



PIKES PEAK MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY, 1983



HAPPY NEW MUSHROOM YEAR! We are hoping that you have all gotten over the shock of your winter utility bills, and will use their deminishing as a harbinger of Spring. I am sure many of you have spent a lot of time hiking the trails despite warm temperatures, but the majority of us probably have only looked wistfully westward.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28th at 7:30, on the second floor of Rastall Center, Colorado College, we will have our first meeting of the new year. (We certainly hope we did not lose anybody in October at our "Tasting Fair"). Lee Barzee will have the program. Since this is still a time of reflection (before the real action starts), Lee will favor us with some of her prize winning slides on mycology, PLUS a few of her candid shots of those intrepid mushroom hunters of the Pikes Peak Region!! Since I am sure that you don't want us giggling behind your back about your plastic bags or strange lunch, you had best be there to defend yourself.

1983 NAMA FORAY IN COLORADO. By far the most interesting thing happening this year is our state hosting the NAMA Foray at Snow Mountain Ranch, near Granby. This will be held on August 19 - 23. The official program will begin at noon, August 20 and continue for two full days. Denver has 10 committees and I am sure that any time spent helping will make the Foray even more meaningful to you. We certainly do hope to be well represented by your presence, and it is not too early to offer your services to the Colorado Mycological Society. Dr. Orson K. Miller, Jr. will speak on special topics in the plenary sessions. Direct any questions to our President, Judy Baranowski, Lee Barzee, or Barbara Laura about arrangements, or which times you can offer to help. \$50 entry fee.

MUSHROOM CLASS - For those of you who do not subscribe to Denver's Spores

Afield, there will be a training session for six weeks beginning April 13th thru May 11th at 7:30 p.m. to be held at the Denver Botanic Garden. The amazing fee is \$10.00. \$8 for additional family members.

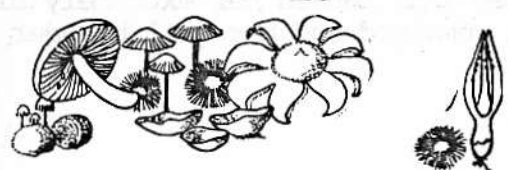
Dr. Salzman offers a Mycological Tour to China October 3 - 24, 1983. Advise if interested.

RAFFLE: A "guaranteed" SHITAKE MINIFARM will go to the winning ticket. Chances .50 or 3/\$1.00.

Additional News - please notify Judy Baranowski - 574-0167 or Barb Laura - 578-6362 - Days. ALWAYS COVET YOUR INPUT TO THE NEWSLETTER.



the neighborhood
by Jerry Ve
TM.



"And what does the Mushroom Society do, exactly?"

TOXIC MUSHROOMS

Since earliest man first discovered that mushrooms were delicious on his dinosaur steaks, he probably tried to figure out "Easy ways" to tell the poisonous ones from the edibles. He noted that some cavemen could tolerate certain mushrooms while others died from eating them at the same feast. If he was one of the survivors, he could feel that his personally contrived system, in his case, worked. He might have carefully watched what mushrooms wild animals ate and did like-wise. Later, it didn't occur to his surviving family that the mushroom poisons had quietly lingered in his body until his last mushroom meal added up to the final lethal dose. This practice continues today with individuals who claim to be able to eat many of the "untouchables".

SOME OF TODAY'S FIVE MOST POPULAR "EASY WAYS" FALLACIES ARE:

1. Boil them in salt water, then drain off the water. This may get rid of some of the poisons but it's possible that man-killing amounts remain in the mushrooms. Boiling with the sufficiency of getting the poisons removes a lot of the mushroom flavor when the liquid is drained off. One Oregon Mycological Society member ignored warnings about eating Gyromitra esculenta, a known killer, for several years. She practiced the salt water method. One winter's day she made a beef stew and added her frozen esculentas. That evening she was taken to the hospital with grinding stomach pains and other complications. She remained there five days. "Never again, I darn near died," she told OMS members at a meeting where she asked to make a report about her illness.

For anyone who has blood or kidney problems, ^(FALSE) morels, particularly Verpa bohemica, have small to moderate amounts of the same Gyromitra esculenta poisons. This acts on the kidneys and the blood.

With today's increased interest in mushroom toxicity and more sophisticated methods for testing, some of the former "goodies" have been shown to actually be "baddies". Until recent years, Cortinarius orellanus was believed to be edible. Now they have discovered Orellan poison which has more potency than the deadly poisonous Amanita phalloides group. It is reported to grow in the Pacific Northwest. This killer remains silent and undetected for two weeks. By then it has destroyed body organs. Now all Cortinarius with bright colored gills are suspected of having this poison. Gathering poisonous species in the same basket with edibles ruins the edibles as the spores and juice are poisonous. Severe dermatitis problems have occurred on more sensitive areas of the body when Amanita virosa was handled than the hands put on the body without first washing them. It is a good idea to always fold the separate mushrooms in waxed paper and then twist the ends. This protects the mushroom and confines it.

At the annual OMS show, we encounter individuals who tell us they can eat mushrooms that we have placed the "skull and cross bones" designation on. We look at them and wonder how much longer they will be among us.

2. Watch the wild animals, including worms, but not domestic cats and dogs, and eat what they do.

Wild animals have a different physical make-up than humans and they can eat mushrooms that we can't. The OMS Toxicity Committee had a report that a large breed dog had playfully nipped at an Amanita muscaria as he passed by it. He almost died. Another report: a Portland female dog chewed on an all-white mushroom which grew in the run of her kennel. She died four days later. The veterinarian opened her up after death to see what caused her extremely bloated stomach. Her liver was destroyed, only the skin remained and her gall bladder was swollen 200 times its normal size.



The Committee has heard that some pets are used to test whether or not a mushroom is poisonous. Though they are susceptible, it could be the animal, like some humans, has a tolerance for the poisons that the owners don't.

If a mushroom has a good taste, then it is edible.

Some of the older books actually recommend this as a practice. Victims of dining on Amanita phalloides told the doctors that it was the most delicious mushroom they had ever tasted. Armillariella mellea has an unpleasant acid taste when it is raw. It isn't advisable to eat most wild raw mushrooms. Tasting, unless the genus is known, can cause problems. This also applies to smelling the gill parts as people with allergies can sniff the invisible spores and set off reactions.

Two individuals, a year apart, ate Amanita pantherina because it tasted good. They both had violent reactions: deep comas, wild hallucinations, rapid heartbeat over a long period of time and both had to be put in lung respirators. They were in the hospital a week.

4. Boiling a mushroom with a silver coin or spoon. If it darkens, the mushroom is poisonous.

This is the most used of the fallacies. Amanita phalloides, verna, virosa bisporigera (group with phalloidian poisons) won't stain a silver piece. Armillariella mellea, a delicious edible, will.

5. Mushrooms which grow on wood are safe to eat.

A number of the thousand or more varieties of Little Brown Mushrooms (LBMs) grow on wood. This includes hallucinatic varieties, as well as Galerian autumnatis, which contains the same lethal poisons that Amanita phalloides group has.

nce mushrooms appear to have the quality of absorbing elements from their surroundings, it is possible that they can contain toxic parts from auto emission fumes. This includes roadsides, turnarounds, etc.

Also, lawns which have been sprayed with herbicides (weedkillers) on which mushrooms are growing can be suspected.

The only safe tests are knowledge and thorough study of each mushroom genus and its "good" and "bad" members. Some genera have a worse reputation than others. At first, stick to the most easily recognized genera and know these for certain. Morchella esculenta, Coprinus comatus, Agaricus caepestrus, Boletus edulis and Cantharellus cibarius are excellent to learn the first year, then add a few others yearly. The various species have individual tastes. Most folks only know one or two a lifetime unless they have a means for qualified instruction.

By DeLora Dever
Toxicity Committee Chairman
Oregon Mycological Society

References: Toxic and Hallucinogenic Mushrooms, Lindcoff and Mitchel.
Also see recent issues Mycologia.

New Books: Simon and Schuster's Guide to Mushrooms, edited by Gary Lindcoff

The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms,
by Gary Lindcoff, Chanticleer Press Edition.