



February 17
General Meeting Speaker



Michael Castellano

*"Truffles: What are they?
And how do I find them?"*

I was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1956 and grew up in the greater Los Angeles area and on Long Island, New York. I studied forestry at Paul Smith's College, New York and Oregon State University, from where I received a Ph.D. I began working for the Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station in 1980. For the last 30 years, my research has focused on increasing our understanding of the natural history and identification of truffles in forest ecosystems. My primary current interests include biodiversity of truffle species in forests, and managing rare, sensitive and endemic macrofungi.

East and West in Cultural Mycophagy

Bob Sommer

When I first became interested in mushrooms during the 1970s, I started hearing about Wall Street banker Gordon Wasson. At the time it was not easy for me to gain access to Wasson's writings. The library of the university where I taught had open access stacks for 99% of its books, but Wasson's work was stored separately in Special Collections with its own librarian, hours, and policies. To access Wasson's books, which were not available on loan, I had to come to Special Collections during designated hours, surrender my brief case, pen, and writing materials other than a lined pad and a pencil. The librarian recorded my name and the book I requested, and supervised the session. There was no photocopier or other device in the room for recording text or illustrations.

I learned later that this hushed and secure room (I was the only user present on most occasions) contained the library's pornography collection. At the time psychedelic mushrooms were taboo topics in the same category as pornography. I read Wasson's account of his wedding day when he discovered his Russian-born wife out in the woods picking mushrooms. Wasson, who then knew nothing about fungi, was uncertain whether his bride



'Gordon Wasson'

PRESIDENT'S POST

Hello MSSF Members,

After a wet December it appears that the Bay Area has hit another dry spell this past month. Fingers crossed that we'll recover with a wet February. Even with the return of dry weather, January was a busy month for many MSSF members who had the opportunity to experience a couple great events to the north and south. The second weekend of January, the Fungus Federation of Santa Cruz pulled off another fantastic Fungus Fair to a large crowd of enthusiastic, mushroom-loving attendees. Then, during the MLK holiday weekend, the Sonoma County Mycological Association held their annual SOMA Camp, a mushroom and food filled educational intensive. I highly encourage you all to mark these occasions on your calendar next year. Our non-profit mushroom enthusiast friends do an outstanding job with these events.

January also marked a return to the MSSF's regular monthly meetings after the December hiatus. I want to thank the MSSF Scientific Advisor Dr. Dennis Desjardin for giving a fascinating talk on Pohnpei Mushrooms. The talk sparked many questions from attendees about bioluminescent fungi, one of Dr. Desjardin's areas of expertise. We'll look forward to another talk by Dennis at some point in the future. This month, we will host Michael Castellano, who will talk about the connection between forests and one of the most alluring gastronomic subjects of all time: truffles.

Along with the meeting location transition, the MSSF is still taking suggestions on temporary housing options for the Bill and Louise Freedman MSSF Library that is currently located at the Randall Museum. We need to move our library prior to the start of construction this March and are still weighing our options. Ideally, we would like to house the library somewhere where MSSF members would still have access to our book collection during our season. If you know of any location possibilities, please contact me at president@mssf.org.

I want to remind everyone that a great way to communicate with other MSSF members is through the MSSF member Yahoo group. The MSSF Council recently decided to purge the Yahoo group of discontinued members to keep it a forum for current members to send information like foray announcements, new research, recipes, etc. If you are a newer MSSF member, do join the group: MSSF@yahoo.com and join the conversation. If you have any questions, please contact Pascal Pelous, MSSF Social Media Chair at socialmedia@mssf.org.

Thanks again to all of you who contribute to make the MSSF a great organization. Remember to share your love of the forests and mushrooms with a friend, and bring them to the next meeting if you can. We'd love to meet them!

Happy Hunting Everyone,

-David

CULINARY CORNER

Patricia George

February doesn't necessarily portend the end of the season for good edibles. Each mushrooming season is unique in its own way, driven by weather and soil conditions, but, typically, great edibles like black trumpets (*Craterellus cornucopioides*), yellowfeet (*Craterellus tubaeformis*), and hedgehogs (*Hydnum umbilicatum*) fruit later in the season. All are excellent and versatile

culinary mushrooms and can be dried for preservation. In my estimation, black trumpets taste best when rehydrated, while I like yellowfeet for their contrast with the forest floor and their sometimes almost promiscuous abundance. Hedgehogs often present themselves in great numbers and are easy to see, while black trumpets, being so dark and flower-like, are sometimes very difficult to see without great patience and concentration.



Black trumpets

All are small so require some forbearance when gathered, but they seldom need much field cleaning except for clipping off the ends of the stipe. They complement each other well when combined, while individually, they are superb in strudels, stews, soups, anything with potatoes, soufflés, and even tacos. They are delicious with just the right amount of chewiness. Dried black trumpets can also be ground and mixed with good salt. Like porcini salt, it can be sprinkled into most anything for an extra umami kick. I like it generously sprinkled over a steak prior to grilling. It is also easy to make: combine one cup of ground dried trumpets with ½ cup of sea salt (or lesser amounts in the same proportions).

Amidst the tiresome barrage of ads and popups, novel mushroom recipes sometimes can be challenging to find online. However, Mary Smiley's blog, "Cooking with Wild Mushrooms," collects posts from inventive people who happily share their ideas and recipes. One of my new favorites is her wonderfully easy candy cap syrup. I tried this with several batches of candy caps from my dried mushroom stash. One batch came from the distant past (more than 5 years) one from the recent past (between 2 and 5 years) and the last one from a modest stash I gathered this past December from a rather picked over area. The batch from long ago was a waste of water, sugar and energy. I threw out the large jar I had found at the back of the storage shelf. The candy caps from the more recent past were just

Continued on page 5

was suicidal or worse, homicidal.

This episode launched Wasson, whose Wall Street banking provided ample means to finance eclectic interests, on a worldwide project ingesting psychedelic substances. His book that interested me the most was co-authored with his wife Valentina, *Mushrooms, Russia, and History* (1957), which divided the East from the West as mycophiles (mushroom lovers) and mycophobes (mushroom haters). Valentina was clearly an Eastern European mycophile; Gordon on his wedding day was in the Anglo-Saxon mycophobic category.

This distinction remained with me over the years. When I taught in Europe in the 1980s there were special trains going out into forest areas in season for mushroom foraging. French pharmacies routinely displayed posters showing edible and toxic fungi and the pharmacist would identify mushrooms that people brought into the store. In contrast, in England, the seat of mycophobic Anglo-Saxon culture, children were taught from an early age to kick over and stomp forest mushrooms; only the cultivated button mushroom (*Agaricus bisporus*) was considered suitable for the table. While Eastern European mycophagy remains strong, Western attitudes are no longer so provincial. One can find chanterelles and King Boletes on the menus of upscale restaurants in England and the United States, and multiple species of mushrooms are sold in high-end grocery stores and farmer's markets.

Fast forward several decades to the emergence of SAM, our local club: Sacramento Area Mushroomers. Like clubs elsewhere, we organize educational meetings and forays. Membership is heterogeneous with old and young and multiple ethnicities. Harkening back to the Wassons' book, there is often representation from Eastern Europe. Although many SAM members are intrigued by the diversity of forest fungi and the challenges of identification and documentation, folks from an Eastern European background seem primarily interested in collecting for the table. Other foragers in our group have similar motives, which stimulates their frequent queries about edibility, but their questions reflect a lack of knowledge and experience. Not true of those from Eastern Europe who know very clearly what they are looking for, and this includes species that Western field guides do not consider edible. On a recent foray, one Slavic participant enthusiastically filled a large basket to overflowing with *Russula brevipes*, a species I have found singularly lacking in flavor. "Oh no," he asserted, "Slice them, cover with butter and sour cream and bake... delicious."

As a foray organizer, I feel responsible for what my group collects for the table. It is embarrassing and sometimes unnerving to witness people enthusiastically and unhesitatingly gathering red *Russula* in their baskets shortly after I have warned them about the hazards of eating *R. emetica/silvicola*. The same is true of *Lactarius* species with yellow latex that no American field guide considers edible. Sometimes these folks encourage less informed members to become experimental, to try out species despite what the field guides say. There are shades of Charles McIlvaine: pioneer American mycologist who personally tested the edibility of hundreds of species "about which mycologists have either written nothing or have followed one another in giving erroneous information." McIlvaine mentions the occasional unpleasant results from encountering toxic fungi, although he felt this was more than compensated for by the many previously unknown delicacies among the more than 700 edible varieties he came across.

Having traveled overseas, I am aware of the elaborate preparation that Eastern European foragers use with *Russula* and *Lactarius* species. A light sauté as one might apply to boletes or chanterelles does not suffice; in Eastern Europe they boil, salt, or pickle russulas and *Lactarius* before serving or storing them, and this is the way the species are sold in markets. I fear that local foragers will lack the cast-iron stomach of Charles McIlvaine and the knowledge of proper preparation so basic to the food culture of Eastern Europe.

Mycena News



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Please e-mail photos, comments, corrections, and correspondence to mycenanews@mssf.org

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HOW TO MAKE A SPORE PRINT IN 3 EASY STEPS

By Enrique Sanchez

Volvopluteus is found in open grassy areas such as lawns and disturbed areas; I found this one coming out through several inches of pine and magnolia duff along a suburban walking path. Its pinkish gills and rosy salmon colored spores help differentiate it from *Amanita virosa*, which have white spores. It is said to be edible, although not particularly choice. It fruits from late winter to spring in northern California if the conditions are right. When there is a lapse of rain during the rainy season, city parks, municipal properties, and business lawns become good places these mushrooms.

Spore color is essential to identifying a given mushroom, and it is easy to do. Once you find a good specimen, remove the cap and place it on paper. If you have some sort of idea of the color outcome, the choice of paper is easier. Spore color varies from black to white. If you are not sure of the outcome, black and white construction paper is best.

1) Cut the paper to fit the cap size: half white and half black. If you have an idea of the color, go either black or white. You can even use aluminum foil; spore prints make great art pieces.

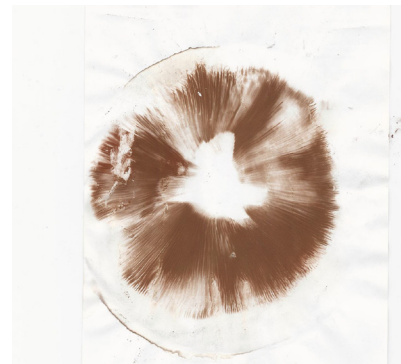
2) Place a glass bowl over the cap and let it sit for a few hours to about a day. The bowl prevents airflow and disturbing the spores, as they are minute and the slightest air can move them.

3) After the allotted time, you should have a good spore print. You are now one step closer to identifying your mushroom.

(Thanks to Liz Sandiford, for helping me come up with this idea.)



Volvopluteus in the wild



The finished spore print

CALL OUT TO MSSF CULTIVATORS: BURLAP BAGS FOR YOUR MUSHROOM GROWING NEEDS

The MSSF just received over 100 donated large burlap bags from our friends at the Blue Bottle Coffee Roastery! The MSSF is looking forward to cultivating a continuing partnership with the local roastery to help further ramp up the opportunities for MSSF's home mushroom cultivator contingent. If you would like to pick up a few burlap bags for your own home cultivation needs please contact David at president@mssf.org and I'll set some aside for you to pick up. Have fun and remember to thank Blue Bottle Coffee for the generous donation.

Culinary Corner continued

okay, but certainly not as good as the ones from December. I decided that mixing the newer mushrooms with some of the older made a very worthwhile syrup. I made a largish batch and keep it in the fridge. I constantly find myself wandering over to it and taking just a little teaspoon to drizzle over yogurt and fruit for breakfast or to add some to a dessert. I dribbled some of the syrup and a few of the mushrooms from it over a nice, runny wedge of Affinois cheese and served it with crackers at a New Year's Day party. It was a big hit. The syrup can also be mixed with butter and powdered sugar for a frosting with a few of the mushrooms used as garnish. There are also plenty of variations. Matt Gee, another contributor to "Cooking with Wild Mushrooms," makes his candy cap syrup with rye whiskey. I haven't tried his recipe yet but it sounds enticing. But other whiskeys would work as well.

Black Trumpet Lo Mein

- 1 cup black trumpets (dried or fresh)
- 1 bunch of scallions
- One inch piece of fresh ginger
- 1/3 pound of thin lo-mein or other very thin noodles
- 3 tablespoons of canola or peanut oil
- 2 tablespoons Chinese rice wine or white wine
- 2/3 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 cup black trumpet soaking liquid or chicken stock

For dried trumpets, soak them in one cup water for 30 minutes. Remove from the liquid and squeeze the mushrooms until most of the water is out. Save the liquid, straining it if it is gritty. Put the trumpets in cold water if they are gritty and then dry them. Cut or shred the mushrooms into pieces.

Cook the noodles as directed on the package, drain and rinse with cold water then drain again. Cut the scallions into 1 1/2 inch sections then cut them thinly lengthwise. Peel the ginger and thinly slice lengthwise and then cut these into shreds. Heat a wok or similar non-sticking pan, add the oil, and add scallions and ginger and cook until softened over moderately low heat. Add the trumpets and cook 1 minute. Add the wine and raise the heat to high. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add the noodles, sesame oil and keep stir frying and adding small amounts of the liquid until done. Cooked broccoli or other cooked vegetables and/or mushrooms can be added to this, or even more stock to make it a soup. Just don't overcook the noodles. Add them last if you are making a soup,

Hospitality Committee Thanks David Gardella January Celebrity Guest Chef

The Hospitality Committee sends a shout-out to our MSSF president, David Gardella, who, notwithstanding his many and weighty administrative responsibilities, found the time to make excellent appetizers for the January meeting. David made two delicious spreads: a parsley porcini cremini pesto and duxelles, an adaptable, delectable mixture of finely chopped mushrooms, shallots, and herbs named after the 17th-century French Marquis d'Uxelles. (For recipes for January appetizers, please email David at president@mssf.org and he'll gladly send them along.)

YOU TOO can be a guest chef at a hospitality function at some point of your choosing in the future. Just email one of your Hospitality co-chairs:

Eric: mullew@comcast.net

George: gwillis2@mac.com

to let us know of your interest.



Mycological Society of San Francisco
c/o The Randall Museum
199 Museum Way
San Francisco, CA 94114



"A World of Wonder at Your Feet"

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MSSF Calendar February 2015

Monday, February 2, 7:00 p.m. - Culinary Group Dinner
Hall of Flowers, Golden Gate Pk., 9th & Lincoln, S.F.
Pre-registration required for attendance.

Tuesday, February 10, 7:30 p.m. - Council Meeting
Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.

Tuesday, February 17, 7:00 p.m. - MSSF General Meeting
Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.
7 p.m. - Mushroom identification and refreshments.
8 p.m. - Speaker: Michael Castellano

Monday, March 2, 7:00 p.m. - Culinary Group Dinner
Hall of Flowers, Golden Gate Pk., 9th & Lincoln, S.F.
Pre-registration required for attendance.

MSSF Volunteers Needed

Mycena News Layout Designer: The MSSF is seeking a volunteer that has familiarity with Adobe InDesign to assist the Mycena News editor with the Mycena News layout. Current editor is happy to coach and will work with layout person to create the newsletter each month during the MSSF season from September through May. If interested, email mycenanews@mssf.org

MSSF Videographer: The MSSF is seeking to build its web presence and is currently looking for a videographer that can film events like meeting lectures, Fungus Fair, and MSSF forays. The videographer will work with the MSSF Social Media Chair to create and document interesting MSSF video content. If interested, please contact Pascal Pelous socialmedia@mssf.org or David Gardella president@mssf.org

Check the MSSF online calendar at:
<http://www.mssf.org/calendar/index.php>
for full details, latest updates
and schedule changes.

Submit to *Mycena News*! The submission deadline
for the March 2015 issue is February 15th.
Send all articles, calendar items and other information
to: mycenanews@mssf.org