MAY IS MOREL MONTH

Agnes Sieger

May ushers in the peak of the morel season in the Pacific Northwest, although they can be found as early as February at low elevations and into June at higher ones. Morels occur from the coast to well over the crest of the Cascades, but are most plentiful on the more sunny eastern slopes.

Growing all over the U.S., indeed, in temperature zones over most of the world, from Europe and Asia to Australia, morels are one of nature's most bountiful gifts. But you need to know how to find them.

Morels prefer disturbed ground, whether from logging, bulldozing, or fire—anything that removes the surface vegetation. Good places to look are in campgrounds, recently logged areas, and recent burns. They also turn up in plantings recently mulched with wood bark and under old apple trees where the fruit has been allowed to fall to the ground and rot.

They often occur in slight depressions or other places that conserve moisture, and it's possible to follow a morel path right up a slope. They also seem to come up frequently next to dead branches lying on the ground, where they are protected by the sun.

Tony Williams, five-time winner of the Boyne City, Michigan, National Mushroom Hunting championship, has this advice on hunting morels:

"Walk at a good pace. Keep your eyes out 30 to 35 ft in front of you and scan the ground left and right. Morels usually come in groups, so when you find one stop and look around. I start walking in small circles around it and work up to a radius of 75 ft or so. Sometimes that'll lead you right into a river of morels maybe 30 ft wide and 150 or 200 ft long."

*MycoNews* has this advice on hunting a burn site:

"Not all burns yield morels. A fairly intense fire is needed. Check the intensity of the fire by observing the height of the scorched marks on the trees.

"Remember one thing: Morels fruit where there is ample moisture. Obtain a topographical map of the burn and determine water courses such as rivers, creeks, ponds, and draws, the lie of the land, and the direction the mountain slopes face. First head for as level an area as possible where the drainage is slower. Hunt south-facing slopes first and reserve the north-facing slopes for later.

"Check under downed trees and limbs, in cracks and fissures in the earth, and in burned out root systems within the ground which offer protection from the sun."

In the mood to do a little morel hunting? Here's to a good year!

THE BUILDING FUND NEEDS YOU

Ralph Burbridge

The end of June is coming up fast. The future of our society is on the line, and we need your help. Your donation to the building fund will ensure a permanent, safe, and secure home for most PSMS functions.

The Puget Sound Mycological Society is one of the premier amateur mycological groups in the U.S.A. It has become so because of your participation in wild mushrooming and your commitment to PSMS. We are relying on you to ensure its continued existence and success. Please give generously.

Make your check payable to "PSMS Building Fund" and mail to

Ralph Burbridge
1014 South 208th
Seattle, WA 97198

All contributions are tax deductible.

MOREL AND CHICKPEA WON TON

Kate March

[The Mushroom Log, The Ohio Mushroom Society]

16 black morels, cut in half lengthwise and wiped
1 C canned chickpeas, drained and chopped fine
2 scallions (include some green) finely chopped
6 pimento-stuffed green olives, finely chopped
1/4 tsp salt
whole black pepper
wonton wrappers
peanut oil
large clove garlic, finely chopped

Put morels in 3-4 qt. saucepan, cover with water, and bring to a boil over high heat. Bring back to a boil and drain. Repeat process and chop the morels fine.

In bowl large enough to hold ingredients comfortably, thoroughly mix morels, chickpeas, scallions, garlic, olive, salt, and a few grindings of black pepper.

Place 1 Tbs of mixture into the middle of a wrapper. Wet the edges all around and fold in half, sealing stuffing. Pull the two corners down under the folded edge, wet them, and stick them together.

In a 12-in. wok or pot suitable for deep frying, heat approx. 4 C of peanut oil to 375°F (350°-360° above 3,000 ft). Fry wontons 3 or 4 at a time until crisp and golden brown. Remove to drain on a paper towel.

Dipping sauce:

soy sauce
Chinese rice vinegar
hot oil or Tabasco

The dipping sauce should be mixed at the table to the taste of the individual. Chinese hot mustard and sweet and sour sauce also make good dipping sauces.
Spore Prints

is published monthly, September through June, by the

PUGET SOUND MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY
Center for Urban Horticulture, Mail Stop GF-15,
University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195
(206) 522-6031

SPORTE PRINTS

Tuesday, May 9, 1989, at 7:30 p.m. in the Center for
Urban Horticulture, 3501 41st Street, Seattle, WA.

Program: Our May program features a panel of four
mushroom-hunting experts with 75 years of collective
experience, who will talk about finding spring mush­
rums. There will be time for questions and answers,
so come and take advantage of this once in a lifetime
change to find out all those things you've been dying to
know.

Silent Auction: Don't forget to get there a little
early and drop off your mushroom memorabilia for the
silent auction, to be held after the program. Any­
things mushroom related will do. Wall plaques, books,
posters, framed photos, mushroom-decorated clothing
or accessories—the sky's the limit. Bring whatever
you have or, like Bob Hanna and Margaret Holzbauer
with their kites, make something special. I can't
wait see what shows up.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Crystal Springs Forest Camp May 13
Take I-5 over Snoqualmie Pass. Nine miles east of
the summit take the Stampede Pass exit #82. Turn
right at the stop sign. After a quarter mile (before
the bridge) bear right to enter the camp. Special
event -- see the article below.

Swauk Creek Camp May 20
Take I-5 over Snoqualmie Pass and exit exit #35, just
east of Cle Elum. Follow Route 970 to the Route 97
intersection. Turn left (north) and continue on
Route 97 for about 16 miles. The campground is on
the right. Swauk Pass is about 4 miles past the camp.

American River Ski Lodge May 27-29
A $5.00 camping fee will pay for the entire weekend.
Go east on Route 410 over Chinook Pass. About 17
miles past the summit, turn right onto Bumping Lake
Road 174. Turn right again after ½ mile and turn
right to go uphill and through the gate. Continue
for about 1 mile to the ski lodge.

Indian Creek Forest Camp June 3
Change - change - change. Instead of going to Clear
Lake this year, we have decided to go next door to
Indian Creek. The camp is about a mile east of the
Clear Lake turnoff, southeast of Mt. Rainier National
Park on State Route 12 about 8 miles east of White
Pass summit. Unlike Clear Lake, there is water, and
there is easier access for recreational vehicles.

THE SPRINTERING SLIME MOLD

Physarum polycephalum, a giant slime mold bred in
Bonn, Germany, is the largest single-cell organism
ever grown. At its full size, the bright yellow fun­
gus was 2 mm thick and covered 10 square meters. It
could have grown endlessly, given the right condi­
tions—a humid surface heated to 24°C and a regular
diet of porridge.

The fungus apparently "smells" its favorite food and
encircles it at speeds up to 2 cm/hour. Its proto­
plasm moves 1 mm/second, 10 times faster than in the
fastest vegetable cell and 50 times faster than in
comparable animal cells.

The fungus is stored in a Bonn University freezer,
and can be thawed out and stimulated in a matter of
hours to grow again.

SPECIAL FIELD TRIP

Back by popular demand! Everyone had
so much fun last year that the Crys­
tal Springs field trip (May 13th) has
again been designated a special occa­
sion, with lots of exciting events
taking place all day. It's a wonderful chance to ex­
perience new mushroom-related activities. As before,
there will be informal cooking and cultivation dem­
strations as well as a chance to observe the collect­
ing techniques of expert mycologists. For further
information, phone Patrice Benson at 722-0691. Vol­
unteers are needed to help with hosting as well as
with all of the above.
MODERN TRIP REPORTS

McDonald Park

Hildegard R. Hendrickson

It was raining all morning, but this did not deter 60 true mushroomers from coming out and hearing a lecture on spring mushrooming. After learning what cottonwood trees look like and hearing a number of hints and warnings, they began the foray. Most found tiny Verpa bohemica. Among the fungi identified were Sarcoscypha coccinea, Nolanea sericea, Hypholoma infundibulum, Coprinus micaceus, Cortinarius versicolor, and Polyporus elegans. Dr. Ammirati confirmed the find of a rare Baeospora myriadophylla which has lavender gills and grows on wood. The "gigantic" fungi found were leftover puffballs (the specific variety is being identified with the use of a microscope).

Edith Godar was the host. Monte Hendrickson gave the lecture. Foray leaders were Kern Hendricks, Elizabeth Purser, Joy and Lyle McKnight, and Hildegard Hendrickson.

Lake Wilderness

Ralph Burbridge

The weather was cold and wet on April 1, but even at 39 degrees, 24 dedicated hunters arrived at the foray site. Hot coffee, tea, and chocolate never tasted better. Although there was a negative weather factor, 13 species of mushrooms were identified by Larry Baxter, Sara Clark, and Nettie Laycock, who also offered assistance to our new members.

Steelhead Park at Rockport

Edith Godar

Forty-seven people turned out on a beautiful spring day to hunt for Verpa bohemica, the early morel, among the cottonwoods lining the routes to and from Steelhead Park in Rockport. Most people who really looked found some, but the season was still very early. No eagles were spotted, as far as I know, but someone reported seeing an osprey. The potluck, which was attended by 28 people, was delicious as usual. Nineteen species were identified, including another Baeospora.

OLD TIME HI-JINKS

[Washington Mycological Society Newsletter]

The following tale comes from a book sponsored by the Madison Mushroom Club and published in 1937 by the Federal Writers' Projects.

It was morel time in the spring of 1906, and the members of the Milwaukee Mushroom Club had gathered for the first meeting at the Milwaukee Museum. The secretary, Mr. Pierson Halsey, and a few others had collected a nice lot of morels. The mushrooms were displayed on paper plates on tables in the lecture hall, and the members were gathered about these. Jack Atkinson and "Doc" Rogers, both fond of a good joke, had not collected any morels. They were determined to have some. So Jack posted a number of confederates down the length of the tables. One of these men would pick up a morel and pass it behind his back to another friend, and so it would travel on down to Jack at the end of the tables. He deftly deposited the prizes in the tail pockets of his frock coat as they came. Soon, before anyone realized it, most of the morels had disappeared, and no one knew what had become of them. Mr. Halsey was particularly agitated about their mysterious loss.

Jack and Doc and their cohorts in crime had a nice mushroom feast at Doc's home that night.
WHAT ABOUT FIELD TRIPS? Gilbert Austin

PSMS members are poised for another spring of field trips and then, after a 2- or 3-month hiatus, for a half dozen or so more in the fall.

It is appropriate to ask, now, about the nature and purpose of field trips. Are they purely recreational? Or educational? Or for collecting as many wild mushrooms as possible? Do you judge a field trip by the yield in mushrooms?

A field trip is a little of all of the above. A trip is, first of all, a learning and a recreational experience. With luck, it will also yield a collection of edible mushrooms.

But the success or failure of trip should not be judged by the "poundage." The first objective should be to familiarize the participant with the environment in which specific mushrooms can normally be found. Experienced hunters are only too painfully aware that mushrooms are not always found in the environments where they are expected. Weather conditions, both this year and last, enormously affect availability of fungi during the current season. Also, it is well to remember that someone else may have covered the ground before your current day's search. The important thing is to learn where the edibles can normally be expected.

Just as important is learning as much as possible about the appearance and environment of toxic mushrooms. And for this the identification table is all important. It is highly desirable that participants, whether experienced or neophyte, spend time at the table studying the multiple specimens identified there by Brian Luther or one of PSMS's other expert identifiers.

And, finally, the brown bag mid-day lunch, the late afternoon potluck, and the day-long coffee pot. Each hunter brings his or her own lunch at mid-day and hopefully a dish for the evening potluck. Taking part in the potluck is, like every aspect of a field trip, optional. But the food is good, the company is congenial, and virtually all members that take part term it a very enjoyable experience.

Members who have recently joined PSMS are especially urged to take part in some or all of our forthcoming field trips. Don't hesitate to ask experienced members for guidance on where and how to search. Ask for help in identification; study the table of specimens. And by all means bring a hot dish or a dessert or a salad and remain for the potluck. Field trips are designed to be enjoyed. Try not to feel disgruntled if you don't a bushel of mushrooms on each hunt. Keep at it. You'll find some eventually.

MUSHROOM PRESENTATION Joy Spurr

On April 8, PSMS participated in "Northwest Outdoors: A Sports and Recreation Celebration," held at the Lake Washington Vocational Technical Institution in Kirkland. Mushroom photos and posters hung in a display. Fresh mushrooms and books were available for browsing, and membership applications were given to all who were interested. Margaret Dilly and Joy Spurr contributed to a one-hour workshop, showing slides and discussing mushroom conservation and advantages of membership in PSMS. George Rafanelli and Lyle Joy McKnight helped answer questions.

MUSHROOM ASTROLOGY Bob Lehman, LAMS

Taurus (Apr. 20 - May 20): You enjoy the aesthetic and sensual qualities of mushrooms—their forms, colors, textures, aromas, and flavors—and you can prepare tasty dishes from the edible ones. You insistently search for particular species that meet your qualifications, although you also may fill your basket with mushrooms that you never use. You like the idea of living off the land and not having to pay for your food. You are protective about your favorite hunting places.

Remember to bring mushroom items for the silent auction.

SIEGER, Dick & Agnes
15555 14th Ave NE
Seattle WA 98155