



THE KEYSTONE CAP

Newsletter of the Eastern Penn Mushroomers
www.epennmushroomers.org

Summer 2020

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message
Open EPM Roles
Forays Cancellation
2020 Miknis Foray Cancellation
Notes from a Quarantine Kitchen
Did You Know?

COMMUNICATIONS

President:

Shawn Moyer
(717) 571-9942
smoyer@pinchoffamilymed.com

Vice Pres & Program Chair:

John Dawson
717-846-1225
Jwd7too@comcast.net

Treasurer:

Cheryl Dawson
717-846-1225
Daws1cheryl@comcast.net

Director at Large:

Gina Vachino
410-302-6395
gvachino@gmail.com

Foray Chair & Recorder:

Linda Sears
570-581-1202
lkbsears@gmail.com

Webmaster:

Chris Snyder
717-768-4660
Cwsnyder@frontiernet.net

Newsletter Editor:

Lynn Nelson
717-757-4980
LynnNelson104@gmail.com

Culinary Coordinators:

Gina Vachino
410-302-6395
gvachino@gmail.com
Angela Foster
717-799-1554
CVToaster@aol.com

President's Message – Shawn Moyer

As we have all lived different lives since the stay-at-home order issued by Governor Wolf on April 1, our club also has looked very different as well.

To date, there have been 76,500 cases of Covid-19 caused by the novel Coronavirus in Pennsylvania and over 5,000 deaths. No one has a crystal ball to know what will happen next, but the cases in our community have fallen. Predictive models suggest there will be a spike in cases this summer. Hiking in the woods and staying socially distant is safe, but reviewing mushrooms in a group, gathering in dorm rooms and communal eating are not. As such, we are forced to cancel the Miknis Foray along with all other forays until further notice.

A few years ago, I gave a winter lecture on how to grow mushrooms at home. Unfortunately, growing mushrooms isn't as easy as growing tomato plants. There are multiple steps in cultivation of mushrooms and if you want to start from the beginning i.e. spores or from a tissue culture, you need a sterile work environment.

During this time at home, if you would like to try your hand at growing mushrooms at home, there are several companies that sell bags of spawn or logs with spawn that are ready to fruit. Tabletop mushroom farms are a fun way to get into the hobby, without the expense and hassle of setting up a lab in your basement.

Here are some reputable suppliers of home mushroom kits.
<https://farwestfungi.com/collections/farm-cultivation-products>
<https://www.smugtownmushrooms.com/growkits>
<https://www.fieldforest.net/category/mushroom-grow-kits>

Once you receive your mushroom kit, all you need to do is soak the spawn and cover it with a plastic bag. Some kits require daily misting to keep them moist. In a week or so, you will have a flush of edible mushrooms. It is easy, fun and gives a taste for the hobby.

I have some additional sad news for the Club. Long time members and officers, Cheryl and John Dawson are stepping down from their roles as Treasurer and Vice President and Program Chair and we need some members to assume their positions. Those of you who would like to help out, but are



Chestnut Mushrooms fruiting on block of spawn, from Field and Forest Products

SAVE THE DATES

Mark your calendars so you don't miss these FUNgi activities.

EPM 2020 Summer Forays
CANCELLED

EPM 2020 Miknis Foray
CANCELLED

NEMF 2020 Foray
Postponed until 2021

FUNGI IN THE NEWS

Commercial Mushroom Shortage

<https://www.thepacker.com/article/mushroom-shortages-expected-10-weeks>

How COVID-19 is affecting mushroom production.

Lichens and Fungi

<https://getpocket.com/explore/item/how-a-guy-from-a-montana-trailer-park-overturned-150-years-of-biology>
Lichen expert uncovers unknown symbiotic relationship.

John Cage: A Mycological Foray—Variations on Mushrooms

<https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/aia-reviews/john-cage-mycological-foray-variations-on-mushrooms-1202689259/>
Book review

“Fungi are nature’s greatest chemists.”

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mushrooms-save-planet-environment-plastic-meat_n_5e9e9bd5c5b6b2e5b8377074

Why people think mushrooms could save the world.

concerned about the responsibility of the positions, the Dawsons and I are happy to review the duties and responsibilities with you.

John and Cheryl have been the backbone of our Club for many years and their kind offer to ease their transition is another way they continue to support our Club. I look forward to a time we can gather to show our appreciation of their long-term contributions.

In the meantime, stay safe.



Photo by: Sarah Sears
Proof that cats can't resist shelves anytime, anywhere.

Important! Open EPM Roles

John Dawson (vice-president/program chair) and Cheryl Dawson (club membership secretary/treasurer) are stepping down from their EPM roles. They have had a long and successful tenure in those roles, but given their ages and the health issues that come with age, they think it is time for some younger members to fill those positions. We thank John and Cheryl for their hard work and dedication to the club for all these years. We are seeking members to fill these important key positions.

John has completed his last tasks as program chair and is ready to work with whoever steps forward to transition to the role. Cheryl is ready to work with her replacement, transferring records, and explaining her procedures and databases.

Without a new program chair, our winter meetings will no longer have presentations, and the annual Miknis Foray will end. Without a membership secretary/treasurer, our club cannot survive.

Please consider stepping up to fill these important positions. For details on the responsibilities and workload, please contact John or Cheryl. Their contact information is in the masthead of this newsletter.

Forays Cancellation - Linda Sears, Foray Chair

What a year 2020 has turned out to be thus far! Good grief!! Kind of makes me want to go to sleep like Rip Van Winkle. Wake me when it's over. The other side of me says, "Fight!" Does this make me a dual personality? I think we are all feeling a bit like this. In any case, the effect it has had on our club is unprecedented and very disappointing.



All forays are cancelled for the year. We do not feel it is appropriate to subject our members to the possibility of contagion for the sake of mushrooms. While getting out in the woods is a good thing and healthy, the congregation necessary for the identification sessions would be dangerous. Our president, Dr. Shawn Moyer, is 100% behind this decision.

We polled members to see if they would like to participate in virtual Zoom meetings. There were not enough interested members to make it worthwhile. We heartily encourage people to get out in the wilds on their own. Take good and complete pictures: caps, gills, stems, all parts of the mushrooms. Get spore prints, if possible. If you do not know how to do this, visit MushroomExpert.com. Michael Kuo has all the information you need on his site and he is very entertaining as well. Note the habitat. Is it growing under hardwoods or conifers? If you can, try to identify the species of tree. Is it growing on a log or in your lawn? Is it on dung? (Honestly, they are the most opportunistic organisms.) All these things help us identify fungi.

Share them with us via our email address: epennmushroomers@groups.io and we will do our best to identify them for you. Do not forget those lovely slime molds. We want to see those too.

Stay safe. Stay strong and hope to see you in 2021.

Message from our outgoing program chair - John Dawson

Unlike our club's regular forays, which are coordinated by our foray chair Linda Sears, responsibility for organizing the club's annual Miknis Foray lies with the program chair. Given the uncertainties regarding the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, I have waited until now to make a decision about whether or not to cancel this year's Miknis Foray at Mont Alto. I do not know the current situation in Franklin County, where Mont Alto is located, but it is my understanding that all of Penn State's branch campuses are closed this summer, and I just learned that Penn State Mont Alto has now cancelled all summer camp programs there, so that venue would not be available to us. In addition, although the "green" phase of Governor Wolf's reopening plan (to which York County transitioned on June 12) permits gatherings of up to 250 people, I am among many who think that move will prove to be too hasty, and our club president Shawn Moyer, who is a physician and one of the directors of the UPMC medical center here, has said that the York medical community expects COVID-19 infections to spike in June and July. In any case, our club members come from many different localities within and outside of Pennsylvania, in some of which the Covid-19 infection rate remains quite high. The potential for the spread of COVID-19 in a gathering such as ours would thus be substantial wherever it was held, for even if all participants wore masks during the entire foray, there is no way we could carry out mushroom identification while maintaining 6-foot separation. Bearing in mind also that several members who have participated in the

Miknis forays in the recent past are either beyond the age of 65 or have pre-existing health conditions that put them at high risk should they contract the coronavirus, I concluded that the only wise course was to cancel this year's Miknis Foray. I notified the Mont Alto campus of that decision before I learned of their own cancellation, but expressed the hope that we will nevertheless be able to hold next year's foray there.

I regret very much having had to take that action (and even more having decided last week to cancel the travel reservations my wife and I had made to travel to Banff, Alberta this August to celebrate our golden wedding anniversary), but I saw no other safe option.

P.S.: This is my final act as outgoing program chair. It is imperative that someone else step forward to assume that post, as otherwise we will not be able to book speakers for our winter meetings next year. I will be glad to advise whoever does succeed me as program chair on potential speakers and on details of organizing the annual Miknis foray.

Notes from a Quarantine Kitchen by Gina Vachino, Culinary Coordinator

Before I begin, let me say, I LOVE butter. And heavy cream. And half-n-half.

Organic, unsalted, grass-fed.

I adore chanterelles sautéed in golden butter, the pan de-glazed with a splash of chardonnay, and added to a laboriously prepared risotto, finished with fresh heavy cream. Or, black trumpets and cream on puff pastry; a delicate morel panna cotta; crème de brick caps on toast (I just made that up).

You get the idea. I'm not vegan. My LDL is a *little too high*.

Enter Covid-19 and the dreaded Instacart.

I last stepped foot in a grocery store on March 14. Even then I was totally paranoid. I stood as far back from the check-out counter as possible. I scolded the teen employee who invaded my safety-zone; 3 feet at the time, which later increased to 6 feet, and currently, if you neurotically read PubMed instead of mainstream media, 21+ feet (depending on airflow, humidity, etc.). HADN'T HE READ THE NEWS!?!?

A few weeks later (when I ran out of butter), I guiltily attempted my first Instacart order. "Guiltily" because there I sat, in the safety of my home, while an anonymous, underpaid shopper risked their health to collect and deliver my groceries! I justified it then (and now) as the measure I need to take to protect my parents, who I *finally* was able to visit after 4 weeks of complete self-isolation.

Although things seem to be improving, in the early days of the pandemic, when people were hoarding heavy cream and toilet paper, my Instacart delivery yielded very few items on my grocery list. There was no butter, half-n-half or heavy cream to be had for the basket of morels (I never found). They were even out of less mainstream ingredients like tempeh! The kale I was craving turned out to be a plastic container of soupy green-rot.

Instead of relying on a stranger to pick out fresh produce and competing with hoarders for kitchen staples, at the end of each work day, I foraged for wild-greens and elusive spring mushrooms. After weeks of eating

violets, chickweed and yellow-rocket, I serendipitously stumbled upon a log of young, fresh oyster mushrooms! Sadly, I had no butter. And, no cream. But I did have olive oil, and a container of raw, unsalted cashews.

I had been making homemade cashew milk for a while, sweetened with maple syrup, vanilla extract, cinnamon and nutmeg. It's a bit like eggnog, without the egg or the nog. This time, I omitted the sugar and warm spices and added only a pinch of salt. I also used less water, resulting in the nut-milk equivalent of half-n-half. After sautéing the oysters in olive oil until just caramelized, I lowered the flame and poured in cashew milk to cover. The heat thickened the mushroom cashew milk mixture into a creamy, decadent sauce, almost identical to a roux, which I spooned over toasted multi-grain nut & seed bread (made by very loosely following the recipe at bojongourmet.com). I can't wait to try cashew cream chanterelle risotto later this summer. Moooooove over Dairy! Cashews over Cows! HDL over LDL! Udder-deliciousness.

Did you know?

Although not toxic, the teliospores of the common bunt fungus, also called stinking smut (*Tilletia tritici* and *T. laevis*), give wheat flour an unappealing gray color and foul odor of rotting fish. From the late 1800s to the 1930s, this fungus was particularly devastating to the wheat crop—in Kansas alone 25–50% of the crop was lost—and supplies of flour were at times scarce. Similar losses were occurring in Europe. Even tainted flour could not be wasted. Historians have determined that this was the impetus for the invention of gingerbread. Adding molasses to the dough sweetened and masked the color and smell of the flour—along with this new spicy ingredient from India (ginger)—and resulted in a sensational new treat that is popular to this day.

From FUNGI Magazine, v. 13, no. 1. Reprinted with permission.

Entangled Life



Biologist and author [Merlin Sheldrake](#) is using a particularly self-referential marketing strategy for his new book [Entangled Life](#). In a recent [Instagram](#) post, Sheldrake announced the mycelium-based project's release with an image of the text literally bursting with fungi. "Here it is being devoured by Pleurotus, or oyster mushrooms. Pleurotus can digest many things, from crude oil to used cigarette butts, and is also delicious. Now Pleurotus has eaten Entangled Life, I can eat the Pleurotus, and so eat my words," he writes. You can purchase your own (untarnished) copy from [Bookshop](#).

From <https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2020/05/merlin-sheldrake-entangled-life/>