12th Annual Winter Luncheon

Maxine Stone

You are cordially invited to attend the 12th Annual Missouri Mycological Society Winter Luncheon on Sunday, February 4, from noon until 4 p.m., at “The Commons” at Eden Seminary, 475 E. Lockwood, Webster Groves, Missouri. Pat Ferrill is again chairing this event. Many thanks to her for taking on this challenging responsibility.

The Commons will accommodate our members and guests in “old world” beauty and comfort. (We don’t expect to be cramped like last winter’s lunch.) Make your reservations asap so you don’t miss this excellent event.

The Winter Luncheon is our fabulous potluck luncheon. Food is taken to a higher level. Some of last year’s culinary spectacles included venison stuffed with wild oysters, chanterelle stew, Canada goose consommé, salmon croquettes with black trumpets, dove and squirrel pasta, persimmon-cheese pie, peach-blackberry pie, peppermint bark and the beautiful amanita (shaped and decorated) cookies.

Please bring a dish with a label identifying the chef and the ingredients, and, if it contains mushrooms, whether the mushrooms are wild or store-bought. Wine and nonalcoholic beverages will be served. We welcome your homemade wines and brews.

Anne Schlafly, owner of the Kitchen Conservatory, will speak on Passionate Soup-tion.

We will also be holding our wonderful raffle. All raffle proceeds will be used for our new home at Tyson Research Facility. We expect that the prizes will at least equal last year’s, which included various gift certificates (e.g., Malmaison and Natural Fact Restaurants, Gilberg Perennial Farms, Rolling Ridge Nursery, Natural Way, Silver Garden and the Travel Den), Blues hockey tickets and, yes, a helicopter ride with Alan Barkledge.

Register Now: Reservations must be received by January 22nd. Cost for members is $10, nonmembers $15. Raffle tickets are $1 each or 1 for $10. Please use the form on page 6. Requests under $5 will not be accepted. No confirmation will be sent. More registration information, contact Sara Yates at 314-962-5711 or CWWYSKY@postnet.com.

Volunteer: Volunteers are needed to set up, serve wine, help with the raffle and clean up. Please contact Pat Ferrill to offer your assistance at 618-664-2373 (home) 618-337-6060 (work) or PFerrill@bdsa-transit.org.

Directions: Take I-44 to the Elm exit. Go north on Elm to Lockwood. Go east (right) on Lockwood to the stop sign at Bimpard. Go north (left) on Bimpard. Take the first driveway to the left. (This is the back way into Eden Seminary.) Go straight. At the “T” in the parking lot you will see the Commons building on your right. It has a rust colored door.

Winter Luncheon Raffle Prizes Sought

All proceeds from the raffle will be used for Bunker 26 of Tyson Research Facility. The more raffle prizes, the more tickets we will sell, the more refurbishing we can do. So please participate by either donating an item or two or soliciting a donation. Good prizes include anything related to mushrooms (a book, a kitschy tea set, a tablecloth, or an ounce of dried morels), homemade foods or wine, gift certificates to stores or restaurants, tickets to shows, concerts or games or even services like a “shroomly dinner for four at your home or a day of instruction on how to find those elusive morels. We will gladly accept a special, big-ticket item like a balloon ride or the use of a condo in Colorado or airline tickets. Use your imagination! Solicit donations. Help to raise money for Bunker 26! And buy lots of raffle tickets!

Please contact Barbara Steps about your offerings: 314-469-5184 (work); 314-968-9345 (home); steps@us.ibm.com.

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Home At Last

Don Dill

Storage bunker 26 at Tyson Research Center is now home base for MOMS. The board of directors made it official at its November 7 meeting.

All records and donated equipment will be safely stored there. When we have stabilized the interior temperature and humidity, which Brad Bomanz, Gordon White and I are in the process of doing, we will be able to move the mycarium and dryer there too.

Great news! Bob Beckwith and Dawn Keaton have each contributed microscopes to MOMS. Those of us who wish to use them will need help. So we are going to set up some classes, as soon as we can, on their use. (Don’t expect to be #1, #2 or #3 on the list though because Brad, Gordon and I are already waiting in line!)

The list of current needs to make the bunker more functional and comfortable is on the next page. Look it over and see if you can help. Call Brad, who is the bunker supervisor, or someone else on the education and research committee and we’ll make some arrangements for pick up.

If you’d like to visit the bunker to see what we’re up to or would like to help out, call one of us and we’ll meet you there for the “grand tour.”

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Missouri Mycological Society is a 501(c)(3) organization under the Internal Revenue Code. Donations to MOMS are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.
Education And Research Committee
— Don Dill, Chairman

At a recent meeting of the Education and Research Committee mention was made by several members that there was a noticeable lack of voucher specimens from certain areas in Missouri and Illinois. (Not too surprising since the majority of MOMS members come from the St. Louis metropolitan area and forays center around it.) Conspicuous by their absence or paucity were:

1. The Ozark region (excluding “Mingo”)
2. Central Illinois
3. Northern Missouri
4. Western Missouri

A suggestion was made that we should solicit members of the Education and Research Committee and other club members to head subcommittees for these specific areas. It was expected that each subcommittee would gather, document, photograph, identify and dry specimens found in each area which could then be forwarded to and stored at our Tyson bunker mycorarium and logged onto our voucher specimen collection list. This would greatly increase our collection’s size, and, more importantly, broaden its scope and thus make it a more valuable resource.

For now, we will use the Tyson bunker only for our “official collection,” but there is no reason that each subcommittee could not establish its own voucher specimen collection.

When such a project was more than a group wanted to do, it could simply maintain a supplementary species list which would have considerable research value by itself. The primary purpose would still remain to supplement our official voucher specimen list at the Tyson center.

We sincerely hope that this idea sparks your interest and you decide to participate. We want our collection to be as comprehensive and representative of our central region as we can possibly make it. Refinements such as this might enable us to plot new species spreading into our area or ones declining or disappearing from it — valuable and important fungal information!

Dues Reminder

Annual dues for 2001 are due December 31. Please send your $15 dues to David Yates, 3654 French Ave., St. Louis, MO 63116-4043. Include the usual information: name, address, phone number. Include your e-mail if you wish to be notified of 911 forays (i.e., short notice forays — mostly hypothetical). Or use the form on page 6.

MOMS members who are NAMA members should send their NAMA dues to David also, for forwarding to NAMA. MOMS members receive a discount: the dues are $32 per year for an individual membership and $35 for a family membership.

Please do not send multi-year payments — we need to keep our records simple.

Bunker 26: A Fix-upper
— Maxine Stone

Our bunker at Tyson needs quite a bit of work to make it habitable and hospitable: assembling bookshelves, tacking up insulation, repairing leaks, affixing lighting, creating and installing a banister, moving furniture, painting and more. Knowledgeable carpentry or a willing pair of hands — whatever you can do will be appreciated greatly. Please contact me asap to offer your time and energy. VeryMaxine@aol.com, 963-0280.

Here’s our current wish list from Don Dill and Brad Bomantz:

A small refrigerator
Two ceiling fans
Four 2-lite or 4-lite florescent lights
Storage cabinet, 6’ high
Floor and/or desk lights and lamp bulbshade
L.C.D. projector
Long folding table
Chalk board, bulletin board
Binoculars
Tool chest items (wire cutter, tape measure, hack saw, socket wrenches, pliers, Phillips screwdriver, scissors)

What Is A Voucher?
— Barkha Bullin McDermith

When you skip work and go to the doctor, the doc gives you a note of excuse. This note is a voucher. If you skip work to go foraging for mushrooms, you can hardly take a mushroom to work! Still, some of us are interested in preserving our mushroom work for future generations.

We are interested in seeing whether the same mushrooms grow under this tree next year — or in a hundred years — as are growing here now. We want to document whether clearcutting this forest has any effect on mushroom growth. Maybe we aren’t sure of our identification, so we want to save a mushroom and mail it to an expert. Or see what mushroom grows on this log after this slime mold is done with it. Mycologists sometimes request a certain mushroom from voucher collections all over the world, in order to study some particular feature, such as antitumor activity. Some of us feel that fungivorous forays document the meaning of existence: “I found a mushroom, therefore I was.”

Mushroom vouchers do all of this, and more.

Mushroom vouchers are evidence that you were where you said you were and found what you said you found.

As with all evidence, there is lots of room for “tampering,” especially later, when our memory is less clear. We might not want to admit the question, but we wonder: “Gee, was that a black or a golden morel before I dried it?” “Did this thing smell like chlorine, or was it turpins?” “Was that lactate peppery, or just fishy?”

As Andy Methven says, “the most valuable voucher specimens are those with the best documentation, including photos, spore prints and written descriptions of the fungus while still fresh.”

If you are still wondering just what IS a voucher, then the next time you collect a mushroom, do it with one of Brad’s cool voucher kits, and you’ll be well on your way. Visit the bunker at Tyson and see our growing collection of vouchers.
Mingo Report

I think I suffered my mid-life crisis yesterday [Sept. 19] on the job as I considered my daily routines and the turning of Big Wheel In The Sky. Doubt, regret, a sense of time slipping away ... it wasn’t pretty and I didn’t like it, but at least I understood it. Mingo was this past weekend, and, if you were there, you understand it too.

Jack Toll recalls a time in Mingo when a Caterpillar operator left his rig idling and ran an errand. He returned to find it had idled its way down into the mud ... up to the cab. That’s how it happens there. From the moment you arrive, you begin idling down into the swamp.

Historically speaking, the fungi we bring in at Mingo have been truly stunning in quality, quantity and variety. The I.D. room is noisy, the odor is heavy, the mycologists work overtime and still don’t keep up. This fall, the only tables with fungi-abundant were the dinner tables, thanks to The Julies and team. Things were dry all across the swamp and there were just enough finds to go around: a few beautiful specimens with veils intact, a few hoary inedibles to poke at, a few sorry edibles on which to pin hopes. It may go down as the first time a mycologist at Mingo had time to spill wine on anything other than a mushroom!!

Still, the weekend was glorious! The weather was cool and ideal for walking and sleeping. There were very few mosquitoes and just enough folding chairs. No one was lost. The Elephant Mug went round in friendly rivalry. Bill May gave his long-anticipated snake talk. We took time to remember Harry Thiers with Andy Methven and Walt Sundberg, who then proceeded to keep us spellbound on-screen. Never take these fellows for granted — who else will hand down the wisdom, “OH! That’s Volvariella bombacinus ... now you’re a REAL Mycologist!!”

And how about The Cultivation of Specialized Fungi in Agriforestry? Sound exciting? If you’re shaking your head “no,” you haven’t heard Johann Bruhn (see picture, p. 8) describe current studies in European black truffle farming, happening right here and promising rewards both monetary and salivary. Even if your truffle tester said, “old sock,” that presentation had you saying “Wow!!”

Truthfully, if you have ever been there, you know everything about a Mingo weekend is sure to settle you down, open you up and fill you with bliss ... all the way up to your cab. Digging yourself back out, well, that’ll be your mid-life crisis. It’s a good problem to have, I wouldn’t miss it for the world.

(Editor’s note: Next issue, Ms. Vadner shares her favorite recipes for mid-life crises, including “creamed mid-life crisis and morels on toast”!)

Financial Report

Mingo 2000 $??? Expenses $??? Revenue

Although the Earthstar’s investigative reporter failed to obtain exact numbers, s/he learned from reliable sources that expenses slightly exceeded revenue this year for the annual state foray (i.e., Mingo) and that, in prior years, revenue usually exceeded expenses. This indicates that the Mingo foray pretty much runs on a “break even” basis. That’s great for such an excellent event! (The keepers of the exact numbers weren’t sure if the members should be given exact numbers; maybe next issue!)

Minnesota Here We Come!

— Maxine Stone

The next NAMA Foray is scheduled for July 5 – 8 at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota on 2,400 acres of lakes and woods one hour west of Minneapolis. The Minnesota Mycological Society will be the host. There will be mycologists and mycophiles from all over the country, including host mycologist Tom Volk, Associate Professor of Microbiology at the University of Wisconsin. If you attended our NAMA Foray in Cape Girardeau, you know how much fun these events are. Mark your calendar now so that you don’t miss this myco-filled event with unique myco-folks in a myco-rich territory. I will be going and would love to have other MOMS members go too. Contact me for more information (or visit NAMA’s website).

Foray Report: Miscellaneous

Rumors have it that the forays at Eleanor Beal’s farm, at Tyson Research Center and at Pickle Springs (following the Hawning) were successful and many mushrooms were found (see species list for Tyson on p. 4). Rumors from the Hellmuth Farm foray indicate that few noncultivated mushrooms were found but a good time was had by all nonetheless.

Incurable Epicureans

— Julie Ridlon

On January 27, the Steps are hosting our Dippy Fondue Dinner. Racolette, black trumpet, porcini, beef tenderloin, truffles, dark chocolate andfind white chocolate fondue are just a part of our menu. We will have a Japanese dinner in early April and a tapas picnic in mid June. Membership: $15 a person to join for these three meals. Cost of the meals is in addition to the $15. Send your check to me at 1234 Orchard Village Lane, Manchester, MO 63021.

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Harry D. Thiers: Rest In Peace

— Ken Gilberg

It’s been hard to express my feelings about Harry Thiers since his death on August 8. I couldn’t even send condolences to his wife, Ellen, for over a month. It’s been almost four months now and, well, it’s still hard and it’s not gonna get any easier.

If you want the details of his academic career and accomplishments, check out NAMA’s Mycophile and Mushroom the Journal and other mushroom club newsletters (some are on the web – check out the September issue of San Francisco’s Mycena News at www.mssf.org/mycena.html). Or read Dennis Desjardin’s tribute for the Dr. Harry Thiers NAMA foray in Asilomar, California in 1998. It was the grandest NAMA foray I’ve ever attended and Harry and Ellen were the most gracious recipients of recognition that I’ve ever seen.

I first tuned in to the greatness of this man from clues from Walt Sundberg in 1995. He told me that his old mentor, Dr. Harry Thiers, was retiring with his wife, Ellen, to Peoria, Illinois. They were coming from California where Dr. Thiers was an esteemed professor at San Francisco State University. They were also revered in the Mycological Society of San Francisco, one of the most active mushroom clubs in the country with about 1,000 members. Walt was hoping that Harry and Ellen would come to some of the Missouri Mycological Society outings. Walt spoke of Harry with awe, respect, and admiration. Funny how I can think of him as Harry... he is so much an elder. Yet he made himself so available, available to everyone in the Missouri club.

We were privileged to hear Harry speak at the Winter Luncheon in 1996 (“The Mushrooms of California”). I was thrilled when Harry and Ellen came to Mingo in 1997. The Thierses were comfortable with us, due in no small part to Walt’s and Andy Methven’s welcome. (Andy is yet another of Harry’s proteges.)

I recall Harry’s talk on boletes at Mingo. He explained the differences between Boletus, Leccinum, Gyroporus, Gastroboletus, Pulveroboletus, Suillus and Tylopilus. It was a stretch for most of us, a pleasurable stretch, and I wish I’d taken a video. Here was a prominent scientist who had written numerous articles and books about boletes, described and named over 150 new species of fungi, even had 14 taxa named after him (including the genus Thierista) and who had served on investigative panels around the world, unraveling the mysteries of fungi with other giants of mycology like Alexander Smith, Richard Homola, L. R. Hesler, Rolf Singer. And here he was with us at Mingo sharing his lifetime of knowledge.

I treasure the time I walked with Harry, Walt, Andy, Jay Justice and several others down Mudlick Mountain at Sam A. Baker State Park. We identified species, Harry said, “Only God knows what that is. And He’s not even sure.” Harry attributed that quote to someone else but to me that was Harry. Steppingstepping his greatness, sharing his love of life, mushrooms and us.

About a year ago Harry and Ellen came to St. Louis to give us several boxes of his mushroom books from all over the world. Those 50 or so books, including Harry’s Ph.D. thesis, now compose the core of the Missouri Mycological Society Library. I propose the collection be named the Harry D. Thiers Memorial Library.

We were fortunate to have Dr. Thiers with us as a member of the Missouri Mycological Society for the past four years. Good-bye, Harry.

Report From Friuli E Veneto

— Maxine Stone

Have you ever eaten so many mushrooms, of so many varieties, prepared in so many ways, in so many different settings, that you thought you could never again eat another one? Such a problem. Right? I was in Italy this fall with like-minded people hunting ’til we dropped and eating ’til we burst. We participated in the COCOFUNghi 2000 Festival taking place in the Friuli and Veneto Regions of northeast Italy. Porcini, *Amanita caesaria*, *Armellaria mella*, black trumpets, chanterelles and even a few truffles. Appetizers, soups, side dishes, entrees, desserts. It was wonderful. I have never taken so many pictures of beautiful presentations in my life! We met up with other clubs from the area and were treated royally by them. Gorgeous scenery. Good hunting. Lovely and interesting people. But the food... Bueno, bueno.

Grow Morel Mushrooms in your own backyard with the Morel Habitat Kit. The Kit’s guaranteed seed and easy-to-use instructions and a little recycling will allow you to pick and enjoy pounds of fresh morel mushrooms.

Grow Delicious Gourmet Mushrooms in your home or office with the Mushroom Kit — it’s as easy as growing a potted plant all you need is water. Gourmet Mushroom Products, www.gmushrooms.com

(Sucker ad spotted by Bill Kwapy)
Night In A Rainy Forest (Second of two parts from the April 2000 issue of Mycena News, the newsletter of the Mycological Society of San Francisco.) — Tom Duffy

Then I began to feel a wondrous glow. And I knew that was the start of hypothermia, so all that miserable night when I began to feel euphoric or stopped shivering, I induced shivering by first moving my leg muscles. I got better and better at doing it voluntarily with my thighs, even to the point where my whole body shook. My "bed" itself felt like down, but I suspect that my backside was so numb I couldn't have felt a rock. Twice I heard what sounded like a motorcycle on the highway in the distance towards the north.

At daybreak the rain let up and I very slowly got up to find I was so stiff I couldn't stand at first. Then I slowly emptied my pack of all my mycological specimens, but kept the chanterelles. I put the heavy flannel shirt on again and realized that I had been a little confused. What was a "motorcycle" doing north of me? The highway was east. This time I had a plan. Forget the damn car. No going in straight lines, go north; when around the Devil's Club, go east again. No east or north available, go a little left (almost all right-handed people go in anti-clock wise circles anyway). Stick to the plan! It worked like a charm, but I got more and more tired. So out went all my beautiful chanterelles! At the next stop, off went that heavy soggy shirt. Finally I was so tired, I crawled two or three times and was ready to throw away the pack. Then above me I saw the berm of the first dirt road and the joining of the highway. There were some road workers in orange on it. I could barely say "help, I need help" (not something a male likes to do, anymore than he likes to ask for directions).

One of the "workers" came down the sharp slope and asked "Are you Tom?" I croaked "yes"—even my vocal cords were shot. He was a rescue worker and had been out all night looking for me with his team. They were just about to change shifts but, at least, I had a little pride left. I had found them and not vice versa, but thank God for them. They almost had to drag me up the bank. All I could have done without them would have been to drag myself to the side of the highway and lain there until someone either ran me over or became a good Samaritan.

They got me into the rescue truck, which heater in back. One of the searchers (a young woman) said to strip everything off and don't worry about being embarrassed, as if I could really care. To get warm, I would have stripped on the internet. A couple of towels were tossed my way and then 3 or 4 blankets. They had actually shmooshed (I can think of no better verb) through that forest that night on all terrain vehicles; that, you idiot, was the "motorcycle." The rest, however, was strictly low-tech. They had no low-reading thermometer, so the mercury never moved. Not sure just how hypothermic I was, I sent for an ambulance.

In the ambulance, of course, the sirens went on, thereby engendering a Class III emergency bill, if I remember rightly. Without a hot washcloth, no veins were found until I reached the ER. Then I had a nice re-warming blanket and a less nice IV, later followed by warm apple juice, toast & jelly and hot chocolate that had never tasted so good in my life. The sheriff gave Ellen a ride to the hospital regaling her with stories of past rescues (only one death at the bottom of a ravine found a year later). One local had actually lost himself three times in that heavy forest; once more and the sheriff promised him a nice clean jail cell. Ellen was very optimistic about my survival skills, so she fully expected me to be alive but was very glad that I was unhurt. Did I learn anything? Well, one becomes awful nice to people and very careful for a few weeks and then some relapse sets in. But I do some odd things from time to time like talking to street people about the lousy weather and donating a little here and there. Life can always be shorter than you might think. Also think about what's in your pack. Don't carry survival gear just for an expedition; carry it up the next rise if you're alone. You rarely, if ever, sprain your ankle going up or down a mountain; you sprain it in plain sight of your camp when you are relaxed and safely home.

p.s. GTE says that 911 always works if you are in a cell zone — even if your cell phone has been cloned.

Was The Plank Road Inn On The Plank Road?

(For several years, some of us at the Haunting are dinner at the Plank Road Inn in Farmington (you remember: "Chicken Fried Steak, Two Vegetables and Mashed Potatoes — $5.99") and mostly never thought about the odd name. Nancy Hollingsworth provided this excerpt from Our Lead Belt Heritage by Henry C. Thompson, shedding light on the subject.)

In 1819 the first steamboat came up the Mississippi River and a great period of river commerce started. While all the towns on the river reaped the benefit of this increase in river shipping, Ste. Genevieve was the shipping point for almost all of the mineral region. The lead from Washington and Jefferson counties and the iron from St. Francois and Iron counties was almost entirely brought to this point and was very large indeed. Lead had always been an important commodity and in the early 1840's, the iron industry became of almost equal importance. The town became one of the greatest commercial centers on the upper Mississippi River ...

Of great importance to the area was the building of the Plank Road from Iron Mountain to Ste. Genevieve in 1851. Being forty-two miles long, it was considered a great enterprise at the time. Perhaps millions of tons of iron ore and lead went over those planks. It was built by a group of men incorporated under the name of "The Ste. Genevieve, Iron Mountain and Pilot Knob Plank Road Company" and was a toll road. Toll gates were placed at intervals and a small fee was paid at each station. Some of the best engineers of the state were employed to lay out and build the road. James P. Kirkwood, later Chief Engineer of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, Joseph A. Miller, William R. Singleton were the engineers and all of them subsequently became national authorities on road and railroad construction.

The road was constructed by laying heavy timbers lengthwise on the ground and then oak planks eight feet long were laid over these across the timbers and nailed down. Wooden bridges were constructed over the creeks and saw mills were every few miles and constantly at work sawing the oak boards that wore out rapidly with the heavy traffic. The road was only wide enough for one-way traffic and turnouts were built at frequent intervals. Eastbound traffic took precedence because those teams were usually the more heavily loaded with iron ore.

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Join The Fun(gi) — Complete A Form Or Two!

Sara Yates is again taking registrations for the Winter Luncheon and David Yates is looking after membership and the club treasury. If you want the works, it will take three different checks and two stamps. Thanks to Sara and David (and to you)!

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Winter Luncheon Reservation Form

Reservations must be received by January 22

Confirmation will not be sent.

Make checks payable to:
Missouri Mycological Society

Names of attendees, state whether a member or a nonmember.

Registration amount enclosed ($10 members, nonmembers $15) $________
Add money for raffle tickets ($1/ticket or $10/12 tickets) $________
Total Amount Enclosed $________

Phone Number ________________

Send to:
Sara Yates
41 Rosemont
Webster Groves, MO 63119-2451

Any questions?
Contact Sara: 314-962-5711, CWYSKY@postnet.com

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Missouri Mycological Society and NAMA Membership Form

Memberships end each December 31 (unless renewed!)

Make MOMS checks payable to:
Missouri Mycological Society
Make NAMA checks payable to:
NAMA

Name (please print) ____________________________
Street ____________________________
City ____________________________ State ____________ Zip (9 digit) ____________
Home phone ____________________________ Work phone ____________________________
E-mail ____________________________

Missouri Mycological Society family membership - 1 year/$15 $________
Make a separate check payable to Missouri Mycological Society to send to David

NAMA’s dues are due concurrently with MOMS dues. To keep your NAMA membership current or to become a member of NAMA, send an additional check for $32 made out to NAMA. (This reflects a $3 discount from the $35 reg. membership.) NAMA’s dues need to be sent to our treasurer, David Yates. Here’s an opportunity to save a stamp.

North American Mycological Association membership

Affiliated club members - 1 year/$32 $________
Family/Active - 1 year/$35 $________
Student - 1 year/$15 $________
Sustaining - 1 year/$60 or more $________
Life - $500 $________

Make a separate check payable to NAMA but send to David

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Cut off here (or photocopy) and mail top portion to Sara Yates

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I woke up this morning with visions of sugar plums, fat slices of pumpkin pie and slabs of vanilla fudge dancing in my head. So, how is it that when I zip my jeans, the vision had dedicated itself to my waist? ‘Tis the season for cookies and candies, cakes and pies and meals with good friends. The fattening season.

A case in point. How many sticks of butter have you opened and used with a liberal hand since Thanksgiving? By the second week in December I no longer refer to them as sticks but pounds. I remember making butterball dip candies for the teachers last week. Dailee took sick and couldn’t attend school and neither could those yummy butter balls. I wonder where they went... all twelve dozen!

Enter Gennie with a “g.” That’s the nicest thing she says for an hour three times a week. She’s my aerobics instructor at the Y. It’s amazing. She knows every food sin in the heart of each spandex-clad woman in the room, and she intends to undo two days of Friday binging in an hour. Good Luck!

For the uninitiated, aerobics begins with a light warm-up for stretching the large muscle groups. Most instructors use an upbeat rock or oldies tape. Gennie’s tape tells us to “work that body” “move it move it” to the beat of a jack hammer. I swear the underlying message whispers “move the blubber” “you shouldn’t have eaten those cookies.” She works us to a point where I think we deserve a 15 minute cupcake break (it is the holidays) when she says “OK, You all warmed up?” Without waiting for our breathless answer she increases the tape speed to warp drive and yells, “Let’s MOVE.”

I dread going to Gennie’s workout — no place to hide. The workout room is a dance studio with two walls of floor-to-ceiling mirrors. Gennie exercises in front. I study her sculpted thighs and firm buttocks as she shouts for me to squeeze my glutes and suck my belly button into my backbone. I try. I curse myself for even looking at a second helping of mashed potatoes. I swear I’ll live on celery and saltines as Gennie cranks the tempo up a notch and glares at me to keep pace. “Strong arms,” she bellows. “Good-bye, ice cream,” I weep. “Kick, then punch,” she commands. “Why are sugar and butter my two favorite food groups?” I lament.

What seems like an eternity of torture punctuated with a trail of sweat eventually comes to an end. We actually clap for Gennie and thank her for the workout. I feel so much better when it’s over, like leaving the dentist’s office. My sweatshirt feels looser. Wow, maybe Gennie’s not so bad. This aerobic stuff really works. It’s a good thing because tonight there’s a dinner party and the weekend is going to be a Friday to Sunday eating orgy.

Happy Holidays and Good Eating!

This is the only time of the year when I have half-and-half and butter in the ’fridge. To jazz up a plain menu or add elegance to a special evening, this simple recipe reminds me of how delicious mushrooms are.

Mushroom Fricassee for Two
1 tablespoon butter, divided
1 shallot, minced
1/2 pound shiitake and oyster mushrooms, coarsely chopped (or use your dried morel stash)
2 tablespoons dry sherry
2 tablespoons chicken or vegetable broth
3 tablespoons half-and-half
1/2 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary or 1/4 dried
1/2 teaspoon salt, ground pepper to taste

Melt half the butter in medium skillet. Add shallot. Cook two minutes, until tender. Add remaining butter. Add mushrooms and saute for 5 minutes or until limp. Add sherry. Scrape brown bits in skillet. Add broth, half-and-half, rosemary, salt and pepper to taste. Simmer 5 minutes. Serve and Enjoy!

Event and Foray Schedule
Meet at visitor centers unless otherwise noted. Bring a basket, long pants, wax paper (bags are nice), bug repellent.

* Denotes new item since last issue
December 31, Membership expiration date, see p. 2
January 27, Incurable Epicureans Dinner; see p. 3
Feb. 4, Winter Luncheon
*Feb. 28, Tentative cutoff for the next Earthstar.
*May 30, Tentative cutoff for the June Earthstar.
May 5 - 8, NAMA Foray, Collegeville, MN, see p. 4

Errata: The correct address for the Tyson Research Facility website is: www.biology.wustl.edu.

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Member Meeting

The Missouri Mycological Society will hold its annual meeting of members on Tuesday, January 30, at 7 p.m., at the St. Louis County Library on Lindbergh across from Plaza Frontenac.

All members are invited and encouraged to attend. We will elect two new board members and plan upcoming events.

This is your chance to have a say in who we are and what we do.

12th Annual Winter Luncheon

When: February 4, Noon to 5:00 p.m.
Where: The Commons, see page 1
How Much: $10 members, $15 nonmembers
What to bring: Something delicious!
Reservations: By 1/22; use form on p. 6