

MUSHROOM NEWSLETTER

October 6 2009

Well the first foray of the year has come and gone. Results were not brilliant, but we found 17 species of mushroom in all. All but one of these were on the first day and for those of you who share my worrying trainspotter tendencies, they were: yellow swamp russula; charcoal burner; chicken-of-the-woods; brown birch bolete; beefsteak; hedgehog; hen-of-the-woods; giant puffball; honey fungus; cauliflower; cepe/porcini; bay bolete; chanterelle; meadow waxcap; tawny grisette; amethyst deceiver and wood blewit.



James and the giant puffball



A good woodland haul: note the baby porcini (an encouraging sign?)

But turning back to the season as a whole – what can we expect now? Well as always I am going to be optimistic. Things aren't brilliant at the moment, but normally the mushroom season seems to peak in the middle of October, so there's every reason to be hopeful. It seems to be a good year for cauliflower (the picture below is of the one I've been watching and finally harvested last Friday – it weighed 3kgs and is the heaviest mushroom I have ever found). Although I haven't found any shaggy ink caps yet, a neighbour tells me they're coming up on his lawn. My hunch is that at the moment a very dry September (it barely rained all month) is holding things up. Heavy rain has been falling here this morning and more is forecast over the next 24 hours, so I would hope that this gives things a bump start – certainly grassland species such as waxcaps, parasols and puffballs should get a real kick from an inch or so.



Pine woods are often dismissed by guide books, but in my experience are the best cepe hunting grounds

But back to last weekend. This was the first time I have used the Clyn (www.clyncottages.co.uk) as a base and I will certainly be doing so again. It is an idyllic spot, tucked high in the hills with spectacular views. Jan enjoyed it too and we've provisionally agreed to base at least one break there in late September/early October next year. These are open to groups of four – six people and at £250 per person, the package is slightly cheaper than my normal hotel breaks.

The flat-topped woodburner also allowed the group to dry their finds overnight – and in the process discover the wonders of sleeping in porcini-steeped atmosphere (I find it makes my dreams very lurid – everyone seems dressed in dayglo clothing).



Wine merchant Gary gets to grips with a Welsh cepe

To top everything off, we had two wine merchants, Gary (www.bordeauxindex.com) and David (www.caviste.co.uk) who not only brought some of the greatest Burgundy I am every likely to taste, but a bowl of Wiltshire truffles. They left two for the rest of us. One is now sitting in a bowl of eggs in my fridge (the scent will permeate through the shells to make a great omelette later in the week). Meanwhile Ben and Miranda grabbed the other and are now attempting to transform their cocker spaniel, Zebedee, into Britain's only working truffle hound. If they are successful, I will certainly let you know.



A Wiltshire truffle – courtesy of Bordeaux Index

The taste test is always interesting – and never turns up the same result. This time the cepe, cauliflower and hedgehog came out top, but to my surprise the beefsteak scored well too (I think it is disgusting).



Top of the pops – cauliflower, cepe, hedgehog yes, but beefsteak? . . .

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P.S. I loathe junk e-mails and would be horrified to think I might be clogging up your systems unnecessarily, so 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.