpha, it is currently on display at a gallery in Germany.

Nutty as "mycotecture" sounds, Ross may be onto something bigger than an art project. A promising start-up named Ecovative is

building a 10,000-sq.-ft. (about 930 sq m) myco-factory in Green Island, N.Y. "We see this as a whole new material, a woodlike equivalent to plastic," says CEO Eben Bayer. The three-year-old company has been awarded grants from the EPA and the National Science Foundation, as well as the Department of Agriculture--because its mushrooms feast on empty seed husks from rice or cotton. "You can't even feed it to animals," says Bayer of this kind of agricultural waste. "It's basically trash."

After the husks are cooked, sprayed with water and myco-vitamins and seeded with mushroom spores, the mixture is poured into a mold of the desired shape and left to grow in a dark warehouse. A week or two later, the finished product is popped out and the material rendered biologically inert. The company's first product, a green alternative to Styrofoam, is taking on the packaging industry. Called Ecocradle, it is set to be shipped around a yet-to-be-disclosed consumer item this spring.

One of the beauties of Ecocradle is that unlike Styrofoam--which is hard to recycle, let alone biodegrade--this myco-material can easily serve as mulch in your garden. Ecovative's next product, Greensulate, will begin targeting the home-insulation market sometime next year. And according to Bayer's engineering tests, densely packed mycelium is strong enough to be used in place of wooden beams. "It's not so far-out," he says of Ross's art house. So could Bayer see himself growing a mushroom house and living in it? "Well"--he hesitates--"maybe we'd start with a doghouse."

<http://www.shroomery.org/forums/showflat.php/Number/11919350>

Mushrooming is a sport that requires careful focus. Example: many of us come to appreciate candy caps, but there are little associated Galerinas, such as *G. autumnalis*, that could get mixed up in a collection. That would be a huge mistake! The above little orange wood growing mushroom is as deadly as *A. phalloides*. Matsutake buttons also come with analogues and look a like: try *Amanita coccora* in the earliest stages. The trick here is to slice your button in half. I speak not of commercializing here. And we are pretty aware of how easy it would be to get another similar amanita when you are not careful enough with the I.D. and avoid the key directions. I have hunted since the late 70's to slap a date on me (Hey, mushrooming keeps you healthy—real healthy!).

I think I found Matsies in 5 different sites before I realized my staggering error—leaving them where I found them. What was that you said? Yup, that was me! A fear of illness: born of a belief or prejudice—fungophobia—that masks the proper action and method: just look 'em up in the guides and key away. Was I nuts? No, the mind creates blind spots out of a “tribal memory” that’s hard wired in the “lizard brain” or the toe nails—don’t always trust a fear! I just recently tried “Pigs Ears” this year. They are great. Could it be the ugly moniker? Or just those tall, sub-interesting, curly, *je ne sais quoi* staring you in the face?

In search of any choice mushroom it is the target habitat. When Aurora writes “solo to gregarious in mixed woods” for example, does he mean all mycorrhizal trees have to be present? Or do the target mushrooms come up on or near or grouped species or both? Like gold, they’re where you find them. Study the location a long time. Where’s the sun, altitude, and rain in past week or two? Soggy donuts, or gill-sopped, fading Matzies, neither are a prize. But they tell you where conditions are right.

Being in too big a hurry can be a mistake. If you want a good deal of mushroom you will find them, but only with enough persistence. You might have to invest. Advertise. Sometimes you just luck out, but to me finding a tough-to-find species is just as mystifying as finding my first Ceps: First there comes the “What the heck? Then the shock of recognition, followed by a huge mushroom eating grin, and the itch to brag!

Oregonian hunters use an indicator, the red tapered *Allotropa** mint and these red flower spikes are a precursor to the Matsutake zone. Chemistry. Trouble with ground cover is that Allos may forget to come up next year, *Quien sabe*? Follow your research anyway. Associated habitat may (or may not) give you an edge. Guys and gals even string a colored thread down to a road to get back to their spot. A GPS might help. I haven’t perfected the technique yet. My secret tech is this: set your goal and follow your nose.

So how’d you like to become a Matsie hound or just train Barker-the-Dog to sniff ‘em out? That’s a hard one to judge. To me the Matsie scent is almost indescribable. Watch for a sudden weather change too—warm to cold? Wetness helps—fog is good. Fefferlings break out of the duff or soil. Simplicity is best in a scramble for Matsutake—Forget the muzzled pot belly pig! A flashlight, take a compass--dark days can get you lost.

Matsie fever is a lot like gold fever—especially when values skyrocket. In Oregon, hunters carry lethal hardware for a variety of threats, including a two legged variety. People can become estranged-- like Bogart in the “Treasure of the Sierra Madre” Mistrust and insecurity come creeping in—you aren’t paranoid if they’re really after your patch! Experience helps one know that there are plenty of mushrooms out there for all, but you must invest time and hard work to get to them. These Oregon zones are on State Forest lands with logging contracts held in second posi-

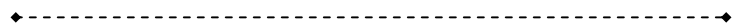
tion to filed mushroom patches. You need a “work permit” and county license. Oregon market is down. It’s that red dragon that keeps popping up here and there with lower Matsutake prices.

Meteorite hunting, another fun harvest is fine but only if the values are not too high for comfort. But meteorite fever can get you lost real fast. Stick to mushrooms, my friend, we all seem to savor them; eat Matsies raw or cooked, contemplate the unique flavor in a cream sauce. We opted to go to a higher elevation to hunt: 1000 feet plus! Hmm--dryer terrain there. The mushrooms might even wait for us. You’ll never get there if you don’t arrive.

Are we foraging within the legal park boundaries? This time we nearly found out the hard way—Matsie fever had us bad. Suddenly it’s a Fish and Game operative; a debut appearance for us; he arrives mysteriously (seeking to network with CHP on a possible DUI) “Sorry Sir. We don’t celebrate while we hunt”. He says “the base fine would have been \$450 and then the theft of personal property...per count, plus “in and around-any booze on you guys?” Not at all, dear Sir. “Gotta letcha guys go, then. They (the owners) won’t prosecute.”

Instantly, we’re born again legal hunters, Old Scooter Jim and I. The Tan Oak leaves are all that’s sodden and trodden in the park, who cares? The Crawler Folk have woven tunnels through the huckleberries, but it’s all about freedom from: local park officials and freedom to: forage and attain clarity of mind. We reach a reverie. We again chant our mantra: “Timing is everything”: “Timing is the All!” “WE are worthy!” “WE are free!” “Bless the clock deity and the almighty Date, Rain and Fog god! WE shall know, and knowledge sets us free! Those Matsies are solid and heavy! I couldn’t vanquish the scent out for hours. Never touch a vale cover! Wipe, DONT cut off dirt. Use a piece of soft sponge.* You’se gots ta use ya sniffa!—as it seems to me.

(* Thanks to <http://www.matsiman.com/>)



Drama at the San Francisco Archery Range: Pacifica: circa Oct 1980: Sherman sheepishly gives his first *Armillaria Matsutake* to a pro hunter who trudges through cypress and eucalyptus, but not pines. (Button sure looked fine and edible!)

Script: The Fool on the Bow Range Hill:

By “Cecilbede” Mills-Hahs

SF Archery Range, Day:

Pro ‘Shroomer (peering hauntingly at a gift: a Matsie button):

“Where did you get *this*?”

Naive Initiate (pointing at a pine grove):..

“Over there: Any good?”

‘Shroomer (Over a shoulder: double-timing away rapidly):

“‘Tis a banner year for mushrooms, me hardy! Heh heh!”

‘Shroomer (Under his breath):

(“Tai-Tai, Sucker!”)

Initiate (scratching his head with one hand):

(A sudden look of recognition appears in his face)

Fin ☺

A quick-and-dirty guide to the velvet underground

By Marina Wolf

From the October 1-7, 1998 issue of the Metropolitan.

THE SUN AT Salt Point State Park is strong. Even the cool air in the coastal woods has a toasted resin smell to it. But Pete Petersen, my contact at the Sonoma County Mycological Association and the planner of the day's expedition 20 miles north of Bodega Bay, assures me that there already have been mushroom sightings here this season, so we may get lucky. Pete's been 'shrooming for 35 years, so I'll follow his lead any day.

The rest of the party--Sue Davidson, Elissa Rubin-Mahon, and Elissa's 13-year-old daughter, Ariel Mahon, all members of SOMA--are ready for the hunt, with wicker baskets, rusty knives, and well-worn guidebooks. And they are enthusiastic, even though their predictions have been dire about the likelihood of finding anything today.



Stalking the wild mushroom: Sumptuous chanterelle mushrooms growing at Salt Point State Park attract a cadre of dedicated fungi foragers.

Photo by Michael Amsler

"It's very dry, much drier than last year," says Elissa, who has been hunting mushrooms since 1981. "Last year was a really early year, and the mushrooms were abundant. This season at the places I was finding pounds of mushrooms last year, I've only found one very small one."

This particular spot, known to generations of Russian- and Italian-Americans as a jackpot for succulent porcini and chanterelles, is seeing increased traffic as other hunting grounds closer to cities have been covered up by housing developments. "It takes generations of growth before boletes [porcini] and chanterelles come up," Elissa says. "If you wipe out an area, they usually doesn't come back for a while."

Which is not to say that you need to travel to pristine wilderness to find good 'shrooms. "I have a spot in my neighborhood that I check out now every year," chirps Sue, a cheery older woman who looks as though she might teach home-ec when she's not crawling around in the woods.

"Yeah, we have chanterelles that come up not too far from us in the winter," Elissa answers absentmindedly from the little hollow to which she had made a beeline. She pulls up a stack of pine needles and lets out the first call of the day: "I found some!" The creamy yellow lumps emerge under Elissa's careful fingers. "They're a little dry," she says, "but they're not old." She cuts the two blooms free and hands the mushrooms over to Pete, who holds them up to my nose. They give off a faint apricot smell, overlaid by an irresistible aroma of dusty old velvet, and the pale skin darkens with exposure and handling to a burnished gold. Everyone is tangibly excited by this first find. "There's a happiness in going out to the woods, hunting stuff," Pete explains. "It goes back to when we were hunters and gatherers thousands and thousands of years ago."

Sue nods her head vigorously. "You're hardwired to do it. It feels really natural."

AFTER THE THRILL wears off a bit, Sue and Ariel head off down the gully, while Elissa pares the stems clean. "Part of mushrooming is intuition," she says matter-of-factly, scraping the tender flesh with casually perfect strokes. "I almost get a feeling in the pit, in the solar plexus, that something's starting to happen, and I'll come and look."

Another part of mushrooming is, of course, practice, which is where SOMA comes to the rescue with frequent outings and workshops for dedicated seekers and curious members of the public alike. To ward off any mycological misadventures--every rainy season seems to bring on a small but well-publicized crop of ill-informed individuals in need of mushroom-related liver transplants--SOMA hosts a mushroom fair every winter, with mycologists on hand to identify fungi, and the group sponsors a year-round helpline. Accessible through directory information, the recording gives contact numbers for some of SOMA's senior members, outlines emergency procedures for bad- or worst-case scenarios, and reiterates the mushroom novice's mantra: Don't eat it until a pro says you can.

The pros on hand know exactly what we're looking for. Elissa resumes her intent scrabbling around the pine trees, while Pete demonstrates the finer points of mushroom structure to the fascinated Independent photographer. I catch up with Ariel, who seems a precocious youngster indeed. Latin terms spring from her lips with unstudied ease, interspersed with gossip about other mushroom hunters and enthusiastic tales of her outings with mom. Ariel has been mushrooming since the age of 4. Sheesh. I'm never going to catch up.

AS WE CLAMBER around the side of the ravine, the two older women exchange sites and recipes for their favorite fungi. We have covered a swath of hillside a couple of hundred feet long, and still I have found nothing.

I ask Elissa to come with me to the other side of the glen. By now, the bottom of her basket is thickly covered with chanterelles, and I harbor a vague hope of her mushroom magnetism rubbing off on me.

Then I look down at the base of a tree not 25 feet from the parking lot and see a glint of blonde in the dark forest floor. "Hey," I call out weakly, the excitement mounting in my chest, "is this one?" The others come quickly, and Pete kneels down next to me

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

for a closer look. Yes, it is a chanterelle. Grinning like an idiot, I wrap it proudly in paper towel and put it in Pete's basket.

Back at the parking lot, my head fills with visions of a future full of wild, flavorful fungi. I could do this--a lot. But the logistics of mushroom hunting are daunting. Mushroomers can be secretive about disclosing their favorite spots--this group asked me to avoid naming the specific site that we're hunting in--and in any case, only three public parks in Sonoma County are open for gathering: Salt Point, Tomales Bay, and Samuel P. Taylor.

"Basically you need to find people who own private property," says Pete.

"We're really trying to work toward getting all of the state parks open," adds Elissa. "Right now, they're saying, oh, there's too much pressure, there're too many people picking here. Our belief is that if they opened everything up they would spread the activity out."

Potentially that leaves the gate wide open for commercial harvesters--who can pick up \$2-\$7 cash for a pound of chanterelles--for

whom this particular group of mushroomers has a certain disdain. "The commercial pickers travel in caravans," says Elissa. "They start in the summer in Alaska, in trailers and vans, and they work their way down. They're not supposed to do it here. But I've seen at the north end of the park when bolete season is upon us, 20 or 30 vans of people.

"You know they're out there doing it."

Nods and murmurs from the others accompany Elissa's complaint, but the conversation eventually turns back to recipes for the chanterelles in hand (general consensus calls for a quick sauté in butter).

It's hard to stay worked up about porcini poachers after exercising one's hunter-gatherer instincts, which are probably, as Ariel suggests, closer to the stomach than to the brain.

SOMA meets on the third Thursday of the month, from September through May, at 7 p.m. at the Sonoma County Farm Bureau (970 Piner Road, Santa Rosa).

[Sonoma County | MetroActive

<http://www.metroactive.com/papers/sonoma/10.01.98/dining-9839.html>

Mushroom drug cancer secret probe

Scientists have discovered how a promising cancer drug, first discovered in a wild mushroom, works.

The University of Nottingham team believe their work could help make the drug more effective, and useful for treating a wider range of cancers.

Cordycepin, commonly used in Chinese medicine, was originally extracted from a rare kind of parasitic mushroom that grows on caterpillars.

The study will appear in the Journal of Biological Chemistry.

The cordyceps mushroom has been studied by medical researchers for some time - the first scientific publication on cordycepin was in 1950.

However, although the drug showed great promise, it was quickly degraded in the body.

It can be given with another drug to combat this - but the second drug can produce side effects that limit its potential use.

As a result, researchers turned their interest to other potential candidate drugs, and exactly how cordycepin worked on the body's cells remained unclear.

"It could lay the groundwork for the design of new cancer drugs that work on the same principle"

Dr Cornelia de Moor University of Nottingham

Researcher Dr Cornelia de Moor said: "Our discovery will open up the possibility of investigating the range of different cancers that could be treated with cordycepin.

"It will be possible to predict what types of cancers might be sensitive and what other cancer drugs it may effectively combine with.

"It could also lay the groundwork for the design of new cancer drugs that work on the same principle."

The researchers have also developed a method to test how effective the drug is in new preparations, and combinations with other drugs, which might solve the problem of degradation more satisfactorily.

Dr De Moor said: "This is a great advantage as it will allow us to rule out any non-runners before anyone considers testing them in animals."

The Nottingham team observed two effects on the cells - at a low dose cordycepin inhibits the uncontrolled growth and division of the cells, and at high doses it stops cells from sticking together, which also inhibits growth.

"The knowledge generated by this research demonstrates the mechanisms of drug action and could have an impact on one of the most important challenges to health"

Professor Janet Allen Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council

Both of these effects probably have the same underlying mechanism - that cordycepin interferes with how cells make proteins.

At low doses cordycepin interferes with the production of mRNA, the molecule that gives instructions on how to assemble a protein.

And at higher doses it has a direct impact on the making of proteins.

Professor Janet Allen is director of research at the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, which funded the study.

She said: "This project shows that we can always return to asking questions about the fundamental biology of something in order to refine the solution or resolve unanswered questions.

"The knowledge generated by this research demonstrates the mechanisms of drug action and could have an impact on one of the most important challenges to health."

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/health/8428340.stm>

Published: 2009/12/29 00:01:30 GMT

© BBC MMX



The drug was first isolated from a parasitic mushroom

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: _____

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

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

Other ideas/comments: _____

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!

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

www.SOMAmushrooms.org

YOU CAN NOW RENEW/JOIN ONLINE AT THE WEBSITE!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

For those interested in visiting **Tibet** and experiencing the fantastic mushrooms there, MushRoaming tours will be hosting two trips in 2010.

1. Cordyceps Expedition to East Tibet **May 24 to June 6, 2010**
2. Fungal & Floral Foray in Tibet **July 14 to 27, 2010**

More info at: www.MushRoaming.com

SOMA friend Daniel Winkler leads these tours and I am sure they are a lifetime experience. A very interesting article by Daniel can be found at link below.

"The Mushrooming Fungi Market in Tibet exemplified by *Cordyceps sinensis* and *Tricholoma matsutake*"

<http://tinyurl.com/yzwo783>

NAMA 2010 - 50th Anniversary Foray

August 12-15, 2010, at the YMCA Snow Mountain Ranch, Winter Park, Colorado

Information at NAMA and CMS (Colorado Mycological Society)

Co-Chief Identifiers: Cathy Cripps, Vera Evenson

Faculty: Scott Bates, Denis Benjamin, MD, Michael Beug, Roy Halling, Rick Kerrigan, Michael Kuo, Brandon Matheny, Michelle Seidl, Jack States, Walt Sundberg, Rytas Vilgalys, Tom Volk, Nancy Weber

The Colorado Mycological Society is delighted to welcome NAMA to the Centennial State for NAMA's 50th Anniversary Foray, August 12-15, 2010. The foray will be held at the same location as NAMA's memorable 1983 foray, YMCA of the Rockies Snow Mountain Ranch, 14 miles from Winter Park, high on the western slope of the Continental Divide at 8,700 feet. Nearby Rocky Mountain National Park is celebrating its 95th Anniversary this year, and at least one of our forays is planned to study fungi in that area.

We hope to see you in August!

Info at:

<http://www.namyco.org/events/index2010.html>

Linnea Gillman

Colorado Mycological Society NAMA 2010

Deadline for the April 2010 issue of SOMA News is March 21st.

Please send your articles, calendar items, and other information to:

SOMAnewseditor@SOMAmushrooms.org

I came across this website and thought I'd pass it along:

www.sciplus.com

It has lab equipment and a whole lot of other neat stuff at fairly good prices.

Dan Long

The Last Shuttle Launch

Monday, February 8, 2010 @ 4:14 am

Top of the Intracoastal Waterway Bridge in Ponte Vedra, FL

115 Miles from the launch

34 Degrees outside (!)



SOMA News

P.O. Box 7147
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

SOMA
DIVINE MUSHROOM
OF IMMORTALITY

R. Gordon Wasson



SOMA Members

The March 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.

