Speaker for September 19 MSSF Meeting



Jennifer Kerekes

Jennifer Kerekes, a graduate student at San Francisco State University and winner of the MSSF scholarship, will be our speaker at the September general meeting. She will be presenting the results of her master's thesis on the genus Crinipellis from Southeast Asia under the direction of Dr. Dennis Desjardin. Her talk will also include a basic introduction to different molecular techniques and will describe how molecular techniques have improved our understanding of fungal evolution, sometimes in surprising ways, and also have presented new challenges.

For a photo of *Crinipellis* perniciosa, please turn to page 3.

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Mycena News

The Mycological Society of San Francisco September, 2006, vol 57:09

MycoDigest: Pioneers of California Mycology: W.A. Murrill and the Fungi of the Pacific Coast

Peter Werner

In previous *MycoDigest* columns, we've focused on recent discoveries in mycological science. Upcoming columns will continue in this vein, but in this column, I want to introduce a new series of articles I'm calling "Pioneers of California Mycology", focusing on the early discoverers and contributors to our knowledge of the mycota of California. This knowledge is the result of over a century of mycological exploration by both academic mycologists and serious amateurs. All of our distinct California species and collecting spots were once unknown and undescribed and there are interesting stories to be told about their discovery. In future columns, I will cover the stories of HW Harkness, Lee Bonar, Elizabeth Morse, William Bridge Cooke, Harry Thiers, and other great figures who made invaluable contributions to California mycology over the years.

William Alphonso Murrill is one of the great names in the history of mycology, having over the course of his career, founded the journal *Mycologia*, published dozens of papers, originated scores of new names of fungal taxa, and traveled extensively to describe the mycota of Europe and the Americas. He was also an early "mycological evangelist" – a charismatic figure and frequent public speaker whose knowledge and enthusiasm for the study of fungi broadened the interest in mycology in a nation with little established tradition of mushroom hunting.

Murrill began his career as a curator at the New York Botanical Garden, eventually rising to the rank of Assistant Director of the Garden. Since Murrill filled mycologist Franklin Sumner Earle's position at NYBG after the latter had left, Murrill was put in charge of mycological research at the Garden. As part of his work for the NYBG, Murrill traveled extensively to collect and describe new species of fungi. He traveled throughout the eastern United States, made several trips to Europe, as well as Mexico and the Caribbean, and to the Pacific Coast.

It was during one of these journeys that Murrill had the first of several disappearances. At some point during his 1918 trip to Europe, his usual packages of collections and correspondence ceased arriving and he failed to arrive back in Europe as scheduled. Inquiries to his colleagues at European herbaria failed to turn up any news of his whereabouts. He turned up several months later back in New York with news that he had fallen severely ill with a kidney condition and had been held up in hospital in a small French village without means of communication. Unfortunately, he also returned to find that his wife had left and sued for divorce and that the NYBG

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MycoDigest is a section of the Mycena News dedicated to the scientific reiew of recent mycological information.

The MSSF Culinary Group

If you are new to the MSSF you may not be acquainted with one of its most lively sub-groups, the Culinary Group, open to all members interested in the gastronomical aspects of mushrooming. On the first Monday night of each month, from September to May (except for December when we have the general group's grand holiday feast) we meet in the Hall of Flowers, Golden Gate Park, to enjoy each other's company and have a delicious meal.

We are united in our love of cooking as well as our love of mushrooms. All participants contribute to the feast either as part of the team that prepares the dinner or by bringing an appetizer to share. At the dinner meetings members contribute ideas and suggestions for the upcoming menus and prepare food that they, with help, would like to cook. Traditionally, the dinners have been designed to take advantage of the wild mushrooms available at the time as well as the best and the freshest food of the season. The menus are centered on mushrooms, ethnic foods, a particular main ingredient or a close holiday. The aim is for "chef-for-the-night" members to prepare menus and cook foods they love. And, we usually have a lovely punch served with the appetizers.

To be part of the fun and food, you must be a current MSSF member. The annual fee is \$12.00 (\$6.00 for seniors) and there is a charge of \$14.00 per dinner to cover the cost of using the facility and the dinner's ingredients. Diners bring their own cutlery, plates, etc and their choice of beverage.

All members participate at least once a year in the preparation of the main dinner. Members also bring appetizers for dinners, using mushrooms if possible, when not involved in the main menu preparation.

The Culinary Group is a participatory cooking group, not just an eating group. Members should expect to cook for dinners and help with special MSSF fund-raising events, such as the Holiday Dinner, the Mendocino Woodlands Foray and the annual Fungus Fair.

Come join us, you lovers of cooking and conviviality! For more information, contact Pat George at 510-204-9130 or plgeorge33@yahoo.com.

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MycoDigest: W.A. Murrill Continued from page 1

had fired him from his position as Assistant Director, demoting him to a token public outreach position at a much-reduced salary.

After 5 more years in this capacity, Murrill handed in his resignation from the Garden and soon disappeared again. This time, Murrill abandoned academic work entirely and his whereabouts were unknown to his colleagues back in New York. This would have been the end of an otherwise great academic career, but for a chance event a few years later.

In 1926, George F Weber, a mycologist and plant pathologist from University of Florida, was visiting a Gainesville resort called the Tin Can Tourist Camp along with his wife. In the recreation hall, they came across and unkempt and haggard, yet "tall, robust, dignified, pleasant stranger providing a piano concert for the transient tourists". Weber soon recognized the stranger as none other than Murrill.

The next Summer, while convalescing from his recurring kidney problem at the University of Florida Infirmary, Murrill found that it was now the peak of the Florida mushroom season, and asked Weber for some collecting supplies, a desk, and a microscope. Weber set Murrill up with a permanent desk and research space in the only spot he could find – a landing on a stairway near the University Herbarium. Weber also arranged for a remaining \$600 in publication royalties to be sent to Murill and managed to get a small stipend for him. Murrill permanently relocated to Florida, building a small house, and spending the last 34 years of his life there.

Murrill became a familiar figure around the Gainesville campus, known by many simply as "the Mushroom Man". During the mushroom season, he would spend the morning gathering fungi in and around the campus, then return to his desk to describe and curate the collections. He would rarely return home during this time, but would work late into the evening, then fall asleep on a couch in the student union. The next morning the incoming students would rouse him and often treat him to breakfast.

During his years at Gainesville, he was also frequently visited by other eminent mycologists such as AH Smith, LR Hesler, and Rolf Singer. Singer was a frequent visitor, and the debates between Singer and Murrill on the finer points of fungal taxonomy were often made plain to anyone within shouting distance of the University Herbarium.

Murrill's contribution to California mycology came out of his collecting trip to the Pacific Coast States in fall of 1911, while he was still at NYBG. Murrill came to the West Coast by several days train journey. He arrived first in Seattle in late October, collecting extensively at the University of Washington campus and in the city parks. He then traveled and collected in such locales as Mt Rainier, the Willamette Valley, and the Oregon Coast before moving on to California. His collecting in California was limited to the Bay Area over the period of one

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The Foragers' Report September 2006

Patrick Hamilton

How does that Kenny Loggins song go? "Summer thunder on moonlight days, northern lights, the skies ablaze . . ." That was nice. And so would it be if we all get into a group hug and pray for late summer thunderstorms.

Here we are. Again. The scents and hopes of the new season are upon, around, about, and within us. Catch that whiff? No? You've got to train yourself to tune in the nostrils. Gather into your lungs and hearts the umami of fungi—those difficult to define, mostly mental, aromas of "forest floor," nuttiness," "farinaceous," etc. Smell it? Yes!

No? Well in that case you are just not in the anticipatory mood needed to propel yourself into this new period of potential porcini picking. This is, of course, going to become the season that will be known as "2006-2007." Our mushroom seasons take us from the present to the middle of next year. Kind of like a fiscal year, but not. Better. No accountants.

So what should we expect for us here soon? We had a two month longer-than-usual rainy season, a hotter-than-Hell tenday period in July, and regular morning fog now—hmmm. How will that affect the fungal fruiting? Who knows?

Let's look into our special mushroom clubs' crystal balls (available at mycochef@sbcglobal.net for an, as yet, undetermined price). Turning it over, floating the flakey things, looking through the dandruffy murk we can see Huh? Santa Claus? Must be the wrong ball.

Sorry, there is no such thing as a divining orb that can help predict. No seer of things to be soon seen. Nope—we got to use our fungal history. We need to look back to see ahead. (But don't crook your neck doing this and put yourself on the disabled list even before the season starts.) Get out your mushroom hunting notes from years past and try to discern fruiting patterns. Don't have those notes? You can simply look at all the old September "Mycena News" posted on MykoWeb and read about what we reporting scribers have scribbled for what seems like years and years.

Is our mushroom season just beginning now or has it been going all the while? Never stopped, maybe?

I think that.

Folks have found mushrooms almost whenever they have really looked all summer long. With our drippy coastal weather comes the miracle of rainless-day fungi. Princes and chanterelles are just two fine edibles that have been recently picked at our magnificent Salt Point State Park.

Some good summer rains in the Sierra will guarantee fall porcini (a favorite bolete of many).

Matsutakes are beginning to be found near Crescent, Oregon. Sulfur shelves should be soon coming in our area. (Check your local listings as to exactly where)

Do we do a recipe to help herald our high hopes? Sure. Something really simple follows. Ever look behind yourself?

Olive, Feta, Artichoke and Wild Mushroom Pizza

Serving Size: 3 Preparation time: 0:30

Ingredients:

- 1 Boboli crust ("thin" is good)
- 1 6.5 oz jar, marinated artichoke hearts, sliced in half
- 1 cup feta cheese, crumbled
- 1/4 cup sun-dried tomatoes, marinated, chopped large
- 1 cup wild mushrooms, mixed, sautéed chopped
- 2 tomatoes, medium, garden fresh, sliced
- 2 1/2 tsp Mediterranean herbs, mixed
- 1/2 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and chopped

Preparation Method:

Pre-heat your oven to 450 degrees. Place crust on baking stone. Brush with some of the artichoke marinade. Top with cheese, tomatoes, mushrooms, olives, herbs, and artichokes. Drizzle with remaining marinade. Bake about 10 minutes.



Crinipellis perniciosa/Scott Bauer.

Cultivation Corner

Ken Litchfield

Here it is middle of the California summer dry season, three months since the last rain and probably at least 2 more till the next. Not usually considered the prime mushroom picking season. But it is prime time for shaggy fog drippers and red stinkies. And when you're collecting them to eat or store you can also capture them to grow in your garden with a few simple tricks.

For fog dripper shaggies there's two kinds: Shaggy Parasols and Shaggy Manes. The Shaggy Parasol, Chlorophyllum (Macrolepiota {Lepiota}) rachodes, can commonly be found in the fine duff under Monterey Cypress, in decaying woodchips, horse manure patches, and the broken down parts of grass clipping and compost piles. It seems to prefer the extra nitrogen of those materials compared with the raw cellulose of fresh wood chips, grass thatch, or straw. It can pop up fully developed overnight after a few evening hours of heavy fog or lawn sprinkling. They are typically white: stalked, veiled, and capped mushrooms with tan to chocolate shingled patches on the cap with a larger central patch of the same color. The spherical cap unfurled is golf ball sized and up to 8 to 12 inches across. When you pull them up, the bulbous base is often connected to other sprouted or unsprouted buttons in a clump, with mycelium attached. You can scrape the dirt off the bases for more meat or cut the stems half way up. The cut surface turns bright orange, an identifying characteristic along with the white spores. The very similar looking, green spored, warmer loving puker, Chlorophyllum molybdites, is found out in the warmer valley areas and less in the cooler Bay Area. The scrapings and the mycelium can be put into a plastic bag with a little substrate from the clump site. The plastic bag should be closed loosely so it doesn't dry out but can breathe. Place it in the fridge to grow out slowly in the cold. Once the substrate in the base is getting infiltrated with plenty of white mycelium it can be placed in an appropriate spot in the home garden or local park. These are excellent mushrooms sliced and diced and sautéed with butter and a little sherry; nutty Corbel is fine. If you dry them they have the fragrance of freshly hulled pecans and can be powdered in a coffee grinder for use in sauces and seasoning.

The Shaggy Mane, *Coprinus comatus*, is a white bullet or torpedo shaped mushroom with brown shags on the upper portion of the cap with a larger central top patch like the Shaggy Parasol. The two Shaggies do look quite similar but the Parasol cap is spherical and the Mane is taller two to three or more times than the diameter. The Mane cuts white with no stain and the vertically cut stem is hollow with a characteristic long white "kite string" suspended in the middle of the hollow. These mushrooms like similar growing habitat to Shaggy Parasols but prefer well-thatched lawns. They pop up in the early morning from overnight irrigation. But they usually don't last the whole day without turning to black ink from the bottom of the unfurled cap up to the top. If you catch them in mid going they



Macrolepiota rachodes/Dean Weir

can still be harvested with the dark parts cut away and put in the backyard compost pile. These mushrooms are difficult to preserve without turning to ink except by fresh freezing. They can be cooked just like Shaggy Parasols.

The Stinky Red Whiffle Ball and the Stinky Red Starfish, Clathrus ruber and archeri respectively, can be found in partially decayed woodchips in park and garden pathways. The Whiffle Ball is typically tennis to softball sized, hollow, delicate in all manners, except odor, which is designed to attract spore spreading flies. Hence the fragrance of dead stuff and feces. Ditto for the Stinky Starfish which looks like someone flipped a starfish on its back and it's curling its legs round to try to flip itself back over. Both stinky beasts are scarlet red fading to pastel with age. The inside of the arms and lattice structure on both is coated with a slimy brown goo that coprophilic flies find delectable but you probably won't, at least at that stage of development. However, both of these mushrooms form clutches of eggs, from hummingbird to goose in size, that are quite delectable if you catch them before they hatch and take wing. Slice them and fry them in hot oil like bacon filets. Soft or crispy they make great veggie BLT's. Both stinkies are very easy to grow. Wherever you find some eggs slide your fingers under the woodchip mulch and lift out the layer of mycelial lasagna in chunks or cakes a square foot or more in size. Usually the mycelium is massed into distinctive stringy rhizomorphs that are easily transplanted into fresh wood chips in your garden or favorite uninoculated park. Be sure to soak the fresh chips well, like an overnight submerging, to break their surface tension before spreading them six to twelve inches deep.

Don't forget that we have the Mushroom Cultivation class at Merritt Community College in the Oakland Hills Sundays 10 – 2 August 27 to December 17. You can take the class for grade, credit, or no credit and it is only \$54 for the whole semester. Last day to sign up late is September 9th. For more details about the class and registration read the Cultivation Corner for May 2006.

Healthy Fungi

Exotic mushrooms have been revered by herbalists for centuries, but a new report reveals that white and chestnut mushrooms may have powerful health giving properties too.

Not only do cultivated mushrooms outstrip the exotics such as shiitake and oyster in some essential minerals and vitamins, but they also contain biologically active compounds which scientific studies suggest may have the potential to help fight cancer and heart disease and improve well being - although more research is needed in this area.

The report called, *Mushrooms: The New Superfood*, has been compiled by leading British nutritionist Jane Clarke. She and her team reviewed several major scientific studies around the world regarding the nutritional value and potential health benefits of *Agaricus bisporus* mushrooms, the species that accounts for 95% of all mushroom sales and includes white button mushrooms, crimini and portabello.

Breast Cancer Fighter:

Studies at the Beckman Research Institute of the City of Hope in Duarte, California, suggest that fresh white mushrooms contain substances that are effective in reducing the activity of the enzyme aromatase that increases estrogen levels. High estrogen levels have been implicated in breast cancer risk. Initially, extracts from seven vegetables — onion, celery, carrot, pepper, broccoli, spinach and mushroom - were tested. The most effective aromatase inhibitor was found in white mushrooms. The study's second phase tested only mushrooms, including portabellos, shiitake, crimini, oyster, enoki, woodear, chanterelle, small white and large white mushrooms. The large white mushrooms emerged as the most potent inhibitor of aromatase activity.

Prostrate Cancer Fighter:

A series of experiments have been carried out to investigate the effects of white button mushrooms in relation to prostate cancer and suggested that they may play a chemopreventive role. Research at the American City of Hope Medical Center showed that two phytochemicals found in white button mushrooms had the ability to suppress two enzymes – steroid 5alpha-reductase and aromatase - which have been implicated in the incidence of prostate cancer.

Antioxidant Protection:

Mushrooms are a prime natural source of the powerful antioxidant L-Ergothioneine, outdoing either of the two foods previously believed to be better sources. Led by Professor Robert Beelman, researchers at Pennsylvania State University found that just a handful of white button mushrooms have about 12 times more of the antioxidant than wheat germ and four times more than chicken liver. Brown mushrooms contained even more, with exotics having the highest levels. L-Ergothioneine scavenges free radicals and protects the body's DNA from damage. As a result of this research, the university advocated that white mushrooms be elevated to "superfood" status.

Lower Cholesterol:

Studies have suggested that substances found in white mushrooms have the ability to lower blood cholesterol levels and so may be able to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. They are a valuable source of lovastatin, which has been found to suppress the activity of the main cholesterol synthesis enzyme. Mushrooms are a good source of fibre, in particular glucans giving them the potential to impact on cholesterol uptake from the diet.

Weight Loss:

The preliminary findings of an 18 month American study into the potential role of mushrooms in weight loss diets, showed that when compared to other isocaloric diets, a mushroom based diet produced greatest loss of fat tissue. Other research showed that when men substituted a 4-ounce grilled portabello mushroom for a 4-ounce grilled beef burger, they would save 18,400 calories in a year, a potential weight loss of 5.3 pounds and a yearly reduction of 2,725 grams of fat. Mushrooms are low in calories, fat and sodium and are a good source of phosphorus, riboflavin, thiamin, B-6, niacin and also provide iron, magnesium, manganese and some Vitamin C.

Reprinted courtesy the Mushroom Bureau, mushroom-uk.com

MSSF Discussion Group on Yahoo Groups

The MSSF email discussion group facilitated through Yahoo Groups is a great way to keep in contact with other members and is one of the primary ways in which members keep up on news about the Society. The list features often-intriguing discussion of fungal-related topics, tips about current fungal activity, and up-to-the-minute news about MSSF functions.

The list is available in both individual-message and digest formats. Additionally, you can also subscribe to the group in "Special Notices" mode. That means that if you wish to receive only official announcements from the society and not email traffic from other members, you can subscribe using this method. (Subscribers to the list in regular and digest formats also, of course, receive official announcements in addition to posts from other members.) To sign up, go to:

http://groups.vahoo.com/group/mssf/

Follow the link that says "Join This Group". (You will need to sign up for a free Yahoo Groups membership if you do not have one already.)

MycoDigest: W.A. Murrill Continued from page 2



William Alphonso Murrill (1869 – 1957)

Botanical Abbreviation: Murrill Notable taxa discovered: Agaricus hondensis, Ganoderma tsugae, Laetiporus, Marasmiellus

week in late November, but the collections he made were extensive.

On his arrival, he first set out for the UC Berkeley Herbarium where he examined many of HW Harkness' early collections of California fungi. He next went collecting in Golden Gate Park, but as it was early in the season and still dry, came back with only a few collections, though he commented that "During a period of rainy weather, the extensive wooded areas of this park should yield a rich harvest of fungi."

The next day, he set out for Muir Woods, which Murrill described as "the famous collecting ground in the vicinity of San Francisco". Today a short drive from San Francisco, getting there in 1911 was a bit more involved, involving a ferry trip across the bay, a ride in an electric train up Mt Tamalpais, and descent into Muir Woods by gravity car. There, he had better luck collecting than he had the previous day. His collections included several of the tiny colorful Lepiota characteristic of redwood forests, including two species new to science, L. castaneidisca and L. sequoiarum.

After a side trip to visit with Luther Burbank and a tour of his gardens in Santa Rosa, he next headed south to Stanford University. There, Murrill met with pioneering California botanist LeRoy Abrams and together the two set out on a collecting trip to the Santa Cruz Mountains. The first stop was in a locale known as "Preston's Ravine" on the Old La Honda Road in Woodside, where they collected some 100 collections, including two species not described before or since, Pholiota ornatula and Melanoleuca anomala. They then drove onward to La Honda, where they even made some 50 more collections, including several more undescribed *Lepiota*, *L. reseofolia* and *L.*

fuligenescens, as well as a couple of new species that were named for La Honda, Agaricus hondensis (one of the more common "sickner" agarics of California woodlands) and Rhodocybe hondensis. Two days were required for examination and description of the collections made from that trip, after which, he journeyed back to New York.

Over the next several years, Murrill published a series of articles in Mycologia titled Agaricaceae of the Pacific Coast (plus an additional article on the polypores and boletes) in which he described the fungi collected on his West Coast journey, plus additional collections sent to him by correspondents. In all, these articles described some 250 species of fleshy basidiomycetes, about half of which were newly described species (though this number partly reflects Murrill's tendency to be a "splitter"). Murrill's articles on Pacific Coast fungi represented an important early landmark in the description of the California mycota.

Further Reading:

Kimbrough JW. (2003). The twilight years of William Alphonso Murrill. Mushroom, The Journal 21(3):20-24, 30-33, 46. Available from: http://www.mushroomthejournal.com/bestof/ Murrillpt2.pdf

Murrill WA. (1912). Collecting fungi on the Pacific Coast. Journal of the New York Botanical Garden 13:41-44.

Roseteaching DW. (2003). William Alphonso Murrill: The legend of the naturalist. Mushroom, The Journal 21(1):12-15. Available from: http://www.mushroomthejournal.com/ bestof/Murrillpt1.pdf

Weber GF. (1961). William Alphonso Murrill. Mycologia 53:543– 557.

Books at the MSSF Library

Current members are encouraged to visit our library at the Randall Museum. We also accept donations of any mushroom related books you may not have used for a while, just bring them along to the general meetings. All books borrowed over the summer are now due.Contact Monique at moniquecarment@yahoo.com or 415-474-7220.

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Time to Renew Your Membership?

Check your Mycena News mailing label to see. If your membership is paid only through 2006, you'll need to renew for 2007 to continue receiving membership services after January 1.

It's never too early to renew... Fill out the required information on the form. Mail a check for the appropriate amount (made out to "MSSF Membership") to MSSF-Membership c/o the Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco, CA 94114. Or, to save postage, you can give the envelope with the filled out form and check to George or Jane Collier at the monthly meeting, culinary dinner, or the December 3-4 Oakland Fungus Fair.

You can also renew online by using the PayPal option on the MSSF website. If you do, please send email (to membership@mssf.org) or telephone (1-866-807-7148) with the information on the reverse of this column. Paypal provides only the name, mailing address, and email of those who enroll or renew. It does not give secondary members, telephone numbers, an alternate email address, or interests.

The regular, adult/family membership fee is \$25.00. Seniors over 65 and full-time students pay \$20.00. E-members pay \$15 to download the Mycena News and other publications from the website. Check our website for reduced rates for multiple-year memberships.

The MSSF treats membership information as private, but it does VERY occasionally release its membership list for mailings by mycological businesses. If you do not want your name included in such a mailing list, either contact the membership chair or indicate on your renewal that you do not want to receive commercial mailings.



Mature Macrolepiota rachodes/Dean Weir

sending a check, please make it out to "MSSF membership" and mail it, with this form to: MSSF Membership, c/o The Randall Junior Museum. 199 Museum Way, San Francisco, CA 94114

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MSSF Calendar, September, 2006

Monday, September 11. Culinary Group kick-off dinner. 7 p.m., Hall of Flowers, Golden Gate Park, 9th and Lincoln, SF. For reservations and more information, contact Pat George at 510-204-9130 or plgeorge33@yahoo.com.

Tuesday, September 19. MSSF General Meeting. Randall Museum. Mushroom Identification at 7:00 pm. Jennifer Kerekes will discuss the genus *Crinipellis* from Southeast Asia at 8:00 pm.

Friday-Sunday, November 10-12. Mendocinco Woodlands Foray. Dr. Dennis Desjardin, foray mycologist. \$140 includes lodging, meals, forays, classes, and special events. Register online at www.mssf.org/mendo, or send check with your contact info to: MSSF c/o Randall Museum 199 Museum Way SF, CA 94114. Info: 415-457-7662 or 707-829-2063.

Saturday-Sunday, December 2-3. MSSF Annual Fungus Fair. Oakland Museum. Stay tuned for more details.