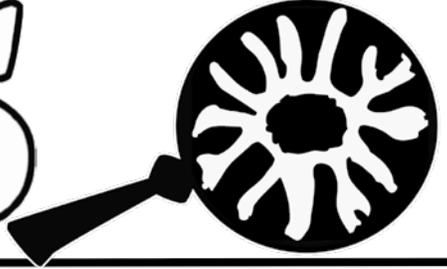


# nyms



Spring 2011 New York Mycological Society Newsletter

## Letter from a Sabbatical in Hell

Greetings from the future—sort of. While New York is being hit with another late-spring flurry, I'm sweating through my t-shirt in 90 degree heat.

"Did he escape this miserable, epic festival of filthy snow and ice via a wormhole into summer?" you ask. No indeed. I'm on an extended work sabbatical in Austin, Texas—where I had hoped to be picking morels as early as mid-March. Instead I've stumbled into another microclimate of severe frustration—a several-months-long drought. Not a single morel reported this year within a 200 mile radius.

(I could try to explain the confluence of circumstances that lead me to park a 30 foot-long recreational vehicle on the streets of Brooklyn and load it up with cases of books, kitchen gear, assorted film equipment, and several irritable cats on a late January day with 19 inches of fresh snow on the ground...but I'm not sure I understand it myself.)

And so, with foraging off the schedule in my present circumstance, I've been able to apply my fungiphilic attentions to experimenting with mushroom cultivation. As part of a film project that I've been working on for the last year, I need to shoot time-lapse videos of different species of mushrooms as they grow and decay. In specific, I want to capture the development and deliquescence of some *Coprinus* species—the shaggy manes and inky caps that turn to black goo in their dramatic death throes.

I chose three different strains of *Coprinus* culture to work with: a bag of sawdust inoculated with a *C. comatus* from Fungi Perfecti; 10cc of liquid *C. comatus* culture from a company called Everything Mushrooms; and an agar cake inoculated with a strain of *C. cinereus* from Ward's Natural Science.

The sawdust culture arrived already grown-through with cottony white mycelium. This would be the easiest of the three strains to work with, since much of the work had already been done by Mr. Stamets and company. I put the cultured sawdust into a tray, added composted cow manure, and placed it into a clear plastic container to help maintain 90% humidity. So far, so good—the mycelium is spreading into the compost layer very well.

The other two *Coprinus* strains would require a bit more work. I sterilized quart jars of moistened rye grain in a pressure cooker to kill off any bacteria, molds, or competing fungi. Then, in my thoroughly sterilized home laboratory (also known as the bathroom) I inoculated half the jars with portions of the liquid culture, and the other half with cross-sections of the agar cake. Over the first couple weeks, two of my *C. comatus* jars showed contamination from the dreaded "green mildew"—a common foe of home cultivators. But the other 4 jars are going strong.

For now, I'll be content to play at mushroom farmer. But my inner hunter's dreams of wild Spring edibles remain in the Northeast. I hope to see you all in person when I'm back for a visit during Morel Breakfast week.



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### ↘ Upcoming Events ↙

**April 30**—*Morel Breakfast: Members Only!*  
**May 7**—*Club Morel Hunt: Members Only!*  
**July 18**—*Inaugural Foul Weather Friends meeting, 7 pm at the Downtown Community Center, 120 Warren St. between Greenwich and West Streets.*



## NYMS Newsletter

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Graphic design—Maria Reidelbach  
Copy editor—Paul Sadowski

A quarterly publication of the New York Mycological Society, distributed to its members.

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Submissions for the next issue of the NYMS newsletter must reach the editor by \_\_\_\_\_, 2011. Various formats are acceptable for manuscripts. Address questions to Jason Cortlund, editor. See above for addresses.

## NEWS, ANNOUNCEMENTS & LETTERS

### NYMS Business Meeting

Our annual business meeting was held at the home of Eugenia Bone on March 30.

Maria Reidelbach and Gary Lincoff are working on reprinting *The Guide to Poisonous Mushrooms in the New York Area*, a book that the NYMS originally published in the 1970s. Gary has agreed to update the content and we will republish it using a digital publisher at little up-front cost to the group. It will be distributed free as a membership perk, and available for purchase to the general public through Amazon.

Activity on the NYMS website discussion boards has been slow and we are going to retire them and move the discussion to Facebook. Maria and Charles Luce will set up an NYMS Facebook page that will be available to all.

A joint walk with the Mid-Hudson Mycological Association will be added to the walk list this year, in Peekskill.

Dennis Aita is looking for new options for our annual banquet—restaurants that are within our price range and have a private area for about 70 to 90 people. If you have suggestions, this is the time to reach out to Dennis and let him know.

We discussed the NYMS 50th anniversary next year. Gary, Paul Sadowski, Pam Kray and Will Shapiro are working on ideas to celebrate. It is also the 100th birthday of our founder, John Cage, and so we will find out how we can partner with other events going on around the city. If you are interested in being involved, please contact one of the committee members.

We held elections for officers. Because Maria is spending much time upstate, she requested replacement—Eugenia Bone was nominated and consented to run as co-president with her. Charles Luce has retired as Treasurer. Many thanks to Charles for one doing of the most time-consuming NYMS jobs for five years!

Our 2011 officers are:

Co-Presidents: Eugenia Bone and Maria Reidelbach

Vice-President: Dennis Aita

Treasurer: Marija Zeremski

Secretary: Paul Sadowski

### Morel Breakfast Rideshare

Dennis Aita has once again graciously agreed to organize carpooling resources to this year's Morel Breakfast on April 30 and the following club morel hunt on May 7.

If you have space in your vehicle or you need a ride to the event, please contact Dennis by email ([denaita@verizon.net](mailto:denaita@verizon.net)) or phone (212-962-6908).

### 50th Anniversary Ideas

- 1) Format of a 2 hour theater event in the Great Hall?
- 2) Pam says Cage mushrooming film is available from the Film Co-op for a nominal rental (\$30-50)
- 3) Readings from *Silence, Indeterminacy* and the *Mushroom Mesostics*, perhaps with professional actors
- 4) How about an interview with Laurette exploring the NYMS beginnings.
- 5) An interview with Gwen Fabricant as a set-up for Cage's Stoney Point film?
- 6) A version of *Waltzes for Five Boroughs* involving groups of mushroomers in parks throughout the city, recorded for playback as part of the evening.
- 7) A re-enactment of the Italian Quiz Show Cage Mushroom event.
- 8) We have material about our other two incarnations. Perhaps this could be folded into the evening's program.
- 9) Visual presentations of John's mushrooms work as well as art could form a visual display together with specimen tables.
- 10) Laura Kuhn of the John Cage Trust is very interested in seeing what we propose.

### Errata

The group photo of the Central Park Post-Christmas Mushroom Count that ran in the Winter 2010 newsletter was taken by club member Eric Darton.



## Review



# Chanterelle Dreams Come True

Mushroom-Hunting Author is Named a Finalist for

## Prestigious Culinary Award

White River Junction, Vermont – When the International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP) named the finalists for its annual Cookbook Award earlier this week, most of the authors were familiar and illustrious food-world names like Jane Ziegelman, Sara Moulton, and Mark Bittman. But one small-town author—a man who spends his time mushroom hunting in the forest near his coastal Maine home—is also celebrating.

Greg Marley, author of *Chanterelle Dreams, Amanita Nightmares: The Love, Lore, and Mystique of Mushrooms*, was named one of three finalists in IACP's culinary history category. IACP has long been considered the gold standard for culinary publishing.

"I'm thrilled that *Chanterelle Dreams, Amanita Nightmares* is joining the ranks of finalists for an IACP book award this year," said author Greg Marley, after receiving the news from his publisher, Chelsea Green, that his book had been selected.

"This book combines many of the things we love: sustainability, food you find or grow yourself, and an unusual talent," said Chelsea Green president and publisher Margo Baldwin.

Marley, who regularly leads guided walks and workshops, is a passionate advocate for fungi, intent on overcoming the distrust many Americans feel towards mushrooms by illuminating their profound historical and culinary role in cultures all over the world.

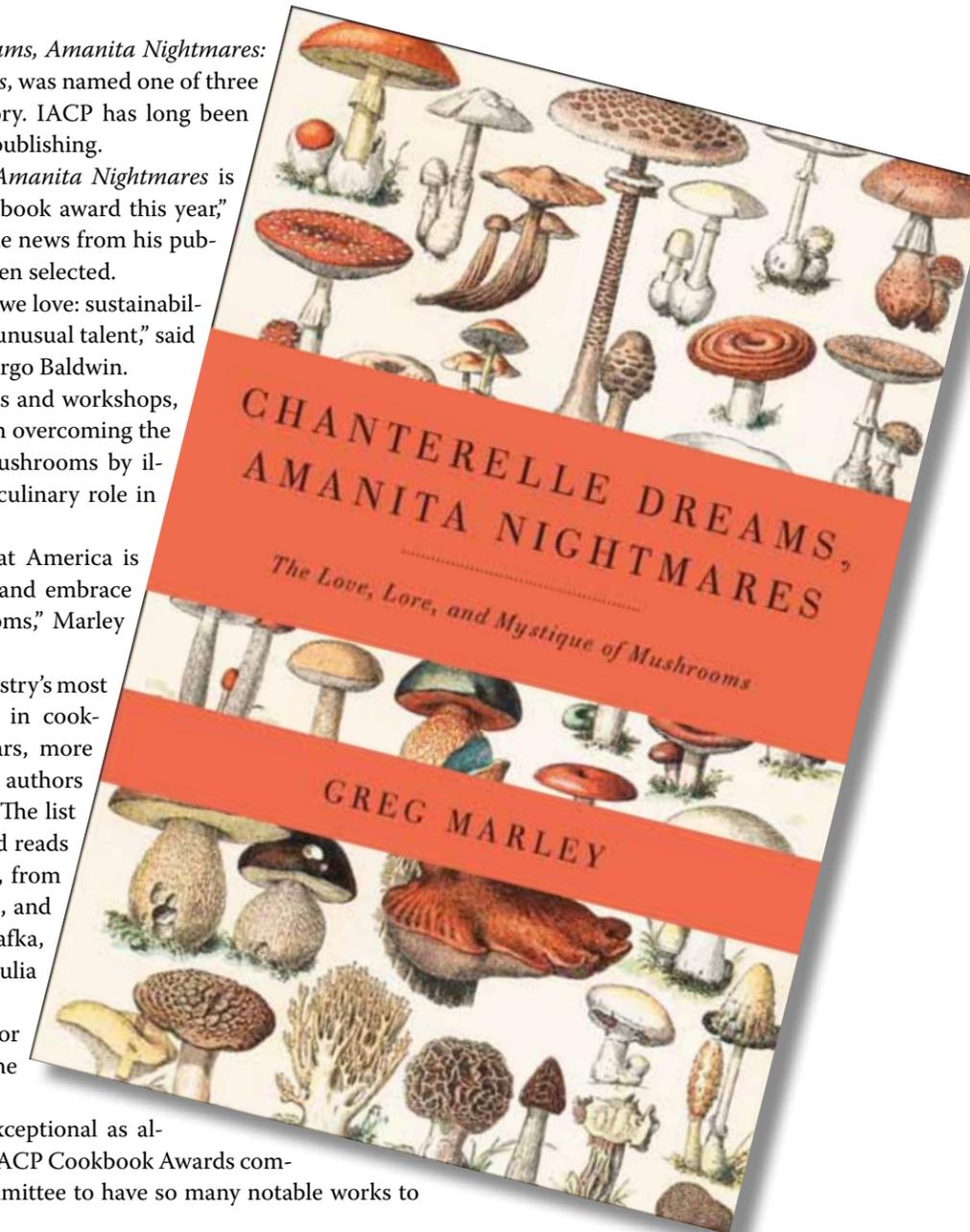
"To me, it sends a hopeful message that America is ready to overcome our mycophobic past and embrace the promise of great edible wild mushrooms," Marley said.

The IACP Cookbook Awards are the industry's most reputable acknowledgment of excellence in cookbook publishing. During the past 25 years, more than 350 books written by more than 300 authors have won the coveted Cookbook Awards. The list of authors whose books received the award reads like a "Who's Who" of the culinary world, from Flo Braker, Dorie Greenspan, Rick Bayless, and Jacques Pépin to Patricia Wells, Barbara Kafka, Thomas Keller, Deborah Madison, and Julia Child.

Five hundred entries were submitted for consideration, making this year one of the most competitive ever.

"The caliber of books submitted was exceptional as always," said Robin L. Kline, former chair of IACP Cookbook Awards committee. "It is always gratifying for our committee to have so many notable works to consider."

2011 winners will be revealed and recognized at the Gala Awards ceremony on Thursday, June 2 in Austin, Texas, as part of IACP's annual conference.



# Walks & Forays

## 48th Annual Chanterelle Weekend in Vermont

Dates: July 29 - July 31, 2011

Location: The house from last year will be available.

Contact: Claudine Michaud 718-622-6834 / 631-749-4398 or [michaudhenri@aol.com](mailto:michaudhenri@aol.com)

What does the end of July mean for NYMS members? Of course, Chanterelle Weekend. Already the dreams of chanterelles (*Cantharellus cibarius*) are awakening our senses and getting us ready for the hunt.

The Green Mountains are a vast expanse of land, meadow, forest, and mountains—too much for one person to explore. Also this year we will try something new: there are several locations suggested by local rangers for woods with red spruce and other hosts loved by chanterelles. So with the help of maps and compasses, we will go for a real hunt by groups of two, three, or four people, really looking for them. What will we find? Surprises—maybe another good spot for next year, maybe nothing. Surprise, surprise....

Of course, we will also go to the habitual spots where we are sure to find them waiting for us in all their magnificent glory.

Last year the cost of the weekend was more than affordable, under \$100.00, for 2 nights and 6 meals, but with the price of food this year, we don't know how much it will be. The cost has something to do with the numbers of people attending it, and everyone has to know that the accommodations are acceptable, but not a 5 stars place. A \$30.00 deposit for each person is required by June 15th. If you need to cancel, the deposit will be refunded if a replacement is found. You have to be a member to participate in this event. It is a hands-on weekend. To attend, complete and send in the registration form at the end of this issue.

## NEMF

The 2011 Northeast Mycological Foray Samuel Ristich Foray will be held at Paul Smith's College in Paul Smiths, NY from 4/11-14. Early application is encouraged.

Paul Smith's College is on beautiful Lower Saint Regis Lake, situated within the St. Regis Canoe area and the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks. It's also close to Lake Placid and Saranac Lake.

Programs will include ID workshops, papermaking, cultivation, medicinals, and dyeing. Walks Chair Stacey Kalechitz has assembled a variety of foray locations close to the campus to allow maximum gathering time, chosen from over six million acres in the Adirondack Park.

For a registration form and information: <http://www.nemf.org/files/2011/2011.html>.

For questions, contact Peter Molesky, Registrar Chair, at (315) 339-3515 or [pcmolesky@aol.com](mailto:pcmolesky@aol.com).

## NAMA

Dr. Richard Homola Memorial Foray  
Thursday, August 4 – Sunday, August 7  
Host: The Western PA Mushroom Club  
Join us for a long weekend of Fungi, Fun, and Friends! An excellent foray is planned for you.

- We are going to be using 4 new air conditioned buildings on campus.
- The area is a great place to hunt mushrooms and favored by Walt Sturgeon, John Plischke, Emily Johnson, and others.
- There will be 20 walks to choose from.
- There will be 25 presenters to help you learn mushrooms.
- More information at NAMA website

As the foray is set up, it is limited to 225 people. It is going sell out early, so don't hesitate, get your registration form signed and send it along with a check today. Please visit the NAMA website at [www.namyco.org](http://www.namyco.org) for more information.

## MushRoaming

### Eco-Tours in Tibet with Daniel Winkler

June 10-23 I will take people on the "Cordyceps Expedition" in Tibet. We will be based in Lhasa and explore Nagchu and Kongpo caterpillar fungus sites and will have all the other incredible experiences people from all over the world come for in Tibet.

July 31-August 13 the "Floral & Fungal Foray" will explore and enjoy Tibet's incredibly beautiful and extremely bio-diverse Kongpo region.

Please note we have early bird sign up specials for all the tours to help us make the organization a bit easier.

2010's two MushRoaming tours in Tibet were a great success on many levels and I have created extensive photo reports available at [www.mushroaming.com](http://www.mushroaming.com).

On my extensive *Cordyceps sinensis* pages and the *Cordyceps* blog at [www.ophiocordyceps.com](http://www.ophiocordyceps.com), with news on a new block-buster drug derived from *Cordyceps*, I added a new page dedicated to related entomophagous fungi. The updated version of my paper "Ophiocordyceps sinensis production and sustainability," with the first attempt to quantify global production presented at this year's *Cordyceps* conference in Xining, is available for download here as well.

Also, another Ecuador Tour is planned for January or February 2012. Larry Evans (known to many from the *Know your Mushrooms* movie) and I are teaming up for MushRoaming Ecuador. We will use a new Canadian run jungle lodge with an organic chocolate orchard down in the Amazon rain forest as base camp to venture out in the jungle, mostly by canoe on the river system. And we will not only focus on Ecuador's mushrooms, but also on wildlife, plants, and local culture.



## Sierra Spring

Morel & Porcini Mushroom Foray  
June 3-5, 2011

Join mushroom expert David Campbell and the Wild About Mushrooms Co. crew in the beautiful Sierra Nevada for an amazing Spring weekend of mushroom foraging adventure, education, campfires, and fabulous food prepared by professional chef Sven Revel. We'll be on the hunt for Morels and Spring King Boletes (Porcini), along with any other intriguing mushrooms the mountains may provide.

Base camp will be established at a scenic private group campground located off Highway 50, between Placerville and South Lake Tahoe (motel lodging available nearby, for those not wishing to "rough it"). We meet and greet at camp for orientation Saturday morning, before heading farther into the mountains to forage for our highly prized fungal treasures. Participants are welcome to arrive at camp Friday night and join us for a fine potluck dinner and roaring campfire.

The weekend fee includes accommodations at the group campground Friday and Saturday nights, the all day mushroom foray on Saturday, general mushroom identification and educational discussion of fungal specimens we collect, a fantastic gourmet wild mushroom dinner at camp Saturday night, and an equally wonderful wild mushroom breakfast Sunday morning. Enjoy a friendly group dynamic of camaraderie and adventure. Beginners are welcome.

Fee: \$175 per person, kids \$75. Include a note with your name, phone numbers, and e-mail address. If registering with partners or friends, please state their full names as well.

Send registration with check to: Wild About Mushrooms, PO Box# 1088, Forestville, CA 95436. You will receive a confirmation by e-mail, along with directions, itinerary, and a list of items to bring.

For more information, contact Charmoon Richardson at (707) 829-2063 or [wildaboutmushrooms@sonic.net](mailto:wildaboutmushrooms@sonic.net).



## Remember!

2011 membership renewals are \$20 (individual) and \$30 (family). Make checks payable to the NYMS (New York Mycological Society). If you wish to become a member of NAMA (the North American Mycological Association), make a separate check for \$32, payable to NAMA, and mail it with the NYMS dues to Marija Zeremski-Seferovic, NYMS, 215 Grand St. 3R Hoboken, NJ 07030. Use the membership coupon in this issue.

Stay responsibly in touch with us. If your telephone number, mailing or email address changes, please contact Paul Sadowski, Secretary with your new information. On your membership form, please consider going paperless when it comes to receiving these newsletters. Newsletters sent via email (PDF file format) are in color, have live web links, help us contain costs, and use fewer natural resources!

NYMS walks policy: We meet when public transportation arrives. Check the walks schedule for other transportation notes. Walks last 5-6 hours and are of moderate difficulty except where noted. Bring lunch, water, knife, and a basket for mushrooms. Leaders have discretion to cancel walks in case of rain or very dry conditions. Be sure to check your email or contact the walk leader before a walk to see if it has been canceled for some reason. Non-members' attendance is \$5 for an individual and \$10 for a family.

Warning: Many mushrooms are toxic. Neither the Society nor individual members are responsible for the identification or edibility of any fungus.





## Mushroom Cake with Cream Sauce

Adapted from *The Mushroom Feast* by Jane Grigson (1975, republished 2008, Grub Street Cookery)

*I spotted this strange but glorious recipe in Grigson's classic culinary monograph and imagined a version featuring a basket-load of fresh Morchella esculenta rather than common market buttons. If I were to make that extravagant substitution, I'd probably want to adjust the sauce—omitting the tomato paste and including another shot of brandy. Ed.*

### CAKE:

- 2 lbs mushrooms (*morels, if you dare*)
- 8 Tb butter
- Juice of 1 lemon
- ½ lb cooked ham
- 4 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 large clove garlic, finely chopped
- 2 Tb chopped parsley
- 2 Tb fine breadcrumbs
- ¼ c. heavy cream
- 6 Tb brandy
- 4 large eggs
- Salt, pepper, nutmeg to taste

### SAUCE:

- 1 generous Tb butter
- 2 Tb flour
- 2 Tb tomato paste
- 2/3 c. light cream
- Salt, pepper, nutmeg to taste

Preheat oven to 375°. To make the cake, put the whole, cleaned mushrooms, 4 Tb butter and lemon juice in a large pan over medium heat. Cover and cook for 10 minutes, then strain off the juice and set aside for the sauce. Reserve 12 of the best mushrooms for decoration and chop the rest with the ham (a food processor can be used for this, but don't overdo the chopping—leave the mixture somewhat coarse).

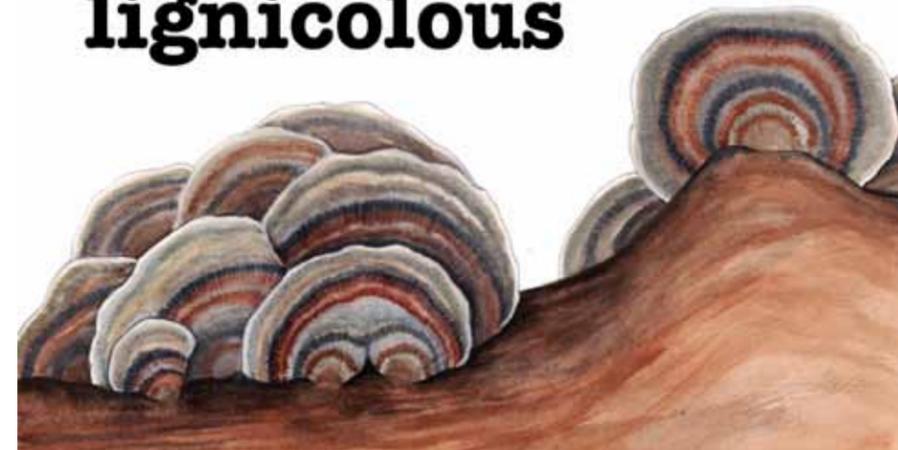
Melt 2 Tb of the remaining butter in a small pan and cook the shallots gently for 5 minutes. Mix with the ham and mushrooms, long with the garlic, parsley, breadcrumbs, cream, and brandy. Stir in 2 whole eggs and 2 egg yolks (reserve the whites) and season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Beat the remaining egg whites until very stiff, then fold into the mixture as if you were making a soufflé.

Butter a 2-quart ramekin or other straight-sided baking dish with the remaining 2Tb butter. Pour in the mushroom mixture. Put the baking dish into a pan of boiling water and bake at 375° for 30 minutes, then raise the temperature to 400° and bake for an additional 15 minutes.

While the mushroom cake is in the oven, melt 1Tb butter in a large skillet or sauce pan. Stir in the flour and cook for 2 minutes without allowing the roux to color. Stir in the reserved mushroom liquor and the tomato paste (if desired, or an extra shot of brandy). Add the cream and simmer for 10 minutes. Season to taste and adjust to desired consistency by adding a bit more cream or milk if desired.

Unmold the cake onto a warmed serving dish, decorate with the reserved mushrooms, and serve with the sauce. 🍄

## lignicolous



### A Term Defined: Lignicolous

Etymology: “Ligni-” from the Latin *lignum*, meaning ‘wood’ + the suffix “-colous” which indicates ‘inhabiting’.

The adjective “lignicolous” describes an organism that grows on trees or dead wood.

*Trametes versicolor*—the polypore that’s commonly known as “turkey tail”—is a ubiquitous lignicolous fungus in our region and very common throughout the world.

*Lignicolous artwork provided by NYMS club member and natural science illustrator Anne Yen ([www.anneyenillustration.com](http://www.anneyenillustration.com)).*

## Himalayan Fungus

### Boosts Mitsubishi Tanabe Revenue

From *Businessweek*, February 03, 2011

Tetsuro Fujita’s eureka moment about a Himalayan fungus in 1985 may mean part of a \$5 billion payout for Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma Corp. a quarter-century later.

While the scientist drove over a bridge between Japan’s Shikoku and Honshu islands on his way to take up a research post for traditional herbal remedies, Fujita realized the fungus, used in a Chinese medicinal soup, must be suppressing the immune system of the insects on which it grew.

His research at Kyoto University not only helped yield Gilenya, a new treatment for multiple sclerosis—the debilitating condition afflicting more than 2 million people worldwide—it also promises to bring Mitsubishi Tanabe its biggest money earner. Annual sales of the pill, the first for the autoimmune disease, may exceed \$5 billion, UBS AG said.

“Little did I think that it would be a treatment for multiple sclerosis,” Fujita, 80, said in an interview Kyoto. “I was more interested in immune suppression for organ transplants. I knew nothing about the disease back then.”

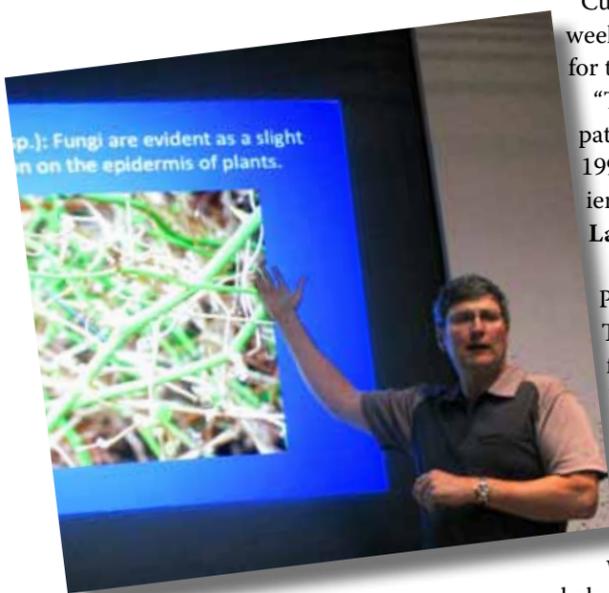
Novartis AG, based in Basel, Switzerland, began selling Gilenya in the U.S. in October. Projected sales of the medicine would rank it among the 10 best-selling drugs worldwide, based on data from IMS Health Inc., a Norwalk, Connecticut-based research company.

Mitsubishi Tanabe will probably book royalties equivalent to 10 percent of sales, based on the median of four analyst estimates in a Bloomberg News survey.

### Better Than Expected

Kazuko Hamada, a spokeswoman for Mitsubishi Tanabe, declined to comment on the royalty payments that the Osaka, Japan-based drugmaker will receive. Novartis spokesman Eric Althoff also declined to comment on the royalties.

Gilenya’s fourth-quarter sales of \$13 million were above expectations, Dhavalkumar Patel, who heads Novartis’s autoimmune research, said last week.



Eugenia Bone (top) introduces Dr. James White (bottom), who lectured the NYMS in March on endophytes—fungi growing inside plants—and why the price of tequila will be going up.

“Novartis says 2,000 people are already using the drug in three months,” Kenji Masuzoe, an analyst at Deutsche Bank AG in Tokyo, said by telephone on Jan. 28. “That’s great progress as I’ve been expecting 10,000 people by the end of this year, which will mean sales of about \$350 million.”

Multiple sclerosis causes the immune system to attack the myelin sheath, which surrounds and protects nerve cells, leading to symptoms including numbness, difficulty in coordination and memory loss, according to Medline Plus, a website of the U.S. National Institutes of Health. In its severest form, it can shorten life and, in rare cases, lead to death, according to the U.S. National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s website.

Gilenya is approved for the relapsing-remitting form of multiple sclerosis, the most common type, and competes with injected drugs on the market including Biogen Idec Inc.’s Avonex and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.’s Copaxone.

#### Superior Drug

The Novartis drug cut relapses by more than half compared with Avonex, an injected therapy from U.S. drugmaker Biogen Idec Inc., according to a patient study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* last year.

Gilenya gained the support of a European medical committee in January, and a European Commission decision on approval may come in about three months. It’s also being reviewed by regulators in Japan.

In the U.S., the drug is priced at \$4,000 for a monthly prescription. That’s 66 percent more than the \$2,414.99 for a pre-filled syringe of 30 micrograms per milliliter of Avonex, a month’s supply, according to PharmacyChecker.com. Analysts including UBS’s Wenner expect Gilenya to be cheaper in Europe.

Current medicines require patients to inject themselves every other day or once a week, Kyoko Nakata, the Tokyo-based chairman of Japan’s MS Cabin, a support group for the condition, said in an e-mail.

“They are shots, so during the course of treatment, they are a constant reminder to patients of their condition,” said Nakata, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1993 and has been taking Bayer AG’s Betaferon since 2000. “Gilenya would make it easier to treat the disease as it saves time and brings patients closer to having a normal life.”

#### Larva Invader

With the help of another researcher, Fujita partnered with Yoshitomi Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. and Taito Co., now respectively part of Mitsubishi Tanabe and Mitsui Sugar Co. The scientists began studying in 1986 the *Cordyceps* fungus known in Chinese and Japanese as “winter insect, summer plant,” so called because it invades insect larva during winter and grows out of the host by summer.

Fujita said he was inspired by the discovery of cyclosporine, also derived from a fungus, which spurred research into how the immune system may be subdued in transplant patients. Fujita, now a professor emeritus at Kyoto University, said he was unaware the immune-modulating properties of *Cordyceps* could eventually help multiple sclerosis patients.

“I knew from reading the Chinese medicinal encyclopedia that the fungus feeds off the larva, lives in a symbiotic relationship for a year, and comes out of the ground in summer by growing out of the carcass,” he said. “That made me think the fungus must be suppressing the larva’s immune response.”

#### Centuries-Old Remedy

Used as an herbal remedy for centuries, the fungus contains an insoluble, toxic compound called myriocin, said Kenji Chiba, who worked on the project at Yoshitomi. It took scientists at least three more years before they could modify the compound into a usable form, creating fingolimod, or Gilenya.

Novartis licensed the overseas rights to fingolimod from Mitsubishi Tanabe in 1997. “Although it took a quarter of a century, I’m happy it’s become a drug while I’m still alive,” Fujita said. “It makes me happy that something I did is making others happy.”

With assistance from Eva von Schaper in Munich. Editors: Lena Lee, Jason Gale. 🍄

## Member Profile: *Ava Chin*

### What brings you to mushroom hunting?

As a kid, I used to sift through giant bins of shiitakes with my grandfather in Chinese supermarkets in Flushing, Queens. He taught me how to choose the very best ones through smell and color. My grandfather passed away several years ago, but foraging for mushrooms in the wild feels like a natural extension of that time.

### Where, when, and/or with whom did you first hunt mushrooms?

I discovered reishi, honey mushrooms, and maitake on a foraging tour with Steve Brill in Central Park. It took several outings to find maitake on my own, and it was one of the most frustrating experiences I’d ever had—my friends were reporting finding them nearly every weekend that fall and I was continually coming up empty-handed.

One night after teaching, I stumbled upon a giant bloom of maitake growing on a tree stump on campus on the way to my car. It was pitch-black outside and I think I stepped on it. I got on my knees and bowed down—both in reverence as well as to collect and bring the armload of *Grifola frondosa* home.

### How would you describe your relationship with fungi?

Mycorrhizal and symbiotic. Fungi have infected my roots.

### What occupies you when you aren’t mushroom hunting?

As the Urban Forager columnist for the NY Times, my thoughts are often centered on what wild edibles are in season and how to best prepare them. During morel season I have ramps and nettles on the brain. In summer, it’s berries and purslane. Fall is a cornucopia of everything, and I often feel like Veruca Salt in *Willy Wonka*: I can’t stop eating and chewing and thinking about food.

### Has your interest in fungi had any influence on the rest of your life?

When I was growing up, my grandparents made stir-fries with cloud ear fungus. “Did this grow on land or in the ocean?” I asked, but no one knew the answer. I was just told to “eat.” I soon forgot about it and this question remained unanswered for years.

Decades later, while foraging on Staten Island, I found my first cloud ear on the side of a tree. It was cool, wet, and marvelously translucent. I spotted it again that summer on a fallen log in Park Slope, Brooklyn. I couldn’t believe that the ingredient in my grandparents’ dishes was growing all around us, and I was elated to finally learn, first-hand: *Auricularia polytricha* grows on land.

This changed my relationship with food, and the way that I look at, and interact with, the city in which I was born. I suppose I could have just Googled it, but somehow finding the cloud ear myself after such a long extended period of unknowing made it so much better. It was a kind of slow-learning.

I’m writing these experiences in my forthcoming memoir for Simon & Schuster, so yes, fungi and especially cloud ear have colored my experiences.

### How do you decide whether or not to eat a mushroom?

I am slowly building up my mycological palate: I only eat wild mushrooms that I have found and identified via spore print and cross-referenced with older mycologists and their books.

With new mushrooms—and by that I mean ones that have passed all the checkpoints—I still only nibble a small cooked sample and sometimes wait a day before putting them in a full-blown meal. I’ve had allergic reactions to food that others have had no problems with, ie, the innocuous honey. My rule of thumb: I never eat new mushrooms when I’m hungry.

### Do you buy mushrooms? What kinds, and what sources?

I buy dried shiitakes from Chinese supermarkets in Chinatown, Flushing, and Sunset



Park. They are called dong gu.

**How long have you been a member of the NYMS?**

I've been a member since 2009.

**Are you secretive about the places where you've found mushrooms growing?**

Who me? Secretive? Let's talk about something else.

**What are you willing to endure, physically, to hunt mushrooms?**

I have jumped over cliffs to collect enoki, climbed trees for chickens, and endured fields of Enchanter's Nightshade to harvest oysters. Those mushrooms were worth every tiny, irksome burr.

**Do you know many mushroom enthusiasts (mycophiles) or are you relatively alone in this pursuit (outside of your NYMS associations)?**

For our second date, I invited my fiancé to a NYMS walk (South Mountain, 2009). When he gave me an enthusiastic nod, and said, "My mother used to find giant puff-balls on the side of the road in England," I thought, this could really turn into something. 🍄

## "Poisonous and Eatable Mushrooms"

During the course of my research on 18th-19th-century architectural-paint recipes (hardly of interest to mycologists, I know), I came across a short note on mushrooms in *The Manufacturer and Builder*. A question is posed regarding poisonous mushrooms and their identification. The answer that is given is clear, concise, and most assuredly eliminates all uncertainties regarding the subject, except for the identification of the mushroom described. That is left up to the reader.

Judy Jacob

*Poisonous Mushrooms.—The fall season is the time to search for mushrooms. I know they can be utilized to make a deliciously flavored dish, therefore I wish to ask how the eatable kind may be distinguished from the various poisonous varieties.—D.M., Belle Plain, N.J.*

*Poisonous Mushrooms.—Fortunately the characteristic differences are so marked that it is quite easy to give a satisfactory answer to this question. For the subject under consideration we may divide the mushroom into three classes—poisonous, non-poisonous but not good for eating, and the eatable ones. Of the latter there are many kinds; one of them, the most commonly used, and largely imported as a preserve, when quite young has the form of a little ball on a short and very thick stem (never pick any with thin stems;) this ball soon develops into an umbrella shape, white above with thin flat ribs of a light salmon color underneath; when growing older the salmon color underneath turns into a brown, while the top becomes flat and light brown; finally the top turns up, exposing the brown flat ribs underneath. When this stage has been reached, the mushroom is no longer fit for eating, not that it has become poisonous, but because it has become tough, and has lost the peculiar agreeable flavor possessed at the earlier stage of growth when the top is white, umbrella-shaped, and the under side of a delicate salmon color. "Notes and Queries," *The Manufacturer and Builder*, Volume 8, Issue 12, December 1876, pp. 287-288. 🍄*

## Composting with Bokashi

### Let the Fungi do the Work

by Margaret Faye

From *Mycelium*, Mycological Society of Toronto, April—June 2011

At an MST meeting last fall, fellow member Vera Del Vecchio spoke to me about a method of composting she is using in her downtown Toronto condo. The technique known as Bokashi has been popular in Japan since the 1980s.

The technique relies on a mixture of organisms termed EM for "effective microorganisms". There are a number of different mixtures but there are two constants.

Lactobacillus and Saccharomyces are present in all EM mixtures. Lactobacillus is

the bacterium that converts milk to yogurt. Its role in the process is to create an acidic pH that other bacteria cannot tolerate. That sets the stage for the yeast Saccharomyces that prefers an acid pH. Saccharomyces is our old fungal friend used in bread, beer and wine production.

Its role here is to ferment organic waste. The organic wastes are collected each day and added to a container with a tight fitting lid. A small amount of the EM mixture is sprinkled over top. Each layer is compacted and covered tightly to keep oxygen levels low. This part of the process is fermentation and does not require oxygen. When the container is full, it is stored for two weeks to complete the fermentation. At this point, the Bokashi is mixed with soil where the decomposition takes place. All organic matter should be fully converted to soil in 6 to 8 weeks.

What makes composting with Bokashi different? The immediate benefit is that there is no foul odor. The pickling process inhibits putrefying organisms. You can even compost meat and dairy products. When it is moved outside, Bokashi does not attract raccoons and vermin, a problem with traditional composting.

A final benefit is the quality of the compost produced. Bokashi compost is being used by both professional and amateur gardeners. There are claims of plants and vegetables growing to enormous sizes.

I thought I would give it a try. I started composting with Bokashi two weeks before Christmas. With the ground frozen, I have been mixing the Bokashi with soil in a large garbage pail and will have to wait for the warm weather to complete the decomposition. I plan to use the soil for my herb garden. I will report on my results in the fall.

Vera, in her condo, has mixed the Bokashi with soil in a covered plastic container and has completed the composting right in her kitchen. She has added the soil she created to her regular potting soil and is seeing remarkably increased growth in her house plants.

If you are interested in composting with Bokashi, you may contact Vera at her email: [lightupyourlife@rogers.com](mailto:lightupyourlife@rogers.com). 🍄

Back cover: [Peter G. Werner](#), *asci and ascospores, Morchella elata (morel), 40x objective, phase contrast, Zeiss Axio Imager.A1 microscope, Zeiss AxioCam MRc CCD image, Merritt College, Oakland, CA, found on [Wikimedia](#).*



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