



January 20  
General Meeting Speaker



## Denis Desjardin

*“Pohmpei Mushrooms”*

Dennis Desjardin is Professor of Biology at San Francisco State University. He received a Master’s Degree from San Francisco State University studying with Dr. Harry D. Thiers, and a PhD from the University of Tennessee under the guidance of Dr. Ronald H. Petersen. He has published over 130 scientific papers on the taxonomy and evolution of mushroom-forming fungi in which he described 235 new species and 7 new genera. He has active research projects in the Hawaiian Islands, Micronesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil, and the African islands of São Tome and Principe, funded by grants from the National Science Foundation. He is co-author (with Mike Wood and Fred Stevens) of a new book, *California Mushrooms: The Comprehensive Identification Guide*.

## Cultivation Quarters:

### A Recap of the Past 15 Years

*Ken Litchfield*

This issue of *Mycena News* marks a new beginning for Cultivation Quarters. In going green, we are now only publishing an electronic version of each issue. To celebrate our new format, I’d like to update the readership on the cultivation projects we’ve been involved with over the last fifteen years that I’ve been the Cultivation Chair of the MSSF so that we can plan for the future. (If you are so inclined, you can go back and read about the past history and the people involved in our MSSF cultivation endeavors in the MN starting in October 2000. Lots of tricks, techniques, and projects are discussed over the years there.)

When I became the Cultivation Chair in 2000, I was taking care of the courtyard gardens of the Randall Museum in San Francisco where the MSSF has held its monthly meetings for many years. We had already incorporated mushrooms into the mulches, compost, and raised bed logs of the plant gardens in the courtyard for a few years and had recently turned some of those gardens into dedicated mushroom cultivation demonstration gardens. We had gnarly stumps and snags blooming in ornate profusion with several colorful strains of turkey tail mushrooms, artist conks, plugged shiitake logs, garden giant mulch beds, shaggy parasols blooming in the compost, and lots of various flower mushrooms sprinkling the gardens’ pathways and borders.

However, the Randall was about to undergo an outdoor remodeling,



‘Hobbit Mushroom Garden’ built for the Flower and Garden Show

## PRESIDENT'S POST

Hello MSSF Members,

Happy New Year and hooray for rain! The end of 2014 turned out to be a rewarding time for hunting fungi. Up and down the California coast, I've heard many successful foray reports, a nice change from the lean last few years. Personally, I've already replenished my exhausted stores of candy caps and found many other edibles to keep me satiated ... temporarily. Here's hoping for continual rain and bountiful fruitings during the winter to keep both our reservoirs and baskets full.

The 45th annual Fungus Fair took place at the County Fair Building in Golden Gate Park the first weekend in December. Saturday was filled with seminars and demos, and on Sunday the fair was in full swing, featuring woodland and mushroom displays, educational tables, vendors, and food. It was a great success and another huge endeavor all carried forth by volunteers. I want to personally thank our key organizers: **Stephanie Wright, Brennan Wenck, Jackie Shay, Curt Haney, Ken Litchfield, J.R. Blair, Tyler Taunton and Henry Shaw.** To everyone else that helped out in big and small ways, thank you for offering your time and giving the many attendees over the two days something to smile about.

The annual MSSF Holiday Dinner was held on December 15th to a packed house of MSSF members and their guests at the Hall of Flowers. I want to thank **Al Carvajal** for taking on the huge task of coordinating this event. Along with the delicious appetizers contributed by talented MSSF members and lively music provided by The Dim Lights, the event was filled to the brim with holiday camaraderie. For those of you in attendance, we'd love to hear your feedback on this event as the Council looks to make a few changes for next year. As always, if you would like to be an active volunteer, please let me or another Council member know.

I want to remind everyone of two changes to our programming taking place in 2015. First, *Mycena News* is now an online only publication. In September, our Council decided to end the printed edition to improve its accessibility, expand educational opportunities, and to fulfill the greening initiative that our past President, Curt Haney, began. You should still expect to receive the online newsletter around the first of the month. Second, because of the upcoming Randall Museum renovations, the monthly MSSF general meeting will be changing location. From April 2015, meetings will take place the third Tuesday of the month at the County Fair Building in Golden Gate Park. January through March will be at the Randall Museum.

Thanks again to all of you who continually contribute to make the MSSF a great organization. Remember to share your love of the forest with a friend, and bring them to a meeting if you can. We'd love to meet them! Happy hunting everyone,

David Gardella

## CULINARY CORNER

Patricia George

What a year for mycophagy! We've found so many fungi during December. Not many chanterelles so far, but lots of other culinary favorites. Walking through my garden recently, I was met with a large, dingy and unremarkable brown russula species, *R. sororia*, perhaps. I hadn't seen it before, but now it was everywhere. Seeing all the russulas



Its russula season!

made me recall my time in Rome many years ago, specifically the day I stepped into the lift and ran into my neighbor with a basket of russulas he'd just collected and a wide grin on his face. He said they were *molto*

*buono*, very good. No one I knew in the U.S., save a few emigrés from Eastern Europe, picked russulas. They were generally "kicked rather than picked," or "stomped rather than chomped." Europeans don't think that way.

My curiosity had been piqued. Whilst mushrooming years ago, I had nibbled a tiny bit from a few, to see if they were really as acrid and insipid (or any of the other unflattering adjectives used to describe them) as I had heard. They lived up to their descriptions. At the same time, there is very little information about cooking them online. I had previously prepared *R. xerampelina* simply by sauteeing them in butter. One of my mushroom cookbooks claims that russulas retain their firm texture when cooked, allowing them to be grilled, baked or stuffed with roast pecans, breadcrumbs, shallots, cheese, seasoning and a squeeze of lemon juice. They are apparently lovely served with a cream sauce over pasta.

While russulas can be prepared like most of our culinary favorites, they are brittle, so should be placed in a box or treated very gently. According to local guide books, the edible russulas in our area include *R. integra*, *R. vesca*, *R. aeruginea*, *R. virescens*, *R. olivecea*, *R. cyanoxantha*, *R. xerampelina*, and *R. brevipes*, the host of parasitic *Hypomyces lactifluorum*, better known as the lobster mushroom. So, try not to dismiss the russula clan. Learn about them and, when you know the good ones, experiment in the kitchen.

With such a plethora of varieties of edible fungi fruiting this season I've chosen a German recipe for which most any mushroom can be used. It's kind of a vegetarian hamburger: comfort food. See page five.

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and we had to find a temporary home for the mushroom gardens. I had been teaching mushroom cultivation at the Crissy Field Center. When we put out the word on the mycelial grapevine that we were looking for a new home for the mushroom gardens, we were referred to the Native Plants Program at the Presidio National Park.

Not only did the Native Plants Program provide us twice the amount of space at the Presidio Community Gardens, but they also gave us an indoor 30' x 60' bay in the Native Plants Program warehouse for us to install and use our stored laboratory equipment. For several years we had regular mushroom cultivation seminars and workshops at the Presidio gardens and lab. The Presidio warehouse space was the perfect eclectic venue for oddball mushroom cultivation projects that complemented the Native Plants program, but also for the initial fermentings of experimental cookups and potluck concoctions that we developed over the years. Some Sunday evenings the Native Plants staff and volunteers would practice music in one section of the warehouse, while the golf course crew brewed up their compost tea tanker in one bay, while a chain saw sculptor carved totem poles in another bay, while there was a seed saving group sorting seeds in another bay, with the mushroom lab cranking in our bay, with lots of folks wandering around sampling potluck tables

Unfortunately, many of the old buildings from the military days were no longer sound. At the end of one particularly rainy winter, one roof completely collapsed. That caused a broader survey of all the buildings, where it was found that, like a number of other buildings, our warehouse had several splitting roof beams, one right above our lab. The engineers shored the beams up, but the lawyers condemned the building for any sustained human use. So we had to find a new location for the lab, but kept the gardens for several more years.

Eventually, we found a new location at Merritt Community College, where we began teaching mushroom cultivation and other classes. Over the past ten years, we have educated hundreds of students from the public and MSSF, including much of our current leadership. In fact, our current President, David Gardella, was a lab instructor for the Merritt class. He has been instrumental to organizing our MycoMondo style fermentation events, which began back at the Presidio warehouse.

We also continue to teach mushroom cultivation in other venues and at MSSF events like Mendocino Camp and the Fungus Fair. We had provided a 20' x 20' indoor mushroom cultivation demonstration garden at the Cow Palace Garden Show for several years when they asked us to move to the main floor and paid the MSSF to create one of the fancy display gardens. We did that a second year with the creation of a mushroom Hobbit house and garden. When they moved the garden show from the Cow Palace to the San Mateo Expo Center it was no longer logistically feasible to participate and they weren't investing in the display gardens anyway. But we have expanded to new venues, like SOMA Camp, the Telluride Mushroom Festival, and ongoing projects with the Bay Area Radical Mycology group.

In the coming months, I'll be discussing some new mushroom cultivation projects we have planned, as well as techniques, tips, tricks, and philosophies of mushroom cultivation, for the lab as well as the home organic gardener. I'll also be teaching an upcoming workshop at the Jewish Community Center in San Francisco.

- **What:** Introduction to Mushroom Cultivation
- **When:** Sunday, January 25, 1- 4 pm
- **Where:** The Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California Street
- **For more information:** <https://www.jccsf.org/all-ages/urban-gardening>



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Past issues of *Mycena News* can be read online at [www.mssf.org](http://www.mssf.org)

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## LETTER FROM ITALY: PORCINI SOTT'OLIO

*By Brother Mark Folger*

Dear chums at MSSE,

I've been in Rome for nearly two years now. This article has been waiting to be written for almost as long. But my Italian is finally good enough for me to understand how the people here like to preserve their porcini. I have no doubt that some form of this simple recipe goes all the way back to the tables of Imperial Rome, and perhaps even beyond.

After you come back from the forest, victorious, with loads of porcini, make sure you've brushed them clean and trimmed away soil from the stem tips. Many Italians recommend to not store your porcini in the refrigerator. Keep them on newspaper instead, in a cool place, with the caps down and the stems pointing up. This is important when it comes to getting rid of vermin. They believe that fungus maggots can't stand the odor of newsprint. They try to burrow away from it and head toward the tip of the stem. Then it's just a matter of cutting off the wormy ends and throwing them away. Otherwise, remove any vermin you see by hand during cleaning and slicing. You will need:



Fig. 1: The ingredients

- 2 lbs porcini mushrooms
- 2 cups white wine vinegar
- 2 cups white wine
- 2 garlic cloves
- Black peppercorns
- 6 or more bay leaves
- Salt
- Oregano
- Capers (optional)
- Extra virgin olive oil

First, clean two or three quart jars, and their lids, in very hot water. Drain and dry. The dishwasher would probably be fine for this. Next clean your porcini. Cut off the tip ends of the stems. Give the mushrooms a quick rinse and wipe them clean with paper towels. Separate the caps from the stems and use a paring knife to peel the outer skin from the stems. Slice your caps and stems into bite-sized pieces. Smaller caps can be quartered.

In a medium pot, combine the wine and vinegar and bring them to a boil. Once boiling, add your porcini pieces. Stir gently to coat all pieces. Add a little water if needed. Season with salt to taste "as though you were salting water to boil pasta." Return the mixture to a boil, cover with a lid and simmer the mushrooms for five minutes. Turn off the heat. Add six bay leaves on top of the mixture, cover the pot again and let the mixture sit covered until cool.

Once cool, use a slotted spoon to remove your mushroom pieces and bay leaves. Spread the pieces in a single layer over a clean kitchen towel. Discard the cooking liquid. At this point the mushrooms must be allowed to dry, uncovered on the towel, for at least 24 hours.



Fig. 2: Cover and simmer for 5 minutes



Fig. 3: Drying 24 hours

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## Letter from Italy continued

Once dry, it's time to begin layering the mushrooms in jars for conservation. Pour a small amount of olive oil in the bottom of one of your clean jars. Add a layer of porcini pieces. Add two or three thin slices of garlic. Sprinkle in a scant teaspoon of capers if you wish. Sprinkle in 4-5 black peppercorns. Add a pinch of oregano. Add two bay leaves. Continue layering in this manner until your mushrooms have reached the shoulder of the jar. Do not fill to the very top. Pour in olive oil until the contents are completely covered. Make sure nothing is sticking up out of the oil or you risk spoilage. Seal with a lid and store in a cool place. Repeat as needed with your other jars. I'm told the mushrooms will develop richer flavor in the coming months and will stay good under oil up to a year.

There are endless variations of this recipe. Some boil small white onions along with the porcini and add them to the jars as well. Sometimes the jar is spiced with a few whole sweet cloves. Very medieval. But I must say, I have eaten these preserved porcini often; their texture and flavor are remarkable. They appear in pasta, risotto, under melted cheese, or sometimes you find them served by themselves as an antipasto item. Happy eating!



Fig. 4: Layering slices and spices in a jar



Fig. 5: Filling jar with olive oil

## Culinary Corner Continued

**Pilzkotelets (Mushroom Cutlets)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| - 1 ½ lbs. wild mushrooms                          | - 3 eggs  |
| - 3 tablespoons butter                             | - 1 tablespoon chopped flat parsley                 |
| - 1 medium onion, diced                            | - Salt and pepper                                   |
| - ½ loaf sweet day-old French bread, crust removed | - 3 tablespoons fine breadcrumbs                    |
| - ½ cup milk                                       | - 2 tablespoons grapeseed oil (or other frying oil) |

Clean and slice the mushrooms. Melt two tablespoons of butter in a large skillet. Add the mushrooms and saute over medium heat for 5 minutes. Set aside. Add the remaining tablespoon of butter to the skillet. Add the onions and saute until translucent but not browned. Thinly slice the bread and soak in the milk for a few minutes, then squeeze out as much liquid as possible, leaving a soft bread pulp. Combine the bread pulp, sautéed mushrooms and onions in a food processor. Add the eggs, parsley and salt and pepper to taste. Process with on/off pulses just until coarsely chopped. Do not overprocess. Taste for seasoning and adjust if necessary. Chill for 30 minutes.

Shape the mixture into ½ inch thick patties. Dredge in breadcrumbs, place on a rack and let coating set for a few minutes. Heat the oil in a heavy skillet, preferably non-stick. Add the patties and cook, turning once, until golden brown on both sides. Serves 4 as a main, 6 as an appetizer.

The 45th Annual Fungus Fair was a big success, but I want to extend special thanks to our volunteer soup makers, coordinated by David Eichorn. Berkeley-based Monterey Market donates boxes of mushrooms for the soups, and our volunteer cooks spend hours making gallons of memorable gourmet soups. (However, we always run out well before the fair is over. Many fairgoers say that they come the Fungus Fair for just the soup!) Highlights included Jeanette Larsen's creamy chanterelle and black trumpet soup, Kristin Jensen's cream of mushroom soup with sherry, Bill Hellums' candy cap bean soup, Sheila Harmon and Toni Kiely's vegetarian Boletus soup, Jeff Hill's brandy and mixed mushroom soup, Andy Still's smoked chicken, bean and roasted mushroom soup, Pascal Pelous's famous Thai mushroom soup, David Campbell's "zuppa di ceci con funghi porcini (chickpea soup with porcini), Dave and Peggy Manuel's mixed mushroom soup. I brought a mixed mushroom soup with Andouille sausages.



Mycological Society of San Francisco  
c/o The Randall Museum  
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San Francisco, CA 94114



"A World of Wonder at Your Feet"

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## MSSF Calendar January 2015

**Monday, January 5, 7:00 p.m. - Culinary Group Dinner**  
Hall of Flowers, Golden Gate Pk., 9th & Lincoln, S.F.  
Pre-registration required for attendance.

**Tuesday, January 13, 7:30 p.m. - MSSF Council Meeting**  
Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.

**Tuesday, January 20, 7:00 p.m. - MSSF General Meeting**  
Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.  
7 p.m. - Mushroom identification and refreshments.  
8 p.m. - Speaker: Denis Desjardin

**Monday, February 2, 7:00 p.m. - Culinary Group Dinner**  
Hall of Flowers, Golden Gate Pk., 9th & Lincoln, S.F.  
Pre-registration required for attendance.

**Tuesday, February 17, 7:00 p.m. - MSSF General Meeting**  
Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.  
7 p.m. - Mushroom identification and refreshments.  
8 p.m. - Speaker: Michael Castellano

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

## MSSF Volunteers Needed

**Request for Feedback:** Over the course of 5 weeks in November and December, the MSSF held 3 of its biggest organized events of the season: Mendocino Camp, the Fungus Fair, and the Holiday Dinner. These events reach thousands of people and require a great deal of effort and work from our volunteer base. As the MSSF Council is always looking for ways to improve our events to greater fit the needs of those attending, we always encourage people to give feedback. If there is anything you'd like to share about any of the listed events or other MSSF offerings, please email [president@mssf.org](mailto:president@mssf.org). Feedback is always of great assistance to the MSSF Council so we can find and implement better ways to serve the greater community of mushroom enthusiasts.

Submit to *Mycena News*! The submission deadline  
for the February 2015 issue is January 15th.  
Send all articles, calendar items and other information  
to: [mycenanews@mssf.org](mailto:mycenanews@mssf.org)