

MUSHROOM NEWSLETTER

12 April 2018



Life is beginning to stir in the woods

It's been a long, cold, wet winter, but the end is in sight. The first migrant birds are back, with chiffchaffs, willow warblers and pied fly catchers already audible on local woods. Buds are just starting to appear on trees and the daffodils are giving a welcome dash of colour to the roadsides.

And there is good news for mushroom fanatics too. Morels are starting to pop up, despite the long, cold, winter. Unfortunately for me they are very intolerant of acid conditions, but friends are reporting them in East Anglia and even London. Morels seem to thrive in 'scorched earth' conditions. They grew all over the bomb sites after the Blitz and in America there are websites giving the locations of past forest fires: apparently these can fruit well a couple of years after the blaze.



Morels: surely the best possible way to start the season?

Supermarket car parks and municipal borders can also be good hunting grounds because of the heavy use of imported bark mulches. The mushrooms arrive in this and will fruit for a couple of years before the nutrients are spent. One reader reports good crops in central Newcastle-on-Tyne and another found some in an office car park in London last week.



Morels like rough ground – wasteland is ideal

They are spectacularly camouflaged so take some finding, but it's well worth the effort because they are one of the greatest of mushrooms. Two of my most memorable gastronomic encounters were chicken in a creamy morel sauce and an Alpine fondue of Beaufort, Emmental and Gruyere with morels soaked in white wine.



Woods now have a hint of green

Watch out too for St George's which will soon be emerging in unimproved pasture around the country. So named because they are supposed to appear in rough rings on St George's day (23 April), my patches generally start to fruit about a week later. They are creamy in colour with a texture that is often described as comparable to kid leather. The strong 'mealy' smell is another good identifying factor.



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P.S. As always, let me know if you want to be removed from the list and I will do it forthwith.