It seems that little El Niño got off to a slow, gradual start this year. It provided just enough rain to slowly, very slowly, wet the ground enough to soak in well and saturate so slowly, so very slowly, that the mushroom season has been about two months late. Well into winter, we had only had one third of normal precipitation. The rains finally came, enough to get us up to normal, and then El Niño went off to play elsewhere, leaving us with the balmy tropics -- not bad if you're into cacti and succulents.

Early fruiters that usually come out with the first rains were finally showing up in late January and early February. I know a reliable Jack O’ Lantern that fruited consistently for the last ten years from Thanksgiving through Fungus Fair at the base of a lightning bolted oak. It was just wilting at the beginning of February. Nearby is an oak with a hollow opening at head height and head size that is usually prime during the same Thanksgiving to Fungus Fair window. The hollow was completely crammed with the largest lion’s mane that

**Mushroom of the Month:** Shaggies - Shaggy Mane and Shaggy Parasol

_Coprinus comatus, Chlorophyllum brunneum, Chlorophyllum rachodes_
by Ken Litchfield

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Hello fellow MSSF Members,

The early rains of March certainly brought quite a bounty with them. I was fortunate enough to literally stumble upon a small patch of morels in a planter box as I was walking home to my house in the Mission district…. Dare I eat them? Oh you betcha!

We even had someone bring in a beautiful spring porcini to the general meeting on the 15th. That thing could have fed a small village. Let's hope it actually did. Anyway, March has proven to be a fantastic month to get out and see all the mushrooms, and I hope each and every one of you took full advantage and filled a basket or two.

If you are itching to get your hands on some morels, the spring morel foray is upon us. The dates are May 21 and 22 and we will be heading into the King Fire this year, camping off of Ice House Road near Highway 50 on the way to Tahoe. Keep your eye on the MSSF Calendar for more information regarding this trip. Every year it is a blast to go up to the mountains, camp with your fellow mycophiles, and hopefully come home with a grocery bag of yummy morels. (No guarantee on the grocery bag quantity, but it has happened in the past.) Remember to be safe and respectful up in the mountains this season.

Last month at our general meeting we were graced with the presence of Jack Muir Laws, who taught us how to draw mushrooms. It was a fantastic meeting, and a lot of fun to see everyone actively participating. Jack is a very talented man, with a great philosophy on life. I know I appreciated having him come share his wonderful skill.

We have yet another big set of guests this month, Erowid, A.K.A. Earth and Fire, who are coming to speak on the topic of hallucinogenic fungi. We anticipate a large crowd for the meeting so be sure to get there early. Their web site, http://www.erowid.org/, is a vault of knowledge on the topics of psychoactive plants and fungi.

On May 17th we have our important Annual Meeting, where we will vote on next year’s council positions. The nominees for the positions will be announced at the April meeting. I want to encourage members to attend this meeting to help support the future of the society with your vote. The election of incoming officers and councilors will be by the majority vote of MSSF members present at the May General Meeting, provided that a quorum is present. This will also be the last meeting of the season before our summer hiatus. On September 20th, the MSSF general meetings will resume at the County Fair Building in Golden Gate Park.

Thanks again to all of you who continually contribute to make the Society a great organization. Remember to share your love of the forests and mushrooms with a friend, and bring them to the next meeting if you can. We’d love to meet them!

I hope to see you eating morels this spring,

Brennan - president@mssf.org

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**Mushroomer of the Month**

Sunnyside Elementary 5th grader Poppy did her science fair project on local SF mycology. Her topic was “What is the most plentiful mushroom in McClaren Park in December.”

She found it to be *Mycena murina.*

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**Herbal Mead Making**

7pm-10:30ish Every Wednesday Night at Omni Commons Lab
4799 Shattuck Ave, Oakland

Contact Ken Kitchfield (litchfield.ken@gmail.com) for more info
I've ever seen there, two months late. *Lactarius alnicola*, which I usually recognize as signaling the crank of the general mushroom season in November, didn't flush until late January. Just down the hill from those patches were oyster logs going gangbusters when they normally are out in late November on the same logs. Candy caps have just been kicking in at the latter part of the midwinter balmy pause. I only saw my first chanterelle of the season the weekend before last, as I write this shortly before mid-March. And that's just before El Niño decided to finally kick in these past two weeks. Now I'm hoping to finally see the candy caps really crank, along with amethystinas, and finally -- finally -- maybe -- chanterelles. Plus a nice lead-in to shaggy season.

I think all that balmy midwinter tropics provided an opportunity for lots of mycelial growth without enough moisture or humidity for any actual bountiful fruiting. With the latest rains, considerable numbers of delectable, anisey-almondy princes, *Agaricus augustus*, have been popping up, indicators for shaggy conditions. Typically, princes will be up in sandy soils around fog dripping pines out in the Sunset boulevards of SF in the warm summer months, but they're out early this year.

Button mushrooms and shaggies constitute a lifestyle group of compost feeding saprobic mushrooms that are helpful to learn about as a group. When we say buttons, that's the vulgate name that refers specifically to the members of the taxonomic genus *Agaricus*. The *Agaricus* genus encompasses the portobello, crimini, and button mushrooms typically found in the generic produce section of most common grocery stores; it's the mushroom that the average American thinks of when they think of mushrooms as food. The genus is generally divided into the edible half of species that have an anisey-almondy or store bought button mushroom fragrance or flavor, and the nonedible “puker” half of species that usually have a sort of library paste or phenol identifying fragrance which some folks, like myself, genetically can't distinguish. Among the best of the edible local wild buttons are the distinctly anisey-almondy prince and the meaty “salt lover”, *A. bernardii*. But more common, especially in backyard gardens, are the golden puker buttons that stain yellow when rubbed on the base of the stem or the side of the cap, *Agaricus xanthodermus*.

When we say shaggies we're referring to the shaggy mane and the shaggy parasol. The shaggy mane, *Coprinus comatus*, is the largest of the inky caps, a group of capped gilled mushrooms that quickly deliquesces, in warm temps, from a pristine, sprouted mushroom to a gooey, black, inky liquid dripping off a skeletonized umbrella. The shaggy mane has a bullet or torpedo shaped cap that stays folded down around the stipe rather than opening up and flattening out like most capped mushrooms. The deliquescence progresses from the outside edge of the cap, i.e., the bottom of the folded cap, and progresses upward and inward through the cap. Looked at in vertical cross section through the center of the cap and stipe, the cap, stipe, and gills will be pure white when young before deliquescence begins, with unstaining white flesh where the cut surface is exposed to the air. When observing the deliquescence in cross-sectioned caps, in the earliest stage of maturity the cap has reached full size and the gills are all white. This is the primo delectable stage for harvest. As the cap begins deliquescence, the gills begin to turn pinkish at the outer rim or bottom of the cap. As the pinkish color progresses up the cap, it begins to turn black at the bottom edge of the pink portion, so in the early stages you can see that the gills are still white at the top of the cap, there is a band of pink gills toward the middle, and the bottom edge of the pink band has turned black. Any part of the cap that has turned pink or black will taste “funky” but any remaining white flesh of the cap can be cut away from the pink stuff and cooked for eating.

Interestingly, the cross sectioned stipe is hollow, and in the hollow chamber you'll find a long white “kite string” of tissue hanging loose connecting the bottom center of the hollow to the center of the top of the chamber at the center of the cap. This is an identifying characteristic of the shaggy mane.

Continued on page 4
The other shaggy is the shaggy parasol. Like the shaggy mane and the prince, the shaggy parasol is a delectable ed-

Clitocybe clavipes

To make shaggy mane ink, collect any shaggy mane caps or parts of caps that are past prime for eating, or have

turned to globs of gook, and place them in a low, wide-mouthed glass jar like a salsa jar or a pickled herring jar. You can

remove the stems before the caps have gone to ink as the stems don’t produce any ink and their fleshy parts just get in the way. If your collected samples are already inky you can leave the messy stems in and strain them out later. Close the lid of the jar and place it in a pleasantly warm spot until all of the cap tissue has disintegrated into ink, usually a day or so maximum. Then run it through a strainer to remove any of the chunky stems or other tissue and put the ink back into the lidded jar. This time leave the lid off and place it in a warm spot with a fan on it to dehydrate the ink. After it is dry scrape the black ink from the slick glass surface and put it into a mortar and pestle to grind it to as fine a powder as you can conveniently produce. This can then store indefinitely in a glass jar as dry inky cap ink. Or you can place a little in a small ceramic cup and add 95% ethanol or 99% rubbing alcohol to reconstitute the ink. The alcohol solvent dries faster when painting with the ink than a water base and it helps to preserve the ink from rotting over time. Depending upon how much ink powder you use per quantity of alcohol will determine how dense of an ink or ink wash you produce. You can use this ink like India ink in a stylus pen, but it usually works better with a camel’s hair brush.

Most any of the inky cap species can be used to make inky cap ink, but for practical purposes there is really only one other species that is large enough to bother with. That is Coprinopsis atramentaries, the “alcoholic’s inky cap.” This inky cap looks similar to the shaggy mane, smaller but smoother, without the shingles or shags. It contains coprine, a component similar to disulphiram or Antabuse, which causes the feeling of a bad hangover in folks who eat this mushroom while drinking alcohol. Other mushrooms that are reputed to contain something similar are Imperator torosus, Suillelus luridus, and Clitocybe clavipes.

The other shaggy is the shaggy parasol. Like the shaggy mane and the prince, the shaggy parasol is a delectable ed-

ible. Like them it is a compost feeder that particularly likes the fine compost duff composed of the tiny needles of Monterey cypress found under those trees. It also likes manure piles and broken-down mulch compost. It pops up quickly out of the duff from predeveloped dormant buttons in the early morning after an evening of summer fog drip or some rainy season moisture. The shaggy parasol is the round version of the bullet-shaped shaggy mane; they both do look remarkably similar with their dark brown shingle-like patches around the top central brown patch. And all around the sides of the cap are shaggy bits that make them both look like the popular shag hairstyle of the 70s, which led to much shagging and adds to the popularity of these mushrooms. As it matures, the cap of the shaggy parasol does open and flatten out like most regular capped mushrooms and unlike the shaggy mane, which retains its bullet shape. When you cut the flesh of the shaggy parasol, the stems are solid and the cut surface does turn orangy or reddish, in contrast to the white-fleshed shaggy mane. Shaggy parasols are white-spored with white gills consistently to maturity. There is a green-spored, green-gilled parasol, Chlorophyllum molybdites, the shaggy parasol lookalike that is a puker but not usually found in the cooler areas of the bay area, but more around the warmer valley. Shaggy parasols are great diced small and sautéed in butter with added cream cheese or sour cream to make shaggy dip. Or they can be dehydrated whole or sliced, and when placed in a glass jar sealed for a few days, their fragrance is reminiscent of freshly hulled pecans. Dried and powdered they make great cream sauces.

The shaggy parasol has another characteristic distinction. It is one of the mushrooms that has gone through a notorious number of scientific name changes, so much so that many folks have seen them lurch from Lepiota rachodes to Macrolepiota rachodes, to then be split between Chlorophyllum brunneum, and Chlorophyllum rachodes. It’s weird to expect these slippery scientific names to be more stable than the reliable common name of shaggy parasol, which everyone has always known. It’s rather disorienting to know that scientific nomenclature was developed to give people a reliable system for

Suillelus luridus

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identifying living organisms and have that end run by the vulgate names that are more stable, reliable, and understandable. So often I’ve had conversations with folks that stare in a stupor when I refer to “Chlorophyllum brunneum” but perk out of “duh” mode when I clarify with “shaggy parasol.” Or I’ll simply call the splitted Chlorophyllum brunneum and Chlorophyllum rachodes by the vulgate name of “rachodes” that everyone understands when applied as a common name.

I enjoy advocating with the academic taxonomist types that are authoring new names based upon analysis of DNA characters that can’t be defined by traditional morphological characters that the average person can recognize. Just because the pendulum has swung in favor of the splitters in these early stages of DNA technology doesn’t mean that all these academics deserve all the authorships for “new” species they are claiming. Soon enough the lumpers will be swinging back in on Tarzan lianas to rectify the primitive current situation with more sophisticated methodologies and publications down the road a few years. Next time you encounter one of these academic splitters smugly trying to dismiss your perfectly rational arguments that these academics should have their influence over normal societal discourse limited to the pages of the “Journal of Tentative Taxonomy” for a minimum of ten years before their “findings” are imposed upon the public, don’t be fazed. Remind them that it was the splitter academics that imposed the inappropriate term “Macrolepiota” upon the forest foraging public. Everyone knows that “macro” refers to the type of lens that you use to take pictures of LITTLE things. Normal folks would never use that to refer to BIG Lepiota. Those of us normal folks know the big Lepiota belongs in the genus Megalepiota. If you’re going to split it out, at least split it out properly. That doesn’t even have to do with DNA; that’s just plain English.

For further reference - http://www.mycologia.org/content/95/3/442.full

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**Culinary Corner** by Heather Lunan

Our March Culinary dinner was a delight of colors and textures and was inspired by “Spring in Venice”. Team Captains Laura Parker and Leslie Stansfield and their talented team created a Venetian feast, preceded by wonderful mushroom appetizers from the attending members. The main dish, prepared by Kevin Hyland, was swordfish baked in white wine and served with a porcini and crimini mushroom sauce loaded with fresh garlic and lemon. Many thanks to Far West Fungi (http://www.farwestfungi.com/) for the great deal on the porcini, and to Ports Seafood (http://www.portseafood.com/) for the beautiful swordfish! The vegetarian entree was a flaky pastry shell stuffed with sautéed vegetables and sauced with the porcini and crimini mushroom sauce. Lesley de Lone created a beautiful pasta dish with fresh pea pesto. Paul Lufkin presented roasted spring organic asparagus with sea salt and truffled olive oil. Lesley Stansfield proffered a tricolor salad with radicchio, endive and lettuce with Gorgonzola cheese, dressed with a grapefruit vinaigrette made with grapefruit from her backyard. The Italian bread was from the Downtown Bakery and Creamery in Healdsburg (http://www.downtownbakery.net/). Sheila Harman created a luxurious and decadent tiramisu accompanied by Carol Reed’s coffee service. Virgilio Cardona led the clean up and set up crew. Thank you to the dinner team for this wonderful experience!

Be sure to snag a spot for the next Culinary Dinner, “A Forager’s Heart-Healthy Feast” with Team Captains Curt Haney, Carol Reed, Peter Griffin, and Janet Dudley. Mark your calendars for Monday, April 4th, and be sure to register soon.

It has been so lovely to have all of the recent rain, washing the streets of San Francisco clean and watering the mycelium throughout Northern California. Forays have returned with wonderful volumes of mushrooms, some to be enjoyed fresh and others preserved for the rest of the year. Many times we sauté and freeze the abundance of mushrooms harvested when the season is high, or dehydrate them and store in jars or bags for pantry storage. While this is wonderful, sometimes it can feel uninspired. I recommend making this recipe of stuffed chicken breasts and freezing them for a quick dinner at a later date or for an easy dinner party. Skin-on boneless chicken breasts are stuffed under the skin with an herbed mushroom and greens dressing. Simply thaw the day before you need them for an elegant entree with little effort. I like to wrap each stuffed breast in plastic wrap and freeze on a flat surface, then pile them into a gallon ziplock freezer bag for storage.

Continued on page 6
Preheat oven to 350 F.

Place chicken breasts, skin side down, on a cutting board and pull off the little tenderloin filet piece from each breast. It should pull away easily. Turn the breasts over, skin side up, and using your fingers, gently separate the skin from the breast on one long edge to make a little pocket between the skin and meat. Season both sides of the chicken with salt and pepper and set aside.

Cut the chicken filets in half and place in a food processor and pulse the machine on and off until the chicken is puréed.

In a large skillet over medium high heat, melt 1 Tbl. butter and sauté onions until soft, about 10-15 minutes, adding a sprinkle of salt and pepper at the start. Remove the onions on a plate and set aside.

Melt the remaining 1 Tbl. of butter in the skillet and add the mushrooms and a sprinkle of salt and pepper, and sauté until the mushrooms give off their juices. Add the chopped herbs and sauté until the mushrooms have started to brown and the liquid has been absorbed.

Add the onions, the sautéed mushrooms, and the thawed frozen spinach to the chicken in the food processor. (If you are using fresh greens, melt the butter in the sauté pan and cook the greens until tender, about 10 minutes, and remove to a plate to cool. When they have cooled, squeeze out as much liquid as possible and chop roughly with a knife, then add the greens to the food processor.)

Pulse the raw chicken, mushroom, onion and greens mixture until it is well combined. Add the eggs and the ricotta, parsley, lemon zest, and nutmeg. Pulse the machine until smooth. Add 1 tsp. of salt and 3/4 tsp. ground pepper and pulse a few times more. You still want to see texture from the mushrooms and onions after all of the mixing is done. Do not over process!

Sauté a spoonful of the mixture in the skillet until cooked through to test for enough salt and pepper. Adjust seasoning as desired.

Spoon the mixture into a large ziplock bag, and press out the air and squeeze to fill one corner of the bag. Using scissors, cut opening the size of the diameter of your index finger from the filled corner.

With the chicken skin side up, squeeze the filling under the chicken skin into the little pocket. Depending upon the size of your chicken breasts, you should be able to fill each breast with 1/4-1/3 cup of filling. Press the loose edge of skin down to seal the dressing inside. Lightly smooth the skin with your fingers to distribute the filling evenly under the skin, but not letting it overflow outside the skin.

If you are planning on cooking them right away, place the chicken breasts a few inches apart on a well oiled large cookie tray or on a piece of parchment paper on top of the tray. Re-season the skin lightly with salt and pepper. Bake for 30 - 35 minutes. Let rest 5 minutes, and using a thin, sharp knife, slice diagonally to show off the beautiful filling and juicy chicken.

If you are planning on freezing them for later, place each filled breast on a piece of plastic wrap and gently wrap up securely. Freeze flat, skin side up. When frozen solid, place them in a large plastic freezer bag for storage. Thaw in the fridge and let them rest on a plate 30 minutes on the counter while the oven preheats. Bake as above.

If you have any leftover stuffing, squeeze out balls the size of a walnut onto an oiled baking tray and then chill. When cold, sauté in butter and serve with cooked pasta and a wine and mushroom sauce or in a chicken broth based soup. Sometimes, they just get eaten as soon as they’re cooked, plucked out of the pan while trying not to scorch your fingers, lagniappe for the cook!

Serves 16 or makes a bunch for the freezer.
The 2015/16 season had a tremendous fruiting of candy cap mushrooms in Northern California. Given the abundance, there was a lot of discussion online about the differences between the two Lactarius species commonly called “candy cap” - Lactarius rubidus and Lactarius rufulus. In these discussions, many folks said that L. rufulus was not only inferior on the plate, but perhaps not worthy of harvest. So, one evening, I decided to put the “conventional wisdom” to the test with a candy cap mushroom side-by-side taste test. L. rubidus vs. L. rufulus - the “true” candy cap vs. the “poor man’s” candy cap.

I prepared two batches of cookies according to David Arora’s recipe from All that the Rain Promises and More. In one I used L. rubidus and in the other L. rufulus. I took care to prepare both batches of cookies as similarly as I could reasonably manage. I also doubled the amount of candy caps the recipe calls for to maximize their flavor and hopefully highlight any differences.

And the findings? Both species result in delicious mapley-butterscotchy-earthy cookies! Hot out of the oven, I found them nearly indistinguishable from one another when prepared according to DA’s simple sugar cookie recipe. The following day, however, I subjected three unbiased coworkers (and myself again) to my little experiment. None of my coworkers knew which cookie was which species nor had they been exposed to any species bias to begin with. All three stated that both cookies were delicious and enjoyable, but that the L. rufulus cookie tasted a little bit more “mushroomy” than the L. rubidus cookie, which tasted more like “maple syrup”. I found that I agreed. In my experience, the candy cap flavor in my confections often intensifies if given a bit of time. In this case, that intensification made the difference in flavor between the species more discernible. However, all three coworkers said that if I hadn’t given them the cookies side by side, they would have thoroughly enjoyed either cookie and would have happily eaten seconds of both types. Given the two for comparison, though, all three indicated a slight preference for the L. rubidus cookie.

So, while some taste buds slightly prefer Lactarius rubidus, by no means is L. rufulus worthy of the “poor-man’s” moniker so cruelly applied to it by some. In fact, its easy to imagine that in some applications, their slightly earthier flavor might even be preferred! Regardless, when in season in years to come, you can be sure that both species will continue to find their way into my basket.

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This month’s Cultivation Quarters is a little briefer, since the shaggies are compost feeders and we saw how to make quick, easy 14-day compost back in the October 2015 Mycena News. You can refer to that issue for details.

Anywhere in your garden that you can place piles or mulches of finished compost or fresh manure will be a place you can inoculate with the slurries of buttons and shaggies or their bases or other parts. Manure is essentially raw cellulose broken down to compost by the gut bacteria of ruminant animals rather than the microbes found in the hot compost pile. The raw grass materials are shredded by the teeth of the animals into a perfect soil texture when they get pooped out the rear of the animal.

Often you’ll hear that manure needs to be “well rotted” before it is put in your garden. However it can go straight from the horse’s butt or the shoveled stable right into the garden as long as it isn’t placed right up against the stems of any plant like tomatoes or fruit trees, which might cause the piled manure to heat up for decomposition and perhaps burn the stems from the potentially 160-degree maximum heat of hot composting.
MUSHROOM SIGHTINGS IN MARCH 2016

Send photos of your findings to mycenanews@mssf.org to be published in the next newsletter.
HOSPITALITY

The Hospitality Committee gives its March shout-out to guest chefs Jackie Shay and Madhu Kottalam for their savory portobello bruschetta, beautifully seasoned with olive oil, garlic, parsley, thyme, birch smoked salt, and lavender pepper. Notwithstanding unforeseen circumstances that required certain last minute adjustments in their game plan, Jackie and Madhu came through in great MSSF style to wow the appreciative audience.

YOU TOO can be a guest chef for a hospitality hour. Just e-mail George at george_willis@sbcglobal.net, or Eric at mullew@comcast.net. You will have an $80 food budget from the MSSF, and Hospitality Committee members available for advice and support.

MSSF Calendar April 2016

Monday, April 4, 7:00 p.m. - Culinary Group Dinner
  Theme: Forager's Heart Healthy Feast - details
  Hall of Flowers, Country Fair Building
  Golden Gate Pk., 9th & Lincoln, S.F.
  Advance registration required at mssf.org.
  Email culinary@mssf.org to volunteer.

Tuesday, April 19, 7:00pm - 10:00 pm - General Meeting
  7pm - Mushroom Identification, mushroom appetizers...
  8pm - General Meeting
  Speakers: Earth & Fire Erowid
  Topic: Psilocybin and World Cultures
  Hall of Flowers, County Fair Building
  Golden Gate Pk., 9th & Lincoln, S.F.

Check the MSSF online calendar at:
http://www.mssf.org/calendar/index.php
for full details, latest updates
and schedule changes.

MSSF Volunteer Opportunities

Join the Council leadership, learn the inner workings of the MSSF and help make decisions that shape the future of the society. Do your part by contributing your time to this 100% volunteer organization!

To learn more about all council and committee positions, go to: www.mssf.org members-only area, file archives, council member position descriptions. Or email president@mssf.org.

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Submit to Mycena News: The submission deadline for the May 2016 issue is April 15th. Send all articles, calendar items and other information to: mycenanews@mssf.org