

MUSHROOM NEWSLETTER

April 23 2018

Although morels signal the start of the mushroom season in many areas, our acid soil means they don't grow here (at least I've never found one). Instead it is St George's that mark the beginning of the fungal year for many foragers. These are named after the saint's day on which they are supposed to emerge (23 April). Because I heard last week that people are beginning to find them in the West Country and Herefordshire and further spurred on by the date, this morning I went up the hill behind my house to check my nearest patches. Unfortunately I drew a total blank.



St George's traditionally come up on the English patron saint's day

This did not come as a particular surprise. In normal years May Day is usually more like it at this altitude (my best patches are around 1,500 feet) and the 'Beast from the East' can only have delayed things (it was snowing a fortnight ago).

Interestingly, this link between the mushroom and a date is reflected in other languages. The Italians call them *marzolini* (the little March ones), while further north in colder Germany they are called *Maipilz* (May mushroom).

If you are lucky enough to find patches you are in luck for they are a good meaty species. The flavour is strong – too strong for some palates – but I consider them to be one of our best wild mushrooms. They work well with chicken or rabbit, but the great Roger Phillips suggests cooking them as a flan or sautéed in yoghurt as a sort

of stroganoff. Unfortunately they don't dry particularly well, but you can flash-fry and freeze them. Personally, I prefer to treat them like strawberries and new potatoes – only eating them very fresh and in season.



St George's have a velvety cap and a strong, mealy, smell

Generally they grow in unimproved pasture – often in rough rings – but they can occur under trees too – particularly along woodland edges. They are also supposed to be more common on alkaline soil, although they certainly grow on the very acidic soil of Mid-Wales (ours is 6.1 pH).

Daniel Butler
www.fungiforays.co.uk
01597 811168 / 0779 429 4221

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.