



# SOMA News

VOLUME 21 ISSUE 9

May 2009

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

## 2009 SEASON CALENDAR

May

May 21st » Meeting—7pm  
Sonoma County Farm Bureau  
Speaker: Nicole Hynson  
**NO FORAY FOR MAY**

May is our Annual Membership Meeting where you can run for office or join the Board. Please come and help with your club.



Photo by Julie Zickerfoose



## EMERGENCY MUSHROOM POISONING IDENTIFICATION

After seeking medical attention, contact **Darvin DeShazer** for identification at (707) 829-0596. Email your photos to [muscaria@pacbell.net](mailto: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

Nicole Hynson

May 21st—7pm—Farm Bureau

### When fungi host plants: unraveling the role of mycorrhizal specificity in myco-heterotrophic plants

I have been an avid mushroom hunter for the last 15 years and even worked as a commercial morel picker in eastern Oregon before beginning a career path in mycology. I first became interested in fungi as an undergraduate student at the Evergreen State College under the mentorship of Dr. Michael Beug. While living in Washington I was involved with both the Pacific Northwest Key Council and Puget Sound Mycological Society. As an undergraduate I spent a term abroad working with Dr. Don Hemmes at the University of Hawaii to collect and identify the puffballs (Gasteromycetes) of Maui. After graduating from Evergreen I worked as a botanist and “mushroom expert” for the Olympic National Forest in Washington before beginning my graduate work under the advisement of Dr. Tom Bruns at UC Berkeley. Since beginning my Ph.D., I remain involved with education and outreach by teaching mycology and mushroom identification to undergraduates at UC Berkeley and volunteering for San Francisco Mycological Society’s annual Fungus Fair. My current interests in mycology include understanding the functional role of mycorrhizal fungi in forest ecosystems and the identification of the mycorrhizal fungi associated with myco-heterotrophic (fungus-feeder) plants.



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SOMA's *Amanita muscaria* logo by Ariel Mahon

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dispatch from the duff . . .

The SOMA year will come to an end with the 2009 Volunteer Appreciation picnic scheduled in July. SOMA celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this season. I'm not aware of the average life span of non-profit groups in California, but a bi-decennary might be an achievement of note. I think our founding members would be very pleased with the club's growth and activities in the community over the years. SOMA has been able to maintain a tradition of scholarship awards, educational camp programs, and the wonderful opportunity for all members to spend hours in the great outdoors of Northern California, always the best part of living here.

SOMA Camp was a highlight of the year. We are particularly grateful to the CYO staff under Jim Willford's leadership for their support. The CYO made Camp possible this year by actively helping SOMA to manage costs and providing a first rate staff that assisted all our efforts along the way. Patrick Hamilton's very, very timely assistance brought Gary Lincoff to his favorite part of California and one of his favorite groups. He delivered another interesting and entertaining talk that held our undivided attention throughout. Dinner that night was extraordinary due to the menu planning and the great energy and enthusiasm of the culinary volunteers. At the foray in April, some folks reminisced how outstandingly delicious that dinner was and their descriptions noticeably awed a number of new members. I think we may have more than a few early sign-ups for the 2010 Camp.

We will determine the scholarship recipients for 2009 in the next week or two. The Board voted to extend the same number of scholarships (2) and awards as in 2008. You've seen on the newsletter cover that Nicole Hynson, our second scholarship awardee, will speak on the 21st of May. I hope and urge that all of you attend her presentation.

The Board is very, very grateful for the support provided by our club members. I look forward to an excellent 2010 season. With the continued involvement of the experienced pros and newer members, we will be able to successfully carry on the traditions of the club set by the original members of 1988.

Best regards,

-Jim Wheeler

## FORAY OF THE MONTH

No forays scheduled for May; see you in September or in the mountains looking for morels and spring boletes.



Usual suspects in Navarro

Is there a theme in this issue?

**10 Reasons when you know its time to quit writing about "Mushroom Dyes" (for awhile, at least)**

© Dorothy Beebee (updated from SOMA News, March 2000)

10) ...when you start fishing out old copies of mushroom dye articles to reprint because you have run out of anything new to say...

9) ...when there is no room in the freezer for ice cream at Thanksgiving because it is filled with frozen dye mushrooms for SOMA Camp in January...

8) ...when you check last night's mushroom dye first, before making your coffee or checking your e-mail in the morning... (this is STILL the case, 10 years later)

7) ...when you're so busy looking at *Dermoycbe sanguinea* growing out of the D. fir stumps at Breitenbush, that you don't realize you are the last one to leave camp.....

6) ...when you put your mushroom dye sample notebooks in the overhead-bin on the airplane, and send your asthma medicine through in the baggage compartment below ... (I still do this – the medications are replaceable, the dye notebooks aren't)

5) ...when you approach perfect strangers in Alaska to ask them if their hats or sweaters are mushroom-dyed...

4) ...when you go in to see your asthma doctor for a checkup and the possibility comes up that you might be allergic to fungi after all...

3) ...when you go into see your asthma doctor for a checkup, and "forget" to tell him about the mushrooms sprouting under the bathtub, and drying behind the stove ...

2) ... when you blame the phases of the moon for the color change of the *Omphalotus* dye from purple to green instead of trusting the pH indicators... (I'm still doing this, ~ sorry Darwin!)

**And now # 1 reason for giving up writing mushroom dye articles for awhile:**

**Its 93 degrees outside, and I can't think of anything new to say... or draw...(!)**

**Most of all, thanks for being such faithful readers of this SOMA News column over the last 10 years! And especially a big THANK YOU to all of those many, many SOMA folks who have so assiduously collected dye mushrooms for me to use at SOMA Camp and for mushroom dye presentations all over the country!!!**

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**Editor's Note:** It is to my great sadness that Dorothy has decided to hang up her pen again and I expect clamorous outrage and exhortations from her readers to get her back in the saddle. BUT, as luck would have it, another SOMA member has agreed to write for the News. Residents of Walnut Creek, Mary and Jim Olsen attended SOMA Camp this year and donated some great wine to the cause. Mary will help fill our pages with mushroom lore, vignettes and fantasies, hopefully well into the future. Without further ado, here is an intro article and another hot on the heels of the first:

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**Mushrooming is for Every Body**

Mary Olsen © 2009

I love to take off on the spur of the moment for a few days away. Just being in the forest refreshes my soul. Once, I hated hiking. I'm a bit overweight and my partner is slim and trim. During our forced Batan March Hiking Days he was patient with me, but I could see it was tiresome for him, and the dogs, to have to stop and wait for Fatty Arbuckle to come along.

Then, we discovered mushrooming! One must walk at a measured pace to find mushrooms. Finally I could walk at a speed I was comfortable with! Women have such finer skills of observation. Yes, I'm terribly sexist and I make no apologies. Jim (his name is not changed, he is not innocent, and he needs no protection) says to me, five times a day, "Where the heck did you hide \_\_\_\_\_?"

"The best place: right in front of your face!" Therefore, I am always the one to spot the mushrooms. "You just walked right by it. I can't believe it, you almost stepped on it. What the heck are you doing?" I am softening my language here: I love to use naughty, vile words - it's good for venting, which is good for relationships.

So, finally, the two of us discovered a sport we can both enjoy. I would love to tell you that it resulted in our hiking evermore and my losing lots of weight, but it didn't. I'm still fat, but now I enjoy hiking.

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**Fort Bragg Weekend, and what to do with an overabundance of mushrooms** Mary Olsen © 2009

My husband Jim and I love to jump in the car with the dogs and take off to the North Coast for mushroom hunting whenever we think the conditions have been right. This has been a disappointing year for the most part. Our biggest success was at the Jackson Demonstration Forest east of Fort Bragg.

The Jackson Demonstration Forest is owned by the state and managed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Within the forest there are some detention facilities and the inmates do forest restoration and fire mitigation in their spare time. We have seen evidence of areas being cleared of invasive plants, like Pampas Grass, and water diversion ditches being dug to prevent soil erosion. The CDF has an office in Fort Bragg, on the main drag, just across the street from Century 21 Real Estate. There you can get an enormous map of the forest (about \$10), showing numbered dirt roads, elevations, streams and the route of the Skunk Train, which wends its way through the woods on its way to Fort Bragg from Willits. At the office you can also get a mushroom picking permit, (for a small fee), just in

case you think you are going to hit the jackpot and have loads of Black Trumpets to share with all your friends. We are never that optimistic, and besides, we are scofflaws, so we have never bought one.

So in January we drove adventurously down the dirt roads, hoping not to break an axle. Here and there we saw seasoned pick-up trucks and vans, mobile live/work studios, parked along the roads. We soon discovered that they belonged to mushroom pickers who sell their finds to itinerant buyers who make their way down the coast, ending up in the Bay Area. There they sell to restaurants and markets. The buyers set up in RV parks in Fort Bragg or Gualala, or simply put up a handwritten sign by the side of the road that says, "Mushroom Buyer".

They pay the pickers about a fifth of what you finally pay if you are lucky enough to find a grocery that sells them. We bought from one lone picker, and we also bought from a mushroom buyer. Both asked so little for their precious wares that we forced

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**“What’s Up with This?”**

**M**orels in a redwood burn? Porcini still fruiting above Fort Ross in mid-April? The worst 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> golden chanterelle season in the past 30 years? A poor black chanterelle season? So few hedgehogs that I didn’t even bother to check my patches more than twice?

And most of the mushroom talk on the many mushroom Web groups to which I belong isn’t about edibles.

Hmmm-what’s up with this? As far as the lack of good edibles goes (and the questions arising thereof) I simply think that no one has enough data collected over enough years to make a call.

We know that lots of fungi seem to fruit in some sort of cycles but I have not heard anyone explain how or why that is. I have friends who have been picking, say, chanterelles in the same patches for over 30 years and they can not figure out if the lack of a “normal” fruiting is because of the rains during the current months, the prior winter, the prior spring, or the Gods’ favors, the Devil’s proclivities, or what. Anybody have good info?

The morel season seemed to kick off at the end of March with sea level merckels appearing down by Big Sur, around the Bay Area in gardens and old apple orchards, and up near Ft Bragg in those redwoods.

Next I do expect to hear of low High Sierra elevation esculents around 2,500’—

4,-000’ (although none yet reported to me as of 04/21/09).

The yellow foot season has just ended in Brookings, Oregon, and that is late, late, late. Weird.

“This I know that I know nothing” was uttered a long time ago by some famous philosopher whose name I have forgotten since my

CLIP & SAVE

philosophy 1 class back in freshman college in 1964 but it certainly applies to what I (don’t) know about mushrooms’ fruitings. Don’t know a darn thing it seems but I know a lot about that not knowing thing. (You can quote me on that.)

On a little more serious note: Those of you who have not found how to find morels should offer to drive a knowledgeable person (like Larry Stickney) to the Sierras and maybe, just maybe, he will locate some for you.

And, speaking of Larry, he told me that the porcini fruiting now is not that odd because (according to him) it is somewhat normal at the time of the season’s changing that the opposite season’s mushrooms might fruit. I’ll leave that up to those more experienced to decipher.

In Michael Pollan’s very good book—*The Omnivore’s Dilemma*—he asks David Arora what he considered the big question regarding mushrooms’ fruiting and Arora did not hesitate and mentioned two: “Why not here and not there? Why not now and not then?”

David Campbell—old mushroom hunting buddy of mine and former President of the MSSF—tells of how he has found porcini in every calendar month! Maybe many things are not so strange after all. Maybe it’s just us (me?).

One way you can guarantee a successful morel hunt is to purchase the mostly infamous Mycochef’s Mythical Morel Map. Merely send \$25.00 to me and I will send you on your merry way. Really. You can trust me.

Or if you doubt the above do not doubt what follows—the best recipe your columnist has devised in some time. Way too good for most folks but I will, of course, share it with SOMA members (but only the good ones). Make sure none of the bad ones see this.

**Penne Rigate With Favas, Morels, and Fennel**

Recipe By: Patrick      Serving Size: 4      Preparation Time: 0:45

Amt	Ingredient	Preparation Method
1 Lb	Fava Beans, Small	shelled
1 Cup	Morels, fresh, or ½ Cup dried	chopped
2 Tbl	Butter, Unsalted	
2 Tbl	Extra Virgin Olive Oil	
1 Ea	Fennel Bulb, Small	sliced 1/8"
2 Ea	Shallots	chopped small
2 Cloves	Garlic	minced
1 Tbl	Rosemary	minced
¼ Tsp	Red Pepper Flakes	
	S & P	
½ Lb	Penne Rigate Pasta	
3 Tbl	Parmigiano Reggiano	grated fine



**Photo by Bill Bakaitis**

1. If the fava beans are smaller than a thumb nail simply shell them and set aside. If larger you must peel them after shelling. Boil for 3 minutes, drain, and set aside.
2. Sauté over medium high heat the morels (rehydrate if dried first) in the butter and olive oil with the fennel, shallots, garlic, rosemary and red pepper flakes until the fennel is softened (about 8-10 minutes). Remove from heat and set aside.
3. Cook the pasta for 12 minutes, drain (but reserve about 1/2 cup of the cooking water) and put the pasta back in the pot you cooked it in. Add the fava/morel mix and some of the reserved water. Heat until warm throughout (about 5 minutes over medium heat). May add more olive oil or the soaking water if wanted (one could add cream too). Place on serving plates and top with the cheese.

Serve with garlic bread, a crisp salad with a mild vinaigrette, and a dry German Riesling.

p.s. Why do I list “unsalted” butter? Because it is *always* fresher! It is the same type of thing to me as “fresh ground pepper.” Hopefully by now you also know that it has to be fresh ground and should be “Tellicherry” black pepper which is easily obtainable and not expensive. And the salt should be either Kosher or some kind of sea salt—never regular iodized table salt. Strange off-flavors that.

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overpayment on them. Our son later accused us of disrupting the laws of the marketplace.

We found some of our own (hedgehogs) too, and returned home with so many Chanterelles, Black Trumpets and Hedge Hogs and Matsutakes (January) and Candy Caps, Trumpets and Yellow Feet (March), that we had to come up with things to do with them.

We are good cooks (she said modestly) and love experimenting with mushrooms. We made and froze mushroom soup, mushroom stock, and quiches. We had mushrooms coming out our ears. Ear Fungi. Then, after perusing many a cookbook, we hit upon an idea: Mushroom duxelles! That's just a name for mushrooms sautéed with onions (green, red, scallions) and parsley, any herbs, and garlic. We froze the concoction in small quantities. We pull little packets out of the freezer to add to stews, reduction sauces, omelets...many possibilities.

Candy Caps, however, are a different kettle of 'shrooms. Those I dried. They smelled so good I just simply put them in a bowl and placed it in the living room. The entire room, and the dining room, has wonderful maple smell even now, months later. People sit in the living room and say "Wow, I smell maple syrup. Did you have pancakes for lunch?" That's just great, considering we have two dogs that aren't big on bathing. I figure why make cookies out of them when you can get the same effect with maple syrup. And there is no room atomizer with the wonderful, long lasting aroma of Candy Caps.

Since we live in Walnut Creek we always have the fun of figuring out where to stay in Fort Bragg, or Gualala. We've stayed several places - the most important requirements being a place that welcomes our dogs, has a fridge for keeping our wine and milk for morning coffee. Most recently we stayed at Howard Creek Ranch. It is a curious and unusual place run by a couple of ageing hippies (as are we). It is reasonably priced and they serve a great breakfast in the morning, which means you do not need lunch. We ate with 6 others and the conversation included, assisted suicide, psychedelic drug experiences, raising children, and the situation in Afghanistan (as described by a young man working for Knight Ridder News Service who was taking a short break). All before 10AM. I don't know what the table in the other room was talking about.

Our room had beautiful redwood from the 100 year old barn, and very artistic tile work done by the owner himself over the years. They do things as they can afford it, (what a concept) so the place is a work in progress. The stars were brilliant and we saw baby lambs cavorting on the hillside above us. We had to walk across a swinging bridge to get to where the rooms are. One person on the bridge at a time - no jumping.

So where to have dinner? We bought chicken and veggies at the town's terrific grocery, and brought them back to HRC where we made a wood fire in the grill on the lawn outside our room. We wrapped everything in heavy aluminum foil and left to walk the dogs on the beach. Wine, dinner, snuggle up with our books and dogs, flip on the Franklin Stove. Dreaming of more mushrooms tomorrow. Heaven.

## More Ramblings on Morels (Turkeys too) from Mycochef

Quite a few friends and acquaintances from NYC to Mexico and from Petaluma to Sebastopol ("NYC to Mexico" sounds s-o-o much more interesting) have inquired regarding any morel fruitings, mostly in the Sierra. I have really heard of not much at all--especially in the 1,000's of burn sites we had last summer. Some folks are finding a few pounds of naturals at elevations from 2,500' up to 4,000'.

Usually by now there would have been a nice little pop around Lake Jenkinson (El Dorado County, 4000'+-) but Larry Stickney informed me that zero were found by his group last week.

Some people have picked several pounds in the Big Sur and Santa Cruz Mts fires. Others up near FT. Bragg in a redwood burn.

My usual under-apple trees spot in Sebastopol did not produce this year.

So what I've been doing lately, instead of pining about the lack of morels so far, is to try and rid my pines of the wild turkeys roosting in them and prevent their forays into my yard and garden.

Anyone who kennels their dog knows about "fence fighting"--that behavior dogs display while running along the chain link separating their pens. It is to establish territory and to simply validate their presence to the others.

Bird call in the morning is for pretty much the same reasons. Tom turkey calls come in that so familiar sing song, loud gobble gobble gobble. I can do it too (years of practice, practice, practice). And we two do "yard fighting."

So, this morning around 0515 while on my walk down the drive for the papers, young tom sounds out his attempts at establishing him being the boss of his three-hen harem and of my yard.



Photo by Bill Bakaitis

Not so fast, Tommie. Unhuh. I call back with my best as of yet un-cleared early a.m. throat-driven gobble gobble gobble and before I get to the second syllable of the middle gobble he gobbles back. Then I do, interrupting his gobbling (as turkey protocol calls for) and he me, me him, and so on until I get tired of this exchange and go into the garage and get the big tennis ball hurling sling shot that I usually use for my energetic Australian Shepherd's play. But this time I hurl small Monterey Pine cones up at young tom. He can't gobble while leaping from higher branch to higher branch--but he is eliciting some kind of screech that I find soothing.

Not fair? Not true yard fighting? Ever had your young (and delicious to turkeys)

sunflowers ripped out of the ground by them? The young basil, corn, beans, onions? Your bird bath turkey-pooped in (big poop). Had them waiting on your roof until you've just primed the deck rail bird feeder and then--"swoop"--eat the seeds, and then, of course, poop some more. Poop everywhere. And I used to enjoy walking barefoot in the a.m. on the deck. Not any more. Nope. Turkey poop in between the toes. Not good.

Morel hunting is so much more fun. Now--if one was allowed to shoot a gun here in not-quite-rural-enough south of Cotati Sonoma County. Well--that could be different, and fun too.

Patrick

p.s. Anyone heard anything about the burns near Clear Lake?

**F**inding morels is easy, if you look in the right place, Morels fruit when the ground is around 50°F usually in the spring, as the soil warms, near their food sources, these can be mycorrhizal companions, past or present or cellulose rich plant materials. Rain or regular watering is normally required to provide the moisture necessary for fruiting but certain circumstances, underground water sources, such as stream banks, swampy areas, hanging aquifers, seeps, lake shores, can provide sufficient water for fruiting, with rain causing the most wide spread fruiting.

In Northern California we have the best luck in burned or logged forest areas above 2500ft elevation. The soil warms more quickly at lower elevation and progresses up slope, so fruiting period can be extended as it travels higher in elevation. In my experience the tree line is the upper limit to morel fruiting.

To my mind?, the ideal habitat for morels is a dense conifer forest between 4K-10K feet under burnt but with the larger trees alive, the ground gently sloping to provide moisture gradients. The forest floor covered with needles to provide humidifying cover. The morels will start to fruit when the soil temperature reaches 50F, with precocious fruiting beginning 2-3 weeks earlier in sunny spots. A rainy spring will do the best with small rains every week or so, as in the 2004 Power fire, which allowed a marginal habitat to produce in legendry quantities. Generally snowmelt will not provide enough moisture for wide spread fruiting at low elevations. At higher elevations with good water holding capacity, snowmelt fruiting is possible but not guaranteed.

Locally morels fruit in several different types of habitats, newly landscaped areas, orchards, and coastal ice plant. The landscaped zones, have most often been scraped clean of plants and covered with woody debris, chips or beauty bark and irrigated, fruiting can be any month and can continue for weeks, I think most often occurs in Jan-Feb. A famous fruiting was in Gilroy in July, so go figure. This seems to be our local native Morel, *M. rufobrunnea* which has quite different habits than burn morels, it is a "white morel", and it can blush pinkish.

The orchard fruiting morel, is thought to be a mycorrhizal companion of the trees it is fruiting under, often old apple or pear, but olive fruiting have been reported, generally these are tilled to

remove weeds, so that may be the soil disturbance that is causing? The fruiting, older orchards are more likely to produce.

The life style of our quarry is one that involves rapid exploitation of a cellulose or sugar rich habitat. The conversion of cellulose to fungal tissue requires the formation of sclerotium (resting bodies) in the soil. When the substrate is consumed and sclerotia are formed, some combination of conditions, probably appropriate moisture, critical temperature and sclerotia density, trigger fruiting body (ascocarp) formation.

Things that the successful morel hunter looks at are substrate, moisture, and temperature. Most hunters develop a mental picture of past successful habitats. Without a stockpile of past finds, a newbie moreller will have to use a more systemic methodology to be successful. A morel hunter asks does this spot provide all the needs of the quarry, food, water, and warmth.

The habitat will be recently disturbed (last summer or fall), a burnt or logged forest. Salvage logging or slash piles the second year after the fires are also good, the wood on the ground and the dying roots in the soil are the food source for the morel.

Moisture is a crucial element in ascocarp development. Both humidity (airborne water) and the substrate moisture are necessary for fruiting. The humidity can derive from soil moisture if air movement is impeded by a barrier, such as needle cover, brush, tree cover, to impede the humidity dissipation. Wind is an enemy of mushrooms so exposed habitats don't produce well, unless it is a rainy spring.

Now that you have the perfect spot, it has everything, warmth, water, and food. The next question is When?, all things being equal, a normal year, at sea level Jan-Feb./ 4K mid. April / 6K mid May/ 7K and above as late as July.

The importance of slope orientations to you is that this information can allow you to predict fruiting locations and timing. If you find a fruiting of morels on an east facing ridge you know that they're just starting, but if they are fruiting on a north facing creek bottom that is just about the end of fruiting in this area. The fruiting will last about 3 weeks at an elevation. The fruiting progresses up slope roughly 1K ft a week.

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**Yet more morels...and turkeys again from Illinois...**

Posted on Mon, Apr. 20, 2009

**'Mushrooms as far as you could see': Lenzburg man bags 56 pounds of morels in 3 hours**

BY ROD KLOECKNER  
News-Democrat

**A** rotten day of turkey hunting turned into a remarkable day of mushroom hunting for David Jaimet.

Jaimet, of Lenzburg, picked a whopping 56 pounds of healthy yellow morels on Thursday after he tried -- unsuccessfully -- to bag a gobbler earlier in the day. Locals say it was the largest haul they've seen in years, maybe ever, in the area.

Jaimet sought the help of his buddy, Kent Mason, in New Athens, and the pair set out along the timber of the Kaskaskia River in southern St. Clair County in search of the delectable edible mushroom.

"I was turkey hunting and started seeing them all over the place," Jaimet said. "I said 'The heck with this,' and I went and picked Kent up. I figured I could kill a turkey some other time. I better get the mushrooms while I can.

"We went back out and picked 56 pounds of mushrooms in three hours. It was a great way to spend a vacation day."



David Jaimet, of Lenzburg, left, and Kent Mason, of New Athens, Illinois, show off their morel mushrooms at Smitty's at the Marina in New Athens.

- Provided/BND

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Jaimet, a 45-year-old painter at Empire Comfort Systems in Belleville, and Mason used a boat to scour the banks and bottom land of the Kaskaskia River within a 20-mile radius of New Athens.

What they found were honeyhole after honeyhole, mostly under giant maple trees. They picked from 1 p.m. (when turkey hunting ends for the day in Illinois) until 4 p.m.

"There were mushrooms as far as you could see," Jaimet said. "We'd get all of those, hop in the boat and go to the next spot. All of the sudden, there would be another big patch of them. There'd be others here and there, but we'd pass them up and go to the big patches of them where you can sit on your knees and pick them."

Jaimet, who used a cell phone to communicate with Mason, picked morels until they both got tired. Jaimet began his turkey hunt at 4:30 a.m., called in a tom, shot and missed. That's when he decided to ditch gobblers for mushrooms.

Jaimet and Mason filled more than 12 white plastic shopping bags, with Jaimet getting 30 pounds and Mason 26 pounds. They brought their haul to Smitty's at the Marina in New Athens, where their bounty filled two 8-foot banquet tables and caused a stir among the campers and patrons of the bar.

"All the campers and travelers from all over the country -- they have people from Louisiana and the Carolinas and Michigan -- and they say they've never seen that many mushrooms in their life," Jaimet said. "People couldn't believe what they were seeing."

Jaimet's find offers further proof mushroom season is at its peak. After weeks of cool weather, the recent rains coupled with several warm days and evenings produced prime conditions for morels to sprout.

Cheri Smith, who owns Smitty's at the Marina in New Athens with her husband, Ervin "Smitty" Smith, said Jaimet isn't the only one who's having success.

"This is the best mushroom season I've been involved in," Smith said. "People are just coming in with bags and bags of mushrooms and showing everybody."

Typically, mushroom season is at its best in mid- to late April. Experts say the combination of moisture in the soil, amount of sunlight and temperature have to be in sync for morels to sprout.

However, the delicacy is a fickle entity. On March 31, Brad Feltman picked 335 morels in the backyard of his home in the middle of O'Fallon.

Morels often are found in the vicinity of elm trees, and Feltman speculated that several of his neighbor's elm trees that were cut down two years ago after an ice storm were the cause of the unique morel bonanza.

Smith said Jaimet's bounty was the talk of the town.

"That's the most mushrooms I've ever seen," Smith said. "And it isn't just one person coming in with stories of finding a lot of mushrooms, it's a lot of people. A guy came into the bar today and said 'Look at this picture on my cell phone. I found three dozen today.' I said 'Really? Look at this picture.' I showed him David's haul, and he's like 'Oh, my God.'"

Jaimet said he believes morel growth is cyclical around the Kaskaskia.

"They hardly ever grow in the bottoms," Jaimet said. "They were there a couple of years ago and they were there seven years ago, but they might not be back there again for years. I guess it's because of the floods or something."

Jaimet gave many of the morels to old-timers in the New Athens area who aren't able to hunt anymore and kept a bunch for himself.

He also said his haul stoked the interest of other "shroomers." "The parking lots were full on Friday," Jaimet said. "The cat's out of the bag now."

Contact reporter Rod Kloeckner at [rkloeckner@bnd.com](mailto:rkloeckner@bnd.com)

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<http://www.bnd.com/homepage/story/735954.html>

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## Is it morel season? Verpas anyone...

(From the BAMS discussion list)

Hi, All -

Re. *Verpa bohemica* - at last a subject we feel somewhat qualified to discuss!

**V**erpas were the main focus of the first group Puget Sound Mycological Society foray we ever participated in, in the early '80's, along the Skagit River north of Seattle. They were new to us, and the foray leaders strongly counseled all of us to parboil them thoroughly in a well ventilated place or outside, and then cook them thoroughly. We've done so for over 25 years and have never experienced the slightest distress (we use this same technique with the Montana *helvellas*, mentioned here a week or two ago, which we usually find as, or right after, the snow melts in the Cascades). The *Verpas* are found along quite a few river systems in Washington and Oregon, but always in sandy soil in and around Cottonwoods, in our experience.

We don't suggest that *Verpas* are in any way equal to morels; they're not, but they're good in their own right, and the benefits they offer - they're relatively easy to find (year after year in the same places) a couple of weeks or more before morels or much of anything else shows up, and the fact that they're ideal for "stuffing" (we generally bake them after stuffing them with seasoned ground pork, but suit yourself!) - make them a worthwhile quarry for hunter-gatherers like us. In terms of flavor,

we think they have a unique, "earthy" quality that differentiates them from other mushrooms.

A couple of other points: we find the stems coarse and unpalatable, so we simply twist off the caps for our baskets, and leave the stems where we found them. I can't recall who shared this with us, but some folk wisdom we've usually found to be true is that *Verpas* start to show when the cottonwood leaves are about the size of mouse ears. One annoying aspect of *Verpas* is that they frequently are found in association with stinging nettles. If you're inclined to gather those nasty little things for soup, be my guest, but I'll just wear leather gloves, long sleeves, etc. and stick to the *Verpas*, thanks all the same. And we should mention, *verpas* seem to fruit about the same time that garter snakes come out of their winter's hibernation, so for those of you who are a little squeamish around snakes, consider yourselves forewarned.

We have an article on *Verpas* on our website, [WWW.MadAboutMushrooms.com](http://WWW.MadAboutMushrooms.com), that goes into greater detail (Montana *Helvellas* are discussed in another article, "Montana *Helvellas*, Snow Mushrooms... etc" in the News (both old and new), Notes and Commentary section). The bottom line: we like *Verpas* and enjoy them on the table, and any mushroom that extends the season and gives us an excuse to get out looking earlier in the year - well, what's not to like?

- Steve Taylor

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

**B**efore midnight the Señora (as Eva Mendez is usually called) broke a flower from the bouquet on the altar and used it to snuff out the flame of the only candle that was still burning. We were left in darkness and in darkness we remained until dawn. For a half hour we waited in silence. Allan felt cold and wrapped himself in a blanket. A few minutes later he leaned over and whispered, "Gordon, I am seeing things!" I told him not to worry, I was too. The visions had started. They reached a plateau of intensity deep in the night, and they continued at that level until about 4 o'clock. We felt slightly unsteady on our feet and in the beginning were nauseated. We lay down on the mat that had been spread for us, but no one had any wish to sleep except the children, to whom mushrooms are not served. We were never more wide awake, and the visions came whether our eyes were opened or closed. They emerged from the center of the field of vision, opening up as they came, now rushing, now slowly, at the pace that our will chose. They were in vivid color, always harmonious. They began with art motifs, angular such as might decorate carpets or textiles or wallpaper or the drawing board of an architect. Then they evolved



**RECEIVING** his mushrooms, Wasson takes his night's ration from the hand of *Curandera* Eva Mendez. In right background Guy Stresser-Péan, French anthropologist who accompanied Wasson, has begun to chew his own supply.



**EATING** his mushrooms, Wasson takes them from cup holding his night's quota as the *curandera* prays at the household altar. He chewed them slowly, as is the custom, and his six pair took about a half hour to eat.

wallpaper or the drawing board of an architect. Then they evolved into palaces with courts, arcades, gardens--resplendent palaces all laid over with semiprecious stones. Then I saw a mythological beast drawing a regal chariot. Later it was though the walls of our house had dissolved, and my spirit had flown forth, and I was suspended in mid-air viewing landscapes of mountains, with camel caravans advancing slowly across the slopes, the mountains rising tier above tier to the very heavens. Three days later, when I repeated the same experience in the same room with the same *curanderas*, instead of mountains I saw river estuaries, pellucid water flowing through an endless expanse of reeds down to a measureless sea, all by the pastel light of a horizontal sun. This time a human figure appeared, a woman in primitive costume, standing and staring across the water, enigmatic, beautiful, like a sculpture except that she breathed and was wearing woven colored garments. It seemed as though I was viewing a world of which I was not a part and with which I could not hope to establish contact. There I was, poised in space, a disembodied eye, invisible, incorporeal, seeing but not seen.

The visions were not blurred or uncertain. They were sharply focused, the lines and colors being so sharp that they seemed more real to me than anything I had ever seen with my own eyes. I felt that I was now seeing plain, whereas ordinary vision gives us an imperfect view; I was seeing the archetypes, the Platonic ideas, that underlie the imperfect images of everyday life. The thought crossed my mind: could the divine mushrooms be the secret that lay behind the ancient Mysteries? Could the miraculous mobility that I was now enjoying be the explanation for the flying witches that played so important a part in the folklore and fairy tales of northern Europe? These reflections passed through my mind at the very time that I was seeing the visions, for the effect of the mushrooms is to bring about a fission of the spirit, a split in the person, a kind of schizophrenia, with the rational side continuing to reason and to observe the sensations that the other side is enjoying. The mind is attached as by an elastic cord to the vagrant senses.



**ALLAN RICHARDSON** eats a mushroom in spite of his pledge to his wife.

Continued Next Issue...



## SOMA Membership Application and Renewal Form

Regardless of what others may think of me, I wish to become a member of the Sonoma County Mycological Association, a Non-Profit, 501 (c)(3), Corporation dedicated to the promotion of the knowledge and appreciation of local fungi.



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

SOMA will not share your info!

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

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

Culinary Group \_\_\_\_\_ Mushroom Forays \_\_\_\_\_ Cultivation \_\_\_\_\_  
Mushroom Dyes \_\_\_\_\_ Mushroom Papermaking \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_

Other ideas/comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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

[www.SOMAmushrooms.org](http://www.SOMAmushrooms.org)

**YOU CAN NOW RENEW/JOIN ONLINE AT THE WEBSITE!**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Paul Stamets in Sebastopol on Mycoremediation—June 21st**

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/63354>

On **Memorial Day Weekend** there is a Mushroom, Music and Wine Faire in **McCloud, CA** (near Shasta). They have wine tasting, mushroom delicacies, cooking demonstrations, vendors and rides on the old Shasta Sunset Dinner Train. More info at:

[www.mccloudchamberofcommerce.com/events](http://www.mccloudchamberofcommerce.com/events).

Contact the Olsen's if you are interested in some Spring King hunting with them that weekend: [marymalarkey@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marymalarkey@sbcglobal.net)

Since mushroom lovers also love seeking out good food, here's a tip about some **wonderful cheese**. Outside of Santa Rosa, on Llano Road, on the way to Sebastopol, there is a little Portuguese cheese maker named Matos. He sells his cheese directly out of the cheese shop for \$7/lb. The cheese is called St. George. It is a hard cheese, aged there for however long it lasts. It is also available in wheels- we shared one with friends. I love the cheese almost as much as the (world famous) Pleasant Ridge from Wisconsin which sells for \$17/lb. Shop local! Matos is on the Farm Trails map and brochure. (**Thanks to Mary Olsen**)

**Gary Lincoff** appears in: "**Know Your Mushrooms**"

Documentary @ the Roxie Theater in SF—Opens **May 8th**.

More Info: "Ken Litchfield" [litchfield.ken@gmail.com](mailto:litchfield.ken@gmail.com)

<http://www.sphinxproductions.com/films/mushrooms/>

**Fungi of the Sierra Nevada with Dennis Desjardin**  
**May 31-June 5**

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~sierra/Courses.html>

If anyone is considering purchasing a **microscope**, David Lubertozzi recommends American Science and Surplus in Chicago

<http://www.sciplus.com/category.cfm/subsection/21/category/195>

Final report for the **National Survey of Mushroom Club members** can be found at:

<http://www.hehd.clemson.edu/PRTM/>

[National Survey of Mushroom Club Members.pdf](#)

**A Workshop in Phylogenetic Methods** will be held at Ohio State University—**July 13th—17th**; registration closes **June 15th**.

More info:

<http://www.biosci.ohio-state.edu/~jfreuden/cladwork/main.htm>

**Deadline for the September 2009 issue of SOMA News is August 21<sup>st</sup>. Please send your articles, calendar items, and other information to:**  
[SOMAnewseditor@SOMAmushrooms.org](mailto:SOMAnewseditor@SOMAmushrooms.org)

## VOLUNTEER

Offering your help at SOMA ensures that the club will continue to thrive for many years to come. There are many ways to get involved: SOMA Camp, Culinary Group, Cultivation Club, Forays and more. Contact a SOMA Board member if you would like to offer your services.

May is the month when new Board members are voted in to office. Think about joining the board or nominating someone you think would help SOMA in the future. Thanks to those who have stepped up to help for next year including George Riner, Gina Kuta, and Lou Prestia. There are still other jobs available, so please step up and help.

For those who have volunteered in the past year, there will be a volunteer appreciation day picnic in July. More information to come...

Julie Schreiber  
819 Fitch Street  
Healdsburg, CA 95448  
H: 707-473-9766  
Cell: 530-867-1865



Photo by  
Dimitar Bojantchev

## SOMA News

P.O. Box 7147  
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

SOMA  
DIVINE MUSHROOM  
OF IMMORTALITY  
& Golden Wares



## SOMA Members

The May 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.

