

MUSHROOM NEWSLETTER

24 August 2011

THE SEASON BLOOMS

Things are still rattling along, although the summer is not shaping out in quite the way I anticipated. Broadly, after two very similar winters (cold and long), followed by early leafing from the trees and then a mild, dry, summer, I was expecting an identical pattern to last year. Then, as regular readers will recall, we had bumper crops of porcini throughout August. This pattern hasn't been repeated, however. Certainly I picked a few kilos of the 'king' in the first half of August, but these have largely dried up now, although fortunately there are plenty of great mushrooms to take their place.



Wood hedgehogs (pied de mouton) are delicious and their spiny gills make them unmistakable

Most notable for aficionados are the wood hedgehogs (*Hydnum repandum*) which have just begun to emerge. I didn't manage to find many yesterday, but got a sufficient handful to introduce a friend to the delights of this rather crunchy chanterelle relative.

There are plenty of the latter too – still fruiting heavily after the recent showers and in sufficient quantities for me to be able to pick a kilo with no real effort this morning.



Chanterelles should continue to flush regularly throughout the summer and into autumn

The orange birch boletes is the other highly edible mushroom which is currently up in significant quantities. This is sometimes dismissed by hunters because its close relative, the brown birch boletes, is fairly watery and insipid, but the orange version (which is easy to distinguish from the brown by staining dark blue when cut or bruised) is excellent. Indeed, to my mind its flavour is on a par with the cep/porcini and – even better – it seems far less prone to insect attack.



The orange birch bolete is less common than the cep, but emerges earlier and is just as tasty

Finally, for anyone pondering a fun day out, I still have plenty of places on my one day courses this autumn. The price is £50 per adult to include a three course meal with drinks and either mushroom collecting guide or imported mushroom knife.

I am also currently planning to set up two special 'family outing' foray (three generations in one group get an extra discount) which will also include a child-friendly menu. The first will probably be in about a month's time with another at half-term, but details will follow early next week . . . (or phone/e-mail if you are too impatient to wait).

(NORMAL) ONE DAY FORAYS

24 and 25 September

1, 2, 15 October

All the best – and happy hunting!

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