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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WISCONSIN MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Spring has sprung; another mushroom season has begun. Many days are staying above 32 degrees now, so those fungal friends of ours (the decomposers) are starting to stir, breaking down the substrate so that we can enjoy the fruits of their labor.

This will be my last opportunity to encourage you members to get any agenda items in for our annual meeting in June. The slate for the board of directors will be put together over the next couple of months, and now would be the appropriate time for your input before you are asked to approve this slate at the annual meeting. A nominating committee will be putting together the list of officers for the coming year, which will then be presented to the board of directors for approval. Most of the officers will be changing this year, so any input will be appreciated.

Before we get to the annual meeting, though, we have some wonderful events planned. A must will be Dr. Greg Mueller's presentation on April 20. His enthusiasm for fungi and love of life will be just what the doctor ordered to combat those depressing April showers. Heaven City Restaurant will be the next event on May 10. This has been an annual event for some time now, but Chef Scott continues to dazzle us with his creations, a must on your May calendar. Another event will be the morel foray; the date, time and place will be announced shortly. May is my busy time in the greenhouse so I cannot attend, but I will be thinking of you and your quest.

Well, that is it for now. I hope to see you at some of these events.

UPCOMING WMS EVENTS

April 20 (Tuesday) -- Greg Mueller: The Global Diversity and Distribution of Mushrooms in the Midwestern US, China, and Costa Rica -- Mitchell Park Pavilion, 7pm.

May 10 (Monday) -- Mushroom Dinner at Heaven City Restaurant.

May 16 (Sunday) -- Madison Area Morel Foray Rendezvous in Middleton (10:00) or Cross Plains (10:30).

June 19 (Saturday) -- Indian Lake County Park. 10:00

June 26 (Saturday) -- WMS Annual Business Meeting and Picnic. Papa Steinke's Greenhouse and Farm. 4:00

Members should have received announcements with more details and directions.

THE THIRD ANNUAL FALL MUSHROOM DINNER OF THE WISCONSIN MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Nov. 3, 2003

by Elaine Siskoff

The 3rd Annual Fall Mushroom Dinner took place at the Riversite Restaurant, 11120 N. Cedarburg Rd 60W Mequon. While mushroom club guests mingled around the spacious bar area prior to dinner, hors d'oeuvres were served. The appetizers that began the evening were:

The Crimini Mushrooms Stuffed with Crab filling had a mild taste of the crimini mushrooms, which complemented the splendid crab filling nicely. As I remember they tasted sumptuous.

The Lobster Mushroom Strudel was a pastry where the lobster mushrooms were minced and wrapped in a thin layer of light crisp puff pastry. I found it so delicate that I had to pop it all in my mouth or the hors d'oeuvre would disintegrate before I could get a second bite. The mildly sweet and buttery flavor almost melted in my mouth, but left my palate begging for more. I think most of us would have liked a few more. But that is what the hors d'oeuvre is supposed to do: draw you into the dining room with anticipation of more tantalizing delights. We were not disappointed.

The first course was a Bouche' of Roasted Shiitakes. --- The roasted shiitakes with their beefy sweetness were in the center of the pastry like a stuffing. I was not familiar with the term "bouche" or how to describe it to others, so I looked it up in my cookbooks. While I don't know the French derivation of the word, "bouche," I believe a bouche' is a pastry described as a 'bread case' made of layers of puff pastry, which is cut out of a rolled puff pastry and stacked a number of layers high to form the case (a box like structure). It was described as

vol-au-vent, which literally, means 'flight on the wind.' I thought that the outdoorsy reference 'flight on the wind' sounded very 'Foray-like' to nature lovers like us. On the mushrooms in the bouche there was a sauce or gravy that had a Cognac base. Blended with cream, this Cognac sauce was rich and mellow with a smooth creaminess. It was delicious and in my opinion a perfect complement to the pastry and mushrooms. I have heard of Shiitake mushrooms referred to as a health food as they have been shown to lower blood cholesterol. In Asia, mushrooms are consumed as the "ultimate health food." (Jack Czarnecki, A Cook's Book of Mushrooms) I also found that other common names for the Shiitake mushroom are: golden oak mushroom, black forest mushroom, black mushroom, oakwood mushroom, oak tree mushroom, Chinese mushroom, shiangu-gu, donku, pasania (Asian Oaks, Beech or Shii tree mushrooms).

The second course was Autumn Bread Salad with Golden Chanterelle, Lemon & Arugula. In my opinion the croutons were nicely seasoned, but their size was unwieldy. I tried to cut them to a bite size; but that proved a bit difficult as they were almost too tough to get a fork into. I noticed others at the table tried to cut them as well with some difficulty. The pieces of Chanterelle were nicely trimmed and slightly warmed. I assume they were lightly sauteed to bring out their flavor. "Golden Chanterelles are known to have a distinct apricot-like aroma, with a bit of citrus and tend to be rich in flavor, so a little go a long way."(Fischer & Bessette, Edible Wild Mushrooms of North America: A Field to Kitchen Guide). They also added a visual elegance to the meal. The Arugula had a slightly bitter or peppery taste and was seasoned lightly with a touch of lemon juice.

The Lasagnette entree I would describe as an individual serving of lasagna constructed before baking with prepared noodles which caused the edges to become browned and crisp. There were five noodle layers - the bottom layer consisted mainly of coarsely chopped Porcini mushroom pieces. There were two ricotta layers and two diced fresh tomatoes with basil layers. To garnish the Lasagnette a 1/4 inch slice of a Bolete was used. It was sliced to show the silhouette of a Bolete's shape; it was brazed to leave both top and bottom surfaces with a glazed appearance and slightly crispy salty edges. The presentation was sprinkled with the garden fresh sweet basil. As an accompaniment to the lasagna, young zucchini and yellow squash were sliced in rounds and fire grilled to slightly char the edges and leave parallel grill marks on the surface for added flavor. Again, I believe it was seasoned with sweet basil, and what I heard others refer to as honey or button mushrooms were interspersed among the squash.

Dessert was a Baked Apple with Calvados, Pistachio Nut garnish with a slice of Steve's Brie. The taste of the apple was fairly mild and slightly tart. Though the skin was tough, the problem I had with it was that the apple was under-baked or hardly baked. Due to the under-cooked fruit, knives were needed, but were not made available from the wait

staff to use with the dessert, though they were promised. There was a gentleman willing to share his knife with his table-mates, thankfully. About 5 people shared one knife at our table. The apple was plated with a sauce made of mildly sweet simple syrup and Calvados which I assume is a liqueur. The accompanying slice of Brie, with its sour and salty flavors, seemed to be too much of a contrast to the apple and sauce. There was a cone-shaped dollop of whipped cream as a topping on the apple, with a sprinkle of chopped pistachio nuts to top it off. This course I must say sadly was largely a disappointment and not what I would call a proper ending to what I thought was a fabulous meal.

Merlot table wine was served and refilled during the course of the meal. I heard others say it went well with the entire meal. I was told by a few of my fellow diners that it was a full-bodied wine with numerous undertones or slight hints of various fruit flavors. The varieties of fruit flavors I heard mentioned were raspberry, cherry, and plum.

Coffee, Tea and Soda were also served.

Bon Appetit

SO HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN MUSHROOM PICKING?
by Jay Kempinger

"Jay, get a spoon and get out here." The walls of the small log cabin reverberated with the sound of Joe's voice. In his hand he held a bowl of wild mushroom, egg, and onion that he had just cooked up; he demanded that I join him in his early afternoon snack. With great apprehension, I took a small portion and nibbled a sample. As the ecstasy of that great flavor settled in, so did the thought of death by mushroom poisoning.

Joe was a transplant to the North woods of Wisconsin. He came from the Dakotas during the dust bowl era and made a living trapping, hunting, doing odd jobs, and sometimes gathering food from the land. Earlier that day, I had spotted Joe walking in the woods near our cabin. When we chatted, I noticed that he had a few large mushrooms with him. When questioned about his find, he assured me that his father had taught him "which ones to pick." I guess the look of surprise on my face, that this rather odd looking "toad stool" was edible, prompted Joe to feed me some of it. After surviving that first wild mushroom meal, there was a sense of adventure that called me to learn to identify and eventually pick and consume wild mushrooms.

Everyone pursuing a career or enjoying a hobby can look back to a place or time where they can see that shadow of someone who started them, or maybe booted them, on their way. Possibly the best way to conserve and promote your favorite hobby is to be a mentor. Mentoring can be as reserved as helping out at club functions or as complex as taking on an apprentice. We all have something to give; never think that your efforts

will go unappreciated. The only way that your cherished hobby or trade will continue to exist will be for the next generation to pick up that baton, but "you" have to be there to hand it to them.

Old Joe is long gone now, but not forgotten. Joe had unknowingly sent me off on a learning experience that has lasted many years now, and I suspect it will last many more. Oh, those toadstools that Joe fed me? I still find them up in the North woods in the fall, and each and every meal of "Leccinum Aurantiacum" with onions and eggs, reminds me of old Joe.

Joe's Mushroom Breakfast

4 cups cleaned and sliced *Leccinum aurantiacum* caps
1 Tbsp butter with 2 Tbsp olive oil
1 medium onion, sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tsp lemon juice
4 jumbo eggs, beaten
Salt and pepper to taste

Heat the butter and oil in a heavy fry pan. Saute the onion until just softened; add the mushrooms and garlic, and continue to saute until the mushrooms are softened, sprinkle on the lemon juice and saute 2 minutes more. Add the eggs and stir fry until the eggs are done. Serve over buttered toast or polenta. (Old Joe used to say that if there were some bugs in the mushrooms when he cooked them that "that was their tough luck").

ART AU NATUREL (The Artwork of Nancy Mladenoff)
by Amanda Henry (reprinted from the Wisconsin State Journal)

Ed. Note.: The following is part of an article from the Oct. 24, 2003 Wisconsin State Journal about Nancy Mladenoff's Painted Mushroom exhibit at the Wendy Cooper Gallery in Madison. The exhibit was entitled "Hush, you mushrooms" and ran Oct. 18--Nov. 22, 2003. Artwork from the exhibit can still be found at the gallery's website (<http://www.wendycoopergallery.com/>) under past exhibitions. Nancy is an art professor at UW-Madison and a member of the WMS.

"Nature, and the landscape, has been kind of overdone," says Mladenoff. "I had a desire to kind of push the envelope - you know, can we still use nature as subject matter, and push it a little?"

She was interested in mushrooms, but didn't want to simply paint them, in the traditional sense. So she decided to paint on them.

Her first painted mushrooms didn't last long. After painting the tops and then snapping a digital picture, Mladenoff washed them clean so that

the next wanderer would find their toadstools pristine - as opposed to thinking they'd stumbled on some kind of miracle of nature.

As she learned more about the mushroom kingdom, Mladenoff realized that painting the cap of a mushroom was no more damaging than painting the outside of an apple. She began to try more elaborate patterns, and spent more time perfecting the digital photos of her work, achieving a high-enough resolution to enlarge them dramatically.

A painter by training, Mladenoff was now working in a hybrid form of her own invention - half paint, half photography.

"Whenever I get into something, I kind of get into it," Mladenoff admits. Case in point: Her sizable collection of mushroom-shaped salt and pepper sets is on display in the window of the Wendy Cooper Gallery, a touch that is more whimsical than kitsch.

Although Mladenoff has taken to palling around with serious mushroom fanciers, and identifies an underlying environmental concern in the making of art about nature, her work with fungi is anything but serious.

Compared to the nature-based work of Scottish artist Andy Goldsworthy, featured in the recent film "Rivers and Tides," Mladenoff's mushrooms have a sassy, punk sensibility. There is no aspiration to 100-percent organic purity, or to passing as the real thing. With their electric colors and thick dollops of paint, these mushrooms don't hide the fact that they've been made. You're supposed to do a double take.

"The work I do in the studio is very slow and painstaking, and a lot of it's pretty planned out. But when I go out in the woods and do this, I don't know what I'm going to find. It's my way of being improvisational," says Mladenoff. "I'm looking for ways to entertain myself."

The tension between "real" and artistically altered is nothing new for a painter like Mladenoff.

"We're always playing with illusion or non-illusion," she says. Working with digital technology makes the equation even more complex.

"When I started showing these, a lot of people thought I did the manipulation in the computer," says Mladenoff. She wants people to know that the mushrooms and the paint were really there, even if they're not "real" in the evolutionary sense.

"I want it to be real, but fake."

The bug-to-mushroom continuum is a pretty clear one for Mladenoff. (referring to an insect art exhibit at another gallery and to Nancy's

artwork painting on bugs---ed.)

"Part of the fascination for me, both with insects and mushrooms - I'm really attracted to these kind of small, unnoticed things in nature - is that there's a love-hate relationship with these things," she explains. "People either love the beauty of them, or they're disgusted with them."

Mladenoff, obviously, leans more toward the unconditional love end of the spectrum. She doesn't mind if her mushrooms are small or strange or potentially poisonous. She isn't painting them to make them look better, exactly - just different.

Of course, as her mycological knowledge has grown, Mladenoff has encountered one hitch in her purely formal approach to mushrooms.

"When I find something that's really delicious, I'd be less apt to paint on it," she admits. "I'll just take it home and eat it."

PEPPERY (AND NOT-SO-PEPPERY) BOLETES by Steve Nelsen

Adrienne and I found some small reddish, not very peppery Boletes that appear to be related to *piperatus* last summer (2003) at the Almon Recreation Area in Oneida County, Wisconsin, which proved to be a wonderful place for mushrooms in a dry season. The peppery bolete was described by Builliard, but was usually attributed to Fries because he published it in 1821 as *Boleus piperatus*, in the publication considered to be the baseline for describing fungus for years (it no longer is, leading to an excessive number of attribution shifts of very little interest to people looking for mushrooms in the woods). The pileus of *B. piperatus* is brownish with variously described reddish tones, and it is subviscid when young, but usually just feels soft. The pores, which are large and rather reddish brown, and the peppery taste are its most distinct features. People started breaking up Fries' huge *Boletus* genus even by 1821, when Gray split out several genera, but the peppery bolete remained a *Boletus* till the late 19th century, when people started moving it around a lot. Quelet transferred it to *Versipellis* in 1886 and to *Ixocomus* in 1888, Kuntze to *Suillus* in 1898 (and Smith says *piperaturus* is "obviously related" to *Suillus castinellus*, a species from the Smokeys that lacks both the red-brown tones in the gills and the peppery flavor, but has similar large, angular gills, and *Suillus squarrosoides*, which I think I have not seen), Bataille to *Chalciporus* (which means copper-gilled, and is the place many modern mycologists decided to leave it) in 1908, Murrill to *Ceratomyces* in 1909, and Pilat and Dermak to *Rubinoboletus* in 1969.

The conservative Smith kept *piperatus* and its relatives in *Boletus* Section *Piperati* (defined as a section of *Ixocomus* by Singer in 1938) in his 1971 monograph, but Singer, Moser, and the newer Bessette, Roody,

and Bessette book retain *Chalciporus* as a small genus (five species in North America, they say). It is not clear to me why Bataille's name has been retained in preference to both the older and newer dispositions. There would seem to me to be other *Boletus* species at least as deviant as this one that are retained in *Boletus*. Nevertheless, there is a good deal to be said for a Bolete that is recognizable with the naked eye, and the peculiar pore color of *piperatus* and its relatives is striking. We had never seen anything but *piperatus* until this summer, but the one at Almon is clearly too red to be *piperatus*. Figuring out which of the others it might be has proven frustrating. Peck described a redder one he called *B. rubinellus* in 1879, but Smith states unequivocally that it does not occur in Michigan, and if his many coworkers did not kick it out, it seems unlikely to occur in Wisconsin. Kauffman (Smith's predecessor at the University of Michigan and the most prolific mycologist of his day) described *B. rubritubifera*, another redder species, from New York material found under spruce in 1915. Most unfortunately, the most recent monograph of Bessette, Roody, and Bessette says that *Chalciporus rubritubifera* (Kauff.) Singer is known only from a single state park in Florida, so someone appears to be confused, but it seems unlikely that this is what we found either. I am currently going with the identification as *Boletus pseudorubellus* as described in Smith and Thiers, 1971, which was at least seen in Michigan, and fits the macroscopic description as well as the others (I am incompetent to deal with the microscopic descriptions).

RECIPE: EGG-SCRAMBLE WITH MUSHROOMS

by John S. Komosa

1 small onion
1 garlic clove
1 not too ripe tomato
1 red/green/yellow pepper
1 cup mushrooms
butter or margarine,
salt, pepper, spices.
some form of breakfast meat like: ham, Polish or pork sausage, bacon
eggs

If using store mushrooms, peel skin and discard veil. Wash and slice up. If using wild mushrooms, clean, wash and boil. In large skillet, saute the onions & garlic in butter. Add chopped pepper, tomato, mushrooms, chopped meat, and salt/pepper/spices. Heat until meat is ready. Now either beat some eggs with a little milk & water or break some eggs over the mixture and cook till eggs are done. Serve hot.

Enjoy.