

#### the traveler, from page 18

slightly smoky, toasty, grilled, earthy. The white (easier to find and ship) milder, chickeny, buttery, less smoky." Rashid's company supplies morels to both commercial and consumer customers.

#### The hunt is on

On the weekend of May 13, morel mania will reach a high at the Boyne City Mushroom Festival and Hunt. Boyne City, an attractive easy-going town of restored Victorian buildings and plentiful tourist amenities (lodgings, restaurants and shops), plays host.

Chairman Kim Brown shares some of the highlights: A three-day carnival with rides, games and the usual fun foods; on Friday, 4-6 p.m., a morel program by Larry Lonik (good prep for the hunt); on Saturday afternoon, a tented Taste of Boyne City, with for-sale samples of morel goodies prepared by local restaurants—plus THE main event, the 34th National Morel Mushroom Hunting Contest, sponsored by the Boyne Valley Lions.

The hunt sign-up starts on Saturday at 7:30 a.m. in Sunset Park and is expected to draw 200 to 300 entries. Fees are \$12; then, \$10 in advance. Experienced or not, all hunters are eligible.

At 9 a.m. sharp, grab your official tote collector bag and hop on the buses that whisk contenders off to a secret hunt location. For the next 90 minutes, it's you, the

woods and hopefully some morels. Be environmentally friendly and either pinch or cut the mushrooms at their base, allowing for new growth from their underground plant body.

A siren will sound to warn you when the time deadline approaches—and guide you back to the hunt base should you stray.

"We've never lost a contestant yet, although one, a winner, was 10 minutes late and suffered a 30 mushroom penalty!" Chairman Brown reassures. Winners of the first round battle it out in a second afternoon round for morel-shaped trophies.

Hunting success is often at the whim of nature, the past season's weather a big factor. The winning morel count on record is 915 in 1970; the champion in 1992, only 57. So what if you aren't a winner. At least you'll get to keep all your morels...and you can enter a sort of consolation Fun Morel Contest for the smallest, weirdest shape, etc. Or you can "spend" your morels at the White Rose fashion shop; one mushroom per item gives you 10 percent off.

For those who prefer mushroom hunting on a passive level, buy a spore kit at the festival and grow your own or buy fresh morels to bring home.♦

For further information: Springbrook Hills Resort, 616-535-2227; Boyne City Festival and Hunt, Boyne City Chamber of Commerce, 616-582-6222.

#### feasting, from page 19

Clean and cut morels in half, lengthwise. Remove morel stems and chop finely. Mix with frozen peas and onions. Add butter, garlic powder, salt, pepper and soy sauce. Stuff morel heads with mixture and place on greased baking sheet. Cover with foil; bake at 450 F for 35-40 minutes. Makes about 40 appetizers.

*Hoot's Restaurant, Boyne City*

**Morel Mushroom Tart**  
1 short crust pastry recipe  
2 c. heavy cream  
4 oz. sliced bacon  
3 whole eggs and 2 yolks  
1 oz. dried morels, rehydrated  
1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg  
2 Tbs. butter  
1 tsp. lemon juice  
2 Tbs. dry bread crumbs  
6 oz. Swiss cheese, diced  
Salt and fresh ground pepper  
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Roll pastry to a 1/8" thickness and line a 10" or 11" tart pan. Prick the bottom with a fork. Line pastry with parchment paper, fill with pie weights. Bake in preheated 425 F. oven for about 15 minutes. Remove weights and paper. Bake an additional 4 minutes. Take out of oven and reduce temperature to 300 F.

Cut bacon into 1/4" slices and sauté until crisp. Drain and set aside. Slice rehydrated morels and sauté in butter. Add lemon juice, salt and pepper. Add bacon and Swiss cheese. Scald cream and cool. Mix eggs and yolks together and add cream. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Sprinkle bread crumbs on the baked tart shell. Spread the mushroom mixture on top of them. Spoon in the eggs and cream mixture. Bake until tart is barely firm to the touch. Turn off oven and leave until the tart is quite well set. Remove from the oven, sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese and serve hot.

*Tapawingo Restaurant,  
Ellsworth...for American Spoon Foods*

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