

New Jersey

Mycological Assn.

NJMA NEWS  
Volume VIII

MAY 1978  
No. 5

President: Robert Peabody

Editor: Dorothy Smullen

Circulation: Bill Fokicki

MEETING NOTES

ASCOMYCETES

Members who attended the exploratory workshop on April 9th, by Dr. Sam Ristich (NJMA Guru and fungal wisdom spreader) are now able with certainty to tell their asci from their basidia. However, the function of conidia remains enigmatic.

Sam led us on a fascinating slide foray through the world of Myxomycetes, Discomycetes, Pyrenomycetes, and Plectomycetes...showing us that morels are definitely operculate, but not hypogeous or bitunicate. There were specimens of many types of Ascomycetes on two display tables for all to see and examine.

Sam's ribald humor kept us going whenever confusion set in. Thanks again, Dear Sam, for another dynamic presentation.

OFFSET COMMITTEE

A committee consisting of Leonard Frank, Neal MacDonald and Robert Peabody, has been formed to investigate the feasibility of the NJMA's purchase of a used offset duplicator. Len Frank had brought up the availability of the machine and various related equipment to the club's attention at the April meeting.

The membership voted to convene a committee of three to further examine the condition of the equipment in question as well as the purchase price and possible future operating costs. With the increasing size of the membership, the growth of the newsletter, and the increase in the number of courses and lectures being given, printing can become the major operating expense of the club.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

LIBRARY NEWS

Al Northup has volunteered to be Chairman of our Library Committee and is busy getting our new books cataloged. Many thanks to Hiram Korn, retiring Library Committee Chairman for successfully getting the library started.

The first volume in the Permanent Reference Library is Singer's The Agricales in Modern Taxonomy. This book was purchased by the Taxonomy Group with funds raised from a special two-session Microscope Workshop given by Dr. Sam Ristich and Gary Lincoff. The "Singer" is regarded as the standard text for Herbariums, but at present is beyond the grasp of the majority of members of the Taxonomy Group. It is a book to use and love.

## EDUCATION

### BEGINNING MYCOPHAGY

Gertrude Espenscheid described and showed slides of the basic foolproof edible mushrooms and poisonous lookalikes to a group of approximately forty people at a Flemington Nature Club Meeting on March 22nd. At the close of the lecture, Gertrude offered everyone a mushroom dip and cracker repast. Audience response was very favorable.

### BASIC COURSE IN GILLED MUSHROOM GENERA

Bob Peabody's and Jim Richard's course on March 19th was well received by approximately twenty-five people. An excellent course booklet was provided and over 375 slides were shown. One participant commented... "All this time I've been looking at the cap trying to identify mushrooms, but you've just shown me that it's the stipe that's most important".

"The morel is not rare, but it is elusive, often not appearing in the same place two years in a row".  
James Trager, The Food Book

### NEW MEMBER PACKAGE

*The Education Committee (Chaired by the undaunted Jim Richards) after having resigned itself to the inevitable (Bob Peabody) got down to work and had produced a monograph on the new segregate genus Njma entitled The New Member Package.*

*In the Review section of The Times, Dr. Sam Tistich is quoted as saying "The New Member Package is superb! It deserves an Oscar". The package, neatly bound in plastic covers, is designed to acquaint new members with our organization and its activities and also provides some basic educational materials.*

*A copy of the NMP has been reserved for every current member. They will be available at upcoming forays from Jim Richards or Bob Peabody. The Education Committee is requesting a voluntary contribution of \$1.00 from members to help defray production costs.*

*Contents of the NMP: List of NJMA Committees, Constitution, Brief History of NJMA, Functions of Committees, Cookbook & Patch Ads, Foray Schedule & Guide, Gertrude Espenscheid's Mycophagy Page, Gary Lincoff's Keys to Genera, Paul Verger's Polypore Sheet, LMC Chart, Bibliography, Map to SCEEC, and Membership Roster.*

Dr. Clark Rogerson has sent word that he has identified the white mold growing on the Rhizopogon specimens found at Shark River State Park last fall as...  
*Sepedonium ampullosporum.*

## TAXONOMY

### HERBARIUM NEWS

The Taxonomy Group has received an invitation from Dr. Robert Schumacher, one of our newer members, who is of the Botany Department, Kean College, Union, to house our Herbarium in the facilities of their new science building.

We would have workspace, lab space and equipment, and four (4) Herbarium cabinets made available for our immediate use. The Taxonomy Group is currently considering the feasibility of the Kean College location and has extended thanks to Dr. Schumacher for the invitation.

The Taxonomy Committee has just received an invitation from Dr. Roger Locondro, Associate Dean, Cook College, Rutgers University, to establish a NJMA Mycological Herbarium at the State University in New Brunswick.

The college would make available for our use a classroom/laboratory and a secured storage space for herbarium cabinets. Members of the Taxonomy Committee have met on two previous occasions with Dr. Locondro, Dr. Cappellini and Dr. Peterson of the Plant Pathology Department to discuss our needs and the importance, both to our group and the university, of the establishment of such a facility.

A visit to the campus to see the suggested areas will be made by members of the committee in the near future.

### TAXONOMISTS DISCUSS LACTARIUS

At the April 11th meeting of the Taxonomy Group, Vic Gambino let a discussion of the genus Lactarius. Vic has been working with the Lactarii for a year and a half and has developed his own Herbarium and Collection Records for this genus in New Jersey.

During the evening, the group discussed macroscopic and microscopic characteristics of many of the common species of Lactarius in our area. The group hopes to have frequent discussions led by members on their areas of specialization. The general membership is welcome to attend any of the Taxonomy Group's sessions which are held on Tuesday following Forays, at 7:30 p.m. at SCEEC.

For further information, please contact either Vic Gambino or Dorothy Smullen, co-chairpersons of the committee.

"Morels are like the great love of one's life: they don't last". Robert Courtine, The 100 Glories of French Cooking.



## 1ST NJMA ART EXHIBIT HELD AT SCEEC

From April 1st to the 30th, the Mycoesthetics Committee held the first NJMA Art Exhibit which was on display at SCEEC. The exhibition, directed by Chairwoman Gertrude Espenscheid, featured drawings, paintings, and photographs by NJMA Members.

Both Gertrude and Bunji Tagawa displayed selections from their workbooks which gave the general public an excellent idea of how artists approach fungi in the field. Neal MacDonald had a large group of drawings and sketches on exhibit, many of which were familiar to NJMA members from their appearance in the Newsletters. Photos by Dorothy Smullen, Sam Ristich, Al Leyenberger, Jim Richards, and a pair of unusual X-ray photos by Stan Siegler completed the exhibition.

Dorothy had set up a complementary educational exhibit from materials in our Herbarium. Thanks to Virginia Peterson and Jim Richards of NJMA for their assistance in hanging and cataloging the show; and to the Staff of SCEEC for their cooperation and willingness to make the space available for the exhibit. Gertrude is to be commended for this fine job.

*"When I first had them (morels) I thought they were the most delicious morsels I had ever tasted". James Beard,  
Delights and Prejudices*

## TOXICOLOGY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

With the number of people collecting and eating wild foods increasing yearly, it is more important than ever that doctors have a Handbook readily available to treat cases of poisoning. For this reason, Dr. Stanley Siegler, Co-Chairman of the Toxicology Committee, has sent a recommendation to all Poison Control Centers in New Jersey that they obtain a copy of Lincoff and Mitchel, Toxic and Hallucinogenic Mushroom Poisoning, to have on hand as an aid during the mushroom collecting season.

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

### MAY 7....JENNY JUMP MOREL HUNT

*On Sunday May 7th, the foray season begins with our annual search for the elusive Merckels, Sponge Mushrooms, Moseys, Molly Moochers, Myrtles, Miracle Plant, Spring Mushroom and the admirable and perfumed, tender morel.*

*Robert Peabody will lead us through the wilds of Jenny Jump, leaving no apple tree unturned. To join us, simply take Route 80 to the Hope Exit (Route 521 South). In the center of Hope, take Route 519 North to the Small Sign on the Right Side of the road indicating JENNY JUMP STATE FOREST (about one mile). Turn right and proceed to the large white house on the right. Turn right on the road in front of the house. Continue past the swings to the parking field on the right.*

*The Foray begins at 10:00 a.m. so pack your picnic basket and join us.*



MAY 21....WATCHUNG RESERVATION FORAY

On May 21st, Bill Rokicki will lead us on a foray in a new area...the Watchung Reservation. The Foray will begin at 10:00 a.m. from the Trailside Parking Lot of the Reservation.

To reach the foray site: From the Garden State Parkway, take US 22 West at Union to New Providence Road in Mountainside. Drive up hill bearing right at second fork (small sign pointing to Trailside Museum). Continue to Traffic Circle where you proceed 3/4 of the way around, make third right and continue for one mile, bearing right all the way...you will arrive at the Trailside Parking Lot.

From the West, the same directions apply except that you take Route 22 East to New Providence Road.

A California-based company, Pleasuretronics, has just patented a new battery operated vibrator called "The Immorel" shaped like our old friend *Morchella crassipes*. Distribution of the new product will be handled by the NJMA Recreation Committee. Special group rates are available. Please contact Paul Meyer for details and prices.

WILD WILD FOODS AGAIN

On June 4th we will be holding our Second Annual Wild Foods Foray at Sundance Stables in Hackettstown. The Wild Foods Foray was one of the most popular events of the 1977 Foray Season and we expect bigger and better things this year...so mark the date on your calendar.

Additional information will be made available in the June Newsletter, but we can tell you that the Foray will be led by Robert Peabody, Dr. Erica Frank, Irma Chaiten, and Jim Richards with the distinct possibility of *you-know-who* arriving on the scene.

SAM RISTICH TO LECTURE ON PLANT GALLS

Irma Chaiten advises us that Dr. Sam Ristich is presenting a lecture on PLANT GALLS for the Botany Department of Fairleigh Dickinson University on Wednesday, May 10th at 8:00 p.m. in Hartman Lounge of The Mansion.

Mr. Gordon Perry, who was a guest at our last meeting, has generously invited the members of NJMA to attend. Plant galls grow on leaves, stems, and flowers of plants and come in a wide variety of sizes, shapes, and colors. Sam is an expert on Galls and will no doubt provide an exciting intorudction to the field.

There will be slides and specimens on hand.

The dollege is located at 285 Madison Avenue in Madison, off Route 24. From the Morristown area, take Route 24 East. Fairleigh Dickinson University is located a few blocks beyond Convent Station on the left side of the road. (DO NOT go as far as Drew University or to the town of Madison.)

Drive in through the main gate to the center of campus, park in any of several parking lots, and walk to The Mansion. For additional information, contact Irma at 379-5769.

A reminder to all members...register now for an exciting weekend at the Pocono Environmental Education Center (details in last month's Newsletter). Enjoy a weekend of foraging, our "Cordon Bleu" mycophagists prepare the edible finds and then taste their culinary masterpieces, and relax and socialize with other mushroom enthusiasts.

Saturday night's Helvella Hoedown promises to be a gala event. Learn how to improve your photos of phungi by working with our talented camera buffs. Old members will be especially helpful to the needs of new members in their collection and identification of mushrooms.

For more info, call Bill Rokicki [REDACTED]

THANK-YOU'S

We thank Al Leyenberger for donating four volumes to the Circulating Library. They are:

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Thomas  | <u>Field Book of Common Mushrooms (1948)</u> |
| Nelson  | <u>The Magic of Mushroom Cookery (1971)</u>  |
| Duggar  | <u>Growing Mushrooms (1915)</u>              |
| Shimizu | <u>Cooking with Exotic Mushrooms (1977)</u>  |

Thanks also to Neal MacDonald for a copy of Coker and Beers, The Stipitate Hydnum of the Eastern United States (1951). Now we can really do a job on Dentinum repandum and friends.

Thanks to Andy and Kathy Chrucky for the gift of a used Ditto Machine to NJMA. It will be housed at the Smullen residence and Dorothy has volunteered Bill's services to get it in operating condition.

Robert Peabody and Jim Richards have donated the five Kodak Carousel Universal Slide Trays used in their lecture on Macroscopic Identification to the Photography Committee for general club use. Thanks to Bob & Jim.

CLUB SCOPE GOES MECHANICAL

The Club Microscope now has a Mechanical Stage...courtesy of John Wanelik, who miraculously crafted the parts in his basement. Now we no longer have to make one micron nudges of the material under study.

The Club Scope...while we are on the subject...is a good example of how this club can function at its best. The Scope was a gift from Eleanor and Karen Kerecman, the mechanical improvements have been donated by John Wanelik, and a new light for the scope will be paid for by any excess from the donations received for the New Member Package.

NOW COMES THE PITCH...Any member who contributes to the club--whether financially; by donations of books, equipment, slides; by bringing refreshments; or by lugging chairs from one floor to another for lectures--helps build this club. In your New Member Package, there is a long list of committees and their functions. There is a second list of the chairpersons of these committees. Please contact them if you can serve in any way. The NJMA is growing at such a rate that a handful of people can no longer do all the work. YOUR HELP IS NEEDED.

# Mycophagists Corner

## MORELS...

No other mushroom is shrouded in as much mystery as *Morchella* spp. The first mushroom to appear in quantities in the Spring, it appears for only a brief season and then disappears. Morel hunters guard the secret locations of their finds, preferring to share the fungus rather than divulge its source.

Even the literature on fungi seems to be divided as to the locations where one might expect to find morels...as if the authors were reluctant to part with useful information. If we believe the writers, we should expect to be tripping over morels, since they grow "on banks and in hedges, near elms and ashes; under pine, ash, oaks and other trees; especially the white walnut, or butternut; in old orchards; beech-maple and oak forests; lightly burned areas; swampy ground under elm with a cover of jewelweed; compacted soil around cabins, campgrounds; mixed pine and cedar forests; and in tulip-poplar stands under may-apples".

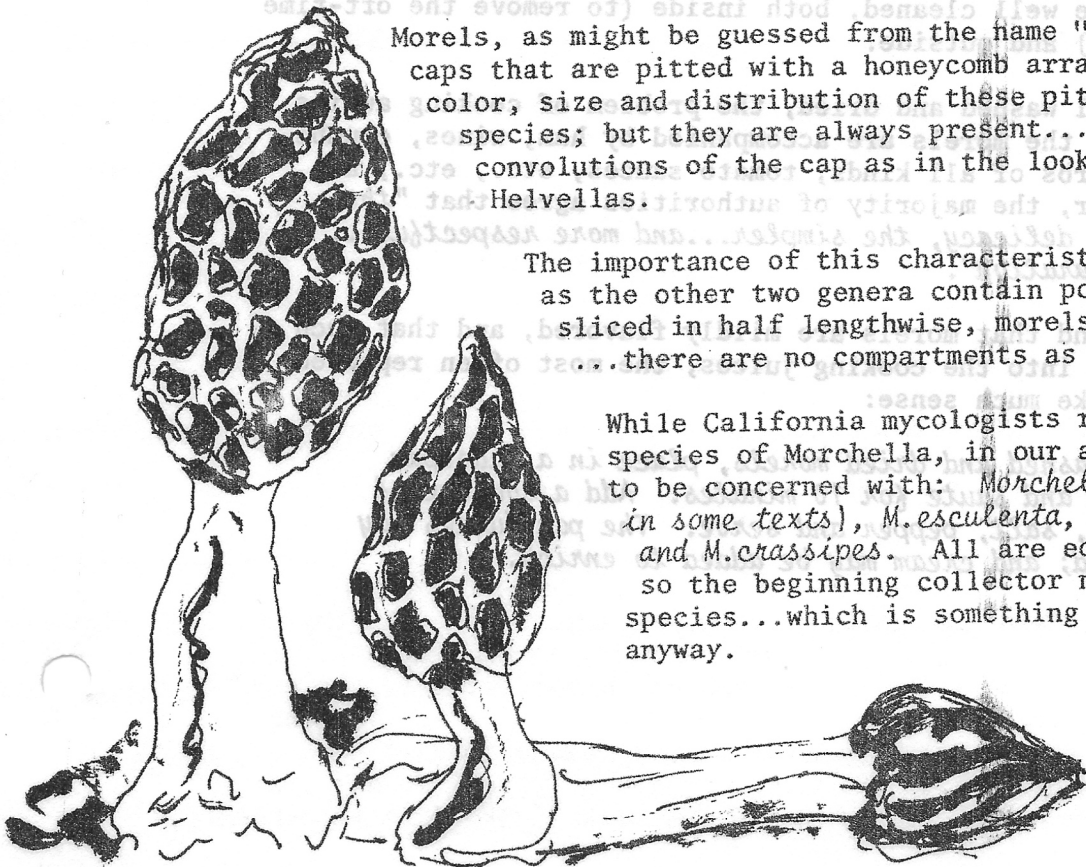
As indicators of the time of year to look for these "omnipresent" fungi, we are instructed to look for purple violets, redbud blossoms, apple blossoms just beginning to show, the "mouse-ear" stage of oak leaves, may apples whose leaves are unfurled but whose flowers are not yet open, red trilliums in bloom, lilies-of-the-valley in bloom, and lilacs beginning to color.

When we have followed all these instructions, how do we know when we have found this treasure of the woods?

Morels, as might be guessed from the name "sponge-mushrooms", have caps that are pitted with a honeycomb arrangement of pits. The color, size and distribution of these pits vary from species to species; but they are always present...as opposed to folds or convolutions of the cap as in the look-alike *Gyromitras* and *Helvellas*.

The importance of this characteristic cannot be overemphasized as the other two genera contain poisonous species. When sliced in half lengthwise, morels are completely hollow...there are no compartments as in *Gyromitra* and *Helvella*.

While California mycologists report finding eight (8) species of *Morchella*, in our area there are only five to be concerned with: *Morchella semi-libra* (*M. hybrida* in some texts), *M. esculenta*, *M. deliciosa*, *M. angusticeps* and *M. crassipes*. All are equally edible and choice, so the beginning collector need not be concerned with species...which is something that the experts differ on anyway.





For most collectors, *M. semi-libra* and *M. angusticeps* can be readily separated from the three other species. In *M. semi-libra*, the pileus is attached to the stipe for only one half the cap's length while all other species are completely attached. In *Morchella angusticeps*, the ridges between the honeycombs are much darker in mature specimens than in any of the other species...hence the common name, *Black Morel*.

The three remaining species present many problems in separating...some writers consider them variants of one species. Usually, *M. crassipes* is considered to be the largest species, *M. esculenta* to have distinctly irregular pits with undarkening ridges and *M. deliciosa* to be anything else.

However, there is much intergrading between the species. For a more in-depth discussion of species, including microscopic information of these ascomycetes, there are many volumes available in our library.

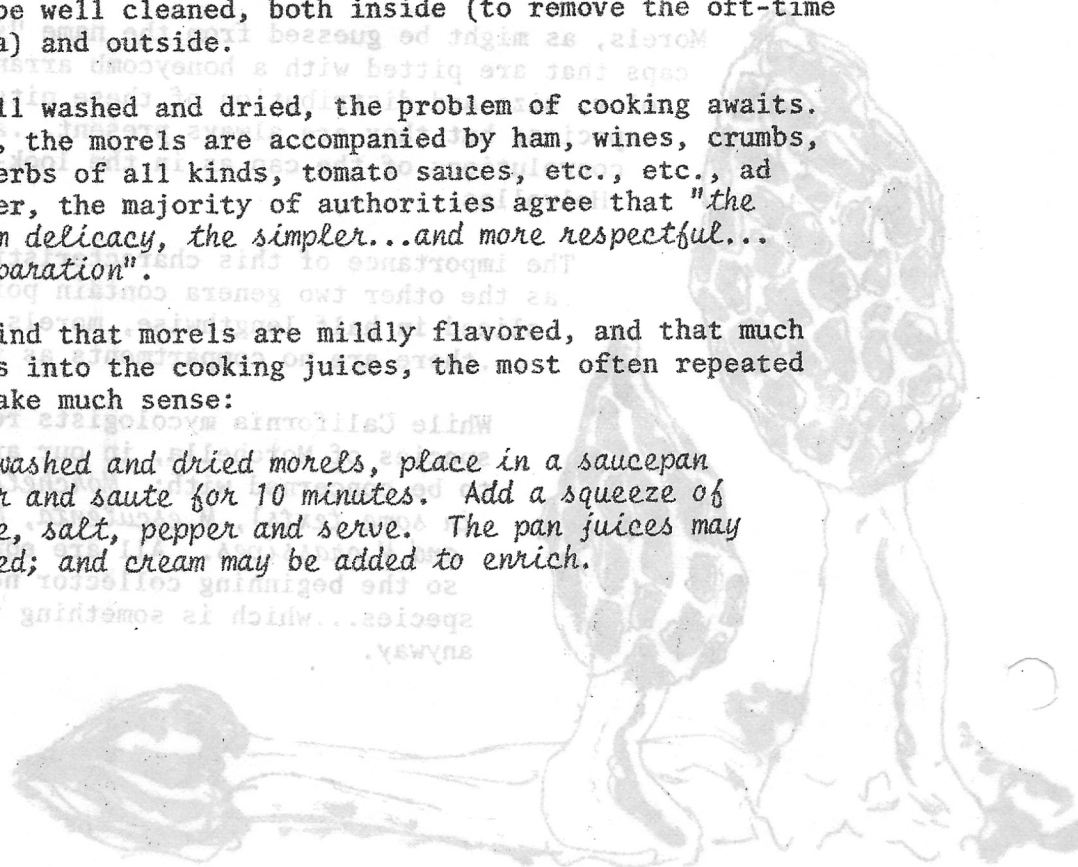
Once the cook has gathered an adequate supply of morels, the next step is to prepare them for the table. After having read cookbook after cookbook of the glories of this fungus--how "*in flavor and texture they surpass both the common cultivated species and most other wild mushrooms*"--it would be disastrous to ruin them in the cooking.

But before they are cooked, they must...unlike most mushrooms...be well washed. The sponge-like surface of the pileus and the wrinkled base of the stipe are fantastic collectors of sand. The base of the stipe is basically uncleanable; therefore, it must be removed. The morel is then to be well cleaned, both inside (to remove the oft-time accompanying fauna) and outside.

After they are well washed and dried, the problem of cooking awaits. In many cookbooks, the morels are accompanied by ham, wines, crumbs, garlic, onions, herbs of all kinds, tomato sauces, etc., etc., ad infinitum. However, the majority of authorities agree that "*the greater a mushroom delicacy, the simpler...and more respectful... should be its preparation*".

If one keeps in mind that morels are mildly flavored, and that much of the flavor goes into the cooking juices, the most often repeated recipe seems to make much sense:

*Slice the washed and dried morels, place in a saucepan with butter and saute for 10 minutes. Add a squeeze of lemon juice, salt, pepper and serve. The pan juices may be thickened; and cream may be added to enrich.*



Morels cooked this way may be used with chicken, veal, or fish. If served with beef, then the mushrooms should be cooked over slightly higher heat to brown lightly and the cream eliminated from the sauce.

If desired, morels may be rolled in flour before cooking to give a browner crust.

After you have first tried morels by sauteing as previously mentioned, as you should the first time with any mushroom, you may wish to try a few of the following ideas which elaborate on the principles of morel cookery but do not violate them.

Following are a couple of recipes supplied by our Grete Turchick...

#### GRETE'S MOREL RAGOUT

Simmer 1 lb. of veal in 2 cups of water with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt for one hour (or until tender). Remove from the pan and cut into cubes.

Wash and coarsely chop 1 lb. of morels. Simmer for 10 minutes in the veal broth. Drain and set broth aside.

In a saucepan, melt 2 Tbs. butter, add 2 Tbs. flour and brown. Add the broth, and salt to taste. Add veal and morels to sauce. Heat for 5 to 10 minutes.

Mix together 1 cup heavy cream and 2 egg yolks. Add to creamed mixture. Fill 4 baked patty shells with mixture.

Heat in 400° oven for 5 minutes.

#### GRETE'S CREAMED MORELS AU GRATIN

Clean and cut  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound of morels into fairly large pieces. Saute 5 minutes in 1 Tbs. butter. Add salt and the juice of  $\frac{1}{2}$  lemon.

Divide mixture between 4 individual baking dishes.

Mix 2 eggs, 1 Tbs. grated cheese, 1 Tbs. chopped parsley and 2 Tbs. sour cream. Pour over morel mixture.

Bake in a preheated 350° oven for 10 minutes or until golden-brown.

The Mycological Association of Washington, D.C., suggests the following BASIC MOREL SAUCE:

Coarsely chop  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 cups cleaned morels. Melt 2 Tbs. butter in skillet. Sauté morels quickly until completely limp. Remove from pan.

Add 3 Tbs. flour and cook briefly. Add 1 cup chicken broth and cook until thickened--stirring constantly. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup heavy cream.

Stir in the morels and add salt and pepper to taste.

The sauce may be used on toast, popovers, pasta, rice, cooked meat or poultry, or in crepes, etc., and may be varied by the addition of herbs, spices, sherry, grated cheese, etc., being careful not to overwhelm the flavor of the morels.

For the truly adventurous gourmet, I would like to suggest the possibility of trying Morel Souffle in Crust as served at The Four Seasons, either as a first course at dinner or the main course of a luncheon.

Line 6 ramekins (3" X  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ") with pastry crust rolled  $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick, and then with buttered foil. Fill the foil with dried beans or rice to prevent the sides from collapsing. Bake at 400° for 10 minutes.

Remove foil and beans from crusts, prick all over with a fork and return to oven to brown for 3 minutes. After cooling, remove crusts from ramekins.

Fill with a standard 4-egg souffle mixture which has had  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound of chopped morels stirred in before the final addition of egg whites. Bake the souffles for 25 minutes at 350°. Serve at once.

Because of their unique shape, morels may be stuffed...using mixtures containing ham, chicken, veal or ground beef. The stuffed morels may then be baked in a moderate oven for about 20 minutes. Before baking, they may be covered with a cream sauce and grated cheese and crumbs.

The full range of morel recipes available is beyond the limitations of this Newsletter so that I can only suggest that the interested mycophagist investigate Mushroom Cookbooks such as those published by the Puget Sound and San Francisco Mycological Groups or The Mushroom Feast by Jane Grigson. Additionally, most good French cookbooks, wild food books, and mushroom field guides will have morel recipes.

No matter which method you choose to try, you must...as James Trager says in The Food Book..."First find the morel: it may be easy to identify, but it is damned hard to find".

\*\*\*\*\*





A Welcome to our new members:

- Ms. Shirley Estes Berg 201-366-3945
  - Mr. & Mrs. Oleg Boychenko 201-667-8201
  - Mr. & Mrs. John Buono 201-982-9402
  - Mr. & Mrs. Charles Christopher 201-766-2138
  - Ms. Eva Dukes 212-722-6602
  - Mr. & Mrs. Donald Dukinas 201-752-7143
  - Ms. Barbara Becker 201-947-9279
  - Mr. & Mrs. Roger Gerath 201-890-9412
- BORED BY TAXONOMY?

If there seems to be an overabundance of taxonomy material in this and any other Newsletter, it is your own fault. The Taxonomy Group has been the most active division of the club to date.

If your interest is in Mycophagy or Photography or any other area-- why not join the committees in which your interests lie and get yourself some equal representation in the Newsletter?



"Look for morels every spring  
then one year, you will want  
next year. Keep their heads  
Aime Lach, Cooking and Co."