

# nyms



Spring 2012 New York Mycological Society Newsletter

## Of Mushrooms and Movies

≡ *Inside This Issue* ≡

As some of you know, one of my main preoccupations for the last few years has been completing a feature-length narrative (AKA fictional) film about a husband and wife who hunt for mushrooms and sell them to restaurants around the city. It's called *Now, Forager* (the title references the original transcendental poem by Walt Whitman, rather than the 1942 film *Now, Voyager* starring Bette Davis).

My co-director (and fellow NYMS member) Julia Halperin and I completed post-production this past January. We're very proud to announce that our North American premiere will be at New Directors/New Films here in New York.

We couldn't have made this film without the support and guidance of many friends in the NYMS. Most of you have taught us something at one time or another on a walk or at a Foul Weather Friends session. A couple of you read the script and gave me notes. Many others helped us spread the word about fundraisers and even made donations. For all the kindness and kinship, we will be forever in your debt.

*Now, Forager* is intended as an evolution of the "food movie"—favoring realism over romanticism, for people with a serious interest in all things culinary. The cooking, seasons, and mushrooms shown are all very real, as are the flaws and warts of our characters.

Mushrooms and movies are nothing new to the NYMS. Former newsletter editor Pam Kray recently released her excellent documentary *Mushroom Seekers* on DVD (see my review on page 10). Gary Lincoff was of course a magnetic major presence in Ron Mann's feature doc *Know Your Mushrooms* (with cameos by many other NYMSers). And if you haven't seen Jud Yalkut's *John Cage Mushroom Hunting in Stony Point* (1972), then you're missing out on a beautiful piece of 16mm experimental filmmaking as well as a foundational document of our club's history.

Archivist and author David Rose has written beautifully about the history of myco-cinema in his "Notes From Underground" published in *Fungi* magazine. While poisonous mushrooms serve as a common plot device in many fiction films, fungi of all varieties are the structuring elements and most glamorous stars of *Now, Forager*. We hope that our production has done them cinematic justice. If you missed the screenings at MoMA and Lincoln Center, it hopefully won't be your last chance to see *Now, Forager* on a big screen. We have a few things in the works. Stay Tuned! To read more about the film, visit [www.nowforager.com](http://www.nowforager.com).

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*Cage 100th/NYMS 50th Anniversary Update*—p. 3  
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*Mushrooming in Tibet (part two)*—p. 5

↗ *Upcoming Events* ↖

*Saturday, April 28:*  
*Morel Breakfast and Hunt*

*Saturday, May 5:*  
*Morel Hunt*

*Friday, July 27-Sunday, July 29:*  
*Chanterelle Weekend*

*Saturday, September 8:*  
*Cage 100/NYMS 50 Anniversary*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Cortlund".

Jason Cortlund  
Editor, NYMS Newsletter



## NYMS Newsletter

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Submissions for the next issue of the NYMS newsletter must reach the editor by June 15, 2011. Various formats are acceptable for manuscripts. Address questions to Jason Cortlund, editor. See above for addresses.

## NEWS, ANNOUNCEMENTS & LETTERS

We'd like to extend our condolences to Howard Goldstein and Mimi Calhoun; their daughter Jessica Goldstein recently passed on.

### Dogs on Mushroom Walks

At our annual business meeting this past February those in attendance voted to allow dogs on our mushroom walks if it is permitted where the walk is being held. As of this time, all sites allow dogs, with the condition that they be on leashes - at least during daytime hours. We voted to insist that members who bring their dogs have them on leashes at all times. We have members who do not like dogs, some who are afraid of them, and dogs in the past have interfered with our mushroom ids at lunchtime and have turned over some of our baskets. Also note this: I was in Van Cortlandt Park this spring and came across a lady with 2 cute little dogs that weren't on leashes. She told me that earlier in the year she had been ticketed by a park ranger and expects to have to pay a possible \$150 summons.

Dennis Aita

### NYMS Annual Business Meeting

The meeting was held on 2/19/12 at the Penn South Community Center, 243 Eighth Avenue. The gathering enjoyed pot-luck dishes.

Co-President Maria Reidelbach called the meeting to order at 1:45 PM. 20+ members attended.

Maria thanked Eric Darton for arranging the use of the community room for our pot-luck meeting.

Dennis Aita reported on the recent Banquet. Eighty people came and most everyone was happy with the event, food and room. There was some discussion of whether to return there, the Royal Cantonese, or go back to Ichyumi. Dennis will be on the lookout for other venues for next year's Banquet.

Paul Sadowski reported that the hand lens offer went well with 60 lenses sold with a modest return to the Treasury.

Marija Zeremski presented her report showing a stable condition in reference to

the last few years. Sadowski discussed the budget for the coming year. Our income from dues, about \$5,000, is our discretionary income. We anticipate the following for the coming year: \$1600.00 for press & publicity, \$1400.00 for the room rental at the DCC for the Monday night ID Meetings, leaving approx. \$2000.00 for lectures & misc.

Pam Kray, Maria and Paul then discussed the CAGE/NYMS project with Pam presenting a laptop demo for the group. In response to the question "Would you be willing to pay \$100.00 for a gala ticket?" Ten people raised their hands. A motion to proceed with the project was approved with no objections. The event is scheduled for Saturday, September 8, 2012 and will take place at the Cooper Union.

Maria opened discussion on the subject of dogs on walks. Our policy has been to prohibit dogs on walks, due to management problems for the walk leaders and some members' aversion to dogs. Comments from the floor pointed out that while dogs are legal in most parks, mushroom picking technically is not, placing the Society in an ironic position. A motion put forward by Katie Kehrig was adopted: Dogs on leashes will be allowed on our walks except where prohibited by park policy.

Dennis reported that the Morel Breakfast would be hosted by Howard Goldstein on April 28th. We will present Howard with a gift of dried morels. We are asking members to contribute to this package.

Maria and Gary are working on republishing the *Guide to Poisonous Mushrooms*.

Eugenia Bone then suggested setting our calendar far enough of advance to allow for proper planning. Her suggested dates are: Banquet on Jan 26th, 2013, Annual Business Meeting February 10, Lecture #1 end of February, Lecture #2 end of March, Lecture #3 mid-April.

Maria reported on correspondence with Claudine Michaud regarding the Chanterelle Weekend. Date is set for the

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## 100/50th/CAGE/NYMS

In the Great Hall of Cooper Union September 7 and 8

By Paul Sadowski, program chair

In our last newsletter we told you about plans for the upcoming anniversaries of John Cage and the NYMS.

At our business February 19 meeting the Society decided to go ahead with the plans for the 100/50th/CAGE/NYMS Anniversary.

The event will be held on the weekend of September 7-8, 2012 with the theatrical event to be held in the Great Hall of Cooper Union on the 8th and an exhibition in an adjacent gallery space Friday and Saturday.

The theatrical event will be a sort of Cagean *MusiCircus* with sound, music, readings, photographic and film projections filling the hall in a grand simultaneity.

The exhibition will feature NYMS and Cage ephemera and objects of art by Cage, Lois Long, Gwen Fabricant, Win Knowlton and others. We will also have a mushroom display.

So, reserve the dates; we are planning a gala celebration that will benefit the NYMS and John Cage Trust.

Now we are looking for input from the membership in two areas:

### PICTURES

The visual component of the theatrical event will require as many as 400 mushroom photographs! We have, for example, noticed many beautiful photos posted to our Facebook page. We would like them in a hi-def format in the show.

Please send them to Pam Kray at <[pamkray@gmail.com](mailto:pamkray@gmail.com)> with the subject "NYMS PHOTO SUBMISSION and YOUR NAME." While we need high definition photos, please take care to keep each email submission manageable, no more than 5MB. Or send them on a CD to Pam at 24 Bedford Avenue, Tilson, NY 12486. Or just bring them along to a walk and hand them to Paul or Pam.

Photos of NYMS gatherings in years past would also be useful in the show. Be sure to include the name of the photographer so that you receive credit in the program.

### SOUND

We also invite your participation in another aspect of the event. We will be realizing a John Cage score entitled *49 Waltzes for the Five Boroughs*. The score specifies intersections in each of the five boroughs where microphones record the activity in each locale.

We have decided to follow mushrooms to locations in New York City. We need a list of 147 locations where mushrooms have been observed. For example, if you have found mushrooms in a tree box on your street, this would be a location available for a recording. We'll be mapping points in New York City Parks for the list. But if you have someplace specific let me know at <[pabloski1@verizon.net](mailto:pabloski1@verizon.net)>.

We intend to complete production of the audio and visual tracks by the end of June, so please let us have your submissions as soon as possible. Thank you.



NYMS Annual Meeting, cont. from p. 2

Last weekend of July and will be held in the same place as last year. The house can accommodate 15 people.

Paul reported that the Catskill Weekend will return to the Crystal Spring House for the Columbus Day weekend of October 5-8, making it a four day weekend. The house accommodates 18 people.

Eugenia reported on the Mycophagist's Table program (description below). It was suggested that photos and the menu of Eugenia's dinner be posted on the Club web pages.

Paul reported on the Microscopy Workshop. The workshop is nearly full with 3-4 spaces remaining.

## Remember!

2012 membership renewals received after April 21st are at the new member rate of \$20 (individual) and \$30 (family). Use the membership coupon in back of this issue. Make checks payable to the 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 to the NYMS Treasurer.

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 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 your 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.

Discussion then turned to the website. Maria and Paul reported on their efforts to use Wordpress editing software to develop and maintain the site. This would allow for a group of members to act as administrators which will, we believe, lead to the long term stability of the site.

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Dennis suggested forming a Restaurant Meet-up Group. The system of notices for such events could be managed through our Constant Contact account.

Dennis then suggested that we consider holding a book sale as a fundraiser. Several donations should be possible, including outright donation of books as well as a 50%-50% split of proceeds between the donor and the Society. A date in Spring of 2013 is being considered.

An officer slate of: Eugenia Bone, President; Dennis Aita, Vice-president; Marija Zeremski-Seferovic, Treasurer; Paul Sadowski, Secretary was nominated and elected by acclamation.

Eugenia in her first Presidential gesture called the meeting to a close at 3:30PM.

## The Mycophagists Table

Eugenia Bone introduced a new program called The NYMS Mycophagists Table. The Table is open to all members of the society. The goal is to meet a minimum of four times a year for a potluck dinner at the homes of members. Anyone can host a dinner, and the size of the party is at the discretion of the host.

Some members might have space for a group of 20, others for a group of 6. The cost of the party is also at the discretion of the host, and may include the costs of a clean-up person and wine. The potluck theme is at the discretion of the host as well. For example, a member might host a cultivated versus wild mushroom tasting, or a mushroom and wine-pairing dinner, and so on. A host may decide to organize a Mycophagist's Table event at a restaurant, or hire a cook to prepare the meal. The charm of the events will lie in the individual choices the host makes. Other activities may be included, like readings, film or musical performances (mushrooms and a movie?). This is not a for-profit proposition, but an opportunity to enjoy good food and company.

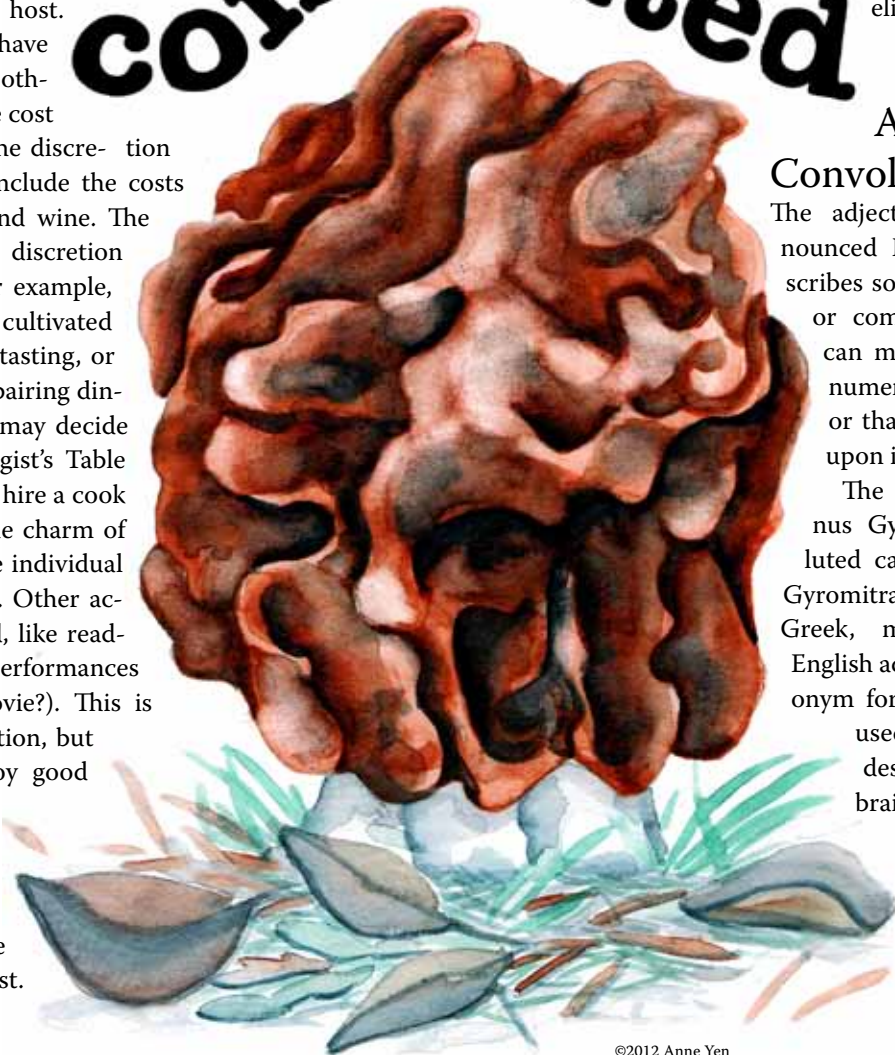
We will post the host's invitation on the NYMS website and reminders will be sent by email blast.

Members can RSVP by return email to the host or an electronic sign-up list, on a first come, first serve basis. However, members who have hosted dinners during the year will jump to the top of the list.

Eugenia Bone is the chair of the NYMS Mycophagists Table. You can direct your questions or suggestions to her via email: [egbone@aol.com](mailto:egbone@aol.com).

The first dinner, a buffet, was held at the home of Eugenia Bone. The theme was mushroom finger food and 18 guests attended. The dishes were delicious and creative, including shitake rolls, porcini cream soup, truffled chicken liver mouse with black trumpets, chanterelle marmalade with cheeses, chucker (a type of partridge) burritos with chanterelles, crimini, porcini and shitake pate, spinach and oyster mushroom soufflé, Grifola and lamb meatballs with marinara sauce,

# convoluted



©2012 Anne Yen

Honey and wine cap mushrooms with goat cheese, onigiri with morels, black trumpet butter with biscuits and bread, and apple tarts.

## Non-English Research on Desert Truffles

By Elinoar Shavit

I was asked by a European publisher of academic textbooks, who is publishing a book on desert truffles, to contribute the chapter on the traditional uses and folklore surrounding desert truffles.

I would like to include in it information on traditional uses of desert species of truffles, particularly species of *Terfezia* and *Tirmania*, for food, medicine, dye, or in rituals from as many countries as possible, particularly Asia.

I will be grateful to our members who can scan the internet in foreign languages that I wish I could read, like Japanese, Mandarin, Korean, etc., for such information. Time frame—I have until the middle of June to collect the information.

Please respond to my email: [elinoar@elinoarshavit.com](mailto:elinoar@elinoarshavit.com)

### A Term Defined:

#### Convoluted

The adjective "convoluted" (pronounced KON-vuh-LOO-tid) describes something that is intricate or complicated. In biology, it can mean something that has numerous overlapping folds or that is rolled longitudinally upon itself.

The false morels of the genus *Gyromitra* feature convoluted caps. The "gyro-" part of *Gyromitra* comes from Modern Greek, meaning "turned". The English adjective "gyrose" is a synonym for convoluted, commonly used in medical contexts to describe the surface of the brain.

*Convoluted artwork created by NYMS member and natural science illustrator Anne Yen ([www.anneyen.com](http://www.anneyen.com)).*

## \* Field Notes \*

## Mushroaming in Tibet with Daniel Winkler

By Eugenia Bone

(Part 2 of 2; part 1 appeared in the Fall 2011 issue of the NYMS Newsletter —ed.)

The plan was a couple of days in Lhasa to acclimate, and I am glad we did, because within 24 hours I started to feel better, and was able to take in the sights. The Jokhang temple is an active place, full of prayer flags and chanting monks and murmuring pilgrims, the floor sticky with yak butter and the air thick with incense. We were swept along by a dense mass of praying humanity: it was like floating in a river of whispers and red robes. We also visited the Potala, a structure that was at the time of its building the largest in the world, an imposing, beautiful edifice that has been co-opted by the Chinese and, probably because of the fee, little visited by Tibetans. We followed large groups of tourists up the steps, the holiness of the place imposing despite the cameras and assault rifles (Lhasa sports armed soldiers everywhere—on the street and at the entrance of every piazza), although it felt like a relic, frozen in time, and utterly medieval. We visited nunneries, the summer palaces of various lamas, souvenir shops—we walked all over, and ate decently enough, although the whole sanitary thing is just not happening in Tibet. If you are pee shy, well, maybe a trip to Tibet is just what you need, because after a couple of days in civilization a little quiet tree looks pretty damn good.

We eventually acclimated, however, and then it was time to go up into the mountains, to the collecting grounds between 15,000 and 16,000 feet. We headed east to Banji. It was a terribly long drive, made all the more problematic because Daniel kept telling the driver to stop so he could check his spots for orchids. In the middle of the road. With all kinds of fast moving rickety vehicles around us.

We drove over bleakly beautiful terrain, past beautiful chocolate colored nomadic tents made from yak wool, green pastures defined by yak dung walls, stopping at a very high, chilly valley to search for mushrooms and have a picnic—one of many peanut butter lunches we would enjoy on the road. Indeed, our jar of Daniel's homemade raspberry preserves became increasingly fermented as the trip progressed. I was amazed at the number and size of the rivers—rivers I'd never heard of—that we drove along. Indeed, Tibet is the water farm of Asia. The eastern part of Tibet is verdant, though sparsely populated. On the slopes of the mountain was an incredible grove of 2,500-year-old cedars that was as holy a place as I've ever been to, and once we climbed into the very high country, Daniel hooked us up with the nomadic pickers.

We lay around in a yak pasture, surrounded by grey-blue rocky outcroppings, looking for the fungus. It is extremely hard to spot; really you are just looking for a little brown stick or blade of grass. But the Tibetans could find them, and Daniel found a few too. There is a lot of digging and cleaning, but it's necessary because the value of the mushroom is really in the caterpillar, not the mushroom that erupts from its head.

The caterpillar fungus (known by the Tibetans as yartsa gunbu, or summer-grass, winter-worm) infects the larvae of the ghost moth. When it does remains a bit of a mystery. No one has proven the pathway of infection of *Cordyceps sinensis*, whether the fungus is in the insect all along or if it is symbiotic until it's parasitic, or what. The infected caterpillar hibernates during the winter and in early summer the mushroom grows from the caterpillar's head and pushes up through the soil to sporulate. Daniel said he thought the fungus compels the caterpillar to crawl close to the soil surface—a more favorable position for fruiting and a manipulation evident in other *Cordyceps*/insect life cycles, as uninfected caterpillars hibernate in deeper soil than infected ones. The fungus absorbs all of the worm's nutrients, replacing the insides of the caterpillar with mycelium. The club-shaped fruiting body, sticking out of the insect's head, is about three to six inches long (although only 1 to 2 inches is above the soil), twice the





length of the caterpillar itself.

The most valuable specimens are those with large caterpillars and young, pre-sporulated mushrooms, as the healing power of the fungus is believed to be in the mycelium-filled caterpillar.

Daniel managed to wrangle an invitation to drink tea in one of the nomad's tents, and we crawled into the cramped space, yak meat hanging from a rafter above, dripping fat as the tent heated up from a small stove and big Americans. We drank salted butter tea and tasted a barley mash flavored with yak butter—rather awful and totally filling—and shared our peanut butter and crackers and chocolate. We asked questions about the *C. sinensis* harvest and Daniel took notes. And, sadly, they asked us if we had any pictures of the Dali Lama. Our cultural differences couldn't have been more intense, yet we got along well, even enthusiastically. When they admired our mushroom knives, Carson gave them hers, and she would have given them her jacket and notebooks and anything else they wanted. She was at a loss to express her delight in them.

A few more temples full of worshippers, breathtaking scenery, beautiful monasteries, and damp hotel rooms, and some very wicked food later, we were back in Lhasa. We stopped to soak in a riverside hot spring that was once wild but then developed by the Chinese, but like so many of those government projects, it was in terrible disrepair, and the tubs, once filled with hot water, were also filled with tiny wiggling centipedes.

A few days of R & R eating yak steaks (kind of like grass fed beef) in Lhasa felt luxurious, and we were fully prepared for our next (and final) adventure: north to Lake Namtso at 15,500 feet. We were stopped constantly at checkpoints where our passports were copied and officials peeked into our van, past long caravans of trucks bristling with soldiers heading toward Lhasa. There were building projects all along the road, where the Chinese are trying to move the nomads into villages. Up up up we drove through huge sweeping pastures filled with yak, sheep, and goats. Many of the yaks had red tassels attached to their ears. That means the herder has made an offering of the animal. But by offering, it doesn't mean he will kill the animal. It means he won't kill the animal. It's a lovely notion, but one that can lead to a degree of poverty. Daniel said 20% of all yaks are "sacrificial," the sacrifice being the nomad herder's.

Lake Namtso is very mysterious: filled with glassy, salty glacial water and surrounded by mountains in the 20,000 plus range, it was so tremendous that one end disappeared into the horizon. It was like looking at the ocean. We were hoping to camp there, but the facilities were unbelievably gross, and feral, snarling dogs roamed all over, so we dropped down 1,000 feet to crash in a grim little place buffeted by howling winds, and then continued back to Lhasa and from there, Chengdu.

Daniel kindly made hotel, transportation, and translator arrangements for us in Chengdu, and we were able to see some of the sights: a giant Buddha which overlooks a confluence of two rivers, Mt. Emei and its beautiful wooden temples, and the panda bear sanctuary, all of which was wonderful (and the food was spectacular), but we were part of the tourist circuit and our experience was fundamentally different from the seat of the pants approach of Daniel's adventure.

In Chengdu we ate well, shopped well, toured comfortably. In Tibet we ate crappily, there was little to buy, and we were constantly looking for a clean place to go to the bathroom. But Tibet changes a person. Carson and I both stopped thinking about ourselves so much—I let go of the rampant obsession it takes to write a book, and she let go of her adolescence. And the spirituality of the place rubs off: ever since the trip, I've kept in mind the idea that every act has a consequence. It's a gentling experience. We may have traveled halfway across the globe to learn about the caterpillar fungus and its medicinal benefits, but in truth, Tibet itself is the medicine. 🍄

(Upcoming MushRoaming Tours include Bolivia in January 2012 and Tibet tours in both June and late July 2012. For more information visit: [www.MushRoaming.com](http://www.MushRoaming.com).)

## \* Field Notes \*

### NYMS Winter Walks 2012 : a Report

By Gary Lincoff

For decades the New York Mycological Society did not go out to look for mushrooms between November and the end of April. That made mushroom hunting a mere half a year venture. For the past two years we've held walks every month of the year, and we've not only found some good mushrooms but we've had excellent attendance on winter walks. So far this year we've had five walks before our first scheduled morel hunt the end of April.

On New Year's Day 25 people showed up for a walk through Central Park, and we found more than 30 different mushrooms, including some very fresh oysters and wild enokis.

On January 29 we had a dozen people attend our walk in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, and we not only found over 50 different mushrooms, but we found some very unusual ones, like *Phlebia incarnata* and the odd jelly *Exidia nucleata* (see back cover). We also found quite a few slime molds, the most beautiful being *Metatrachia vesparium*.

On February 25 we had a walk through Prospect Park, in Brooklyn, and we had 30 people show up, and we found more than 50 different mushrooms, including lots of wild enokis, as well as an unexpected zygomycete that had parasitized some kind of dead invertebrate.

On March 11 about 15 or so people at-

tended our walk in Inwood Hill Park, in northwestern Manhattan, and we found more than 40 different mushrooms. Although we didn't see any morels we were in the vicinity where they occur, and indeed some were collected there a week later.

On April 1st we held a walk in Queens, in Forest Park, at which 30 people attended. Although it had hardly rained at all in March, we still found about 30 different mushrooms, though nearly all of them were over wintering polypores and parchment fungi. We did find some fresh jelly fungi (*Exidia recisa*) and we saw several trees bearing old chicken mushrooms – alerting us to where to look later this year for fresh ones. 🍄



Prospect Park, February 25.



Spotted on April 1 walk.



Above, Forest Park, April 1. Below, Inwood Hill Park, March 11. All photos by Gary.



49TH ANNUAL

## Chanterelle Weekend in Vermont

By Claudine Michaud

Dates: July 27—July 29, 2012

Location: Green Mountains of Vermont. We will rent the same house as last year.

Contact: Claudine, 718-622-6834, 631-749-4398, Claudinelouise6@gmail.com.

Chanterelle Weekend is almost upon us once again. The Green Mountains are a vast expanse of land, meadow, forest, and mountains—too much for one person to explore. The big storm from last year has dramatically changed the scenery. We will find our way I am sure—the sweet smell of the chanterelles will guide us. Our resident mycologist will be Paul Sadowski.

The number of people is limited and it is a “hands-on” weekend. The total cost has something to do with the number of people attending, and everyone should know that the accommodations are acceptable, but certainly not “five-stars”.

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.

To attend, please complete the registration form and send along with your deposit check to: Claudine Michaud, 50 Plaza Street East, # 1B, Brooklyn, NY 11238.

Also, please let me know by email that you have done so (I will be traveling quite a lot from now through July).

## At Humboldt Institute on Eagle Hill

Alumni and friends of Eagle Hill and others who feel the need to get away to the coast of eastern Maine to study, read, and/or write for scientific, literary, or artistic pursuits in a reclusive setting are welcome at the Humboldt Institute.

Nestled among the trees in a boreal forest, and distanced from everyday distractions, Eagle Hill offers guests a chance to intensely focus on pursuits relating to the sciences, literature, and the arts. Trails meander through the forest, alongside overlooks offering panoramic vistas, into a blueberry field, and down to the ocean, which is just over 1200 feet from the Eagle Hill campus. Acadia National Park, Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge, and many other natural areas with hiking trails, ponds, streams, and rivers are just a short distance away. Retreat costs are \$30 per person per evening for accommodations; meals are extra.

Mycology seminars for 2012 include:

**Mushroom Identification for New Mycophiles: Foraging for Edible and Medicinal Mushrooms (7/28-8/4)**

Greg Marley, Author, Consultant, Northern New England Poison Center  
Michaeline Mulvey, Mycologist

**Natural History of Fungi and Slime Molds (8/5-11)**

Steven L. Stephenson, Mycologist

**Coastal Maine Mushrooms and Microscopes Foray (8/19—25)**

Rosalind Lowen, PhD, mycologist

Dianna Smith, Pres. CT-Westchester Mycological Association

Course descriptions, application forms, and more information may be found at <http://www.eaglehill.us>. For any additional information, please contact the Humboldt Institute by phone at 207-546-2821 or by email at [office@eaglehill.us](mailto:office@eaglehill.us).

## Member Profile: *Jamie Newman*

### What brings you to mushroom hunting?

I love urban, industrial, cultural NYC, but in order to live here I need respite in natural places. Mushroom hunting, birding, botanizing in the woods does that for me.

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

I think I went out with Gary with a class at the New York Botanical Gardens about 13 years ago.

### What scientific aspects of fungi interest you (if they do)?

The fact that fungi are a whole taxonomical Kingdom, one closer in some ways to us than to plants blows me away! I am a geologist and have access to lab equipment at the Museum of Natural History where I manage the mineral collection, so not exactly a stranger to science. I took Paul's Microscopy class downtown and really enjoyed it.

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

I am casually passionate. I would probably spontaneously drive 2 hours if I heard about a good mushroom spot. Mushrooms are beautiful and delicious and mysterious and fascinating and easy to love.

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

I am lucky to work at AMNH, the coolest place ever. There is always something wildly interesting to explore and fascinating characters as well. I read a lot— mostly contemporary fiction. I've been in a Park Slope book club for over 20 years. I love architecture, photography, music and travel. When I travel I keep an eye out for mushroom related experiences. For example, I was in Mexico with my husband, Alan Esner (NYMS member) and 2 sons for Day of the Dead. Our wonderful host, Arnold Epstein (long time member of NYMS- from when John Cage was there), took us to a market where we tried huitlacoche tacos. Who thought corn smut could be so tasty (see picture)?

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

I don't know. I guess I've pondered the nature of my own mycorrhizal relationships, not to mention the decomposers and parasites. You can learn from those fungi.

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

Depends on how hungry I am. No really- I never, ever take a chance and eat something I am unsure of. Good rule- to learn the poisonous ones and not eat anything remotely like them.

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

Anything that is not too exorbitant. Chinatown's good for finding tasty stuff. I'm one of the few mycophiles who doesn't mind regular old supermarket Agaricus. Although of course I would prefer fresh foraged morels.

### How do you like to eat mushrooms?

Simply sautéed in olive oil or butter, sometimes garlic. Don't want to overwhelm them. This time of year, I'll take them with ramps.

### What's your favorite fungus?

I love a good Chicken mushroom (*L. sulfureus*) anytime. Love the smell, Love the taste. Love the hunt. Love the Eureka.

### Have any fungus or fungus-hunting stories you'd like to share?

Yes! I had my Ultimate Mushroom hunting experience, on a geology field trip to Canada's Burgess Shale area (Alberta). I was looking at rocks in the Pacific Northwest Woods where there had been a fire the year before and Whoa, it was like an ecstatic dream. The forest floor was covered with morels in July! I was flying back to New York next day and was paranoid about "importing." But when Customs asked if I had plant matter, I was able truthfully to say no (different kingdom).

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

13 years

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

Absolutely. I'm Photoshopping the background out of my morel pic-





# Mushroom Seekers

DVD directed by Pam Kray

By Jason Cortlund

It should be no surprise that a mushroom club founded by John Cage has an eclectic and multi-talented membership base. In New York, the great decomposers of the world have ironically brought together artists, composers, theorists, scholars, and thinkers of all varieties. Former NYMS newsletter editor and long-time filmmaker Pam Kray has combined two of her life's passions in the documentary *Mushroom Seekers*, which has recently been released on DVD.

Shot over a several years, this film is a lovingly homespun exploration of mushrooms and their multiple relevancies to human culture. Through the Kray's first-person narration, we are invited into specific fungi-centric communities around the world—from Czech Republic, to New York, to Telluride, to a remote village in the mountains of Mexico.

With a flow that moves gently from observational studies of people hunting mushrooms in their local environs, to informational sections with experts sharing knowledge, to more abstract sections of circumspection—Kray uses a relaxed exploratory structure that feels like an enjoyable walk through the woods.

*Mushroom Seekers* is more than just a mushroom movie. It's a very personal and earnest look at how and why knowledge is shared through culinary, scientific, and spiritual traditions. It makes for a great introduction to many themes that form a mycelial web of significance for the myco-obsessed.

From the DVD's press materials: "*Mushroom Seekers* is a first-person exploration of the world of wild mushrooms and the people who look for them. When American filmmaker, Pam Kray, noticed people carrying baskets of wild mushrooms in the subways of Prague in 1993, she began to examine her own lack of familiarity with fungi in her surroundings. The ensuing journey of filmmaker into mushroom cultures took her from the Czech Republic through the U.S. to Mexico, from national pastime to arcane hobby to sacred undertaking. *Mushroom Seekers* was first released as a video in 2002. The DVD release includes extras from movie outtakes of herbalist Susun Weed and film artist Bradley Eros, and from interviews shot in 2011 with world-class mycologist and author, Gary Lincoff, and with Paul Sadowski, of the New York Mycological Society."

You can learn more about Kray's films and other works at [pamkray.com](http://pamkray.com). The *Mushroom Seekers* DVD is available for purchase at [wisewomanbookshop.com](http://wisewomanbookshop.com).



Jamie Newman, cont. from p.9

ture, so no one can figure out the location.

**What habitats do you prefer to hunt in?**

Woods. Old burn sites.

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

Not that much. I could always go to Fairway. I have gotten poison ivy. Not fun.

**Do you use keys to identify mushrooms?**

Yes. Spore prints are lovely and informative.

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

I always like to spread the word. And I love to impress skeptical friends with super-delicious foraged mushrooms. I found lots of black trumpets with a group of non-adventurous types. Eventually everyone in the group tried them at dinner. Yumm.



# Mushroom Tamales

By Charles Luce

Mushrooming is like a sandwich made of excellent bread and stale cheese:

There's two exquisite parts - foraging and eating - separated by one tough chew. In the case of mushrooms, that's cleaning, de-bugging and storing.

Every mushroomer whines about the first two, but New Yorkers in particular have a tough time with storage: postage-stamp apartments don't lend themselves to larding bounties. Still, though, we want to save as much of the goods as we can, so we sauté and freeze, dehydrate and bag, pickle and can, and stash our lovelies wherever the spouse/significant other won't be too disconcerted by a ziplock filled with what looks like bark scraps or orange goo.

Storing the excess is always on my mind. I usually prefer dehydration. Not only do some mushrooms gain flavor with drying, but the concentration of size and weight makes things easy. A bag of black trumpets on the top shelf won't smash your nose should it happen to dislodge when you're rummaging for that lost can of tuna fish.

Also, dehydrating releases heavenly smells. After a good morel day the dehydrator runs rack-full and I can smell my apartment down the hall. And then there's the thrill of opening the ziplock on a frigid January morning and taking a deep sniff. To paraphrase chef Jack Czarnicki, a dream job would be sniff-testing dried porcini.

Recently I've stepped away from dehydration and begun supplementing my storage tactics with frozen mushroom tamales. It's amazing how many species "go with" the primary ingredient of tamales-masa-calc-treated corn—and when you add other, standard tamale ingredients—meats, fats, red pepper, crema, onion, cilantro and cheese—the taste can be superb.

Perhaps the best reason for turning excess fungi into tamales, though, is the ease with which the results can be converted to a tasty meal. You can pull just a few or as many as 20 from the freezer, and with the help of a microwave and vegetable steamer, be dining in less than half an hour.

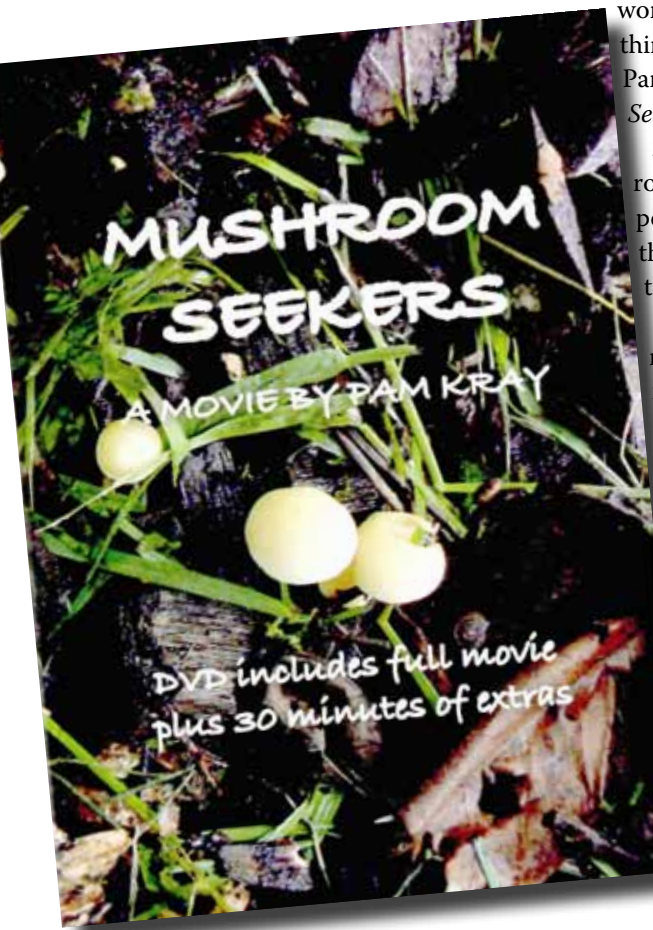
Making tamales - making them well, that is - is not so quick a task. One could say that the same is true of all excellent food (but that would be a lie). You have to love cooking to do tamales right - or at least you have to like cooking and love eating.

The first time I made mushroom tamales I settled for simple: masa, onion, pepper and cilantro, and great gobs of morels in cream sauce. One intense May afternoon I put up 30 such calorie-grenades, bagged so I could retrieve them from the freezer two or three at a time. They were gone by July, just in time for black trumpets, chanterelles, lacterii, boletes and other goodies. By then I'd raised the bar for tastes, grinding my own masa and adding fats, spices and leftover meats. The mushrooms were abundant, and almost every week saw me at the work table with corn husks and bowls of goodies.

My greatest tamale moment came in August. On the way home from NAMA with Claude Martz and Paul Sadowski, I found an oak laden with fresh-budded chicken mushrooms. Each juvenile bud was so tender and fragrant it made visions of cornmeal dance in my head. I had a container of leftover, fatty, spicy chicken parts waiting in the 'fridge. All that was needed was an evening of effort.

Those were my best tamales. They were colorful, big, and very 'shroomy, with complementing and contradicting textures. After making them I set four aside for an immediate meal, which might have been a mistake. They were so good I couldn't let the rest languish at -10F. Day after day I'd pull 2 or 4 or 6 from the chill and Leslie and I would dine. Now they're now all gone.

You can make tamales from fresh or dried mushrooms. Fresh is easier, but if you cold-water-soak dried ones, then braise the mushrooms in butter and shallots adding



water as they threaten to dry out, you'll get excellent results.

It takes a full evening (actually, more than one) to make tamales the way I do.

The extra effort has a payoff in taste. A tamale should be a moist flavor bomb waiting to explode in your mouth - intense, savory, complex and spicy. Everything that can be done to enhance that package, should be done. And slowly made, hand-made tamales are like that.

My tamales depart tradition in one key way: I use coconut and butter instead of lard. My palette prefers these fats - if yours wants lard, I say, use it.

A word on supplies: my NJ neighborhood is so Hispanic you can't find a grocery store that does not have all the needed ingredients. You might not be so lucky, but New York does have everything for everybody, so a little networking will give you what you need. Except the mushrooms. You'll have to get out in the forests and fields and get them yourself.

### Mushroom Tamales

#### Ingredients:

2 or more quarts (dry measure) fresh mushrooms. Good choices are Chicken, Hen-of-the-woods, Morels, Black trumpet, boletes, hedgehog, or grayling. Prepare them as you like (sautéd, braised, roasted; in cream sauce, with cheese, with salmon, etc.) and salt to taste.

2 cups (about 250 grams) white, dried, large-kernel moté corn

1/3 package dried corn husks

1 to 2 cups shredded, leftover, fatty chicken or pork (optional)

1 to 4 dry chipotle peppers -or- 1 - 4 tsp chipotle in adobo (taste to determine heat)

4 tablespoon unsalted butter

2 tablespoon coconut paste (I prefer Goya brand)

1 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro

2 sweet red peppers

1/2 cup Latin-American Crema or sour cream (I prefer Daisy brand when I use sour cream. It is the only brand made with nothing but cream)

1/2 tsp "Calc", AKA Mexican Lime

1 tsp salt, divided

1/2 small Spanish onion, lightly sautéd

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 cloves garlic

#### Procedure:

At least 12 hours before you want to make the tamales, prepare the masa: Weigh the moté corn, place it in a microwave-proof bowl, add an amount of water equal in weight to the corn, stir, and microwave on high for 2 minutes, or just to the boiling point. Remove from microwave, stir again, cover and let stand 12 hours at room temperature.

At the end of this time, place corn and water in a food processor and process to a fluffy consistency. Stop the processor and pinch up some of the masa. If it does not adhere you should add water a tablespoon at a time until you obtain a dough that just barely holds together. If it is gooey, add a tablespoon or two of corn meal - any kind of corn meal.

Add the coconut paste, butter, calc and salt and process again until you have a moderately fine paste. It should smell delicious. Remove to bowl and set aside. Rinse the food processor.

Place the corn husks in a medium-to-large bowl or saucepan, cover with cool water, and weigh down with a filled cup or glass. Soak for at least 1/2 hour, turning and opening the bundle so that all the husks are soaked and flexible.

Prepare the mushrooms. Prepare the meat. Start the oven broiler. Adjust a rack to the highest or second-highest position, allowing enough space to lay out the sweet peppers without them touching oven elements. Tear off a sheet of aluminum foil, wash and slit the sweet red peppers and place them on the aluminum foil. Insert into the oven and broil until the skin blackens and blisters. Turn and do the same with the un-

blackened sides, and turn again until the peppers are the same on all sides. Meanwhile, peel the garlic cloves, and as the peppers are getting done, put the garlic on the aluminum foil and roast to a nutty brown. (With a bit of care you'll finish both at the same time). Remove peppers and garlic from oven and allow to cool.

Peel the charred skins from the peppers and discard. Open the peppers, remove the seeds and stem, and discard. Tear peppers into strips and place in the food processor.

Mash the garlic and add it. Grate or pound the chipotle pepper(s) to a powder and add. Add @ 1/2 tsp salt. Begin to process peppers, then add the olive oil to the spout of the processor. Continue processing until you have a rich, orangish sauce. Scrape into a bowl.

Set up a work area with ingredients in bowls. Arrange them in an order of diminishing quantity. Corn husks go first, then masa, mushrooms, meat, pepper salsa, cilantro and sour cream (crema). Spread out a husk, drop a dollop of masa on it, then add other ingredients in diminishing amounts. Work with your hands - it's a lot more fun.

Fold the husk ends over ingredients then fold the sides over the ends. Turn the husk fold-side-down and place on a platter. Continue stuffing, folding, and laying-in on the platter. When you run out of a crucial ingredient, such as masa or mushrooms, stop. Reserve remainders for leftovers (the red pepper sauce is an excellent "broth" for risotto), set aside any tamales you want to eat right away, and freeze the rest.

#### Cooking:

Tamales are easy to cook - just steam them 20 - 25 minutes. You will need to defrost them first. For small quantities I use a vegetable steamer; for 10 or more I place a stainless steel cooling rack in the bottom of a metal roasting pan, add an inch or two of water, lay out the tamales in one or two layers, and put the works over high heat. Once the water starts boiling I reduce heat to medium and cover the pan tightly. Again it takes just 20 to 25 minutes. Eat 'em while they're hot. Save the leftovers and nuke a minute or two. 🍌

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I hereby release the New York Mycological Society, any officer or member thereof, from any legal responsibility for injuries or accidents incurred during or as result of any mushroom identification, field trip, excursion, meeting, or dining, sponsored by the Society.

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