



SOMANEWS

VOLUME 28: 2

October 2015

October Speaker: Justin Reyes

October 15th, 7:00 PM, at Sonoma County Farm Bureau (See directions on last page)

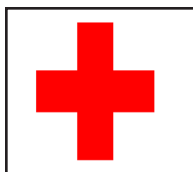
“A look at Gourmet Mushrooms Inc/Mycopia Mushrooms”

Justin's presentation will be an overview of Gourmet Mushrooms Inc/Mycopia Mushrooms, of Sebastopol, California, and the mushroom industry and the growing trend toward specialty mushrooms, and the coming Mycorevolution; helping feed the world's burgeoning population, rethinking the connections between nature, agriculture, industry and technology, and unleashing the potential of the fungal kingdom.

Justin grew up in Sonoma County and attended Sonoma State University where he studied both International and Wine Business. He worked in the wine industry for a handful of years before becoming interested in foraging and left wine for the fascinating world of fungi where



he joined the sales team at Gourmet Mushrooms in Sebastopol, CA. Justin has since taken the lead of the sales department and strives to spread awareness of the incredible and wide ranging benefits and potential of the fungal kingdom.



NEED EMERGENCY MUSHROOM POISONING ID?

After seeking medical attention, contact Darvin DeShazer for identification at (707) 829-0596. Email photos to: muscara@pacbell.net and be sure to photograph all sides, cap and of the mushroom. Please do not send photos taken with older cell phones – the resolution is simply too poor to allow accurate identification. NOTE: Always be **100% sure of the identification of any mushroom before you eat it!**

SOMA OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Jim Wheeler
SOMApresident@SOMAmushrooms.org

VICE PRESIDENT

Rachel Zierdt
SOMAvicepresident@SOMAmushrooms.org

SECRETARY

Gene Zierdt
SOMAsecretary@SOMAmushrooms.org

TREASURER

Judith Tye-Angell
SOMAtreasurer@SOMAmushrooms.org

COMMITTEES & BOARDS

EPICURIAN GROUP

Chris Murray
SOMAculinary@SOMAmushrooms.org

FORAYS

Patrick Hamilton
mycochef@sbcglobal.net

MEMBERSHIP

George Riner
SOMAmembership@SOMAmushrooms.org

MUSHROOM DYE COORDINATOR

Dorothy Beebee
SOMAmushroomdyes@SOMAmushrooms.org

SCHOLARSHIPS

Rachel Zierdt
scholarships@SOMAmushrooms.org

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORS

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

Chris Kjeldsen, Ph.D.
(707) 544-3091
chris.kjeldsen@sonoma.edu

SOMA CAMP REGISTRAR

Chris Murray
SOMAregritar@SOMAmushrooms.org

SOMA NEWS EDITOR

Charles W. Thurston
SOMAnewseditor@SOMAmushrooms.org

SOMA WEB MASTER

Martin Beebee
SOMAinfo@SOMAmushrooms.org

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Lee McCarthy-Smith
Volunteer@SOMAmushrooms.org

Dispatch From the Duff October 2015

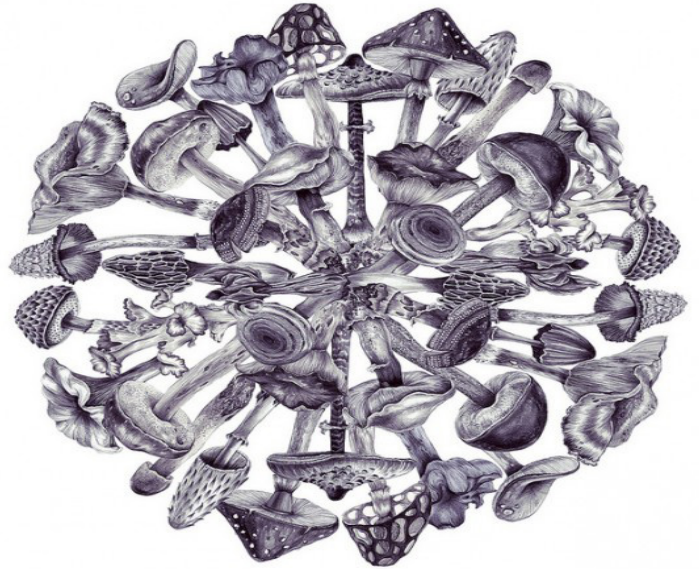
The September and October forays at SPSP were cancelled by the SOMA Board. This was done because of a request to avoid/suspend all trail and off-trail walking (e.g. looking for wild mushrooms). The Duncan Mills State Park Biologist determined the areas are very delicate or fragile and would be easily damaged, perhaps permanently, because of the drought. The Board felt that either foray would not have been instructive nor productive for beginning or experienced collectors. We will continue to judge month by month in cooperation with the Park Staff and keep everyone advised through the website. I drove up Saturday, September 19th, to meet and speak to anyone who might not have heard or read about the cancellation. Fortunately, no one made the trip in vain for the SOMA foray and I had a nice walk using the campground roads, noticing many tent campers and people using the campground area that day.

At the September Speaker Meeting, Joshua Harrison, a Doctoral Student at the University of Nevada, Reno discussed his thesis and work he has done on endophytes. A short note: an endophyte is an endosymbiont, often a bacterium or fungus that lives within a plant for at least part of its life cycle without causing apparent disease. Endophytes are ubiquitous and have been found in all species of plants (Wikipedia). Joshua's talk covered much of what is known about the group. Most of which is classified in the phylum *Ascomycetes*. He discussed the transmission of fungal endophytes, host-endophyte interactions, potential medicinal or agricultural applications and his experience searching for them. The next step in his plan is to identify the species found using DNA sequencing methods. His samples were in the lab for analysis and will be finished this fall. He plans to write an article for the SOMA Newsletter describing the results and conclusions from his experiments. A caution mentioned, there is concern that many endophytes may be lost before they can be studied because of deforestation, environmental contamination and biodiversity.

Big sale SOMA Bookstore Sale in October. All of the Bookstore will be on sale at the October Speaker meeting. Everything you need to complete your collection of SOMA wine or beer glasses, tee-shirts or your mushroom library, and all other object d'art carried by the Bookstore will be available. Be prepared and bring a bag or perhaps buy a SOMA tote.

Best regards,
Jim Wheeler

INSIDE THIS ISSUE :



Credit: Eibatova Karina

- * October Monthly Meeting Speaker: Justin Reyes.....page 1.**
- * Dispatch from the Duff.....SOMA President Jim Wheeler; page 2.**
- * The Foragers Report: October 2015.....Patrick Hamilton; page 4.**
- * Recipe of the Month: Mushroom Pad Thai.....Patrick Hamilton; page 12.**
- * Facing Down Fungiphobia.....Meredith Sabini; page 13.**
- * Between *Pisolithus* and *Phaeolus*...Literally....Dorothy Beebee; page 17.**
- * Epicurean Group SoiréeRachel Zierdt; page 18.**
- * Image of the Month: Atascadero Creek.....Lucy Martin; page 19.**
- * SOMA Volunteer Board: New Listings.....page 20.**
- * SOMA Calendar, Notices & Noteworthy Events.....page 21.**
- * Map and Directions to SOMA Monthly Meeting.....page 22.**

JOIN SOMA! Your membership in the Sonoma County Mycological Association, or SOMA, is a great way to meet and interact with other mushroom enthusiasts. Head to <http://somamushrooms.org/membership> and sign up; the season is just beginning!

The Foragers Report: October 2015

By Patrick Hamilton

"Due to the lack of Mother Nature's interest (anger?) in supplying us with new fungal material I present the following piece from archived stuff. This is from 2001--a spaced odyssey back. In it are several very important people who are or were very real in my life but a few of who now are not in any life, really.

Some of the mushrooms' names have been changed but the locales have not. The friends' names will always be remembered. Pray for rain."

Other Stuff, 20 Favorites

(Reprinted from Summer 2001)

An especially choice event occurs for most folks every once in a while. A whole bunch of these rare events stacked closely together can make for a real fine life and we all know that a pile of the most onces in the fewest whiles is, of course, best. For me (and probably you too) a lot of these winning wonderments happen around finding and cooking wild mushrooms.

Recently I was invited by a close friend (Connie Green--a purveyor of the best edibles) to hunt and cook up at a ranch on the northern Sonoma county coast with a few famed San Francisco Bay Area chefs, other excellent cooks, some wine enthusiasts and several great mushroom pickers.

We had remarkable food and drink in the old pot-belly stove-heated ranch house and warmly experienced some easy downright friendly feeling fun. It became one of those aforementioned onces in whiles.

(This one was so special that I kind of got the feeling I was caterer to something unreal, like the Teddy Bears' Picnic. ("If you go out in the woods. . .")

The woods, the walks, the mushrooms, the lichens and mosses and so much other stuff. Nice, and one of the

ways we all choose to spend our time together.

Many writers with mushroom lore have described the power of mushrooms and how our lives have been so enlivened by fine fungal finds and



Boletus edulis; Wikipedia

finer fungus friends. Many non-mushroomers still think us an odd group and we might think of them as having not enough of those onces in too many of the whiles.

Once upon a time, not long ago (last issue), I asked all of you readers to submit to me your list of top 20 edibles. While many did, a few did not--you know who you are. So I won't mention names but I will contact you later.

As we here at Mushroom Central Main Chief Cooking HQ began to receive your data a column simply ranking and listing the top 20 favorites began to take some form. But that form soon followed the function which unfolds in writing the endless rough drafts of these articles and became just like other writers' classic wastebasket-bound crumpled paper.

Imagine my scrunched computer monitor stuffed into the garbage can.

The Foragers Report: October 2015

...continued

Too many variables and too many varieties came in the mail to your cooking column reporter for a simple roster.

Fungus I've never heard of listed as favorites from places I've never been to. Habitat trees of otherworldly species. *Psilocybe* mushrooms at the top of one extra-ordinary list, some of my very favorites common at the bottom of others'.

But what we received mostly were lists favoring our nationally most well known edibles (in no particular order) old buddies like *Boletus edulis* and *appendiculatus*, *Craterellus cornucopioides* and *fallax*, *Morchella* spp., *Tricholoma flavovirens*, *Laetiporus sulphureus*, *Grifola frondosa*, *Dentinum repandum* and *umbili-*



***Hypholoma capnoides*; Wikipedia**

catum, *Sparassis* ssp., *Cantharellus cibarius* and *formosus*, *Gyromitra gigas*, *Lactarius* ssp., *Clitocybe nuda*, *Tricholoma magnivelare*, *Lepiota procera* and *Macrolepiota rachodes*, *Russula xerampelina*, *Tuber melanosporum*, *Marasmius oreades*, *Agaricus augustus*, *campestris*, *bitorquis*, *crocodilinus*, *liliceps*, *arvensis* and all the other fine edibles from the *Agaricus* genus.

In the interest of what possibly is science (as passes for in this column) and maybe even accuracy I will quote from some of the responses and from others

I'll list some of the contents. Fortunately, The Natural Order of Stuff will help us by sorting out this amalgam of favored mushrooms and what might become obvious is a top 20.

From the area around Spokane, Washington, we heard from Kelly Chadwick and that list included some not found on others--*Lyophyllum decastes*, *Phaeolepiota aurea*, *Rozites caperata* and *Hypholoma capnoides* (on Paul Stammets' list too).

Our own Harley Barnhart thought it best to qualify stuff by writing in a sort of stunted text, "It's a fun game, but needs rules. Include marketed exotics such as truffles? Name species only, or include groups (e.g., lump *M. elata* & *esculenta* as just "morels")? Restrict list to things I actually have a chance of collecting occasionally, or include some I have just sampled?"

Don't have answer Harley, just go for it. And he did after setting me straight by saying, "I have stuck to species and, with a couple of exceptions, to things I bring home. (A rather pedestrian lot, I concede.)"

Pedestrian smedestrian, I say. He added to our roster *Amanita pachycolea*, *Boletus mirabilis*, *Coprinus comatus* and *Albatrellus pescaprae* (or *ellisii*).

From Darwin DeShazer, science advisor to SOMA, the greatly named Sonoma (county) Mycological Association, we got the addition of these species: *Herichium erinaceus*, *Ustilago maydis* (a smutty favorite of many around here), *Amanita velosa* (one of the best!), *Flammulina velutipes*, and *Laccaria laccata*.

Things up around Clayton, Idaho, are far different than around here in coastal northern California. Kathy and Dave Richmond ("finally agreed") on a ranking of mushrooms there which would not rate as highly here, either because I've never seen them or we are lucky to have more, better flavored, fungus available. For instance, *Armillaria straminea* ("use no spices as it ruins the mild nutty flavor--only

The Foragers Report: October 2015

...continued

butter/olive oil--truly our favorite") is one.

I would certainly like to try it and, really, most of the other edibles I have never eaten which have shown up on these lists.

In MD Arora states that *A. straminea* is closely related to *A. albolanaripes* (which grows in the Sierra and which we pass by in favor of others).

The Richmond's also mentioned *Pleurotus pulmonarius*, about which I was unable to find information. Another of theirs, *Hygrophorus subalpinus*, is usually not eaten around here for the same reason of better being available.

Peziza phyllogena, *Mycenastrum corium*, *Gomphidius subroseus*, and *Suillus grevillei* are also on their favorites' list. Might I just say that these particular puppies do not appear on mine. . . ?

(I hope that I am not sounding elitist--I'll leave that to some true elites who soon follow.).

Kathy included with her submission a fine looking recipe for "Morels with Saffron Cream Over Fettucine" that puts the saffron with heavy cream, thyme and allspice.

Charmoon Richardson, who runs The Wild About Mushroom Company, gives mushroom cooking lessons, teaches herb and mushroom i.d. and organizes great events, gave me his list. But not before presenting much sideways waffling qualifying and quantifying. Seems that he and a lot of folks wanted to not be pinned down to any list that they might be stuck defending, especially against any others'.

He said, "(Here is) the Top 20 list, which is, I must regretfully say, somewhat biased by restriction of exposure. That is because I have not had the opportunity to try many of the favorite mushrooms from other lists. It's not necessarily meaningful to compare to other lists. Also, it's not necessarily just

flavor that I'm ranking by--sometimes it's versatility and variety of good cooking styles. For instance, there are many more ways to prepare morels than there



***Suillus grevillei*; Wikipedia**

are matsutake--so morels would come out ahead of matsutake, even if I liked their flavors equally (which I don't--morels are the best, but I haven't had those supposedly great *Gyromitras*. . .)

I could put spruce tip syrup on that waffle and it wouldn't get any better.

He differentiates between our coastal *B. edulis* (his #3 behind morels and The Prince) and those from other locales and between certain morel "burns" from one area and another. Also listed: *Camarophyllus pratensis*, a tasty local edible also very much appreciated by maggots; and shiitake which I believe has been found (or a close relative) wild in this country.

A close buddy of mine, Joe Dougherty, comes out from his Wall Street tower to foray with us three or four times a year. He is a fine cook and a great wine snob who has irritated that heck out of me because I usually end up agreeing with him. (I no longer enjoy most California chardonnays and I live surround-

The Foragers Report: October 2015

...continued

ed by vineyards--too much oak and he is always willing to point that out to anyone who has not had white Burgundies).

He had a difficult time doing what I thought would be a simple task and said, "Not sure what to make of these lists, really. A given dish, a given preparation, a felicitous wine match, good friends, oxygen deprivation from altitude, hunger from a long day's hunting. Any of these can transform the experience of a particular mushroom (except commercial oysters, which are too bland to transform). The list is thus awfully approximate.

"The second broad issue is the difference between bought and foraged mushrooms, with particular application to truffles and Italian porcini. Mushrooms



***Fistulina hepatica*; Wikipedia**

that you've picked yourself have a special pleasure to them, but with luck they are also more common. If truffles were cheap, would we still like them? Hard to say, really. A steady diet of caviar would definitely pall. I would pretty much always trade California coastal porcini for Urbani #1's, though." (See, he is a cep snob too).

Joe divided morels into "greys" (his #1) and "other burns," then listed truffles, white then black.

So-o New York, that truffle stuff.

Another thing that he (and others) did was list "early hedgehogs" and not mid-season nor late. I know that older hedgehogs, long in tooth, can be bitter. One can scrape off the dentition on these specimens and rid much of that harshness, but why bother when sweeter species fruit at the same time?

Russ Cohen, from Arlington, Maine, told me, "I'm assuming that by asking people to submit their 20 favorites that you mean their 20 favorite species to eat, as opposed to their 20 favorite species to find in the wild." Yes, that is why I called for 20 favorite edibles, not 20 favorite wildbibles.

The Mainite added to our list *Fistulina hepatica* (which I have made into a mean sashimi), *Stropharia rugosoannulata* (another one I have never eaten), *Gyroporus cyanescens* (I would love to try it) and *Cantharellula umbonata*, reputed to be as tasty a small mushroom as there is, and, alas, I have not had.

From the incalculable Paul Stammets we got, "My favorite edibles: *Psilocybe semilanceata*, *Psilocybe cyanescens*, *Psilocybe azurescens*, *Psilocybe strictipes*, *Psilocybe cubensis*, *Psilocybe weilii*, *Psilocybe pelliculosa*..." Okay, and thanks Paul.

I have made dinner for him but I never had food prepared by him. Or maybe I don't remember, exactly.

Paul puts these on our list too: *Agaricus blazei* (gee, I wonder why?), *Hypsizygus marmoreus* (new to me), *Pholiota nameko*, and *Amanita muscaria* (after boiling and discarding water).

I wrote here a while back about cooking and eating *A. muscaria* and many folks have since (and some before) written of their experiences eating this beautiful famed mushroom. It really is good and non-active if done like Paul says.

Oft mentioned here Connie Green sees more wild mushrooms per week than 99.99% of folks, anywhere (a thousand pounds and more). She provides such famous restaurants as the French

The Foragers Report: October 2015

...continued

Laundry, Lark Creek Inn, Masa's, Picasso at the Bellagio, LuLu's, blah, blah and her chef's tell her stuff often. So much that I suspect her rankings are a compilation of hers and their tastes.

She call "greys" by name (*Morchella atrotomentosa*) and puts them right above *T. magnatum pico* (white truffle). Connie was only one of two to name *Polyozellus multiplex* and she qualifies them by saying, "The variety growing in British Columbia around Terrace ONLY." Got it Connie.

She also likes European *C. cibarius* over those from North America and loves *B. barrowsii*. Me too.

Larry Stickney, nationally known knowledgeable mushroomer, erstwhile cooking columnist here, and mentor to me in many mushroom ways and means was magnanimous in his listings and even suggested some various best uses.

Because he is so associated with, and respected in, the cooking of wild mushrooms I am going to reprint his list here. It is ranked in alphabetical order after the first three: #1 *Tuber melanosporum*, # 2 *Gyromitra esculenta* (use with cream sauces), # 3 *Morchella* species (use with nutmeg and cream), *Agaricus haemorrhoidarius* (ouch!), *A. arvensis*, *A. augustus* (salad use), *A. rodmani*, *bitorquis* (salad use), *Amanita vaginata* (captivating flavor), *Boletus edulis*, *Calbovista subsculpta* (cook like Egg Plant), *Calvatia sculpta*, *C. maxima*, *Cantharellus cibarius* (use with Marsala wine), *C. infundibuliformis*, *tubaeformis*, *Clathrus ruber* (egg stage) (beautiful laid open on plate), *Clitocybe nuda* (use with dairy products), *Clitopilus prunulus*, *Comatus atramentarius* (best with cream soups), *C. coprinus* (best stuffed and broiled), *C. micaceus*, *Craterellus cornucopioides*, *Grifola frondosus*, *Helvella lacunosa* (best stuffed with cheese and deep fried), *Hericius abietis*, *H. coralloides*, *H. erinaceus*, *H. ramosum*, *Hypomyces lactiflorum*

(lovely in egg dishes),

Lactarius fragilis, rubidus (best dried and powdered for desserts), *L. indigo*, *Laetiporus sulphureus* (best baked in white wine), *Leccinum aurantiacum* (best dredged in corn meal), *L. insigne* (fried with fresh Golden trout), *Lepiota rachodes* (best sautéed with red meat



***Tuber melanosporum*; Wikipedia**

fat), *Lyophyllum decastes* (spaghetti sauce), *Marasmius oreades* (great in white soups),

Phallus ravenlii ("eggs demand to be eaten", McIlvaine), *Polyozellus multiplex*, *Sparassis radicata* (crispa) (fantastic in fritters)," and, ending his lengthy list is one that is way down on mine, "*Suillus brevipes* (wonderful baked w/butter in foil over campfire).

Whew.

Larry goes on, "This listing of my favorite wild mushrooms is not limited to 20, nor narrowly confined to the glorious first three. Choosing between the remaining 37 can be done only by location and season: Bay Area, North Coast, Sierra Nevada, Out of State, and Sum-

The Foragers Report: October 2015

...continued

mer, Fall, Winter, and Spring.

"The best of what is fruiting where and when I am out looking about will be accepted as the favorite then. This enumeration does not mention commonly merchandised domesticated fungi, nor does it mention some known edibles which have no real esculent values; e.g., *Pleurotus*, *Pleuteus*, *Peziza*, or *Psilocybe* (although not these alone)."

All right then. We present for you finally the listing of a favorite and famous contributor to these pages--Gary Lincoff. Like Larry, Gary likes to expound, yes, that is the write word.

His descriptions of his mushrooms are not to be missed and won't be, if you are still with me. Let's sit back and listen to Gary.



***Sparassis crispa*; Wikipedia**

"Gary Lincoff's top ten, well, more or less. I should have added here that although most people probably think they judge best edible whatevers by their flavor and texture, I strongly suspect that PRESENTATION is 90% of it.

"Eating a mediocre mushroom with someone you love can transform that

mushroom into one of the best you ever remember eating! I would think that eating the best mushrooms while sitting blind-folded in a kidnapper's hide-away, waiting to hear whether your loved ones think you're worth the ransom demand, would seriously affect the culinary experience."

I wouldn't have thought of that Gary. "Here are 10--in alphabetical order--not in order of preference! Others would include more familiar edibles, like morels and chanterelles and black trumpets and boletes, etc., etc., etc.

"*Cantharellus longisporus*--African red-capped chanterelle: An incredibly fragrant southern African chanterelle. One you can smell as soon as you enter a room that it's in. The flavor is the fragrance, and the bright red caps, the yellow gills and stems, and meaty texture make it a winner at any dinner party.

"*Cordyceps sinensis*--Chinese caterpillar mushroom: Last year in Telluride this was served in a Chinese soup of vegetables, meats, and herbs. The caterpillars were left attached. As the mushroom simmered in the soup, the caterpillars absorbed the liquid and inflated to their fresh weight size. The *cordyceps*-caterpillar combination was an unbeatable crowd pleaser, except to vegetarians.

"*Cyttaria darwinii*--Darwin's "Beagle" mushroom: In southern South America, in Argentina's Tierra del Fuego, to be precise, there is one of a number of species of a mushroom that grows on southern beech tree (*Nothofagus*). Darwin wrote about it in his "Voyage of the Beagle." Cooked in garlic and oil, and eaten while reading Darwin and facing south (Antarctica), it is an evolutionary moment.

"*Dictyophora rubra*--the white-netted, red-volva stinkhorn: Only in China would you likely find a scentless stinkhorn. The Chinese cultivate it and serve it only on special occasions. In restaurants in Hong Kong it is listed on menus the way lobster is in some American restaurants. Instead

The Foragers Report: October 2015

...continued

of a price for the dish, it's listed as "market price." As prepared in Guangdong, and served in a soup, one eats it sensing the presence of crouching tigers and hidden dragons.

"Mycoleptodonoides aithisonii--shelving Asian tooth fungus: Looking like an oyster mushroom, growing in off-white shelves on trees in Japan and Himalayan India, this mushroom is a densely meaty edible. It lacks the crab-like texture of the *Hericium* tooth fungi, but it does work well as an entree, unlike most edible mushrooms that work best as side dishes. Not to be passed up when hiking in the Himalayas.

"Psathyrella sp.--Haitian djon-djon mushroom: It could be voodoo, who knows?, but there is a small *Psathyrella* being sold in the Haitian markets of New York City. It is called djon-djon. We are still unclear about its exact identity. Djon-djon is cooked with rice. It blackens the rice. It is often served with shrimp and rice. It has an earthy, pungent flavor. Eating it, you can almost smell the too fragrant tropical flowers of Haiti, and sense the intrigue and danger of life on one of the world's least known islands.

"Terfezia leonis--desert truffle: While not comparable to the Italian white or the French black truffles, eating these truffles, some of which are the size of hen's eggs, can be a transforming experience. The ones I had were collected by Bedouins in the Negev desert in southern Israel. These truffles transcend their time and place. Cooking them in a little garlic and oil, and eating them under a starry sky, you are transported to a desert oasis. You find yourself sitting there on the ground, on a Persian carpet, listening to Lawrence (of Arabia, who else - Peter O'Toole?) telling you of the endless wonders of desert life.

"Termitomyces robustus--termite mushroom: "There are many termite

mushrooms that are collected for food. Different kinds are found and eaten in Africa, Burma, Thailand, and China.

Each time we've had this mushroom, especially the large, fleshy ones, like *Termitomyces robustus*, the flavor and tex-



***Termitomyces robustus*; Wikipedia**

ture is the way I remember chicken used to taste years ago. For flavor and texture, one could eat this every week and not grow tired of it.

Besides, eating the fresh "produce" of small farmers, even if they are only termites, is a special treat in our brave new world of genetically modified foods.

"Thelephora ganba jun--Yunnan Province vase fungus: "In western China, in Kunming, Yunnan province, there is a *Thelephora* mushroom commonly sold at market. It has the toughness of belt leather. Nevertheless, in the hands of an expert Chinese chef this mushroom is cut in slivers so thin that when prepared

The Foragers Report: October 2015

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a pungent-spicy flavor and a crunchy texture that is to die for.

Ustilago maydis-cuitlacoche--corn smut: Now a common component of some "smart" American markets and restaurants, we first discovered the virtues of this fungus in Vera Cruz at a mushroom cooking competition.

Although the cuitlacoche empanadas did not win first prize in the competition, it was the most pleasing



***Ustilago maydis-cuitlacoche*; Wiki**

presentation to us. The pita-like cooked wrappers contained a succulent mix of *cuitlacoche* and seasonings.

Considering its source--the common smut of corn--it was an elegant preparation. On another occasion, at a black-tie party, *cuitlacoche*, looking like black caviar, was served in tiny tartlets on silver trays carried by gloved, uniformed waiters."

Now that is a once in a while.



Corn smut; deardirtyamerica.com

Recipe of the Month

By Patrick Hamilton

For those of you who have cooked nothing else since getting my last recipe I present a famous Thai concoction that is great in the summer and best served with a good beer, like Singha. Hopefully you can make this until the Fall issue comes to your kitchen door. It appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle's food section a while back and I adapted it a bit for us folks.

Pad Thai with Wild Mushrooms

Serves 4

Preparation time--30 minutes

- 6 oz flat rice noodles (Pho)
- 1/4 c fish sauce (Nuoc Mam)
- 1/4 c ketchup
- 3 tbl water
- 1 1/2 tbl sugar
- 1/4 c vegetable oil
- 1/4 lb wild mushrooms mix, chopped
(reserve some pretty whole ones for garnish atop the dish, sliced or not, depending upon the size)
- 1 lb shrimp, med., peeled and deveined
- 3 ea eggs, beaten to blend
- 2 tbl garlic, minced
- 2 c bean sprouts, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes, or to taste
- 1/4 c peanuts, dry-roasted, chopped
- 3 tbl scallions, green tops only, sliced 1/4"
- 2 1/2 tbl cilantro, chopped
- 2 ea limes, cut into wedges



Mushroom Pad Thai; Food & Wine

1. soften the noodles, drain. whisk together the fish sauce, ketchup, water, and sugar. set aside.
2. into a hot wok (or any high sided saute pan) put 1 tbl of oil, heat a bit, add the mushrooms and cook until almost done. add the shrimp and cook until just done. using slotted spoon remove the mushrooms and shrimp. wipe the wok dry.
3. reheat the wok, add remaining oil, heat then stir in the eggs and scramble until just set. add the garlic, then the ketchup mixture and drained noodles. toss until they have absorbed most of the liquid, about 3 minutes.
4. add the shrimp and the mushrooms, bean sprouts and pepper flakes, peanuts, scallions and cilantro. toss gently, a lot.
5. serve with the lime wedges and garnish with pretty mushrooms or mushroom slices and a sprig or three of cilantro

Facing Down Fungiphobia

By Meredith Sabini

Surely this has happened to you: You are having a casual conversation with someone – maybe a neighbor, a visiting relative, a new acquaintance – and you happen to mention that you’re going mushroom hunting this weekend. The person responds to this information with a flurry of cautionary words: “Oh, be very careful! You don’t want to touch any toadstools! I’ve heard that just touching certain mushrooms can be fatal. There was that case of the nursing home attendant who cooked mushrooms she thought were edible, and killed everyone! It’s too risky! Better to just buy mushrooms at the grocery store.”

The tenor of your conversation has suddenly changed and is now pervaded with fear – theirs, not yours, though they are eagerly trying to arouse it in you as well. Fear they truly believe appropriate to the activity you dare to participate in. You didn’t bring fear to this discussion, but it’s being directed at you so vociferously that you well may go away with an ample dose, which you will then have to try to shake off.

This scenario has taken place so many times over the course of my experience as a fungi forager, and I am always impressed by the certitude with which someone who is entirely uneducated about fungi can extoll their dangers, having the ostensible goal of protecting me from them and from myself, fool they consider me to be. This is fungiphobia in action. You know this drama, don’t you? And has it happened enough times that you have scripted a reasonable reply to the unreasoned verbal assault? I’ll bet we could entertain ourselves over cheese

and wine at Camp by recounting our best comebacks to this niggling dilemma.

The challenge is whether you intend to remain calm and rational or whether you’re inclined to fight fire with fire. “Bug off, bitch” would probably end the discussion, but it also might end any potential friendship. Likewise “You don’t know what the bleep you’re talking about.” What about humor, always welcome when things get overheated: “I often get his reaction when I tell people about my hobby. Boy, it sure seems to scare them off!” said with a smile and a chuckle. That objectifies the issue by putting it on others, which may help you assailant get some perspective on their silliness. Get a grip.

In my experience, the truly rational approach isn’t very effective. Explaining to the scared party that you have taken classes, learned how to identify various species, and you definitely keep in mind the risks – this doesn’t necessarily defuse

their fear, which I believe emerges from some underground primal place. Asking the person whether they’ve ever taken any classes or know how to tell a morel from a *maitake* – this may only make them defensive or embarrassed.

In my head I have a mischievous voice that likes to dive in and tell it like it is. Given the chance, I might just say to someone, “You know, we have a term for what you’re expressing; it’s called fungiphobia. I’m sorry to learn that you’re suffering from this affliction, but please don’t spread it around. Also, it’s not wise to reveal that you are so



***Lepiota procera*; Wikipedia**

Facing Down Fungiphobia

...continued

uniformed about this topic when good information is readily available." That has a professorial quality to it that appeals to me. It allows me to step into the one-up position, thus recovering from the one-down to which this innocent has subjected me. It's also a little catty, and I don't mind that either.

A more empathic approach might be to ask, with true concern, "How did you become so afraid of fungi? Did you have a bad experience or is this something you were taught?" I admit to not having tried this approach, so let me know if any of you have. It manages to convey that they do have a known condition, but is more compassion-based, which has much to recommend it.

I had my initial encounter with fungiphobia on my very first solo collecting venture. I'd been on forays through MSSF, often with Larry Stickney, a huge, solid figure of a man who knew what he was doing. On a visit to Lands the Bay, and, one Sunday, drove to the top of Panoramic Way, behind UC Berkeley stadium, where the

terrain opens out onto rolling hills with plenty of pines. End in the city, I discovered the mushroom that remains my favorite. I wanted to see if they grew on my side of. Sure enough, there were *Lepiotas*.

I was in my twenties at the time, probably dressed in a home-made tie-dyed skirt, wearing a backpack and carrying a trowel. A dad with a young son in tow came up the back side of the Jordan Trail, stopped some distance away, and called over to me, haltingly, "Are you a...a... witch?"

I couldn't believe my ears. Surely he hadn't said that, used that word. Was he serious? Did he really think that this ordinary-looking young woman, most likely a student, was a...a witch?

Wasn't this the Bay Area in the 1970's and not Salem in 1670? And what might he mean by that term, used in broad daylight in 1970? Was he kidding around, flirting with me?

From the distance he kept and his wary stance, it was clear he was doing neither.



***Macrolepiota procera*; Zaca/MushroomObserver.com**

Facing Down Fungiphobia

...continued

So too stunned to reply in words, I raised my eyebrows and then scowled at him, my face trying hard to convey the incredulity I felt. The moment passed, they continued their hike in another direction, and I continued to carefully pick *Lepi-otas*, not yet knowing if they were rachodes or proceras.

I'm glad to say that this is the only time in my life such an accusation has been levelled at me, if one can give it even that much credit. It wasn't really directed at me, per se, but at the image he imagined he was seeing: a woman doing something unusual, unfamiliar. What scared him, really, was the fantasy that erupted from his own unconscious; it was that he was addressing. I hope he was surprised to find that he had such an image in his psyche, and continued the discussion with it.

There is something about mushrooming that does activate irrational projecting, in a way that other risky endeavors do not. I've engaged, as you probably have, in activities with obvious and predictable dangers – in my case, waterskiing, downhill skiing, scuba diving – and I don't recall anyone admonishing me to be aware of breaking a leg (which I did) or losing my sense of direction underwater (which I did), or telling me to avoid the sport altogether because it was life-threatening (which it wasn't, at least not to me).

All of this reminds me of that wonderful scene in Oscar Wilde's play, "The Importance of Being Ernest," where the young woman coyly says to her new paramour, "What is it we are speaking about when we speak about the weather?" What is it people are speaking about when they speak

about the dangers of mushrooming? Mushrooms can be slimy and wormy, yucky and mucky, phallic in shape, full of cooties; they can leak like raw eggs and ooze like bloody cuts; they can smell like old cheese and melt into inky black puddles; they can grow on dung and sprout in dark basements; they tempt with their bright reds, yellows, blues, oranges. There's plenty to fear and fascinate!

A while back, I was reflecting on how I got started with this hobby and what my early experiences were, and memory of that incident on the Jordan Trail came to mind. The poem

I composed, below, is a tribute to the potency of reactions mushrooming can induce. In retrospect, I wish I'd had the courage to go over and ask the man to tell me his story; why was he so afraid, what had brought this about?

There must be creative ways to face up to fungiphobia. Maybe we could do a survey at Camp and ask how many have been confronted or accosted by a proselytizer. Was the person male or female? Are women foragers more likely to be victims of this well-intended advice? Maybe we could collect enough interesting stories of fungiphobic encounters to publish an anthology. Face up to it in order to face it down. It's fairly pervasive, fear of fungi, and deserves to be named, described and diagnosed. To handle it with grace and equanimity, maybe we all could use some coaching. There's safety in numbers, though, and I'd love to have that anthology on hand to hold up in front of fungiphobes, like a little bit of magic to ward off the curse they may try to cast on this largely honorable activity.



Lepiota; The Mushroom Journal

Poem of the Month:

By Meredith Sabini

Make a Wish

Memory wants to move this tale
into the room with dreams
but it did take place:

Father and son round a curve
of the Jordan trail, catch sight
of me crouching beneath a tree
rooting out a specimen

Elder calls out protectively
"Are you a...a witch?"
Word last heard on Gramma's lips
reading me to sleep at five and six

So remote in time and place
I'm sure I have misheard
Perhaps he said, *"Do you have a watch?"*
"Are you collecting for a dish?"

Or *"Did you make a wish?"*
Wishing for another word
I ask him to repeat. He cannot.
Enchanted by some fairy's tale

He does not know why he brought that
mythic term on a weekend hike
half a mile from stanchions of safety
could not say what made him

Hurl it at me, casting about to see
if I would bite, if I would eat them alive
Call me wood nymph, water sprite
at twenty-three I did not look the part

Of witch, which was the word I heard.
The specimen was *Lepiota rachodes*
Shaggy parasol mushroom, well suited
to Victorian ladies strolling

With perambulators in Sunday parks
all white and delicately fringed.

Between *Pisolithus* and *Phaeolus*... ...Literally

By Dorothy Beebee

This is an in-between time for Sonoma County mushroom dyers.... The two primary players in the game, early *Pisolithus ahirzus* ("dyers puffball" or "dead man's foot") have come and many have gone, leaving only dry, poofy spore clouds behind, and the *Phaeolus schweinitzii* (Dyers Polypore") are still hiding in hibernation, or waiting, waiting. waitin for just a promise of rain. Even my usually faithful backyard pet *Phaeolus* is loathe to appear during this 4th year of drought!

Both of these fungi are perfect "beginner" mushroom dyes – both in the strong and warm autumnal colors they produce, and their normally prolific appearance in Fall in a "normal" year! But since the *Pisolithus* first appeared around here in August, I will concentrate on it right now, and talk about *Phaeolus* dyes next month, by when that polypore should start to come out of hiding!

Pisolithus ahirzus is a strong contender for one of the best early Sonoma County mushroom dyes, but is really best picked and used when young and gooey before all of those little pea-like structures (peridotes) mature into clouds of spores which may stubbornly refuse to go into solution without the addition of a "surfactant" such as a touch of dishwashing soap. So if you can find a young one, pick it, and either save it, stored in a plastic (yes, plastic, - to prevent the maturation of the spores into fine powder), or keep it submerged in a tightly sealed jar of

water, until you are ready to dye with it. OR, while the warm weather lasts, use it as a "solar dye" with wet fiber submerged in a large glass covered container out in the sun for a week or two, even a month or two. It can be pretty odiferous when heated, so this is definitely one we do simmer OUTSIDE at SOMA Camp!

This puffball fungus produces a lovely range of gold to deep rich chocolaty browns or dark red-black depending on the age of the mushroom and the fiber used. Protein fibers such as wool, silk, mohair, etc absorb and hold these pigments best, but a white cotton shirt, human hair, or a car seat (all from my personal experience!) will also absorb the color quite well and permanently! An alum or iron mordant isn't necessary, but I feel that they do improve light fastness of the dye. I always prefer to use rubber gloves to prevent perma-



Pisolithus ahirzus; Wikipedia

nently staining my hands, and a good apron or old shirt is appropriate dress code whenever experimenting with this prolific early dye mushroom.

Pisolithus ahirzus is a dye you will find in popular use at SOMA Camp, in the dye classes with wool yarns, or with Shibori wrapping, and "eco-prints" on silk scarves, or the silk threads used in making the Kumihimo bracelets as well as wool Felting.

So give it a try at home, or join in the fungal fiber art fun at 2016 SOMA Camp!

Epicurean Group Soirée by Rachel Zierdt

Epicurean: Ep·i·cu·re·an

Fond of or adapted to luxury or indulgence in sensual pleasures; having luxurious tastes or habits, especially in eating and drinking.

Sunday, Sept 13 the newly organized Epicurean Group of SOMA held its third dinner.

All three organized dinners were delicious and successful thanks to the chef leaderships of Julie Schreiber, Patrick Hamilton and Brian Mealins. Two meals were held in Graton and one at the lovely family home-
stead/vineyard/winery/formagerie of the Heimans in Sonoma.

I started Sunday by eating lightly since I knew what was coming up. This meal, as Patrick promised, was an amazing feast.....Peruvian ceviche, oysters several ways, huge scallops in porcini cream, mussels oven roasted in garlic butter sauce and a main course of clams and pasta. With participants adding wine, appetizers, salads, breads, and desserts, we all felt that fully satiated. Glad I skipped lunch.

Those of us who chose to work in the kitchen had a blast bumping into each other, sharing pots and spaces at the stove. Patrick did his chef thing, albeit being hard of hearing, and calmly (maybe due to lack of hearing) checked over our shoulders to see that all his creations were being prepared to his satisfaction.

Part of the fun of these events is meeting new members of SOMA, helping in the kitchen, and tasting foods that are unusual and varied. In discussing the dishes, some of us were able to learn secrets of chefs and

new ways of coaxing flavors out of usual and unusual ingredients. I learned what restaurants do to hold cooked pasta. First they cook the pasta till al dente stage, drain, reserving a bit of the liquid, return the pasta to the cooking pot adding olive oil to keep the pasta from sticking. When it is time to add the final ingredients to that pot, some of the remaining liquid is added back into the dish to reheat it a bit. The olive oil part was new to me. Roasting the mussels on a baking pan covered with silverfoil and cooked for 15-17 minutes was a brilliant

and effective way to make a sumptuous course without overcooking the mussels.

It is hoped in the future that more SOMA members will be encouraged to join in the festivities and eventually might be convinced to join in the fun in the kitchen. With the hopes of better foraging conditions, future meals will undoubtedly feature more mushrooms.



Mussels and Woodears; 37Cooks.com

Right now we are exploring the possibility of partnering with the Laguna Foundation to hold one of our dinners at their newly built facility.

The only requirement that is needed for you, too, to become an epicurean is being a member of SOMA. Contact Chris Murray or one of the chefs listed above to get placed on our yahoo group list. Then you will have first notice of any upcoming meal, or should I say feast.

Image of the Month

Atascadero Creek

By Lucy Martin



Lucy recently held an open studio viewing of her mushroom paintings under the auspices of the Sonoma County Art Trails.

The Santa Rosa artist's work can be seen at lucymartinart.com and she can be contacted at lucy@lucymartinart.com

SOMA Volunteer Board: Open Positions

SOMA Camp 2016 Volunteers

We are now accepting work exchange/volunteer applications on the SOMA Camp website at <http://www.somamushrooms.org/camp/registration/workexchange.php> for the 2016 SOMA Mushroom Camp.

Please read the work exchange/volunteer policy and requirements on the work-exchangewebsite before you apply. We will only be accepting applications through October 31st.

SOMA News Deputy Editor

We are seeking a deputy editor of the monthly newsletter to assist in all phases of material gathering, editing, layout and distribution. The position can be fulfilled from your home office, using your computer and phone, and our software, and would require approximately one day per month, post learning curve. The primary software is Word for documents, and In Design for layout. We currently use Excel and Mail Chimp for distribution, but are open to other methods/software. The website is currently being rebuilt, and hopefully incorporate more automation for the newsletter production and distribution in the near future.

The position would also be to contribute new ideas in coverage and/or channel distribution that will help spread our readership and drive new members for SOMA, wherever they may be located.

While the current goal is to create a backup editor and ease the workload, the eventual desire is that the deputy editor would assume the position of editor sometime over the near to mid-term. We are all volunteers at SOMA, and occasionally find it difficult to meet club deadlines without help.

If you are interested, please send an email to me, Chaz Thurston at chazwt@gmail.com stating your case and any skills that would ease your learning curve.

SOMA Director of Communications

We are also seeking candidates for a new position, director of communications, to work closely with the director of public relations and the board to enhance contact and information flow between club members, members of the board, prospective members, event participants, other clubs and the mycological world at large. The position requires someone comfortable with speaking to anyone or any group about almost anything, and the ability to electronically communicate through various channels.

The position will likely be incorporated into the board composition, sooner or later, and would require about one day per month, apart from monthly board meetings.

If you are interested, please send an email to Patrick Hamilton at mycochef@sbcglobal.net, describing your experience, skills and ability to donate time.

SOMA Director of New Membership

We also are seeking candidates for a new position, director of new membership, to help the club attract more, younger, enthusiastic members into the fold. The ideal candidate may be younger than the average board member, and should be familiar with multiple information channels that the club can utilize to offer new members all that SOMA does and can do. While the club now has a Facebook page, various affiliate Yahoo groups, we are seeking more and better ways to communicate with potential and new members. The candidate would help draft a campaign for new membership as well as new program elements for new members. The position likely will require one day per month in addition to attendance of monthly board meetings.

If you are interested, please email Jim Wheeler at SOMApresident@SOMAmushrooms.org.

SOMA CALENDAR, NOTICES & NOTEWORTHY EVENTS

SOMA Calendar for November 2015

SOMA Board Meeting, 6:30 pm , President Wheeler's house; Nov 4.

Speaker at Santa Rosa Farm Bureau at 7:00 pm; Nov 19.

Tentative foray at Salt Point State Park, 10:00 am, Nov 21. Check your emails, call or otherwise confirm; both September and October were cancelled per the park ranger's request to avoid group activities off trail.

SOMA CAMP AUCTION/RAFFLE DONATIONS SOUGHT

SOMA is requesting donations for the coming mushroom camp in January 2016, for use in the silent auction and raffle. Proceeds support the many scholarships SOMA presents to grade school through graduate research students. Contact Rachel Zierdt, SOMA vice president at SOMAvicepresident@SOMAmushrooms.org.

SOMA Financials Available

To comply with the SOMA Bylaws, the fiscal year financials have been posted SOMA website at the following link: <http://www.somamushrooms.org/about/>. Scroll to the "Members Only " section.

The Username and Password for access are:

UN: member

PW: Pholiota

Contribute to SOMA News!

The monthly SOMA News wants you to contribute to our pages with news about your life with mushrooms in Sonoma County and beyond. We need art images, photos, short or long stories, academic or other musings on mycology, recipes, notices, events and more.

The deadline for each issue is the weekend before the first of the month.

You needn't be a professional artist, photographer or writer to join in; just take an interest in sharing what you know and find with others!

Email me at chazwt@gmail.com or call 707-799-9766 with inquiries.

Thanks, Chaz Thurston
SOMA News editor.



JOIN SOMA!

Your membership in the Sonoma County Mycological Association, or SOMA, is a great way to meet and interact with other mushroom enthusiasts, learn more about identifying fungi, and share interests such as cooking and cultivating mushrooms.

Sure, most of what SOMA does is open to the public, but wouldn't you rather join SOMA and get all the goodies?

Head to <http://somamushrooms.org/membership> and sign up!



SOMA MONTHLY MEETING DIRECTIONS & MAP

SOMA usually meets on the third Thursday of the month throughout the year (September through May), at the Sonoma County Farm Bureau, 970 Piner Road, Santa Rosa, California, 94931. Fungi are displayed at 7 PM, and speakers begin around 7:30 PM. Bring in your baffling fungi to be identified!

Directions to the Sonoma County Farm Bureau

From the south:

- Go north on Hwy 101
- Pass the Steel Lane exit then take the Bicentennial Way exit
- Go over Hwy 101 (heading west) and then right on Range Ave
- Turn left on Piner Rd and go about 1/4 mile
- Turn left into Farm Bureau parking lot at 970 Piner Road

From the north:

- Go south on Hwy 101
- Take the first Santa Rosa exit for Hopper Ave/ Mendocino Ave
- Stay left on the frontage road (it becomes Cleveland Ave)
- Turn right on Piner Rd and go about 1/4 mile
- Turn left into Farm Bureau parking lot at 970 Piner!

