OMPHALINA

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Newsletter of FORAY NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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FORAY NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

is an amateur, volunteer-run, community, not-for-profit organization with a mission to organize enjoyable and informative amateur mushroom forays in Newfoundland and Labrador and disseminate the knowledge gained.

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OMPHALINA *is the lackadaisical newsletter of Foray Newfoundland & Labrador. There is no schedule of publications, no promise to appear again. Its primary purpose is to serve as a conduit of information to registrants of the upcoming foray and secondarily as a communications tool with members.*

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COVER

Entoloma sinuata, Killdevil Camp, Gros Morne National Park, Sep 15, 2002. A stately white mushroom that is severely enterotoxic. At least it will not kill you, like the equally white and statuesque *Amanita bisporigera*.

Early on we had some controversy about the exact identity of the *Entoloma* in question. The species was identified as *E. sinuata* by Machiel Noordeloos, confirmed in his laboratory with DNA analysis.

See lead story for a more intimate view of this stately species.

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CONTENT

Message from the Editor

Foray notice. This issue gives the first notice of our 2012 foray. Members get first chance to register—mailing will be delayed to others, and a general notice will be sent out to all and sundry somewhat later. Please see Foray Matters, page 3 (opposite) for details.

Poisoning series. With the story by Adrian Sweetapple on p. 4, we have brought our short series of personal accounts of mushroom poisonings to the here and now. The cover features the species that poisoned Sweetapple, and his account is followed by a brief review of similar mushrooms in the province. In between are some amanitas from the Bishop's sketchbook, and with that we hope that we have seen the last of poisoning stories.

ID the paintings. We have now had sufficient exposure to Glynn Bishop's sketches to note how often he has captured identifying features to the extent that the species is readily recognized. (We have seen bad photos that stump us more—and now that we have a photography series, there should be no reason for bad photos again!) Even on the rare occasion when the artist has written down a misleading name to trap the unwary, the sketch has enough features that a reliable revision in the identification can be made.

In this and each subsequent issue, see if you can identify the species depicted by Glynn. (You can even go back to previous issues and identify those). Send your identifications to the Editor. Where Glynn has added a name, you have an opportunity to agree or disagree with the artist. If we get some mail, we shall publish the answer, but only if you send in your identifications. If we do not get identifications, we shall not publish our identifications. As for to-day's amanitas, one is edible, but unless you are a very experienced identifier, do not try eating any *Amanita*!!! For that matter, do not eat clay mushrooms either.

My favourite mushroom*.** An invitation by Jim Cornish, contributor of ***My favourite mushroom: members are invited to contribute. Please think about writing up one of your favourite mushrooms. It need not be a big work, just say what you like about it and add a brief description. Send your creation to Jim <webmaster AT nlmushrooms DOT ca>, who will be glad to work on it with you (before the Editor starts in!). If you have pictures, so much the better. If not, we can probably find some to grace your words. If we get 12 mushrooms a year, we'll have enough to continue putting out Omphalina monthly.

Mushroom of the Month. Please send in your photos! See <www.nlmushrooms.ca>. All submissions will be featured on our site for that month. If you can identify them, good, if not we'll take a stab at it, and they are open to comment from others on the web. Each month Jim will select one submission to feature as the Mushroom of the Month, adding a very short description that you can do or work on together. These will be added to their respective sets on our Flickr site, slowly building up a store of information about our mushrooms. Also, some of the Mushrooms of the Month will be selected for writing up in the ***My favourite mushroom*** column in Omphalina with your pictures and participation. Everybody takes pictures and everybody has good ones, so send them in!

Sister journals. Lastly, please do not forget to look at the Members-only page on our website to read journals from sister organizations. Instead of sending them around, they are updated regularly.

Memorial. From my few contacts with Erast Parmasto, we suspect he would thoroughly enjoy the tribute on p 21. Those who do not know him, enjoy his story. It's the same all over: the paperwork is left to the young (Database Team in our case).

Happy mushrooming!

andrus

FORAY MATTERS...

Yes, the foray will happen again this year! In beautiful Terra Nova National Park, Sep 28-30. Information and Registration Forms are on our website <**www.nlmushrooms.ca**>.

1. NOTICE. First notice is given to members, to allow them first crack at registering. As a result, this issue of Omphalina will be mailed out to non-members 2 weeks late. And 2 weeks after that, there will be a general notice to our entire mailing list.
2. LIMITED PARTICIPATION. The last three years we have operated with a waiting list, so that early registration is encouraged. Last year we allowed all registrants in, even past the comfortable capacity cut-off of our facilities. There were a few grumbles, and the board decided the cut-off should be strictly observed this year. We hate to turn anybody away, but it is not fair to make it uncomfortable for participants.
3. INFORMATION. We will not devote an issue of Omphalina to foray information this year. Since revamping our website, we elected to use it as a the natural distribution vehicle for this information, and use Omphalina only to notify you when the information is ready.
4. WORKSHOPS. This year there will be no charge for workshops with a cost to the foray:
   Growing mushrooms—David Boyle
   Painting mushrooms*—Glynn Bishop
   Cooking: mushroom terrine—Yvonne Thurlow
   Make your own Chaga tea—Tõnu Voitk

   Some of these events cost considerably extra at most forays, but the generous support of some of our partners allows us to offer this as an experiment. If it does not work out fiscally, we shall go back to charging in the future for those workshops that have extra cost. Sign up for workshops with your Registration Form. Because space for each workshop is limited, you'll be accommodated on a first-come-first-served basis.
5. FEE. Speaking of bargains, did you know that your fee is also a bargain? Our Treasurer calculated on the basis of last year's costs, that the direct participation-related cost per participant is significantly higher than the fee, not calculating general operating expenses and expenses related to ensuring a faculty. Again, this is thanks to partners, some of whom specifically make the foray as financially accessible as possible for all. Look on the inside back cover for a list of partners, and please express your gratitude, should you have any dealings with any of their representatives.

To be sure everything was on the website and worked as it should, we put up the Registration Form and other information earlier this week. Believe it or not, Geoff already has four registrations! Somebody reads it. The usual first registrants move down a bit this year.

* Painting supplies required. Buy at registration or bring your own. See website for details.

Mushroom poisoning: six days of hell!

Adrian Sweetapple

I have been picking/cooking mushrooms for over 15 years in Ontario, Nova Scotia and in Newfoundland, without incident. Life can change in a moment and the results can be unforgiving. I guess I was meant to tell this story.

I write this piece because I want those of us who pick mushrooms, and those of us who think, "'That one' is safe," to stop and think about the possible consequences of an error. That's what happened to my wife and me in Central Newfoundland at the end of August. On a beautiful trail on the Change Islands, we came upon an appealing group of what I thought were honey mushrooms. I could not resist one quick picture. We cooked them in a tasty vegetable stew, ate it and became violently ill. I had made a mistake in mushroom identification.

Within 45 minutes after eating the stew we fell ill. For five hours we vomited until we thought we were dying; really, we thought we might die, it was that bad. We lost control of our bowels, our minds went into severe vertigo and we were too sick to take ourselves to the hospital, only 7 minutes away. No, we did not hallucinate, nor was that on our agenda when I picked the mushrooms.

During our two trips to the hospital we were treated with intravenous drips for dehydration. The emergency room doctors had little knowledge about mushroom poisoning, and it was left up to us to discover the identity of what we had eaten. That took several days. Until then, because my wife had a relapse after initial recovery, we had to live with the possibility that we had ingested a potentially lethal *Amanita bisporigera*, the Newfoundland version of the destroying angel, *Amanita virosa*.

We turned to MaryAnn Barron-Wagner of Washington, who referred us to David Gilbin, who referred us to Joe Ammirati, who referred us to Dave Malloch, who referred us to Andrus Voitk in Corner Brook.

The last two suspected my initial photo showed *Entoloma sinuatum*, but because I only had a shot of the cap from above (see below), they could not be sure. When my wife had a relapse, Voitk suggested I return to the Change Islands, and photograph other mushrooms in the group in more detail. From these photos he was able to confirm that the mushroom in question was not an *Amanita*, but most likely *Entoloma sinuatum*, as initially suspected by Dave Malloch.

After I had e-mailed Andrus Voitk the photographs that suggested it was *Entoloma sinuatum*, he reassured us that we should expect a full recovery, and after a couple of weeks we began to feel ourselves again. Our 10-day recovery left us weak and it was only soft food we could initially keep down. Now we are well, and hopefully wiser. I share this story somewhat uncomfortably, moved partly by gratitude for having escaped the worst possible outcome, and partly by a wish to alert others about the importance of exact identification of wild foods. An extremely brief lapse can bring permanent consequences.

Ed note: Adrian Sweetapple is a pseudonym. The *Entoloma* photos are by Adrian. The photo at the end of his story accompanied the initial request for help. It has the "feel" of a big white *Entoloma*, but certainly no definitive identification can be made from it. *Entoloma* poisoning usually lasts under two days, but may be longer. *Amanita* poisoning is characterized by recovery, followed by relapse. When this happened to Mrs. Sweetapple, it became important to confirm the identification. Big white entolomas tend to keep fruiting over several weeks, new crops coming up all the time, so that if it was an *Entoloma* a return to the Change Islands would be likely to find more, even though all were collected the first time. On his return Adrian did indeed find a new crop (pictures here & p. 9), which he collected for identification. The photo is very reassuring: no cup or volva, no ring, no free gills. Thus, not an *Amanita*. The bearing, shape, hump on the caps, and occurrence of a new crop are all characteristic of an *Entoloma*. *E. sinuatum* has white notched gills, well seen on the photo. Entolomas have a pink sporeprint, seen here as a pink tinge on the gills. As more spores form, the gills eventually become totally pink. This picture allowed us to relax—well worth the trip.

For contrast, note that *Armillaria ostoyae*, our honey mushroom (above, right), has a white sporeprint, a scaly brown cap, a ring, is often cespitose (together at the stem base) and grows on wood. See OMPHALINA II(7):10-12 for a fuller treatment. Read on to learn what else could happen to you, were you tempted to select your supper from big, fleshy, white mushrooms.

The Bishop's Sketchbook

Photo: Adrian Sweetapple

Big, white, fleshy, gilled mushrooms of Newfoundland and Labrador

Andrus Voitk

The previous article by Adrian Sweetapple opens an opportunity to review the big, white, fleshy, gilled mushrooms in our province. The commonest is lethal, several are toxic, a few are edible. It does not take a mathematical genius to understand that the odds are stacked against you to survive one careless meal from this group. Therefore, do not eat any big, white, fleshy, gilled mushroom unless you can identify your find with absolute certainty. If you are not sure whether your find qualifies as big, fleshy, etc., assume it does. If it is not perfectly white, treat it as if it were. If you are not sure whether the gills are free or notched, assume that they are free. If you are not certain whether there is no ring or it has been eaten by slugs, assume the latter. If you do not know whether your mushroom is gilled or not, you should not even think about collecting wild mushrooms to eat! And for goodness' sake, do a sporeprint!

RULE: Do not eat any big, white, fleshy, gilled mushroom unless you can identify your find with absolute certainty.

The above is not meant to belittle you, but to safeguard your lasting power. I love mushrooms, but cannot think of any mushroom I should be willing to die for. If you avoid all white or whitish mushrooms, you will live to have time to learn to identify them, if that is your wish. That tends to balance out any missed gustatory experience by a relatively healthy margin.

This article compares four of our commonest big, white, fleshy, gilled mushrooms. The treatment is far from all-inclusive. For example, left out are big, leafy mushrooms with obviously decurrent gills (e.g. *Catathelasma*, some *Clitocybe* spp., *Clitopilus*, *Leucopaxillus*), and the big white *Russula* and *Lactarius* spp. These last two have flesh that snaps like chalk and the *Lactarius* group usually exudes milk on injury. Also left out are white and light coloured species of *Lepista* (usually with an obvious smell), *Lyophyllum* (usually grow in tight clusters, often stems arise from one point), *Cortinarius* (brown sporeprint, presence of cortina), *Tricholoma* (e.g. the aromatic *T. matsutake*), and the shaggy genera *Coprinus* and *Chlorophyllum* (*Macrolepiota*). Also not featured is an uncommonly big example of the uncommon *Amanita vaginata* var. *alba*, as well as *Amanita islandica*, recorded from one location on the Island. Both have floppy sack-like volvas, free gills, white sporeprint and free gills. Both are edible, but unless you see them often enough to know them without doubt (they are not common enough here for this), don't even go there. Finally, please remember that darker mushrooms may have white or light-coloured forms or be bleached by wind and sun.

The four treated here may seem quite distinct to the veteran student of mushrooms, but for many, even with significant experience, it is easy to confuse them in a careless moment. I have confused *Entoloma sinuatum* with *Lepista irina* (see George Barron's website <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~gbarron/MISC2003/andrus.htm>). *Lepista irina* should also belong with the compared mushrooms, but because I have not found it in Newfoundland and Labrador, it is not included.

I encourage you to read Michael Beug's 2011 Toxicology Report in the Mycophile. Note that one of his rules is not to eat any white gilled mushrooms.

Amanita bisporigera

Edibility: lethally toxic.

Sporeprint: white.

Gills: free; white.

Ring: present, if not eaten by slugs.

Volva: large cup (dig it out!).

Others: This is our version of *A. virosa*. The many other similar amanitas across the continent, all equally lethal, are probably not native in NL.

Habitat: Coniferous or mixed forests. Very common.

Agaricus silvicola

Edibility: choice.

Sporeprint: dark brown.

Gills: free; pink at first, darken to dark brown from spores at (post)maturity.

Ring: present.

Volva: none, but base of stem may be bulbous.

Others: *A. abruptibulbous, A. leucotrichus, A. silvaticus* are close. *A. arvensis* may be similar. *A campestris* and others have shorter stem, but otherwise may be similar. All are edible. Some yellow-staining species are toxic, but we have not recorded them in NL.

Habitat: Coniferous or mixed forests. Occasional.

Leucoagaricus leucothites

Edibility: edible.

Sporeprint: white.

Gills: free; white.

Ring: present, usually can be moved.

Volva: none, but base of stem may be bulbous.

Others: *Amanita bisporigera*.

Habitat: Grasslands, lawns, meadows. Occasional.

Entoloma sinuata

Edibility: seriously toxic.

Sporeprint: pink.

Gills: notched or broadly attached; white, pink from spores at (post)maturity.

Ring: none.

Volva: none, but base of stem may be bulbous.

Others: A host of similar white fleshy entolomas have been described. According to M. Noordeloos, synonymous with *E. luridum* and *E. subsinuata*; *E. lividum* is similar with yellowish gills. We may also have *E. flavifolium* (butterscotch cap and yellow gills), and others.

Habitat: Meadows at the border of coniferous or mixed forests. Occasional.

Photo: Adrian Sweetapple

Mushroom Photography: Macro and Manual Focus for P&S

Jim Cornish

The definition of macro photography is very loosely applied when discussing macro photography on P&S cameras. Technically, macro photography produces life-sized or bigger images on the camera's sensor. Just about every late model P&S can do "macro" photography, but on closer examination, "close-up" describes the result better. While the images may not compare with a dSLR with a designated macro lens, remarkably good shots are possible.

Manual focus (MF) on a P&S camera sounds like an oxymoron. Compared to a dSLR, you cannot, for example, turn the lens via a focusing ring. MF on a point-and-shoot is achieved electronically by the camera, but under your control. It is designed to work with the macro mode, to allow you to override the AF system in selecting the point of sharpest focus. The camera might decide, for example, to have the edge of a mushroom cap in focus. You might decide the spot where the gills are attached to the stem is more important. If the camera's AF system will not do that, manual focus will let you shift the focus.

The previous article (OMPHALINA III-4:8-9) covered the auto focusing system and the auto focus lock feature on all P&S cameras. It might be a good idea to read it again. While each piece can stand on its own, a refresher on the auto focusing (AF) system might help you better understand what follows. This article covers the macro mode and manual focusing feature found on most late model P&S camera. Older P&S models might have the macro mode, but may lack the manual focus feature.

Macro Mode

Macro mode is generally symbolized by a tulip on the mode dial. When selected it instructs the camera to focus on a subject closer than normal to the lens. The minimum focusing distance allowed on a P&S varies from camera to camera so check the specification chart in the camera's manual for exact distance at the widest angle and the longest zoom. Usually it is about two centimetres or less with the lens at wide angle, and around seven centimetres when the camera lens is fully zoomed. Shooting closer than these distances will produce blurred images that cannot be fixed in camera, even using some of its fancy focusing features.

Macro mode also instructs the camera to choose a large aperture so that your subject is in focus but the background blurred. Some compact cameras have close-up filters that fit over the lens to help magnify the subject and/or decrease your minimum focal length.

Common iconry to indicate Macro and MF controls.

Macro mode is very easy to use and the results are generally acceptable. But, there are times the AF system will not focus on the part of the subject you want the sharpest. This is the limitation of the AF system. To get around this problem, some camera manufacturers have added a manual focus feature to their P&Ss.

Manual Focus

To determine if your P&S camera has manual focus, check the specifications in the camera's instruction manual. If it does, the manual will guide you through the steps. Most newer camera's with MF will have a button or menu option labeled MF, and immediately beside MF a tulip, the macro's flower icon. This means the

Enlarged area, allowing accurate manual focus setting.

MF works only in macro mode.

When you select the MF button, the tulip will appear on the LCD first, indicating that the camera is now set to macro mode. When you press the MF button again, a small square that magnifies a postage stamp-sized area of the center of the viewfinder appears along with a bar with either a measurement scale or a slider. (Older cameras may show only a number on the LCD, reflecting the focal length.) What appears inside this enlarged section is your camera's sharpest AF for that area of the image. You can improve this sharpness by turning a dial (found on higher end P&S camera models) or repeatedly pressing the left or right side of the circular button located on the back of the camera on most other P&S models. Depending on which side of the button your press, the enlarged area will become increasingly sharp or increasing blurred.

If your camera has such an enlargement area, slowly move the camera until the specific area you want to improve is visible in the magnified square. Increase the sharpness and then press the shutter release halfway down. Recompose and then press the shutter release the rest of the way. The resulting image will now be sharp where you want it to be.

Macro & Manual Focus for Small Mushrooms

The macro/manual focus combination might be helpful to show close-up surface detail or get those tight shots of small mushrooms, like *Mycena* and *Collybia* species, and smaller. This may be easier if the mushrooms were removed from their substrate and propped up on a tree stump, log or rock. With the back of the camera parallel to the mushroom stem and the camera steady, the focus on these tight shots using the MF option should be greatly improved.

To keep such small distances sharp, all shake must be eliminated. Use a tripod or other support. To eliminate the jiggling caused by pressing the shutter release button, either use a remote shutter release, or a 2-3 second time delay. Consult your manual how to select this. For best results, use both.

Begin as before, but instead of focusing, fix the focal length by selecting a value on the scale, slider or number on your LCD—the smaller your subject, the smaller the focal length. With the focal length thus set, move your camera and its support, until the detail or small mushroom you wish to show are in the sharpest focus on your LCD. When satisfied, take your shot with time delay and remote shutter release. If too much or too little of your subject appears on the screen, adjust the fixed focal length and try again (smaller number to have more of the subject fill the screen and larger number to increase what appears on the screen). With experience you will be able to estimate the correct length quite accurately.

An image doesn't need to be tack sharp throughout to be a good or even a great photograph. Photographers often use a technique called selective focus (choosing one part of the subject to be tack sharp and then letting the rest be out of focus) to be creative in their photography. Now that you know how the focusing system works, you can aim for one or both, depending on how creative you want to be.

Most people buy a P&S camera because they do not want to get too involved with technique. Many remain satisfied with what they can do in auto mode, but after a while some want to extend their horizons. The techniques described here are probably the most complicated that you can do with a P&S camera. However, they allow for pictures rivaling those of a dSLR without the weight or cost. Please see Figure 4 of *Byssonectria terrestris* in the "My favourite mushroom" article on p. 14. It was taken with a P&S, using the techniques described in this article. Like most things that follow steps, getting it to be second nature requires practice. Be patient, enjoy the challenge and then reap the rewards.

My Favourite Mushroom

Jim Cornish

Byssonectria terrestris

Spring is not the season one associates with mushrooms. Yet, come April or May or whenever Spring finally arrives in Newfoundland and Labrador, a few species can be found poking through the remaining snow and covering deadwood and small patches of bare ground saturated by snowmelt and spring rains. One species commonly found in Newfoundland and Labrador in spring is *Byssonectria terrestris* (Alb. & Schw.) Pfister, 1994. Last spring, a "myco-photography friend" took me to several patches he had found in a stand of fir trees growing on the old Gander townsite just north of the airport. This fungus instantly became a favourite because its carrot colour made it easy to find and close up, it proved to be much more interesting than I first thought.

Figure 1. *Byssonectria terrestris* in various stages of the development. The young balls look so different from the mature flat discs, that each can be mistaken for a separate species.

Byssonectria terrestris is a cup fungus that fruits on ground (terrestris means of the earth) enriched in nitrogen by the urine and feces of moose. Figures 1-3 were photographed in the spring of 2011 in a fir stand frequented by moose. The fungi were growing on scattered patches of mycelium that were either foamy white and stringy or orangey-translucent and gelatinous (bysso means filaments and nectria means jointed). From a distance, the patches looked like one orange mass, making the mushroom quite conspicuous against the dark, wet and bare ground. Close-up the patches proved to be quite different. Each one was crowded with hundreds of stalkless bright orange structures in various stages of development. More or less 5 mm in diameter, some looked like flat spintops while others looked like tiny cups.

After transferring my images of Byssonectria terrestris to my computer I was able to enlarge them and view the mass more closely. I noticed that in all of the images many of the cups appeared to be leaning in the same direction. Since the patches were photographed on a forest floor shaded by a tree canopy, I assumed the cups were phototrophic; in this case leaning south and southwest, towards the side of the tree stand with the greatest exposure to sun light. Research on this subject suggests that this phototropism has more to do with spore dispersal than any need for sunlight. In the spot I found these B terrestris, the open side of a tree stand faced the prevailing westerly winds which made it easier for raindrops and air currents to reach them.

Many cup fungi don't look very appetizing and are often too small to savour. Except for morels and truffles (the choice edibles of cup fungi), few other cup fungi are eaten, unless you are an insect, slug or rodent.

As the days grow warmer and the last remnants of winter leave the woods, venture down a trail. Where you find signs of moose, have a look around for this most unusual and conspicuous fungus.

Figure 2. Young *Byssonectria terrestris*, ball-shaped apothecia just opening up. The tip of the fir needle gives a sense of just how small these cup fungi are.

Figure 3. Young *Byssonectria terrestris* on a translucent pale orange mycelial mat.

Figure 4. Mature *Byssonectria terrestris* photographed with a point and shoot camera using the techniques described in the article on macro photography and manual focus (page 10). *Photo: Andrus Voitk*.

COMPETITION!

1ST AND ONLY PRIZE:
STORY PUBLISHED IN OMPHALINA AND A
FREE FNL NEWFOUNDLAND CHANTERELLE T-SHIRT

RULES:

1. IDENTIFY THE FUNGUS IN THE PICTURE, SCIENTIFIC AND COMMON NAMES.
2. WRITE A SHORT (>200, <600 WORDS) STORY ABOUT IT (DESCRIPTION, DISTRIBUTION, LIFE HISTORY, LIFESTYLE, PARTNER/HOST, SIGNIFICANCE, ETC.—YOUR CHOICE).
3. SEND IN AS MS WORD TEXT TO <SEENED AT GMAIL DOT COM> BEFORE AUGUST 9, 2012.

The contest is open to all current members of FNL. The Editor will be the sole judge, and the judge's decision will be final. The judge will assign some arbitrary advantage to the Amateur over the Advanced Amateur, and some to the Advanced Amateur over the Professional competitor. The aim is to ensure that even the most sallow of amateurs will have a smooth path for his or her efforts to bear beautiful fruit. Efforts to tar the judge by disgruntled competitors will result in disqualification of their entries on the spot!

Pairing mushrooms & wine

Geoff Thurlow


Photo: Rob Fiocca

The premise:

Mushroom lovers are undoubtedly a hedonistic lot, many of whom also enjoy a glass of good wine. It has not been lost on these folk that mushrooms and wine on the palate often complement each other, so that the total experience is often greater than the sum of the parts. Indeed, there are rare instances where the mind is flooded with light, the closed eyeballs roll to the back of the head and moans of pleasure can be heard …

Ahem … coming back to earth, it would be logical to ask "Which wines best complement mushrooms?" And since all mushrooms are not born equal, "Which mushrooms best complement wine?" The permutations and combinations boggle the mind.

If you google "mushroom and wine pairing" you'll get thousands of hits with all manner of sound advice, though some of it is curiously conflicting. As well, many of the wines cited are quirky personal preferences, or cult wines, not necessarily widely available. What's a body to do in search of the ultimate wine and mushroom pairing?

The inspiration:

Rather than sift through the mountain of advice available on the internet, it occurred to me that more reliable local knowledge might instead come from a simple experiment. Accordingly, a group of willing friends were assembled by a warm fire on a cold January 2012 night and were shamelessly used as guinea pigs and force-fed with gourmet mushrooms and fine wine.

The mushrooms:

My talented wife, Yvonne, concocted a magnificent Exotic Mushroom Pâté from a 2005 recipe (time consuming, but worth it) published online by the LCBO.[1] The key ingredients were largely fresh-frozen Newfoundland Chanterelles (*Cantharellus roseocanus*) with liberal additions of dried porcini and fresh shiitake. The result was opulent and rich and screamed for a vinous pairing. The pâté was served with neutral bread and crackers.

The Wines:

Subscribing to the old adage, "It's a wine's duty to be red", and also to the KISS formula, I chose just three red wines all from the 2005 vintage. The plan was to represent three common varietals from classic areas with an element of the New World/Old World tension stirred in for good measure. As well, with my personal oenophilic tendencies well entrenched, I sought to elevate the conversation marginally above the lakes of industrial wine that dominate most markets. So, with all of the above in mind, the wines chosen were as follows:

1. a Burgundy – 2005 Nuits-Saint-Georges, Les Lavières from Daniel Rion (100% pinot noir, bien sûr)
2. a left bank Bordeaux – 2005 Château Caronne Ste-Gemme, Cru Bourgeois Supérieur, Haut-Médoc (cabernet sauvignon dominated blend), and
3. a full-throttle Aussie shiraz – 2005 Turkey Flat, Barossa Valley.

All were purchased from the well-stocked Newfoundland Liquor Corporation, and though all are not still available, many comparable substitutes can be found. The wines were opened 6 hours in advance but not decanted and were poured into glasses 45 minutes before tasting. Palates were normalized with bread and a glass of dry 2001 Italian bubbly before

the tasting. The wines were not revealed until after the tasting.

The questions:

Each participant was supplied with a simple ballot that allowed them to supply answers to the following two questions:

1. Before any mushrooms are tasted, how would you rate each wine, on a scale from 1 to 5? and,
2. Having intermingled the mushroom pâté and wines on the palate, how would you rate each pairing, again on a scale from 1 to 5?

The results:

The scores for each wine and each pairing were simply summed. The wine ratings were as follows:

Burgundy: 34 points (out of a possible 50)

Bordeaux: 36 points

Shiraz: 41 points

The Shiraz was the clear favourite of this group. It was the darkest of the lot and was thick and rich on the palate with elements of stewed fruit. The Burgundy was the lightest of the lot with a bright acidity that evidently was less appealing on its own. All the wines had thrown off the aggressive tannins and excessive fruit of youth and were drinking quite nicely in early to mid maturity. As were we.

The ratings of the wine and mushroom pairings provided some surprises:

Burgundy: 34 points (out of a possible 50)

Bordeaux: 38 points

Shiraz: 32 points

The popularity of the Bordeaux and mushroom pairing rose to the top whereas the top-rated Shiraz evidently did not agree with the mushrooms and plummeted to last place. Overall, quite a surprising and interesting outcome. Clearly some wines do not pair with some mushrooms as elegantly as others. I personally had thought that the combination of mushrooms with the Burgundy (generally known for its earthy character) might have prevailed. Indeed, even the LCBO recipe suggested a pinot noir pairing! Evidently not in this instance.

Conclusions:

This was fun and educational – we'll have to do it again!

Reference:

1. http://www.lcbo.com/lcbo-ear/RecipeController?language=EN&recipeType=1&action=recipe&recipeID=2450.

The empty skillet

Maria Voitk
Editor

Chaga Chocolate Crescents

OR

TAO Cookies

URVE MANUEL

*TAO, of course, from **T**riple **A**nti**O**xidant, because nuts, chocolate and chaga are three potent anti-oxidants. If you eat these, you might*

1. *live forever, and*
2. *it would be worth it, just so that you can keep on eating them forever.*

INGREDIENTS

2-3 cups ground hazelnuts
3 tbsp ground chaga*
3 tbsp flour
1 tsp baking soda
2 eggs
1 cup sugar
1 cup butter
300 mg dark chocolate

Chocolate dip:

5 squares Baker's chocolate
2 tbsp butter

* Medium fine grind—not so coarse as to leave chunks, but not as fine as flour. If you order from The Chagaman, <http://www.wix.com/chagaontherock/chaga>, ask for "Custom TAO grind".

PROCEDURE

Whip sugar and softened butter until creamy. Beat in eggs. Fold in ground hazelnuts, chaga, baking soda and flour, to make firm paste.

Fine tune ingredient amounts to get firm batter consistency. Experiment with almonds instead of filberts, or varying sweetness and darkness of chocolate, etc. Try with and without any of vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, etc. if you like.

Roll into ropes, cut and shape into crescents. Bake on greased or parchment paper covered cookie sheet in preheated oven at 350°F before they brown, about 10 min. Careful! Brown = burnt. Cool, dip one end into molten dark chocolate and set out on parchment paper to solidify.

Chocolate dip: melt and mix Baker's chocolate and butter in double boiler or microwave (20 sec. max). Careful! Chocolate burns easily.

Book review

2012

Alan E. Bessette, William C. Roody, Walter E. Sturgeon, Arleen R. Bessette

Waxcap mushrooms of eastern North America

Syracuse University Press
Syracuse NY

192 pp.

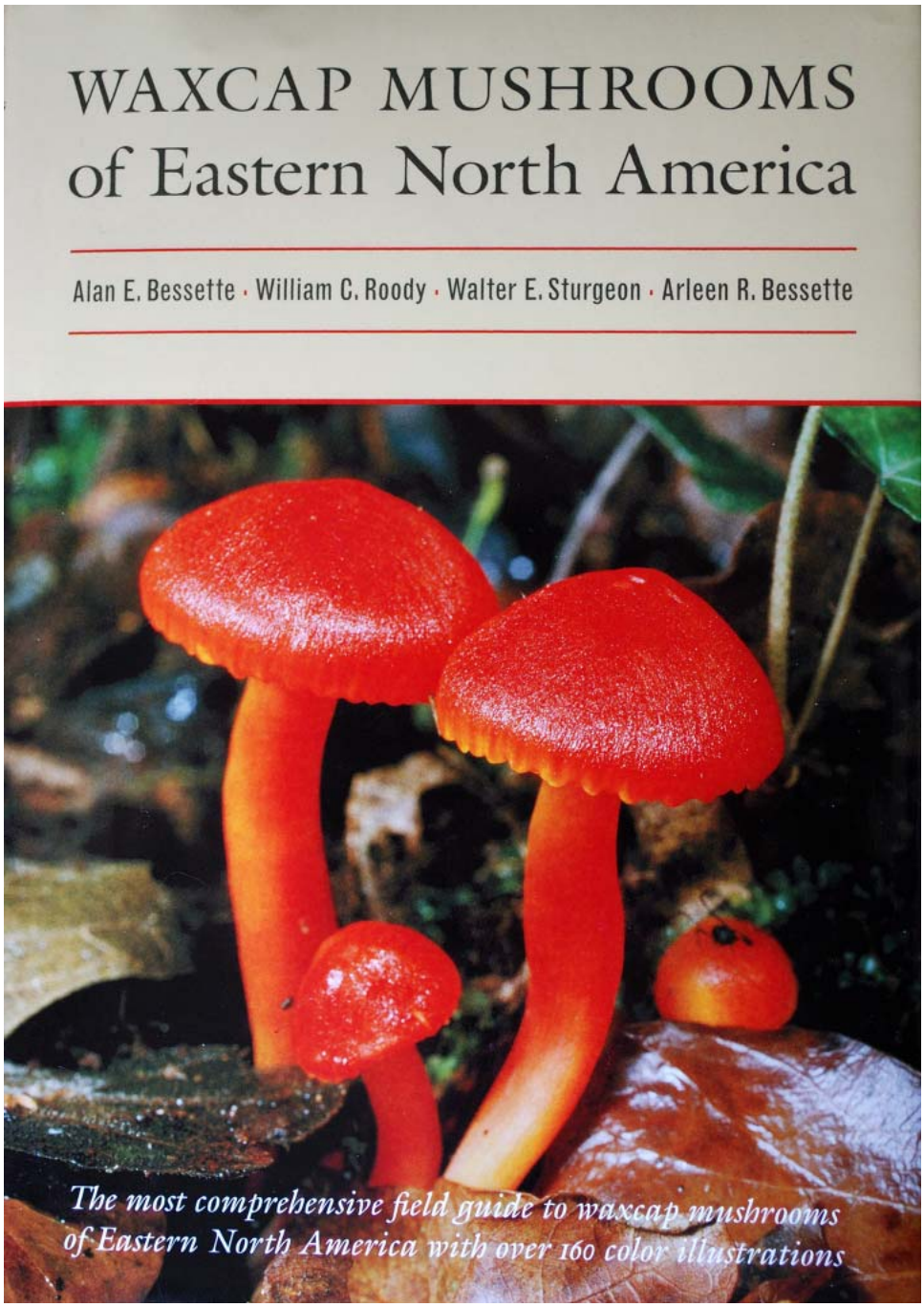
$78.55 CAD on preorder form amazon.ca, taxes and delivery included.

Renée Lebeuf

Waxcaps are mushrooms that, in most cases, are easily identified with the naked eye, which makes them attractive for amateur mycophiles. To help them, Alan E. Bessette, William C. Roody, Walter E. Sturgeon and Arleen R. Bessette just wrote a book about this fascinating and very colourful group. Alan Bessette is one of the most prolific mycological authors of North America, having spearheaded, among other books, previous monographs of North America Boletes and *Lactarius*.

This book is the largest treatment of waxcaps in Eastern North America since Hesler and Smith's *North American Species of* Hygrophorus, published in 1963. Intended mostly as an extensive but non-technical book, it offers more detail and information than regular field guides, without being too harsh on the reader without formal education in mycology.

At first glance, the book just looks beautiful, featuring a gorgeous picture of *Hygrocybe coccinea* on the jacket. The introduction describes the genera *Hygrophorus* and *Hygrocybe*, followed by an overview of the North American mycologists who contributed to the knowledge of American waxcaps. The authors then discuss macroscopic features of the two genera, edibility, and species that might be mistaken for waxcaps. As is usual in Bessette's books, the text is presented first and the images grouped in the



second part of the book, making the reader flip back and forth to view the pictures together with the descriptions. In general, the 160 pictures are of very good quality and of a good size (two per page).

There are about 115 species and varieties described, a very high portion of the known taxa in Eastern North America. Many other species are discussed in the observations, which present lookalikes of the described species. The book describes species discovered after Hesler and Smith's book, pulling together information difficult to find otherwise. About 25 taxa are not illustrated. Pictures of unusual species are difficult to find, so perhaps it is unreasonable to wish that all were illustrated.

The authors chose to divide the waxcaps into *Hygrocybe* and *Hygrophorus*, avoiding genera like *Humidicutis* and *Camarophyllopsis*. While this may not be a major hardship, some of the new combinations (e.g. from *Hygrophorus* to *Hygrocybe*) are unfortunately not valid because all the requirements of the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (*now the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants*) were not met. To be valid, the Code requires that new combinations provide the original name, author and place of publication of the original description. As a result, officially the new combinations should not be used, even though most of these taxa clearly belong where they have been transferred.

None of my critical comments are serious impediments to my using this very helpful book. However, the absence of a key is an inconvenience. It might be difficult for the reader to access some of the non-illustrated species. To help, the authors grouped the pictures of similar species together instead of putting them in alphabetical order. Using the pictures and the descriptions of the illustrated species, where information is found about the non-illustrated lookalikes, the reader should quite readily be able to access most of the information in the book.

This aside, the book is a very good (and very good looking) treatment of the waxcaps of eastern North America and should prove very useful for anyone wanting a deeper knowledge of this fascinating group. It can be confidently recommended for members of Foray Newfoundland & Labrador, because it includes almost all of the species encountered in the province with the exception of some more northern species, like *Hygrocybe lilacina*, *H. cinerella* and *H. citrinopallida*.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT

PYRENOMYCETES?

WANTED:

SOMEBODY TO EDIT AN ISSUE ON THIS GROUP.

E-mail the Editor
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In memoriam:

ERAST PARMASTO

1928-2012

Andrus Voitk

The grand old man of Estonian mycology, Erast Parmasto, died on April 24, 2012. His vision brought the discipline from the field to the bench, laying the foundation for phylogenetic research in Estonia. Fungal genera and species have been named in his honour by colleagues throughout the world.

I knew Erast only through e-mail, including the pleasure of collaborating with him on a small article.[1] A consummate scientist with a keen sense of humour, he was a cultured man with wide interests outside mycology, pursued with equally vast knowledge.

An anecdote from his short autobiography[2] is a fitting memorial, illustrating his tireless efforts to bring the world to Estonia and Estonia to the world, something he has since achieved through his students, very much his disciples, pursuing the same vision.

At the 9th Congress of European Mycologists in Oslo in 1985, Parmasto invited the organizers to hold the 10th Congress in Estonia. This was back in the deep night of USSR dominance over Estonia with resulting shortages of freedom and material things. Permission had to be obtained from Moscow, something that took four years of vacillating yes-and-no to achieve. Temporary repeal of laws forbidding foreigners travel had to be negotiated. Laws restricting routes and forbidding roadside stops were officially waived only a month before the Congress. The largest Congress to date, 228 registrants, was followed by bus excursions to various forest and country sites.

Each bus had along a young couple in charge of a mysterious plastic bag. Every time the bus stopped at a country inn or eatery, this team left the bus with its bag. The driver then awaited a sign to allow the other passengers to disembark. When the lunch or snack was over, all returned to the bus and waited, until the team entered with its mysterious plastic bag. And so it went for the ensuing week, from stop to stop.

Having seen the outside, Parmasto knew Western expectations. In the bag were rolls of toilet paper, a commodity unavailable in Estonia, procured for the Congress by years of special measures and calling in favours. A roll was taken to the toilet of the facility before the guests trooped in, guarded with eagle eye, and retrieved again after their repast and associated ablutions were finished. The supply lasted the entire week, and the spoiled Westerners never guessed!

Rest in peace, Erast!

Photo: Bellis Kullmann

References

1. Parmasto E, Voitk A: Why do mushrooms weep? Fungi 3(4):15-17. 2010.
2. Parmasto E: Ühe seenevana elupäevad. Ilmamaa, Tartu. 2009.

THE MAIL BAG

OR WHY THE PASSENGER PIGEONS ASSIGNED TO SERVE THE LAVISH CORPORATE AND EDITORIAL OFFICES OF OMPHALINA GET HERNIAS

I

I love Omphalina!
Andy Methven

Stunning. Simply stunning.
Lorelei Norvell

Ed note: You just can't have too many of these perceptive assessments, even if it ain't Valentine's Day.

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September 28-30, 2012

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