Potomac Sporophore

September 2008 Volume 23 Number 3

Voicemail:301-907-3053
Next meeting: ext.. 33
For forays: ext. 55

MAW DUES

Please send your MAW dues to:

Connie Durnan
Membership Chair
4500 Windom Place, NW
Washington, DC, 20016

Singles: $20.00/Households: $30.00

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All MAW meetings will be held at the Davis library until further notice. The library is located at 6400 Democracy Blvd in Bethesda, MD

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Club members should not pick mushrooms in an area scheduled for a club foray for one week prior to the date of the foray.

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Forays

Check your e-mail for forays

The Programs

October 7th-
The Fall Tasting.
Members who bring a dish are admitted free; members who do not bring a dish will pay $10.00. Partners who have a family membership must each bring a dish in order for both members to be admitted free. Non-members must join the club to participate.
In order to avoid the long lines please download an admission form and complete it before you arrive. Go to www.mawdc.org and click "archives" and download the Tasting waiver form and the instructions

Remember that you must bring any wild food that you intend to include in the dish that you prepare for the tasting to the meeting in an uncooked state so that one of the club's inspectors

can approve of it for public consumption.

November 4th or 11th Cathleen Clancy will speak on "Mushroom Piosenings."
and nominations for the various club officers and board members will be made.

December 2nd
Election of MAW officers and board members and review of the year's mushroom harvest and a social hour.

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The MAW FAIR

The seventh annual Maw fair will take place on Sunday, Oct. 2nd at the Brookside Garden, located in Wheaton, MD. Connie Durhan and Daniel Barizo are the directors of the fair and will be looking for assistance from MAW members.
We have always had generous help from members in the past and hope that that will continue.

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The Beefsteak Polypore

William Needham

Common name: Beefsteak fungus, Beefsteak polypore, or Ox tongue. The appearance of the flesh of this fungus is similar to that of a cut of tenderloin beef; its lateral growth from the side of a tree has the general shape and distension of an ox tongue

Scientific name: *Fistilina hepatica – fisttilina* means "reed" or "pipe" in Latin - a fistula is an anatomical passage leading from one body cavity to another that allows for the passage of fluids; The generic name therefore translates as "small pipes" and refers to the fact that this fungus has crowded but distinct pores on its lower surface for dissemination of reproductive spores from the terminating tubes - *Hepaticus* is Latin for "of the liver" - used here to indicate that the fungus looks like an animal's liver.

The carnose appearance of *F. hepatica* affords it an unusually broad acceptability as an edible fungus, even in notably mycophobic Great Britain; it is available in some parts of Europe in markets and as an entrée in restaurants. When cut, it even exudes sanguineous red juice that complements the thick, veined flesh. It is one of a very few fungi that are considered safe to be eaten raw, though it has a sour, somewhat acidic flavor.

The beefsteak fungus is for the most part saprobic; it lives on dead or decaying organic material, notably broad-leaved trees - preferentially oaks. It is also weakly parasitic; it draws nutrients from live trees, though not with sufficient virulence to kill the tree due to nutrient deprivation. Perhaps ironically, it causes a slow-acting heartwood rot such that the infected wood has an attractive pattern known as "brown oak." Infected trees are sought out by cabinet makers for the unusual patterns of the wood that has an aesthetic appeal for woodworking applications.

The Beefsteak fungus was originally considered to be a member of Polyporaceae- the Polypore family. It has the physical or structural characteristics that would taxonomically make this assignment logical: it is a bracket fungus in having a single lateral attachment to a host tree from which it

extends like a shelf-supporting bracket; it has relatively tough and fibrous flesh; and it has pores on the underside of the fruiting body.

The name polypore means many pores and refers to this very characteristic of the polypore fungi. However, recent advances in DNA analysis have contradicted the traditional taxonomy of fungi based on structure. As is becoming increasingly obvious as more and more analyses are conducted, the structure of a fungus does not necessarily indicate its genetic similarity to another fungus. The term clade (from the Greek *klados* meaning branch) has fairly recently been adopted to indicate a group of organisms with similar homologous features derived from a common ancestor. It is used to describe a genetic as opposed to a structural relationship.

That is the case with *Fistulina hepatica*; the pores are not pores but the ends of closely packed tubes and are functionally much more like the gills of the umbrella-shaped mushroom than the pores of the polypore. It is in the Order Agaricales, the gilled field mushrooms. As an example of the structural dissimilarity of the fungi of the same genetic clade, the Beefsteak fungus has been placed in the Schizophylloid Clade, exemplified by *Schizophyllum commune*, commonly called "split gill"

The taste of the Beefsteak fungus has been described as tannic and slightly sour. This is not surprising. A chemical analysis revealed that it had five phenolic (aromatic derivatives of benzene) compounds and six organic acids (oxalic, citric, malic, ascorbic, aconitic and fumaric). It was also found to have notable antioxidant effects - it acts as a scavenger for reactive oxygen species and for hydroxyl (OH) radicals. It is also a good source of vitamin C, the ascorbic acid content is noted in the above analysis. In recipes, it is frequently recommended that the Beefsteak fungus be soaked or parboiled to reduce the acidic taste - noting that this also reduces the medicinal and nutritional properties.

One popular recipe calls for 600-800 grams (about 1.5 pounds) of Beefsteak fungus to be marinated in white wine with cloves and parsley and then coated with a mixture of flour mixed with a beaten egg , herbs and breadcrumbs. The coated fungus is cooked in olive oil for 2 to 3 minutes until golden brown and then served on a bed of salad. It is called, not surprisingly, herb crusted fungus.

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Mushrooms in the Raw

Jim Sherry

Mushroom guide books usually have the following categories in describing the edibility of mushrooms: choice, good, edible, non-edible, poisonous, deadly and hallucinogenic. They rarely have a list of those mushrooms that you can eat raw, i.e. uncooked.

Most people, though, have eaten an uncooked button mushroom in a salad, and some people have had a taste of a truffle or two,

which also can be sprinkled, sparingly, on a salad without being cooked.

Then there's the rarely found orange peel mushroom, a cup mushroom, which Bruce Boyer found at the MAW Sequanota foray last year and which he brought to the October tasting and we ate bits of it, raw; it has the texture of a rose petal, but if cooked it turns black and distasteful.

Another brightly colored and edible mushroom that is eaten raw is the popular Cinnabar-red chanterelle. It's small and one needs to pick lots of it for it to be worthwhile A former MAW president once wrote that you could sprinkle it over a salad for an attractive splash of color.
I find some of this mushroom each year, though not last year, in the same spot, which is on a dug-out side of a bank which appears to be sandy. Maria and I found hundreds of this mushroom on a roadside at Smith Mountain Lake in Virginia, four years ago.

Most years mushroomers find the beefsteak polypore (Fistulina hepatica), at least once (see article above). It grows on the side of a dead, standing tree-about three to four feet above the ground—that's where I have found it. Its scientific name comes from its reddish liver-like appearance. It's a bit tart and it probable has to be eaten raw on faith but with olive oil and some lemon juice it's a good edible. See Bruce on this one- he loves it.

Let's look at the shiitake. I wouldn't mention this one except that an experienced mushroomer said, again at the Sequanota foray, that he ate one shiitake every morning-without the stems: raw. The shiitake is the mushroom many of us have grown from logs-at least once. It's probably the Asian's button mushroom in popularity and it has not only great taste but also great nutritional and medicinal value (I am sure that you could not eat many shiitake raw-too difficult to digest)

Would you like to eat the wood's ear raw (Auricularia auricular) I found a new book on Thai cooking in the library. The author had four recipes using the woods ear-one was a salad recipe using the wood's ear- raw. The wood's ear was his substitute for jelly fish, which his mother put in a salad that he ate when he was a child back in Thailand.

In 2001, just after 9-11 Maria and I went on Albert Cascieri's mushroom foray in Italy. Albert leads a foray each year to a different district in Italy. Our first bus stop was at a gas station where I bought a sandwich from a vending machine. It was a salad sandwich made of porcini mushrooms-uncooked. It was wonderful. Later Maria was at a market in Bologna which had lots of mushrooms for sale. She bought Albert an Amanita ceasarea as a gift and he sliced it up and shared it with the group. We ate it raw.

When I stated writing this article I looked at mushroom books for lists of mushrooms which are eaten raw but found nothing on the subject until I looked at an Italian mushroom book, The Complete Book of Mushrooms by Rinaldi and Tyndalo (translated).
It lists all of the mushrooms that I have described above

except for the red chanterelle but it lists the yellow chanterelle as edible! And it lists an additional twelve. I am not recommending that anyone eat any of the mushrooms listed in this article. I have the odd feeling that in America one should not speak of such things. Perhaps the Italians are more relaxed and less nanny-like about mushrooms raw. With their history they know well the dangers of mushrooms. And it ain't the raw ones you have to watch out for.
The following is the Italian book's list of mushrooms that can be eaten uncooked. (I have listed the popular name for the mushroom if I found one and also the new scientific name, if there was one).

Calvtia bovista

1.Amanita caesarea – American Ceasar's Mushroom
2.Auricularia auricular- Wood's ear
3.Boletus aereus (small doses) -Queen Bolete
4.. Boletus edulis (small doses)-King Bolete, Porcini
5. Boletus pinicola (small doses)Boletus pinophilus is the new name
6. Cantharellus cibarius) -- Golden Chanterelle
7.Fistulina hepatica) – BeefsteakPolypore.
8.Gyrocephalus rufus -Red Gyroporus
9..Lycoperdon caelatum (Calvatia bovista)
10.Lycoperdo (Calvatia gigantean) -Giant Puffball
11.Peziza aurantia (Aleuria aurantia)- Orange Peel

Red Jelly

Note: Psalliota is now the Agaricus
12.Psalliota arvensis -horse mushroom
13.Psalliota bispora -button mushroom
14.Psalliota campestris- meadow mushroom
15.Psalliota nivescens.Psalliota silvatica
16.Psalliota silvicola- wood Mushroom

Orange Peel Mushroom

17.Rhodopaxillus panaeolus
18..Tremelioden gelatinosum
19..(Pseudohydnum gelatinosum)-Jelly Tooth

The Beefsteak Polypore

20.Tuber magnatum- Alba or white truffle
20.Tuber melanosporum- Perigord or black truffle.

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A Morel Fable

Jim Sherry

A certain man went into the West and he came to a land called 'Califia' and some of this land was black with

fire and nothing was left on it but a strong stench and a smoke which lay over the land as far as one could see. And the man walked through the land and up and down the hillsides and finally came into a valley where he saw that all was desolation. And then he came upon a small band of people who were excited and who were singing and dancing and cooking a small organism that was growing over the land. And they said to him; "Stranger, will you take some of this food which has been provided; for it will nourish you and give you pleasure."

And the man was glad that not all was desolation and that the land was still with life and the man took the food and ate it and he saw that it was indeed good. And he thanked the people and they said take some more and take it with you and he gathered up many pounds of it and he took it with him
And the man took the food and returned to his shelter and shared some of the food with those who lived there and he took the rest and prepared it so that he could take it with him to his home.
And when he was home a controversy arose over the reason for the growth of this delicious food in the far- away land and not in his own land and he said that the fire was not so forceful there and that it did not destroy the part of the organism that hid in the earth, which he could plainly see because the fire had revealed it to him.

And the man, who was called Don Gore, tried to explain but others would not listen and gradually the dispute went away and the man ate his food and gave thanks that he was provided with such a delicious feast.
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This Season

Jim Sherry

This mushroom season started with great promise. There was plenty of rain and at one point the average rainfall for Maryland was four inches above the yearly average. But then it dried up. No rain in August.
In July the find of the season was chanterelles. Someone said that if you are not finding chanterelles, find another business. Of course chanterelles don't advertise themselves, one has to know where to look for them. But now the chanterelles are gone-even they need rain.
But I do wonder about the fact that one can find lots of chanterelles in a forest but why they are growing at that spot and not down the road in the same forest remains a mystery.

That brings me to the chicken mushroom. We found one just before the rains came.
How it can grow without rain astounds me.
We went on a quick walk locally, for the exercise, and turned down a path we had never tread on before and there it was. Maria saw it growing on the earth next to an enormous log that was full of red rot at its center. This chicken mushroom was 12 inches across but young and moist, in fact it was dripping with moisture on this very hot day.
We always check some books to find the perfect recipe, which I know doesn't exist (maybe at heart I am a Platonist). I was surprised to see how often these books that we consulted suggested that the chicken be used to flavor

soup or in a casserole. No! No!

It was delicious cooked in the frying pan with butter and EVOO. (see R.R.)

I remember that last year I found a chicken mushroom in August at a time when it hadn't rained in 3 or 4 weeks. It was on a dead but standing tree. Today's find was on the ground. It was a cincinatus.
The moral here is that it can be dry, very, very dry, but it's never too dry for the chicken. Let's here it for the chicken.

Now the rain has come- mid-September- I am still not finding what I think I should be finding though some are finding meadow mushrooms and today I thought I was seeing many 'meadows' as I drove by an expansive lawn; the mushrooms were white and snug to the lawn but they turned out to be *Amanita verosa.*

This rain may produce a good yield of hen of the woods in October. There has not been a good hen of the woods yield in two years.

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Thr Sequanota Foray.

Mitch Fournet reported that MAW members found seventy-seven species of mushrooms at the Sequanota foray. Mitch said that the ground had been dry but that there was rain on Friday and some on Saturday. Jon Ellifritz gave a presentation.

Members found some chicken mushroom and served it to the group. The list of species found was sent to MAW members by e-mail.

Every year that the club has gone to the Sequanota foray when I have been there, we have found either a chicken or a hen mushroom. It usually falls to Jon Ellifritz to cook the find. If it is a chicken mushroom, he usually cooks it using a satay recipe.
I didn't go this year and so I don't know what Jon did or even if he did the cooking but it sounds as though the group had a great time.

The Potomac Sporophore is Published quarterly by the Mycological Association of Washington, DC (MAW).