

Mendocino County goes mad for mushrooms in November Wine & Mushroom Festival

Contributed by Editor
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MENDOCINO COUNTY – Every fall in Northern California’s Mendocino County, something magical happens when it rains – delicious, delectable mushrooms appear.

From October through January, more than 3,000 mushroom varieties will pop up, and of these, over 500 are edible and 20 are readily identifiable – including the rare candy cap mushroom, with its intense maple-syrup flavor, that grows only along the northern coast of California.

The highlight of mushroom season is Mendocino County’s annual Wine & Mushroom Festival (this year from Friday, November 6 through Sunday, November 15), with everything from mushroom dinners, wine- and beer-pairing workshops, and musical performances to exhibits, guided mushroom foraging walks and much more.

Ryane Snow, a member of the Mycological Society and a well-known local mushroom expert, states, “We have so many incredible varieties of mushrooms that are grown in Mendocino County, and everyone in the community gets involved in showcasing this great local bounty. As more people discover the health benefits of mushrooms, as well as how versatile and delicious they are to cook with, the interest in our festival is growing.”

During mushroom season, Snow and others offer identification walks, and in addition to the precious candy cap, mushroom hunters can score chanterelles, porcinis, morels and hedgehogs – and the less adventurous can sample these same mushroom varieties on special mushroom tasting menus throughout the county.

Following is a sampling of just some of the events that will be offered during the 2009 Wine & Mushroom Festival. The full Events Schedule can be found at: http://gomendo.com/media/4781MWineMushroomBrochure09_web.pdf .

Skunk Train’s Wine & Mushroom Adventure – Willits Saturday, Nov. 7, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

All Aboard the Skunk Train! Enjoy Mendocino County wines poured by local wineries, mushroom appetizers, and entertainment while you travel through towering trees and watch the wildlife along the Noyo River. Disembark at Camp Mendocino (the halfway point) and enjoy a mushroom-themed lunch along with live entertainment. Celebrity chef Jack Czarnecki hosts. Proceeds benefit the Howard Hospital Foundation, the 1st “green” rural hospital in the country! Tickets \$125 per person. For additional information/tickets: (707) 459-3047, www.howardfoundation.org or www.skunktrain.com .

Mendocino Hotel’s Navarro Winemaker Dinner – Mendocino Village Saturday, Nov. 7, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Participants will enjoy fabulous local wines from Navarro Vineyards, along with a multi-course meal featuring local gourmet mushrooms prepared by Joe Brown, Executive Chef at Mendocino Hotel. Educational mushroom display and lecture by local fungi expert Eric Schramm. Hors D’Oeuvres at 6PM followed by dinner at 7PM Cost is \$95 per person. Receive a 15% discount with purchase of wine dinner for two. Good for Friday and Saturday nights. Add Thursday and/or Sunday night to your reservation and receive a 50% discount for those nights only. To make a reservation, please call 800-548-0513 or visit www.mendocinohotel.com . Menu: www.mendocinohotel.com/menus/Navarro-Wine-Dinner-11-07-09.pdf .

Albion River Inn’s Mushroom Cooking Class – Albion Tuesday, Nov. 10, 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Experience the creative culinary style of Executive Chef Stephen Smith as he demonstrates delectable wild & cultivated mushroom recipes for this 5-course, mushroom-inspired cooking class. Local wild mushroom expert Don Kowalski will join Chef Smith to give a demonstration on how to identify our coast's wild mushroom harvest. Each participant receives a full set of class recipes with step-by- step instructions. \$80 per person includes lunch, wine and dessert. Limited to 20 people. Call 800-479-7944 or visit www.albionriverinn.com/events to make a reservation.

MacCallum House Inn’s Wild Mushroom Winemaker Dinner – Mendocino Village Thursday, Nov. 12, 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

10th Annual Wild Mushroom Winemaker Dinner with Executive Chef Alan Kantor, mushroom expert Eric Schramm and winemaker Greg Graziano. Make advance reservations for one of the most popular events of the festival. \$100 per person, not including tax and gratuity. Cocktail hour begins at 6:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. To make reservations call 707-937-0289. Check www.maccallumhouse.com as the event date draws near to see the detailed menu.

Little River Inn’s Mushroom and Belgian Beer Dinner – Little River Friday, Nov. 13, 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Little River Inn Executive Chef, Marc Dym, and Russian River Brewing Company Brew Master, Vinnie Cilurzo, create a perfectly paired five-course menu. Each dish features a different local mushroom and Belgian-style ale. Chef Marc will share his culinary secrets while Brew Master Vinnie takes you through the world of Belgian brews. \$85 per person. Visit www.littleriverinn.com or call 1-888-INN-LOVE to make a reservation.

St. Anthony's Annual Wine & Mushroom Event – Mendocino Village Saturday, Nov. 14, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Nine local wineries will pour their best vintages, 8 local restaurants will whip up their own mushroom soup recipe for tasting and judging, and homemade mushroom appetizers will be passed. Mushroom expert Eric Schramm will be on hand with examples of mushroom varieties, and lots of enticements will fill the silent auction tables. \$25 per person which includes a commemorative wine glass. Proceeds benefit the coastal community. For more information call (707) 937-2406 or go to www.stanthonysofmendocino.com .

Mendocino Art Center Presents Art, Mushrooms & Abalone – Mendocino Village Saturday, Nov. 14, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Nichols gallery will display a special mushroom art exhibit, where mushrooms are the building block for much of the art. Meet the artists, sip local wines, and sample abalone, another locally harvested favorite. \$25 per person, includes wine

glass. (707) 937-5818 or www.mendocinoartcenter.org .

Stevenswood Resort & Restaurant Farm to Table Winemaker Dinner – Little River Saturday, Nov. 14 – 7 p.m.

Join Chef Rocco Hanson and Standish Wine Company for an intimate Farm to Table five-course mushroom dinner paired with Standish wines. \$90 per person. Stay at Stevenswood and take advantage of the world-class Indigo Eco |Spa, where a special Mushroom Powder Facial will be offered. Call (707) 937-2810 or visit www.stevenswood.com for reservations.

Other Mushroom Events of Interest:

Ukiah's First Friday's Mushroom Trail Art Walk

On Friday, November 6, tour ten different downtown art galleries, and enjoy Mendocino wines, live music, mushroom appetizers, plus art, photographs, and informative displays of mushrooms. Educational presentations by Eric Schramm of Mendocino Mushroom. Free for all ages. Call 707-462-9045 or visit www.artcenterukiah.com .

Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens Mushroom Identification and Cultivation Workshops

Begin your journey to becoming a fungophile! Staff naturalist Mario Abreu will be holding two mushroom identification workshops – Saturday, Nov. 7 and Saturday, Nov. 21 from 10AM – 1PM. Workshops are limited to 20 people. \$10 per class. On Saturday, November 14, 2009 from 11AM – 2PM, John Richardson of Noyo Hill Farm will lead a hands-on workshop in mushroom cultivation for beginners. Attendees will receive an inoculated bag to bring home to assist in producing their own mushrooms. \$25 per class. Reserve a spot in any of the classes by calling 707-964-4352 x 23 or visiting www.gardenbythesea.org .

Ross Ranch, home of horseracing legend Seabiscuit, is doing something this year that they've never done before – they are opening their land to guided mushroom tours and foraging. On November 7 and 14, a historic ranch tours, optional box luncheon and/or mushroom foraging tour will all be offered. This is an incredible opportunity for foragers, as the Ross Ranch property is home to many unique mushroom varieties. Historic Tours 9 a.m. to noon, \$25 per person. Optional Box Lunch 12PM-1PM, \$10 per person. Guided Mushroom Forage 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., \$25 per person. Call (707) 459-5992 or visit www.seabiscuitheritage.org to make a reservation.

Liquid Fusion Kayaking is offering "Mushroom Paddles" along the Noyo River. Emphasis is on seeking out and identifying the wild mushrooms along the banks of the river. This 3-hour guided tour will depart from Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg on November 7, 8, 14, and 15 at 1PM. \$75/person. No experience necessary and all kayaking gear is included. Reservations are required and paddle will happen rain or shine (waterproof gear is included in the tour). Other dates and times are available by appointment. Call (707) 962-1623 or visit www.liquidfusionkayak.com for further information.

In addition, Ryane Snow, Ph.D., Mendocino County's famed mushroom expert, will be leading numerous educational activities during the Mushroom Festival:

From Forest to Table: A Wild Mushroom Ecological & Gastronomical Experience – Nov. 7 and Nov. 14; Stanford Inn by the Sea – Mendocino, noon to 5 p.m.

Snow will educate participants about the importance of mushrooms to the ecology of the forest, their medicinal properties, and their many uses in the world of gastronomy. Participants are given a brief, hands-on introduction to local fungi, followed by a 2-hour foraging walk in the woods, then back to the Stanford Inn for a tutorial on cleaning, prepping, and preparing mushrooms. The day culminates with a lunch featuring the bounty gathered that day! Class is limited to 30 people and is \$60 per person. Call 800-331-8884 or visit www.stanfordinn.com to make a reservation.

Medicinal Mushrooms Workshop – Nov. 8 Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens – Fort Bragg, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Often the first question about a new mushroom is "Is it edible?" But a more interesting question is "How can this mushroom help my health?" Snow, who is also a Classical Chinese Medicine Practitioner, will address these questions and more. \$10 per person. Class sizes is limited, call 707-964-4352 x16 to reserve your space.

Mushroom Explorations Tours – everyday from Nov. 9 to 13

Participants will meet in the Stanford Inn lobby at 10AM before heading out on a mushroom foraging walk, led by Snow. Approximately 3 hours long. \$20/person. Call 707-489-8341 for further details.