

MUSHROOM NEWSLETTER

16 May 2016

St George's and Chicken of the Woods

The 2016 mushroom season is now well under way – well for some people at least. A lot of people across England (Hampshire to Yorkshire) are reported good morel finds, with bark mulches in cities the most popular location. If you are lucky enough to stumble across such a patch, make the most of it because such habitats rarely fruit two years in a row. This is because its nutrients get washed out as the bark breaks down.



That said, you will need to get your skates on because the height of the season is over and they won't be around for much longer. This is obviously a pity, but it is balanced by the arrival of at least two other delicious species.

St George's are so called because they are supposed to emerge on the Saint's Day, but in general they come up on my hillside about a week later. This year people are reporting bumper harvests across the country (with South Wales apparently faring particularly well). This is unfortunately not the case in Mid-Wales where there has been very little rain for the past month. This is disappointing because I am very partial to them, thinking they go particularly well with chicken. I did however, find two small specimens at the weekend (14 May) and it's not too late to hope for more if the promised rain arrives within the next few days.



This brings me on to the other great mushroom to be just starting to emerge – chicken of the woods. This lives up to the second part of its scientific name *Laetiporus sulphureus* by sporting a bright yellow hue, or rather it is at its most edible when it is the same colour as the flowers of sulphur that chemists used to sell (for constipation, I seem to remember).



Chicken of the woods is unmistakable – the one of the right is younger and more tender than its partner

I am very fond of chicken of the woods, but it can upset some stomachs. I have heard one person claim this is as high as 10%, but I find this implausible. Mushrooms which upset a far smaller proportion of the population are labelled as suspect or even poisonous (e.g. false chanterelles, blue-staining boletes and clouded agarics). As with all mushrooms, you are strongly advised to cook this fungus thoroughly and eat just a small portion the first time you try it. Some people think it gets its common name from the flavour, but to my mind its more likely to be down to the texture of the flesh.

Finally, can I remind people that not only do I host several Facebook groups (Fungi Forays, Fungi Recipes, Wild Foods and Wildlife Profiles), but that there is a host of recipes and fungal information on my website. Oh and the same goes for my Pembrokeshire project (www.glebeholidays.co.uk)

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P S As always, let me know if you want to be removed from the mailing list – this is a bit more complicated at my end than it should be, but I will do my best to keep everyone happy.