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The newsletter of the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club is published and distributed 5 times per year: April/May, June/July, Aug/Sept, Oct/Nov, and Dec. Articles, photos, news items, and other submissions should be sent to the editor at least 6-8 weeks prior to targeted distribution for the best chance of inclusion. The editor cannot guarantee that submissions will be included in the next newsletter. However, all submissions will be included in future newsletters as long as it relates in some way to fungi. The editor reserves the right to make spelling or grammatical corrections and may suggest content changes to the author. Material published in our newsletters may be used in other non-profit publications only with expressed permission and with appropriate acknowledgements.

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Morel Madness Weekend

By John Plischke



Photo by Jim Strutz

This is the biggest morel foray in the tri-state area. Almost everyone meets with success in finding morels. A number of other edible and poisonous mushrooms are also found.

Last year 150 people hunted morels with us at Mingo Creek Park, one of the beautiful Washington County Parks. Mingo Creek is in the southwest corner of PA near Washington, close to the Ohio and WV borders. A great many morels were found. We think we just scratched the surface. The area has many tulip poplars and ash and abounds in dying elms. When you see Jeff of the Washington County Parks, thank him for holding this event.

Check-in and registration for this year's huge event will be on Saturday, April 26 from 11:00 am to 12:00 at the roadside near the Henry House. At 12:00, welcome, instructions and agenda review. 12:15 nationally known mycologist John Plischke III will give a slide show on Morel Mushrooms and Their Poisonous

Look Alikes. There will be a short break at 1:00. At 1:15, morel hunting excursions by yourself or with an experienced group leader. At 5:00, morel madness roundup, return to shelter 8 for show and identification. 5:30, free time, dinner, camp set up (on your own). At 8:00, evening slide show, Edible Wild Mushrooms and Their Preparation. At 9:00, campfire social time at shelter 8 fire circle. **Many will be tent camping for the weekend.** We will again hunt morels on April 27. Continental breakfast at 8:00. Morning morel hunt at 9:00, meet at shelter 8.

The fee for non-members is \$5 program only and \$10 program and camping. If you show a 2008 WPMC membership card the program is free and the camping fee is just \$5.

You must pre-register with the Washington County Parks at 724-228-6867. The event is rain or shine. Join us for fungi, fun, friends, and morels.

President's Corner

By John Stuart

Welcome to the start of a new mushroom season. This year's program is starting to take shape and will begin on March 18, 2008 with a talk on how to cultivate mushrooms. This is the most popular and highly attended meeting of the year because of the expertise and benevolence of Mark Spear, Rebecca Miller, John Plischke III, and Jim Tunney. They not only show and tell us all the secrets of how to do it but also hand out oyster mushroom kits to take home. They will also inoculate your logs with shiitake, Ganoderma, Hericium or Panellus spawn. See the article in this newsletter as to the type of log you should bring. You MUST however be a paid up member of the club to receive a kit or log inoculation. This one meeting's gracious gift in essence more than covers the cost of a full year's membership. What a bargain. There is not another mushroom club in the country that gives this type of wonderful benefit.

Our April meeting will highlight the Ellis Becker Collection that is described in a separate article in this newsletter. John Plischke III will be the presenter. He will show highlights of a fantastic CD he compiled using the best of the Becker material from this expert mycologist's lifelong collection. The CD will be available for purchase at the meeting at the bargain price of \$5 for members. You really have to see it. Morel Mania is scheduled for Mingo Park on April 26 and 27, 2008. The last two years have not been great for morels so we are due for a tremendous year this year. This is the place you will find them.

Morels continue onto May. We will have a special walk scheduled at Sewickley Borough Park with ranger Thad Jones. Thad is an expert in tree identification and knows every tree in the park. If you want to know about morel loving trees he will show us where they are and how to identify them. Check the web site and groups for the exact date.

There will be a new "Take a Mushroom to Lunch Club" for those who are retired, able to play hockey or get away every third Tuesday from 10:30 to 12:00 for a walk followed by lunch at a restaurant close by. The specimens collected will be brought to the evening meeting provided they haven't been eaten. We are looking for walk sites near a good eatery to add to the schedule. Let us know. Keep tuned to the newsletter, Yahoo groups, and our web page for further developments.

WPMC News Items

WPMC Mushroom Items For Sale

A number of mushroom-related items are sold at our meetings: caps and t-shirts, mushroom cookbooks, loupes, waxpaper bags, and Field Guides to Mushrooms (both Lincoff's and Russell's). See Mary Ellen Dougall at the sales table at our meetings.

WPMC Yahoo Groups

Yahoo Groups is a great resource for our club members and other mushroom enthusiasts from across the country. There are always interesting discussions in the 'Message' section on all kinds of subjects involving wild mushrooms. Find out what mushrooms are up, where people are finding them, recipes, weather, latest announcements, and other things. Also find award winning photos in the 'Photo' section, and articles, lists, and other files in the 'Files' section. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wpamushroomclub/>

WPMC Website

Reference our professionally designed website for information and links pertaining to our club: walks, meetings, species lists and Java data miner among other things. www.wpamushroomclub.org

WPMC Wild Mushroom Cookbook, Volume 3

We are working on compiling WPMC Cookbook, Volume 3, but we need more recipes. We are waiting for your addition to Vol. 3. Volumes 1 and 2 have been great successes and are both available for sale. We cannot use copyrighted material or anything you have not tested and enjoyed. Send your recipes to Becky Plischke at morelbp@aol.com or mail to 129 Grant St, Greensburg, PA 15601

Monthly Meetings

Our meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month from March until November. They begin at 7:00pm at Beechwood Nature Reserve in Dorseyville. Please see their website (www.awsp.org) for directions and other information.

March 18th "Cultivation Techniques" by *Rebecca Miller and Mark Spear*. Rebecca and Mark will bring materials to make oyster mushroom growing kits for members only (*membership card required*). *John Plischke III* will also bring mushroom spawn and tools for log cultivation. You will need to bring your own log. Logs should be fresh cut and will work if it is cut from a living tree within the last 2 months, older cut logs will not work. Logs should be about 3 feet long and 3 to 5 inches wide. One inch thick branches will not work but short logs, 2 foot long will work if larger ones are too heavy. For growing shiitake you will need an oak, sweetgum, hard species of maple, alder or aspen log. For growing oysters you will need a maple, poplar, tulip poplar, aspen, cottonwood, beech, willow, sweetgum log. For growing ganoderma lucidum you will need a maple, oak, elm, sycamore, or beech log. For growing Hericium abeites a fir or spruce log. For other types of hardwood the glow in the dark Panellus stipticus spawn will be available. Please note that Panellus stipticus is not edible and is available as a novelty.

April 15th "Morel Hunting and Becker Collection" by *John Plischke III*. The Western PA Mushroom Club has had the good fortune to obtain valuable mushroom material from the descendents of Ellis Becker, a Michigan mycologist & contemporary of Alexander Smith. Part of this material was his slide collection. John Plischke III has reviewed this overwhelming slide collection and digitized the best ones. Ellis Becker's favorite mushrooms were morels and amanitas. John digitized 171 morel slides and 388 slides featuring other mushrooms. His talk will focus on the morel slides include some very unique species. However, slides of some other mushrooms will be shown. A CD of these digitized slides will be available at the meeting for \$5

May 20th "More Good and Bad Mushrooms" by *Dick Dougall*, club identifier and past-president. Everyone who starts hunting wild mushrooms is at first overwhelmed by the surprising number and variety of different mushrooms that are found on a typical walk. Dick will expand on his talk last year by presenting more common mushrooms everybody should know. This includes edibles, poisonous and unusual mushroom. More experienced mushroom hunters in the audience will be encouraged to share their experiences as to when and where these mushrooms can be found.

June 17th "Classifying the Edibility of Mushrooms" by *Lamonte Yarroll*

Continued on Page 8, see "WPMC News"

Photos from the 2007 Gary Lincoff Mid-Atlantic Mushroom Foray

Pictures by Jim Strutz, Dick Dougall, and Shirley Caseman



Attendees at one of the afternoon lectures.

Renee LeBeuf, from Montreal, enjoys a moment with her audience.



WPMC president, Dick Dougall (left) and Gary Lincoff (right) in the audience of one of the other lecturers.



Some happy foragers head into the woods. It's hard to tell what mushrooms are in the basket but she needs both hands to hold it!



Bill Russell signed copies of his new book at the foray



Club mycologist La Mont Yarroll (right) puts names to mushroom displays as identifier Jack Baker (left) looks on.



Look closely and you'll see several hens-of-the-woods (*Grifola frondosa*) at the base of the tree. Good find...



Charlotte Tunney (foreground) putting out food at the foray. Becky Plischke and an unknown photographer (Gary?) in the background.

The table discussions at the end of the day is your chance to discuss mushrooms with mycologists. There's probably somebody nearby guarding those hens in the foreground!



Learn about fungi directly from the mycologists at the walks.



Our small army of cooks proudly displaying their wares. The feast is one of the highlights of the foray. Everything contains mushrooms.



Val Baker's smiling face greets early registrants.

The 2008 Gary Lincoff Mid-Atlantic Mushroom Foray will be held on September 20th at North Park. Gary Lincoff and Jon Ellifritz will be back, and we are proud to welcome guest mycologist Coleman McCleneghan. Mark it on your calendar and fill out the registration form today. It will be a great day filled with "Fungi, Fun, and Friends".



Gary Lincoff talks about mushrooms at the table walk. Who better to learn from than the guy who wrote the book?

July 15th Craft Workshop by members of the Workshop Committee. Artists can use mushrooms to make a number of interesting craft projects. Members of the workshop committee are brainstorming about which project to present for this meeting. Based on past projects, we should have more fun at this meeting.

Walks and Forays

Walks and forays are held almost every weekend from April through October. They are led by a walk leader and an identifier. Each walk will be at a designated location where participants will forage for wild mushrooms of all species. After the walk the identifier will discuss the mushrooms that were found and answer any questions. Walks usually last 2 or 3 hours and participants are welcome to stay longer if they want. It's a great way to learn about wild mushrooms. Please see our website www.wpamushroomclub.org and our yahoo groups message board for updated information.

We request that no one hunts a walk or foray location for at least two weeks prior to a walk or foray. It is only through your cooperation that we can have successful walks and forays. All walks and forays will be held rain or shine. All walks start on time.

April 19 - 10:00-12:00 Hampton Township Park, Allegheny County. Meet Dick Dougall and Dick Duffy at the swimming pool parking lot. From Route 8, turn onto Wildwood Road Extension (not toward North Park). Then turn right onto School Road to Hampton Middle School. Go past the school to the end of the parking lot where the road makes a hard left. Turn left into park at sign to Tennis Courts, just across from Hampton High School. Turn left at another sign to the Tennis Courts. Turn right at the stop sign to the swimming pool.

April 26-27 - 11:00 am Morel Mushroom Madness Weekend, Mingo Creek, Washington County. Meet John Plischke and John Plischke III. Registration 11 am, program at 12:00 sharp. This is the biggest morel slide show and hunt in the eastern US. There will be an evening program on Edible Wild Mushrooms & How to Prepare Them. Sunday morning we will hunt morels. Camping will be available for \$5. I 70 to Exit 9 Eighty Four/Glyde. Take Rt. 519 N for 2 miles. At a red light turn right onto Rt. 136. Go 4.4 miles and turn left at a sign to Mingo Creek Park. Follow signs to the park. Check in roadside near Henry House. **TO PRE-REGISTER WITH THE PARK. CALL 724-228-6867.** We found morels at this program last year. <http://www.washpatourism.org/parks.html>

May 3 - 2:00-??, Pine Ridge Lodge, Indiana County. Meet John Plischke and John Plischke III for a Morel slide show and hunt. Take Route 22 east past Blairsville to Route 119 North exit; turn left after exiting then turn left toward Chestnut Ridge Inn. Pass the Inn and veer right onto Strangford Road, as you round a sharp curve, turn left onto Chestnut Ridge Road. Go about 1 mi. look for Pine Lodge sign on the left. Meet at the lodge. This is a site that my dad, Robert Boice and I have hunted morels in the past. <http://www.indiana-co-pa-tourism.org/recreat.html>

May 3 - 10:00 am Meet the West Virginia Mushroom Club for their first foray at Stuart's Park in Elkins, WV, rain or shine. The foray fee of \$10 per person or \$15 per family includes lunch. Please bring

an item to share, such as a covered dish, cookies, chips, etc. Contact Shelly Conrad at geezere@comcast.net for more information

May 10 - 10:00-12:00, Return to Mingo Creek, Washington County. Meet John Plischke III and Kim Plischke. I 70 to Exit 9 Eighty Four/Glyde. Take Rt. 519 N for 2 miles. At a red light turn right onto Rt. 136. Go 4.4 miles and turn left at a sign to Mingo Creek Park. Follow signs to the park. Turn right then cross a covered bridge that's just before the Park Office. Meet at Shelter 4.

May 17 - 10-12am May 17, Saturday, 1:30 p.m. Sewickley Heights Borough Park, Allegheny County. Walk in the Park with Park Ranger Thad Jones. Winter presents unique opportunities to identify trees and shrubs by bark, form, buds, fruit, etc. Join Thad for a walk that will shed some light on our wonderful diversity of native trees and shrubs and how to identify them at any time of year, even in winter. Please meet in upper parking lot of Sewickley Heights Borough Park. Free to the public. In the event of severe weather, call 412-716-5520 to check walk status. Directions: Take I-79 to Mt. Nebo exit. Turn Left onto Blackburn Road. Follow Blackburn Road through the countryside until you come to a stop sign. Make right at stop sign onto Fern Hollow Road. You will pass Sewickley Boro Building on your right and the park entrance is immediately after that on right. Follow the drive all the way to the parking lot at end.

May 20 - 10-12 am Take a Mushroom To Lunch! Meet John Stuart at the Tomato Pie Restaurant. We will hunt mushrooms then have lunch together. From Pittsburgh go north on Rt. 8. Turn left onto Wildwood Road onto the Yellow Belt (Ford Dealer and Boston Market on the right). Go 1.3 mi. to a red light; go straight (W Hardies). Continue another 1.6 mi. to a red light at North Park Entrance, road name changes to Ingomar Road at this intersection. Continue to 885 East Ingomar Rd.

May 24 - 10:00-12:00 Moraine State Park, Butler County. Meet Jim Tunney. From Butler take US 422 west 8.7 miles to PA 528 N and turn right, then an immediately left just before a lawn & garden store with a John Deere sign. Go about .8 miles to the parking lot at the end of the road near the boat launch by the lake. OR take I-79 N to 422 E for about 4 1/2 miles and turn left on PA 528 N, follow the directions above. We will drive to a secret location.

May 31 - 10:00 - 2:00 McConnell's Mill, Butler County. Meet Joyce & George Gross. From the North or South: Take I-79 to the PA 422 exit. Go West on 422 for about a mile, turn left at the sign to McConnell's Mill onto McConnell's Mill Road. The sign is not obvious and is immediately at the turn. Follow this road to the parking lot and picnic area at the end. This area has been very productive on past walks.

Sept 20 - Gary Lincoff Mid Atlantic Mushroom Foray Don't miss it, register today!

Mushroom walks begin promptly at the designated time and place. Your walk leader will brief you on walk details and when to return. The walk identifier, at the end of the walk, will name and discuss the mushrooms found, and answer any questions. You are responsible for bringing your own lunch, water, mushroom gathering paraphernalia, camera, notebook, compass, whistle, etc. Dress for the weather and for comfort. Most importantly, identify any mushroom you intend to eat very carefully. We are not responsible for the consequences of you eating the wrong mushrooms.

Suburban Mushrooming

By Dick Dougall

At our 2006 Mid-Atlantic Fall Foray, Gary Lincoff suggested that it is interesting to pick a location and visit it as often as possible to see the ebb & flow of mushroom activity. I picked a spot near my home, but I did not visit it that often. However, I also started to document the mushrooms growing in my yard, which I scouted almost daily. This article will describe these findings.

My yard is about 1/5 of an acre in a typical suburban development. I no longer have any large trees in my yard since a diseased Norway maple had to be removed several years ago. I do have a lawn, small garden, and flower beds with lots of mulch. You might expect little mushroom activity from such a plain bit of ground.

The first question most people ask is whether any edible mushrooms were found. In the middle of summer, I found one perfect Meadow Mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*) in my grass. I usually find a dozen or so, but there was only one this year. I usually find Gem-studded Puffballs in another area, but they did not fruit in 2007. However, I did find a group of Spiny or Curtis' Puffballs (*Lycoperdon curstisii*) in my mulch around the 1st of August. Another section of my mulch also had a small fruiting of Scrambled-egg Slime Mold (*Fuligo septica*). La Monte Yarroll, a club mycologist, assures me that this is edible, raw. Most people are skeptical about eating something which is often called "Dog-Vomit Slime Mold."



Dog Vomit Slime Mold (*Fuligo septica*) photo used with permission from www.TomVolkFungi.net

A lot of the other mushrooms found are labeled as "edible" in the Audubon Guide, but some with cautions, some obviously being too fragile, and others probably being very bland.

Three different mushrooms were found in my grass, i.e. Lawn Mower Mushroom (*Psathyrella foenicis*), White Dunce Cap (*Conocybe lactea*), and Hemispheric Agrocybe (*Agrocybe pediades*). The *Psathyrella* fruiting peaked in June, but the *Agrocybe* liked the cooler weather with minimal fruiting in August. The *Conocybe* was tolerant of the warm weather, fruiting when there was moisture from rain or heavy dew.

Some interesting-shaped mushrooms were found. Dead Man's Fingers (*Xylaria polymorpha*) appeared at a boundary between the grass and mulch. It was probably growing from roots remaining in the ground from the removed maple tree. Bird's Nest Fungi, both the white egg

(*Crucibulum leave*) and black egg (*Cyathus striatus*) really proliferated in my mulch.

One 8-foot section of mulch on the north-side of my house produced the most interesting mushroom activity. The basic mushroom fruiting here was the Japanese Umbrella Inky (*Coprinus plicatilis*). This very delicate mushroom seemed to appear overnight. In the early morning, it was a pretty mushroom, but by lunchtime or early afternoon, it was drooping and fading badly.



Japanese Umbrella Inky (*Coprinus plicatilis*), photo by Jim Strutz

Over the days that I watched these *C. plicatilis*, I discovered a surprising fact. There seemed to be two quite similar but distinctly different *Coprinus* species fruiting in the same section of mulch. Sometimes I would see small, white egg-shaped (1/2 x 3/8 inch) objects in the mulch. The next morning, these would fruit into mushrooms quite similar to *C. plicatilis*, but about three times bigger. Other times, I would see tiny (1/4 x 1/8 inch) mushrooms forming in the mulch. I suspected they were just another LBM (little brown mushroom), but the next day, they grew into half-size version of *C. plicatilis*. My guess for these smaller mushroom is that they are the Non-inky Coprinus or "Little Helmet" (*C. disseminatus*). I don't have any definite idea yet about the larger mushrooms except that it is in the *Coprinus* genus.

Not much happened mushroom-wise in my yard through the fall except the *Conocybe pediades* fruited a little better in the cooler weather. I was surprised in early December. While going out to fill my bird feeders one afternoon, I spotted a group of brownish mushrooms in my mulch. (See photo) These tough mushrooms stayed in good shape through the cold, snow, and rain of the rest of December and the first half of January. I showed photos of these to club mycologists John Plischke III and La Monte Yarroll. Both believe that these are a type of *Galerina*.

As you can see, my yard produced some interesting mushrooms in 2007. From visits to family and friends, I have also discovered that yards having mature oak, maple, and evergreen trees will do even better producing other mushrooms, especially edibles. Maybe you would like to consider keeping track of the mushrooms in your yard over the next year. You might be amazed.

The Ellis Becker Collection

By John Stuart



In July of 2007 the descendants of Ellis Becker had contact with the Plischke family to see if the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club would be interested in receiving his extensive mycology collection. We gladly accepted their generous offer. Ellis Becker was an avid amateur mycologist and photographer, born in Michigan on April 11, 1910 and died at age 85 on April 18, 1996. He lived and had a jewelry business in Kalamazoo. Over his lifetime he compiled an extensive library of 135 books and journals, over a thousand 35mm slides and spore prints, and numerous pieces of mushroom art. He was meticulous in documenting his collection of mushrooms as to location, habitat, date found and matching this to a representative slide. He attended numerous state and national forays and hunted throughout Michigan. Over the years he developed many friendships in the world of mycology and had a close association with Alexander Smith. Although the library is dated with books mainly from the 1970's and 80's there is a wealth of material including over 50 field guides, several cook books, and special interest items covering species of *Pholiota*, *Hygrophorus*, *Ectomycorrhizae*, and *Gasteromycetes*. There are rare journals from the New York State Museum - Report of the State Botanist authored by Charles H. Peck from 1900 - 1915, two classic art works of mushroom prints, *Icones Farlowianae* by William Gilson Farlow and *Mr. Jackson's Mushrooms* by Harry Alexander Carmichael Jackson and many other materials. We have been in contact with the Beechwood Nature Center to try and incorporate as many of the books as possible into their nature library. These will be available to all members.

Mr. Becker's mushroom collecting was coupled with an avid interest in photography. He used many different Nikon/Nikormat cameras modified with ingenious overlay lens techniques that produced award winning photographs. He had a special interest in morels. The morel slide collection alone is a remarkable recording of many different species and their variations as well as fascinating descriptive field notes including the location of the morel finds. He describes and shows unusual habitats like sand dunes, white pine and oaks. He also documents what could possibly be a new morel species. John Plischke III has submitted samples for DNA analysis with the description of this new morel and we hope to have this material published. John has spent countless hours going through the many slides, culling out the best material and then digitizing them on a CD which will be available to everyone for a nominal \$5 fee. There are hundreds of beautiful detailed pictures of a wide variety of other mushrooms besides the morels that would be a great addition to anyone's mushroom photo collection.

Mr. Becker also had books of thousands of dried mushroom specimens and spores labeled with species type, date collected and location. La Monte Yarroll has expressed an interest in starting a club herbarium which will include these thousands of samples.

All in all it was a real boost to our club to receive this tremendous gift from the Becker family. We thank them whole heartedly for their generosity and hope to have these new resources available for everyone. Thanks to the Plischke family for arranging to pick up the collection and all the club members who gave their time and efforts to sort through and catalog the mass of material we received.



More on Ellis Becker excerpted from the Kalamazoo Gazette, "A legacy in mushrooms: A father's fascination with fungi adds up to substantial research", December 31, 2007, by Phyllis Rose. Contributed by Jim Strutz

In 2000, Lanny Becker began trying to find the right place for his father's research, contacting the North American Mycological Association, a group his father had belonged to, but nothing came of that.

Further research finally led to John Plischke II and John Plischke III, father and son, who are members of the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club, which eventually took possession of Ellis' research. The Plischkes drove a van to Galesburg last summer and filled it up with all the boxes of slides, dried mushrooms and books. "These two guys that I found are the best that I could possibly have found for all this stuff," Becker said. "John Plischke III is an excellent photographer. He's gone through all my dad's slides since July and has photographed them all and put them onto a DVD. All this stuff he's given back to me in terms of copies. It's been just wonderful." Now, Becker can pop a DVD into the computer and see not only pictures of the mushrooms his father photographed but also read handwritten notes Ellis made about the mushrooms he found.

Ellis was convinced he had discovered some new species of mushrooms, but [Dr. Alexander] Smith didn't think so, said Becker, who is excited that new DNA technology may be able to verify that his father did, indeed, find new species.

In an e-mail to Becker, John Plischke III, who has been going through Ellis' collection, expressed excitement about the same thing. "I am very excited to see 40 recognized species, especially since back then, only eight or nine were recognized," said Plischke in the October e-mail. "I have been working on sending in Pennsylvania morels for DNA testing and have seen results from across the United States, and many of your father's morels have now been determined to have different DNA, but many of them have yet to be named. Others look like nothing that has been tested that I have seen. ... Hopefully, we can send some in for the morel data-collection project and have them DNA tested and get some new species."

Gary Lincoff Mid-Atlantic Foray Cooking Demonstration

Article by Jim Strutz, Photo by Shirley Caseman



The cooking demonstration is one of my favorite events in the Gary Lincoff Mid-Atlantic Foray, as it is for many of the other cooking enthusiasts. Tom Chulick usually presents the cooking demo but he had to cancel at the last minute, so JoAnna Jenkins substituted instead. I hadn't known she was a trained chef and restaurant owner in a past life so I was intrigued. She first demonstrated making the Black Trumpet Dip recipe that is in the WPMC Cookbook I. Sorry, you'll have to look up the recipe there. She also demonstrated making a Mushroom Stromboli, the recipe for which she was very kind to share in a handout, and which I will present here.

Mushroom Stromboli

1 lb. thawed pizza dough
1 lb. ricotta cheese, drain off excess moisture
1 10 oz pkg. of frozen chopped spinach, squeeze out excess moisture
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bread crumbs
2 Tbs. chopped parsley
8 oz. shredded cheese (mozzarella, provolone and/or parmesan)
1 lb. mushrooms (mixed domestic, reconstituted dried, or fresh wild)
4 Tbs. butter, margarine or olive oil
1 Tbs. garlic, chopped
1 cup onion, chopped
1 tsp. lemon juice
2 Tbs. fresh mixed herbs chopped (rosemary basil, sage, thyme, oregano) OR 1 Tbs. dried Italian herbs
2 Tbs. pesto (optional)
Salt and Pepper, to taste
 $\frac{1}{2}$ egg, beaten with 1 Tbs. water (egg wash)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ sheet pan or cookie sheet brushed with olive oil or spray

In a small bowl, mix the ricotta with the parsley, 1 tsp. garlic, and 1 tsp herbs, salt to taste. In a large sauté pan, melt the butter and sauté the onions and remaining garlic for 4 minutes on medium heat. Add the sliced mushrooms and sauté until dry. Season with salt and pepper, the remaining herbs, and add the lemon juice. On a floured board, rollout the pizza dough into an 18 x 9 inch rectangle. Brush with half of the egg wash, spread with pesto, sprinkle with $\frac{1}{2}$ of the bread crumbs, and sprinkle with the shredded cheese. Spread on the spinach and the sautéed mushroom mixture. Spread on the ricotta cheese mixture and sprinkle with the remaining bread crumbs. Fold in the short sides and roll the dough from one long side to the other until it forms a "log" shape. Place seam side down on the prepared

sheet and brush with the remaining egg wash. Bake approximately 30 minutes until golden brown. Serve sliced. The stromboli can be accompanied by marinara or other spaghetti style sauce.

Editor's notes: JoAnna garnished her demo stromboli with a sauce made from small, heirloom red and yellow tomatoes roasted until they broke apart and melded, and also seasoned with Italian style herbs. Awesome. I went right out the next day and bought large scoops of the miniature tomatoes while they were still in season; drizzled them with a tiny bit of olive oil, roasted them, seasoned them, and froze them for later use. Some time later, I made this stromboli recipe for guests using phyllo dough instead of the pizza dough, carefully brushing melted butter onto every 3 or 4 sheets. This would make it more of a strudel than a stromboli but the filling was the same. JoAnna later told me that she made it the phyllo dough way in her restaurant but the frozen pizza dough was easier for demonstration purposes.

Farewell to the Guru of Sligo Road.

Contributed by Jahn Plischke



Sam Ristich, known throughout the Northeast and, indeed, the entire country and Canada for his fungal knowledge, wisdom and generosity of spirit died peacefully at home on February 11, 2008. Sam was the heart, mind and soul of the Maine Mycological Society from the start when, after moving to Maine upon retirement from Cornell, he discovered we lacked a Mycological group. Sam will

be remembered by all for his breadth of knowledge, depth of curiosity, his boundless enthusiasm and his willingness to share all three with anyone interested. Gary Lincoff said of Sam, in a review of his book *Sam's Corner*, "If mushroom field guides are the dry bones of mycology, Sam is the flesh and blood. And for Sam, mycology doesn't exist in a vacuum. Sam sees what most of us miss, and he knows what most of us see but can't identify. What a treasure!"

Sam Ristich led a walk for us several years ago at Miller's Tract. The North East Mycological Federation Foray is named in honor of Sam. He will truly be missed by all.

Editor's Note: I am sharing with you an email I received from Dinah Wells, the "Spore Print" newsletter editor for the Connecticut Valley Mycological Society regarding the 2008 NEMF Foray, named in honor of Sam Ristich. I didn't have the space to print the entire 2 page registration form but please follow the link instead.

"Happy March 1st! Although, we've had snow here in CT, spring is close behind. And the Connecticut Valley Mycological Society is deep in planning and preparation for NEMF2008 which we hope to make the best NEMF ever. I have attached the completed 2-page registration form (in a pdf) for you to publish in your next newsletters to give everyone plenty of time to save the date. Please publish it as soon as you can and offer reminders to your membership about the June 15 registration deadline. (A link to the form is also available at www.nemfdata.org)

With your help, we can effectively spread the word about this great event which will be held on the lovely Connecticut College campus in New London. Please help us let people know how excited we are about NEMF 2008. Besides the fine programs, workshops, forays, and socials, we will hold the first ever Mycolympics! No running, jumping or acrobatics required. Just guaranteed fun! Thank you all so much for your help. We look forward to seeing you in CT!"

The Great Chaga Hunt

By Becky Plischke

The Plischke Family, John & Kim, John & Becky, chaga foray started early one Friday morning. We were inspired by reading an article in the Minnesota Mycological Society Newsletter. They went in winter and combine chaga hunting with cross country skiing. They say it is easier to see when there are no leaves on the trees. We were also inspired by the discussion on our Yahoo Groups last winter about chaga.

Do you know where there are any stands of birch in our area? You could take us on a chaga hunt. Just let John III know. I'm not talking about someone's yard, although I have looked at quite a few, with no luck!

This June, John was giving 3 mushroom programs in northeast PA. That was the start of our adventure. We headed east on the PA turnpike, then northeast on I-81. All along I-81 we saw small white birch trees. We knew chaga is found on birch, but we were looking for larger trees.

John III found our first chaga on a large yellow birch tree close to Nescopeck State Park. We were so excited because this tree had two large chaga mushrooms on it. They were bigger than softballs. Problem: they were about ten feet up in the tree.



John found a large rectangular rock and rolled it over to the tree to stand on. We were determined to get that chaga. Problem: how do we get it off the tree? We had read in the Minnesota newsletter that they used hatchets. We used a hammer. John whacked it while standing on the rock. He didn't hit it that hard when it flew off. He hit the second chaga and off it came. The first one was sort of round and solid. The second was about the same size but horse shoe shaped and hollow. We were so excited to find these two beautiful chagas.

We had read that you only find chaga on one out of 15,000 birch trees. Luckily there are a lot of birch trees in that area of PA.

Later that day while driving up a winding country road, John shouted, "Stop the car!" This is a common occurrence during mushroom season in our car. We couldn't pull off the road, so we went on till we could turn around. Coming back down the steep hill, John & Kim got out and went after the next chaga. This was another challenging one. It was too high up in the tree to reach. Kim found a long dead branch and they proceeded to use it to knock the chaga off the birch tree. They were successful. Another beautiful chaga to add to our collection!



Kim & John had to wait for us to turn around and come back up the hill to pick them up. What else was there to do while waiting for us? Why, look for more. There on the base of a nearby birch were 8-10 small chaga about the size of golf balls. Those were easily knocked off with a rock.



They were the last chaga we found on the trip, although we did keep looking.

The next morning at breakfast I broke off some of the black outer part and some of the golden center of one and made a cup of tea. I am a tea drinker and it was very good. I read later that it tastes like a bitter coffee. I found no bitterness or coffee taste whatsoever. After breakfast we put all the chaga we found on the table to see how much we had found. We were very pleased that on our first hunt we found

three large and a lot of smaller ones.

After coming home with our collection came the task of somehow grinding it to a size to make tea. We tried using a wood rasp. It produce a finely ground powder but was very time consuming.



We then, through trial and error, found that we could beat the chaga with a hammer into small pieces.



The next step was to get it into smaller pieces. I tried a food processor, that didn't work too well. It kept getting stuck in the blades. So we tried an electric coffee grinder and it did a great job of grinding the chaga into a fine powder.



OK, now we have our chaga ground up, which we read we had to do to make tea. How do we make the tea? I decided to ask the experts. On Groups last winter there was a chaga tea discussion.

I asked David Work of the Mid Hudson Mycological Society how he made

chaga tea. "I recommend breaking up the chaga into relatively small pieces, using about an ounce or two per quart of water. I simmer it for a couple of hours, cover it and let it steep for 4 to 6 hours then strain it and either hold it in the fridge for 3-4 days or freeze it and pull it out as needed." David also sent me a great recipe for a chaga chai tea.

I also asked David Spar from Maine. He also told me how he makes chaga tea. "I chop it into cubes and dry it then grind it up into powder. Any of the black outer coating that seems loose and would easily fall rubbing it moderately in your hands I do not use. The rest I run through a grinder or hand crank gristmill. The tea is good if you brew it in a tea ball in the normal way. It can be mixed with other tea like chai, green tea or whatever you like. For best medicinal effect boiling for 2 hours or more is supposed to be best."

I asked Greg Marley, whose company Mushrooms for Health sells chaga tea and chaga chai tea. Greg said to grind up the chaga into small pieces. Boil 2 tablespoons of chaga in 2 quarts of water then simmer for 20 minutes. The boiling brings out the medicinal qualities of the chaga. The chaga falls to the bottom of the pan, so you don't need to strain it. If you want, you can sweeten it with honey or any other sweetener you prefer. I did try it this way and it was very good. If you want to try chaga tea and can't find any in our area, you can contact Greg at innrneuf@midcoast.com

By the way, we have yet to find chaga in western PA. But they may be here. Keep a look out for an ugly looking black thing growing on a birch tree, you just may have found chaga.

Chaga - Inonotus obliquus, Birch Conk, Chaga, or Clinker Polypore has been used in Russia as a folk medicine since the 16th century. It is used for the treatment of cancer, diabetes, stomach ailments and blood disorders as well as for common stomach ailments such as gastritis, ulcers and general pain. And it is antibacterial and antiviral. Nobel Prize winning author Alexander Solzhenitsyn credits Chaga with curing his cancer.



Editor's Note: The Plischkes brought some of their chaga tea to the Gary Lincoff Mid-Atlantic Foray to share with attendees. I had heard all about the medicinal benefits of chaga. I remembered what Frank Lotrich had said that very few scientifically credible, long term studies have been done on the medicinal benefits of fungi, at least not enough to support that supplementing with fungal derivatives is anything more than a waste of time and money (if you purchase them, of course). Nonetheless, I was curious to try chaga. I poured a small cup and drank it down. I liked it. And I was happy at least holding out some possibility that it extended my life by a few minutes....



1st Place Documentary Category: Kim Plischke, "Boletus separans"



2nd Place Documentary Category: Dick Dougal, "Coprinus plicatillus"



3rd Place Documentary Category: Jim Strutz, "Omphalotus olearius"



1st Place Pictoral: Jim Strutz, "Morchella semilibera"



2nd Place Pictoral: Don Pendergast, Unspecified Species

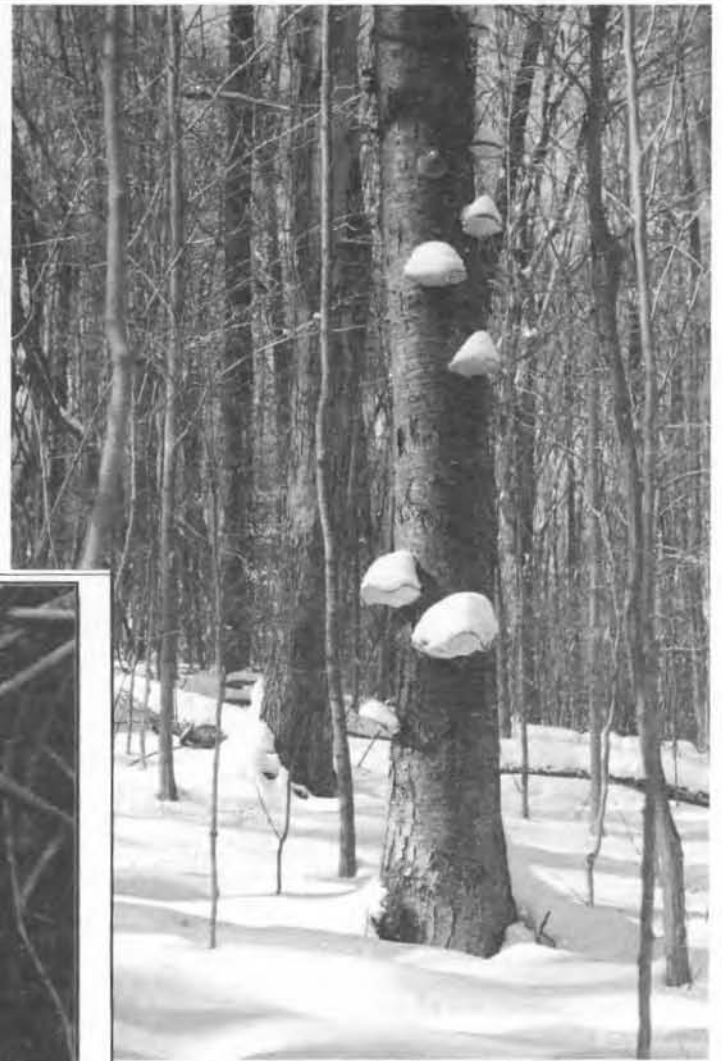
We had a much better level of participation in the photo contest this year. Thanks to Rebecca Miller for judging the entries. Rebecca commented to me in one of the emails containing the winning photos, "The photos were all so good that it was difficult to assign the 1-2-3 places." I can believe it.

Mushroom hunting can be full of surprises. You can turn around to check the other side of a tree and find the most breathtaking display of a Cauliflower cluster (*Sparassis crispa*). Or you stumble upon a few Black Trumpets (*Craterellus fallax*) along a deer path, and look into the woods and find a sea of them scattered everywhere. Right time, right place. Such as the case, I think it

Continued on next page



3rd Place Pictoral: Bill Greenawalt "Red Cracked Boletes"



1st Place Judge's Option: Bill Greenawalt, "Snow Cone Tree"



3rd Place Judge's Option: Shirley Caseman, "Tails"

Continued from previous page

would be interesting to know the stories behind the photographs. I can speak only for mine, the cluster of Jack-O-Lanterns on the previous page. Bill Russell was on my walk at the fall foray last year. We weren't having much luck when I suggested walking a distance to one of my favorite places. He was up for it. We found a few interesting things but generally our luck wasn't a whole lot better than before. It was time to head back when I spotted an odd bit of orange in the distance - in mowed grass. We walked to it and were surprised to find this cluster of Jack-O-Lanterns fruiting from the ground. It was very odd since they are ordinarily found on rotting wood. There must have been an old stump below the ground. I posed the mushrooms for a documentary pose with the photo contest in mind, and we both got some good pictures. I hope the detail comes through on the printed newsletters.

In particular, I want to hear Kim's bolete story, like where she found them all. We should send out a spy to follow her around to her favorite bolete spots!

Congratulations to all the photo contestants for their excellent entries. I'm already looking forward to the 2008 Photo Contest.



2nd Place Judge's Option: Kim Plischke, "Overflowing Boletes"

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