

fungifama

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South Vancouver Island Mycological Society

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SVIMS

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INSIDE:

ASK THE EDITOR
UPCOMING EVENTS
WINDER'S WOODLOT
SOCIETY HIGHLIGHTS
ASK THE EDITOR
And more...

WINDER'S WOODLOT

I'm back! And so are the boletes! I've been traveling a lot this summer, so I'm glad to be back among familiar mushrooms and I'm eager to see the start of the Fall foray season - I hope you all are, too! Time will tell if the early rains this year will help or hinder our Fall forays, but there are plenty of mycological treasures waiting out there. In fact, my fridge is full of mycological royalty right now. The early Summer dryness prevented my usual Boletus edulis collection on Canada day, but my patch has faithfully responded to these latest rains with fine, worm-free specimens - long live the King!. And speaking of royalty, if you haven't found any Agaricus augustus (The Prince) this Summer, then you probably don't walk around much. In fact, you may need glasses (I just darted outside to grab a few for supper). Ditto for Marasmius oreades (the fairy ring mushroom). Several types of inky caps (Coprinus atramentarius, Coprinus micaceus) are out, as are Agaricus campestris (the meadow mushroom), and various puffballs including Vascellum pratense, the field puffball, and some Lycoperdon spp. Slippery jacks (Suillus luteus and Douglas fir Suillus (S. caerulescens) are plentiful, and you can spot other mushrooms such as chanterelles (Cantherellus spp.), Gomphidius oregonensis (verified by microscope), Lepiota racchodes, and Hohenbuehelia petaloides (say that 3 times fast). White King Boletes were reportedly found in the Campbell River area, and Boletus piperatus was found in Port Renfrew. If you are out amongst the birch trees, keep your eyes open for

Leccinum spp., because they are out now. As for mushrooms you won't want to consume, Amanita muscaria, Amanita pantherina. and Amanita gemmata are all out this month, as well as Agaricus praeclaresquamosus and Inocybe spp.

Other mushrooms that were seen since the last issue included Pleurotus porrigens (angel wings) at China beach in May, P. ostreatus at Lizard Lake and Muir Creek in May, Scleroderm~, sp. in July, Agrocybe pediades in July, and a ton of other things I just can't remember at the moment.

You may recall that in the last issue I reported on the occurrence of Boletus barrowsii on the Island. We are still trying to sort out the difference between this species and the so-called white King bolete that people often report in this area. It turns out that the boletes in question came from oaks in an arboretum with a possible European origin - we are still tracking that down. In the meantime, more specimens have fruited, and some of them will hopefully be deposited in the PFC herbarium for further study and confirmation of their true taxonomic identity. So please keep your eyes open - if you find anything resembling these mushrooms, be sure to let us know.

As for forays, the flakiness of the weather here, combined with everyone traveling and maybe some summer lethargy, have caused me to wonder if we can't fine tune foray procedures. Consequently, I would like to (without checking in advance - sorry Hannah!) advocate that people with answering machines let us know so that we can configure a telephone early warning system. Those who have B.C. Tel call answering know that it is a simple matter to construct a phone distribution list for automatic messages to be sent - if you have an answering machine, then we should be pretty able to guarantee receipt of last minute automated messages. So please let me know if you also have that capability on your line, and we should be able to quickly arrange forays when the rains hit. I also encourage everyone in the club to think about leading a foray - you don't need to be an expert. You just have to make sure that one is available, and that the plans are understood (and that nobody gets lost!). Another change that should be mentioned is that the newsletter distribution will start to occur at the meetings to save on postage - you will receive your newsletter if you don't show up (Don't Panic!), but it will be an extra incentive to turn out! See y'all at the meeting... -RSW

ASK THE EDITOR

Q. What is a Kombucha mushroom?

A. A.K.A. the "Manchurian mushroom" or "Japanese Tea Sponge", this fungal culture is not really a mushroom. It is a haphazard collection of symbiotic or quasi-symbiotic fungal yeasts and bacteria that are cultured in black tea and sugar, forming a gelatinous, membranous semisolid colony that New Agers like to call a "mushroom". Reputedly, researchers in Moscow have listed Saccharomyces spp., including Saccharomyces ludwiggi and varieties of Saccharomyces apiculatus, Schizosaccharomyces pombe, Torula spp., and Pichia fermentans as the fungal yeast components. Bacterium xylinoides, Bacterium gluconicum, and Acetobacter ketopenum have been mentioned as bacterial components (I'm not sure if Bacterium is still an accepted genus). Western researchers are looking at Kombucha - there are reports of heavy contamination with other microbes, perhaps due to the informal way that the cultures are distributed and shared. So if you get a culture, there is presently no high degree of certainty exactly what is in it. Although there is an aura of miracle panacea or snake oil around it, depending on who you talk to, it is probably too early to prove or disprove any claims about its effects on human health - we must wait for more definitive studies. Popular literature suggests that Kombucha can detoxify the body or act as a tonic. The cultures reputedly produce glucaronic acid, lactic acid, acetic acid, and various vitamins, antibiotics, and enzymes, all supposedly good for various aspects of human physiology (it also produces alcohol, though). Although there may be a grain of truth to the claims, I would hesitate to embrace any miracle cure as the solution to all of my health problems.

Q. Why should people not eat raw mushrooms?

A. In his recent talk, Scott Redhead told SVIMS members that many diverse groups of fungi contain low amounts of hydrazines, relatives of the monomethylhydrazine toxins in false morels. These compounds are supposedly cancer causing, but are destroyed or driven-off by cooking. You can sometimes improve your chances of tolerating foods (or destroying various toxins within them) by cooking, and mushrooms have many different sorts of compounds that you might find disagreeable if you are a particularly sensitive or allergic individual. That being said, char-grilling can actually generate carcinogens in the case of meat - it is a complex world. I consider myself an omnivore, and while I may not go out of my way to eat raw mushrooms, they are nice in a salad. Everyone must make quality of life decisions like these - how much risk can you tolerate for pleasure, and how much pressure do you want to put on your liver? Eating tons of wild mushrooms every day is probably not wise, given the fact that even when cooked they contain high levels of certain metallic elements

which could potentially affect your health in the long run. But heck, even broccoli every day could probably do you in, particularly if your name rhymes with George Bush. I prefer to spread the risk. Unless you eat raw mushrooms every day, or you're allergic to everything in sight, or you're not confident of your identification skills, or you're into testing new wild species every day, I wouldn't panic at few raw edible Agaricus in a salad once in a while. Most mushroom species that I've nibbled on are more flavorful after cooking, though.
-RSW

Next issue: Cell numbers and solid state stipe physics. Don't miss it!

SOCIETY HIGHLIGHTS

The early summer bolete hunt on Canada Day brought no reports of boletes, but the group of 3 who ventured out in Sooke brought back the bacon (er.. the oysters, that is). Some 12 pounds (2 bags full) of Pleurotus ostreatus were collected in the Muir Creek area.

Although only a dozen or so turned out for the barbecue the following week, it was a smashing success. For those of you who are mycologically "wise" enough to "know" that it is "impossible" to have a good time with wild gourmet mushrooms during dry spells, you will be dismayed to hear that John Dennis donated a bag of dried morels (see recipe #1 below) for the proceedings. The cook nearly lost his fingers while setting out the prepared delicacies... Those present did not complain at low turnout. In fact, the next time we have a get-together, please... stay away! There will be more for the rest of us!

Plans are being finalized regarding Tony Trofymow's proposal to assay fungi in the Watershed. We are going to keep the data-taking very simple - if you want to help study mushrooms in the Watershed, be prepared to participate! We are hoping to do one check per month, at least during peak seasons.

PRINCELY RECIPES

Since I've been pigging out on Agaricus augustus lately, I thought it might only be fair to share a few recipes my wife Christene and I have cooked up for this marvelous mushroom. Although the almond flavor of the young specimens can be a bit of a puzzle to the cook, there is no reason for it to be off-putting, since it is truly an excellent mushroom (The more so since I am slightly allergic to many wild mushrooms, and get a sort of seafood-like buzz when I eat it! I even tried some with fresh salmon- unfortunately the taste of the fish overpowered the taste of the mushrooms). To find the Prince, you need only walk along roadsides, checking shady areas where the earth is dark (fertile and moist) and bare.

Beware of roadside patches that are littered, too close to the road, sprayed with chemicals, etc. Later in the season, you may find that many of the specimens will be exceedingly wormy. Don't panic! Spread these caps around to inoculate fresh patches and reduce pest loads on new flushes. Non-wormy caps can be quite huge, and a meal or two all to themselves. The key characters to watch for are other (not gray) cap fibrils on a white background, dull yellow stains on white flesh, an almond (not inky) smell, a marshmallow-shaped cap when young, gills white at first, then turning dark brown, usually a huge skirt-like annulus with a smooth stipe above and a rough stipe below, and a deep-rooting stalk. During periods of fluctuating humidity (such as this year), the cap may appear cracked and rough, causing the young mushrooms with white gills to be confused with L. racchodes. Some find the unique, almondy flavor of young A. augustus a daunting cooking challenge, but have no fear- these mushrooms truly are a royal treat.

1. Mock almond croissants (adapted from PSMS Wild mushrooms recipes, flaming mushrooms, page 86)

- 4 cups chopped A. augustus, give or take
- Some butter
- ½ - 1 cup cream sherry (Paarl oloroso, S. Africa)
- 2 - 4 tbsp. brandy (St. Remy Napoleon, France)
- ¼ cup scalded cream
- some pepper
- some honey
- some croissants

Heat the mushrooms in butter, cook in sherry until almost dry, season, add brandy, and ignite. Reignite to make sure combustion of brandy is complete. Add scalded cream (skim first), mix, stuff inside croissants (the real kind), cover with honey, and serve.

The original Wild Mushrooms recipe (buy the book!) calls for pastry shells instead of croissants, and works very well for dried morels. Our technique is to rehydrate the morels in the sherry, conserving the remainder for the cook-down (honey isn't called for). If tasting morels for the first time, a drier sherry would provide the definitive taste. However, the sweeter sherry listed here (sweetness 5 on a scale of 1-10) is for veterans - it is much more decadent!

2. Stir fry

Prepare A. augustus as in recipe above (or use leftovers from the above recipe). Mix with your favorite rice-based stir-fry and serve. Makes an excellent addition.

3. Royal chicken (modified from PSMS Wild Mushrooms Recipes, Chicken elegante, p. 16)

- 1 small fryer-type chicken, cut up
- 1 tbsp butter
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 1 medium green pepper, sliced
- 4 cups A. augustus, chopped
- 2 cans peach slices
- some salt
- 4 tsp corn starch
- ¼ cup water

Use a no-stick skillet. Melt butter, brown the meat on both sides. Cover with mushrooms, onions, and peach syrup. Salt, cover, simmer 30 minutes. Add green pepper, cover, simmer 10 minutes. Mix cornstarch and water, stir in. Add peaches and cook until they are warmed.

4. Spaghetti sauce

Add chopped A. augustus to your favorite spaghetti sauce recipe. The flavor will be somewhat masked, but you will definitely be able to tell that you have a premium sauce. -RSW

TRUFFLE ALERT

Truffle hunters are needed! Here's your chance to have a working day in the woods and learn about truffle-like fungi! The U.S. Forest Service In Olympia, Washington needs volunteers for a study on the ecology of hypogeous (underground) fungi (truffles and similar objects) at Fort Lewis. They will provide you with breakfast and lunch, tools, and a lesson on how to look for the fungi under the leaf litter. You will work in groups under the supervision of the project leaders. Volunteers are needed for one or more days in the weeks of Oct. 16 and December 4, 1995 (Monday-Thursday only). For Information, contact David Thysell, USDA Forest Service, PNW Research Station, 3625 93rd Ave. SW, Olympia, WA 98512 Tel: (360) 753-7691. -HN



UPCOMING EVENTS

Note: Since foray plans can be made or changed at the monthly meetings, it is best to attend the meetings to keep up to date on the latest information.

7 September (Thursday) Monthly meeting 7:00 p.m.
Scheduled speaker: Local mushroom hunter, eater and photographer Ted Underhill will regale us with a slide show and stories about his mushrooming experiences. Please do your part for the environment by bringing your own mug, and don't forget to bring munchies if you signed up to do so or if you simply feel generous! Meet at Pacific Forestry Centre, 506 W. Burnside Rd., Victoria.

17 September Shawnigan Foray
Leader - Bruce Norris. Check for early chanterelles, Suillus, and B. edulis along the Renfrew Road area and around West Shawnigan Lake.

7 October (Saturday) 2nd Annual Renfrew Rally

Leader - Richard Winder
Destination - Lizard Lake & environs
Objective - chanterelles & Boletus mirabilis & biodiversity
Rendezvous - Port Renfrew Recreation Centre, 10:00 a.m. Bring a lunch, and plenty of enthusiasm.

20-23 October (Friday - Monday) SVIMS/VMS Fall Foray

Registration for the weekend foray has started! Please fill out the form included with this issue of Fungifama. Reminder: registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis, and spaces are limited to 61 people at the research station. Members of other PNW societies are invited, so book now to ensure your spot!

29 October (Sunday) Annual Mushroom Display

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the great mushroom hunt and display set up on Saturday, 28th Oct., and the actual exhibit on Sunday, the 29th. The location will be announced later. Help will be needed in Sept. and Oct. with labels and other preparations (to be discussed during the Sept. meeting). Please start saving Styrofoam trays, all sizes, from your groceries - they may be useful for the display. Bring them in during the Sept. and Oct. meetings or when the display is being set up.

GARAGE SALE UPDATE

Congratulations to Ken and Maria Kissenger are in order for organizing such a successful fund raising event for us. Although participation was light, they managed to gross a whopping \$602.51 - a net total of 475.51 for SVIMS after costs! Way to go Ken and Maria! You both deserve a lot of credit for the effort.
-RSW

ADDENDUM

Added to the Leechtown foray list - Ciboria rufofusca (the stalked ascomycete on a Doug-fir cone).

← Lots of gaps in the calendar for forays... We need volunteers! -
Richard

SECOND ANNUAL SVIMS & VMS FORAY 1995

20-23 October 1995

B.C. Ministry of Forests Mesachie Lake Research Station Mesachie Lake,
Vancouver Island
British Columbia, Canada

The South Vancouver Island Mycological Society and the Vancouver Mycological Society are pleased to announce their second joint fall foray in the fungically rich area around Cowichan Lake. We again invite members of other Pacific Northwest mycological societies to join us. The foray will be based at the Mesachie Lake Research Station located on the water outside the town.

The town of Mesachie Lake is in southern Vancouver Island on a south-eastern extension of Cowichan Lake. The area has abundant fall-fruiting fungi, some of which are under study by the Ministry of Forests. Field trips will concentrate on the low-elevation coastal Douglas-fir forest around the station.

The station includes a bunkhouse, several detached bungalows of various sizes, showers, a cookhouse with cook, and a study area. Beds are all single, in dormitory style (this is a research facility, after all!). Meals will be prepared by the cook. **Please bring your own towel. Bedding is provided.**

To reach the station, drive north on Highway 1 from Victoria (or south from Nanaimo) to Highway 18 just north of Duncan, turn west on Highway 18, then south on Highway 117 after the town of Lake Cowichan in the direction of Honeymoon Bay. Watch for the B.C. Ministry of Forests sign on the right side of the road.

The deadline for registration is 30 September 1995. Late registration will be frowned upon by the station's cook and may not be possible. Space is limited to about 61 people, on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Cost includes:

Friday Oct. 20 - Dinner and overnight accommodation.

Saturday Oct 21. and Sunday Oct. 22 - Breakfast, bag lunch, dinner, and accommodation.

Monday Oct. 23 - Breakfast.

Cost: Canadian \$116.00 or U.S. \$90.00 per person.

Please send your name(s), address, and phone (and/or e-mail), along with a check or money order **made out to the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society (or SVIMS)**, to:

Hannah Nadel
7028 Bryrwood Court
RR #2
Brentwood Bay, BC
Canada V8M 1G1

Tel: (604) 544-1386

Please indicate if you want vegetarian meals.