

Like gold

Wild morel mushrooms a delicious rite of spring

I have found that most people don't understand the difference between true wild mushrooms and exotic mushrooms. This may be because some restaurants use "exotic mushrooms" and bill them as "wild." However exotic mushrooms like shiitake, enoki and portobello, are grown domestically. Wild mushrooms, on the other hand, are very difficult to cultivate and of the edible wild mushrooms, morels are the most sought after in Michigan.



For a few weeks in May, when Michigan has thawed and started to warm, these unusual and arguably best tasting mushrooms spring into life. According to Ernest Hemingway, "the morel is king in Boyne Valley" and mushroom hunters, gourmets and enthusiasts come out from their winter hibernation to hunt the elusive fungi.

There seems to be quite a frenzy about the unique morel and I have had several conversations in the past few weeks with people of all walks of life about these tender delicacies. One friend, whose family has an apple orchard, mentioned that her uncle is lucky enough to gather morels secretly by some of his apple trees where the apples have fallen and rotted.

Another friend, who happens to be a chef, has scheduled time off from the restaurant that he and his wife own to be part of Michigan's Morel Festival in the upper part of the state. I don't know if they will participate in the mushroom hunting competitions, where gatherers retreat into remote areas and search the woods. I do know that they will stop at each morel stand to sample new recipes.

At the Golden Mushroom, we

MOREL MUSHROOMS WITH COGNAC AND CREAM

A recipe of The Golden Mushroom Serves 2

- 8 ounces fresh morel mushrooms
- 3 ounces whole unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon finely minced shallots
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 ounces good cognac, or a good brandy
- 1 tablespoon sliced chives salt to taste

- 1) Heat a saute pan or skillet on high heat until the pan is hot, then turn down to medium heat.
- 2) Add fresh morels and half of the whole butter and cook for a minute or so. Adjust the heat if needed.
- 3) Now add shallots and cook until translucent. Be sure to stir constantly to prevent the shallots from sticking.
- 4) Add cognac and reduce until dry then add cream and reduce this until thick and it clings to the morels.
- 5) Season with salt and pepper to taste and fold in the remainder of the whole butter. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.
- 6) Sprinkle with sliced chives.

have a long history with morel mushrooms. It all started with Master Chef Milos Cihelka, about 20 years ago. Being of European descent, Chef grew up foraging for wild mushrooms. Michigan was an attractive state for him because many of our natural resources are similar to Europe's. Even though this commonality is true, at the time most Michigan restaurants did not serve morel mushrooms. He introduced the morel to the Golden Mushroom

and they were an immediate favorite. Today, if you are willing to pay the hefty price of \$20 a pound or more, you can purchase morels at specialty produce stores.

One of our finest dishes is Morels in Cognac and Cream. This is an old European recipe and we try to keep this popular feature on the menu all year. By doing so we have to buy a couple thousand pounds of morels annually. No light order when you consider the prices. Since mushrooms have such a short shelf life, we cut them in half to inspect for bugs or dirt because they do grow naturally in the wild. Then we drop them in cold water, wash them around for a second and quickly pull them out with a strainer and shake.

"What?" You say, "you are not supposed to soak mushrooms!" I did not say soak them, rather I said, rinse them. This is assuming of course that you don't enjoy the taste of dirt and bugs. Since the mushrooms are like sponges, the key is to do this process quickly or their texture will be harmed. If you would like to hunt for mushrooms, it is my suggestion to buy a good mushroom book. *The Ultimate Mushroom Book* by Peter Jordan and Steven Wheeler is a good choice. It has clear pictures, lists what mushrooms might be poisonous and where and when you might find what you are looking for.

So, happy morel hunting or shopping!
A resident of Northville, Golden Mushroom Chef Michael Trombley is a Certified Executive Chef. Located on Ten Mile Road at Southfield Road in Southfield, the Golden Mushroom is one of Michigan's oldest and most established fine dining restaurants. Over its 28 years, the Golden Mushroom, its staff and owners have earned more culinary awards and critical acclaim than any other Michigan restaurant.

Picnic from page B1

friendly and user-safe. More than 37 million grills in America are equipped with the dented cylinders, according to the National Fire Protection Association. The wrong cylinders contain a five-pronged hand wheel. The OPD has a triangle-shaped. The old cylinders must be taken to local fire departments or city and township hazardous waste departments.

No sticky fingers

Rolled dishtowels make handy napkins to help keep fingers clean from the BBQ sauces and picnic finger foods. Also, keep the bar simple with pitchers of freshly squeezed lemonade and sugar.

For kids, pack "box lunches" in sand pails, said Hanson.

If you're looking to honor a veteran with a pleasant dinner, be sure to call the restaurant first. Many are closed on Memorial Day.

Some restaurants are hosting Memorial Day dinners. For example, The Palm, at 5600 Crooks Road in Troy, is open Monday from 4-10 p.m. and will specialize in steak dinners and cheesecake for dessert.

MORE MEMORIAL RECIPES

GRILLED MEATLESS SAUSAGE WITH HERB MUSTARD

- 1/4 cup light mayonnaise or Veganaisse dairy-loss dressing
- 2 tablespoons honey Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh chives or dill
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen Boca brand meatless smoked sausage (imitation soy-based sausage found at most supermarkets)
- 4 hot dog buns, split
- leafy lettuce
- tomato

Mix Mayo, mustard and chives and refrigerate. Grill sausages as directed on package (just several minutes required). Serve on buns with lettuce, tomato and mustard sauce. Serves four. Sauce can be prepared ahead and covered in refrigerator for three days.

Vegetarians will love these recipes

THREE BERRY FROZEN TOFU CUSTARD

- 3 cups aseptically packaged silken tofu
- 1/4 cup fresh or frozen, thawed blueberries
- 1/4 cup fresh or frozen, thawed strawberries
- 2 tablespoons sugar or to taste

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Place all ingredients in blender or food processor. Process until smooth and blended. Pour into 1-quart bowl or individual dessert cups. Freeze at least 2 hours, stirring once after one hour. Serve frozen. Makes about 3 1/2 cups or seven 1/2 cups servings.

SUMMERTIME FRUIT DIP

- 1 cup aseptically packaged silken tofu
- 1/4 cup aseptically packaged soy creamer
- 2 ripe bananas
- 1/2 cup fresh or frozen thawed berries
- 2 tablespoons aseptically packaged orange juice
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Place tofu, creamer, bananas and berries in a blender or food processor and process until smooth. Add orange juice and vanilla and mix only until combined. Chill for at least one hour prior to serving. Use as a dipping sauce for fruit or sweet crackers as a dressing for fruit salad or melon cubes, as a cake topping or as a topping for baked or grilled sweet potatoes. Yield 2 cups.

Courtesy of Family Features.

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Healds from page B1

master of tempranillo and producer of the acclaimed Tinto Pesquera. We highly recommend the 1999 at \$28 as a great wine to drink now and as a cellar keeper.

Fernandez 1999 Condado de Haza \$24 from an estate vineyard he planted in the Ribera del Duero in 1987 is also excellent, brimming with ripe black fruits

and a dark chocolate-like finish. In 1998, Fernandez purchased his third estate Dehesa la Granja along the Duero River near Zamora. At \$21, the 1998 Dehesa la Granja from Fernandez is an incredible glass of wine.

Fernandez scoured the region of La Mancha in search of more vineyards with potential for growing high-quality tempranillo.

His newest wine 2000 Fernandez El Vinicelo from La Mancha \$24 is designed for lovers of new oak character, balanced by blackberry fruit and brown spices. Really delicious!

The Healds are Troy residents who write about wine, spirits, food, and restaurants for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave them a voice mail

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