

MUSHROOM NEWSLETTER

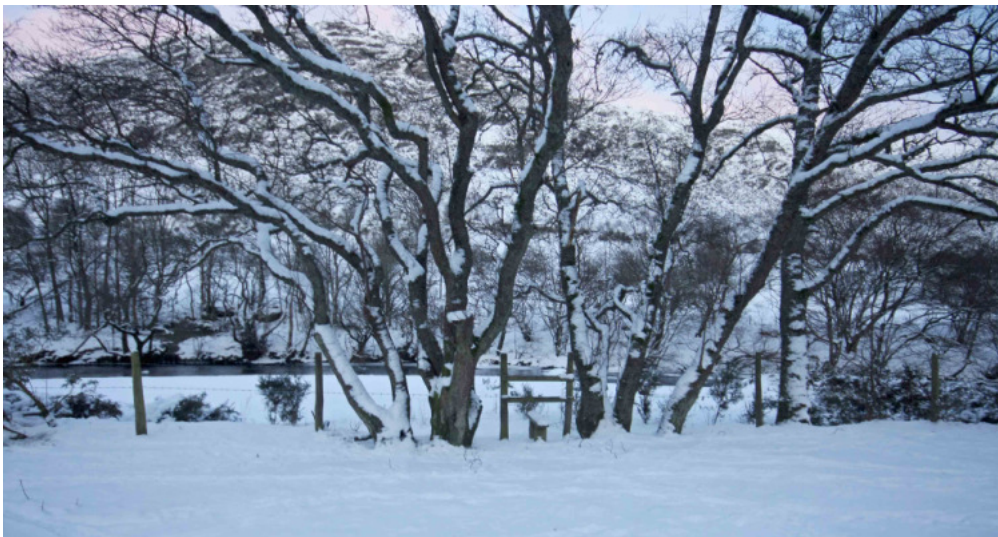
January 23 2010

It goes without saying that the recent weather has not been conducive to mushroom hunting. There are still plenty of Jew's ear, velvet shanks and wood blewits out there, but they're pretty difficult to find when covered by 20 cms of snow.



Velvet shanks, Jew's ear and wood blewits are still out there

Also, while the edibility of the first two is largely unaffected by freezing, most mushrooms do not respond well to sub-zero temperatures. Water expands as it hardens into ice. This leads to the cell walls bursting in many plants and most fungi. As a result, when defrosted they are distinctly soggy (ever seen a lettuce coming out of an over-cold fridge or have you accidentally put one in the freezer?) I know some people freeze cepes (you can find them in the frozen food compartment of French supermarkets), but I can't understand why.



Fungi certainly lurk within this frame – but where?

On a more positive note, my new mushroom cards have finally arrived. They are great – better photographs, six new cards and infinitely better packaging. Unfortunately, because they weigh a little more and cost more to produce than the last, the price has gone up fractionally – it's now £10.99 including P&P. On the bright side, with 1,500 to move from my increasingly cluttered home as quickly as possible, I can do a special deal for online customers - £20 for two (incl. P&P obviously).



The new cards – greatly improved in every way

Unfortunately, while I am well aware I must catch up with the 21st century, by switching to online payments, there appear to be serious glitches when it comes to finding a system which can cope with both small 'merchandising' transactions (eg cards) and break deposits. Watch this space, but meanwhile I can only accept cheques and BACS.

Another good bit of news which just might tempt some of you is the news of a morel festival in Turkey this Easter. Two newsletter subscribers, Ayse and Cengiz Genc, have set up a festival to encourage tourism and educate locals about edible mushrooms:

Our area is very rich in mushrooms and villagers are using mushrooms in their kitchens from October to April . . . Seeing this, last year we organized the people in Fethiye, called in experts from Turkish Universities and set up a festival to explain the risks and benefits to the villagers (<http://www.kuzugobegifest.com/en/>). The main mushroom of the festival is morels (in Turkish it is *kuzu gobegi*) . . . The interest of the people to the festival is amazing. But after the festival we noticed that we should have an English speaking expert to make it interesting to the foreign people living in our area and country. There are too many foreign people (mainly British) living in Fethiye. Some of them can very little speak Turkish . . . because many Turkish people speak English.

I just love morels, but sadly they don't grow here because it's too acidic. In consequence the only photograph on my cards not taken by

myself comes from my brother-in-law PG Crewe (by the way, he's also a fantastic cabinet-maker should anyone want customised furniture).



Anye and Gengiz –morel fanatics

Anyway, I mention the festival for two reasons. Firstly, the mushroom geek in me can't help but notice the talk of picking mushrooms from October to April – in damp, mild, Britain the main season is reversed.

More importantly – for me at least – is their invitation to lead a few English-language forays and to give a couple of talks on edible mushrooms generally. I am really excited.

Thus I have already booked my ticket to Dalaman (which is a 45 minute drive from this lovely fishing village) and found a cheap phrase book on Amazon. The 'all-inclusive' return flight from Thomas Cook was £166 (although by the time I'd paid for hold luggage, text warnings of changes and a debit card booking fee, this had miraculously risen to £192). Despite this, it's a fascinating and beautiful area, full of delicious mushrooms, so if anyone fancies fleeing the cold and wet in favour of an unusual – and affordable – Easter break, you could do worse than head for Turkey. If you do decide to go, give me a call/e-mail and I will pass on details of where to stay and what to expect.

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P.S. I loathe junk e-mails. If at any time you want your name taken off, just let me know with a brief - preferably polite - indication that you want to be removed.