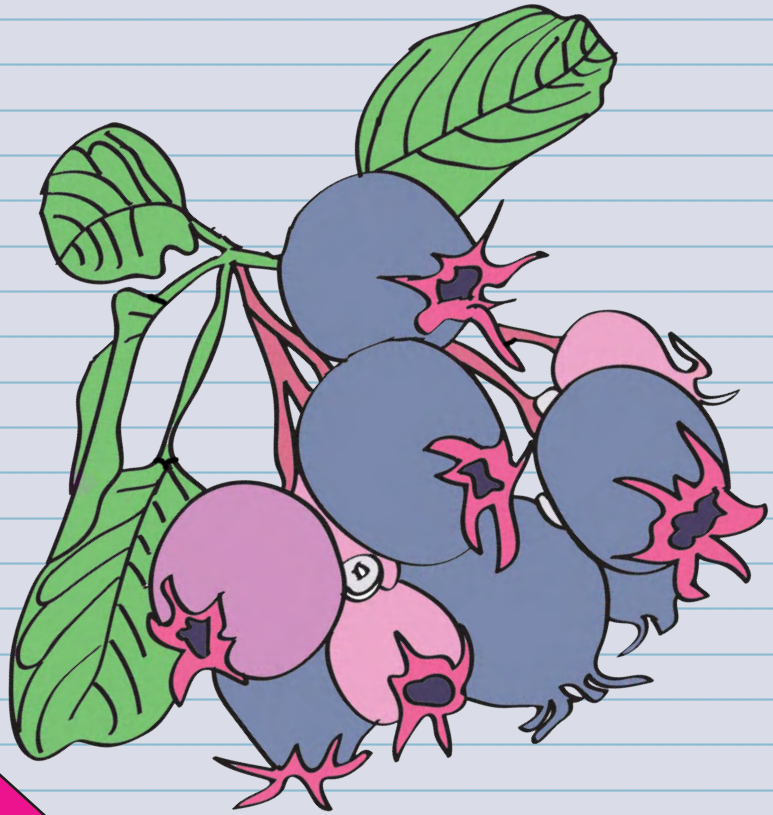


WILD

Edible NoteBook



FREE

August
2013

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Hi and thanks so much for checking out the *Wild Edible NoteBook*, a monthly collection of stories about foraging and using edible wild foods, some local to the Colorado high country, and many found throughout the United States and worldwide.

For this month's edition, I scouted new spots and took some time to play with plants in the wilds of the Colorado Rocky Mountains. The first story is an adventure with serviceberries discovered in abundance at the north end of Summit County, from the happy

rain-kissed picking to the many kitchen experiments inspired by it. Then I get busy with pineapple weed, again undertaking one culinary experiment after the next—some successful, some less so. After that comes the story of a lovely mushroom hunt one rainy afternoon where somehow every mushroom we found was larger than life. There are a few recipes for porcini and serviceberry from yours truly, along with one for porcini bouillon from the inimitable Wendy Petty, blogger at *Hunger & Thirst*.

Although this issue originally came out in August of 2013, I recently reformatted it to be more representative of the layout you'll find in current issues of the *Wild Edible NoteBook*.

If you like this issue, I cordially invite you to consider purchasing a subscription. Several recently released *NoteBooks* are included in the subscription price, followed by a brand new edition featuring several plants and foraging topics each month. I anticipate they will only keep getting better.

As always, input, stories, and reflections are most welcome. Email those to erica@wildfoodgirl.com.



Photo by Gregg Davis.

Most sincerely,
—WFG

Contents:

Fruits with the
Nuts Built In

Dancing for
Pineapple Weed

Yesterday's
Mushroom Hunt

Mushroom
Safety Stuff

Recipes:
Porcini &
Serviceberry



*Pineapple weed in Frisco, Colorado.
Photo by Gregg Davis.*

Fruits with the Nuts Built In By WFG

I am beyond excited about the serviceberries (*Amelanchier spp.*) that grow in abundance not an hour from where we live, excited enough to swear about it. Have I had my head up my a\$% all this time? Apparently.

I was feeling little low yesterday, so Gregg took us on a new drive in the VW bus to the west side of Green Mountain Reservoir on the road to Heeney at the north end of Summit County, Colorado. Once lakeside we started passing bush after berry-laden bush, me squirming excitedly in my seat scanning for pull-offs to confirm my suspicion that we were indeed in serviceberry heaven.

I've heard folks disparage the humble saskatoon, which it is also called, but Sam Thayer sings its praises in *The Forager's Harvest* (2006), and they are easy to collect in quantity where the birds haven't gotten to them first, he told me. But our timing was good and we collected a gallon. The berries and seeds are edible raw or cooked, per ethnobotanical studies and the first-hand experience of modern foragers, though some sources suggest overeating raw berries may lead to a queasy stomach due to small amounts of "cyanide-like compounds" in the seeds.



Hello, what's this? Do my eyes deceive me or are there ripe, plump serviceberries growing all over the north end of the county? Gadzooks!

Gregg helped himself to a bunch of berries and said he found the seeds almondy and interesting. I was starting to think he was sold on them as we collected serviceberries in the rain, until later that day when he also described



Above: Serviceberries near Heeney, Colorado.

Right: We collected these berries, which are also called saskatoon or juneberries (Amelanchier spp.), in Beaver Creek in mid-June. I noticed them at the bus stop on the way up the hill to forage with Chef Bill Greenwood at Beano's Cabin, but then the bus came and we had to jet. It was dark and we were somewhat intoxicated by the time we returned from dinner, but I was desperate to gather a few serviceberries, so we scaled the steep hill by the light of Gregg's cell phone and collected them in the dark, holding our containers under the branches and tickling the tree to see what would fall. The scenario might have been ill-advised, but fortunately neither of us re-broke our knees. Later, I ate serviceberries raw, served as a garnish on a porcini-egg dish, and blended into a smoothie.



them as having “a funny slimy finish because the inside skins are a little slippery” and this morning, when he said “the ripe fruits by themselves are marginal because they are a little mealy and lack a distinctive flavor.” Hmm.

Thayer, too, remarks on the seeds: “Ripe serviceberries are sweet, juicy, and extremely soft. Each one contains several chewy seeds with an almond-extract flavor. Some people dislike the seeds and try to spit them out, but I think they add an interesting flavor and texture without which the fruit is poorer.” He also writes that the flavor of serviceberries varies from region to region.

I, for one, couldn't stop eating them all

afternoon, to the point that Gregg made us stop again to refill the containers after I made a significant dent in them. To me the berries are mildly sweet—and yes, seedy—and I don't mind. Occasionally I did get a surprisingly sweet one, and I imagine they'll sweeten up even more as temperatures cool, like the delicious ones I tasted in Steamboat Springs a couple autumns ago. There are so many right now, both ripe and unripe, that I plan to return to refill the coffers in what looks to be an excellent serviceberry season.

Serviceberries are in the Rose family (Rosaceae). They're colorful and beautiful, but even more so kissed with rain.





Parse the Warnings How You Like

Later, the seeds' almondy flavor and cyanide warning gave me pause. Kershaw (2000) cautions, "The leaves and pits contain poisonous cyanide-like compounds," but says "cooking or drying destroys these toxins." Online, a reader told me he dries the crushed berries and then goes after the seeds when things are less messy, running them through a metal food mill or smashing the seeds, for this reason.

I emailed Sam Thayer: "Sam, I'm such a dolt, there are TONS of serviceberries growing less than an hour from my home. ... Are you at all concerned

Above: After so many ripe serviceberries down lower, we headed up into the hills to find a plentiful supply that has yet to ripen.

Below: Tree after tree means many more serviceberries to come.



with the amount of cyanide in their seeds ... Some people talk of crushing the seeds when drying to let the stuff escape. Do you bother with that?"

"I think the seeds are integral to what makes serviceberries good," he wrote back, indicating that he eats the berries raw with the seeds intact without worrying about toxins.

The USDA cites Majak and others (1980) in warning that "*Amelanchier alnifolia* is capable of producing toxic levels of hydrogen cyanide (prussic acid)," concentrated in new

This one I'll eat straight off the tree. This one goes into the pail. Here's another that needs me to eat it right now.

Wait? Why didn't we get more serviceberries again?

growth and leaves, that is toxic to ruminants. But ruminants tend to graze in much larger quantities than humans, which is why there are many plants that are toxic to ruminants that are not toxic to humans when eaten in a realistic quantity.

"Just be sure to cook them, or separate out the seeds," user lonrom wrote on a serviceberry thread in 2004. "The seeds contain cyanide, though you'd have to actually chew raw ones in quantity to release enough to do more than make you a little queasy. Cooking destroys the cyanide, so pie, jam, or cobbler is a good use."



Raw Serviceberry Mania

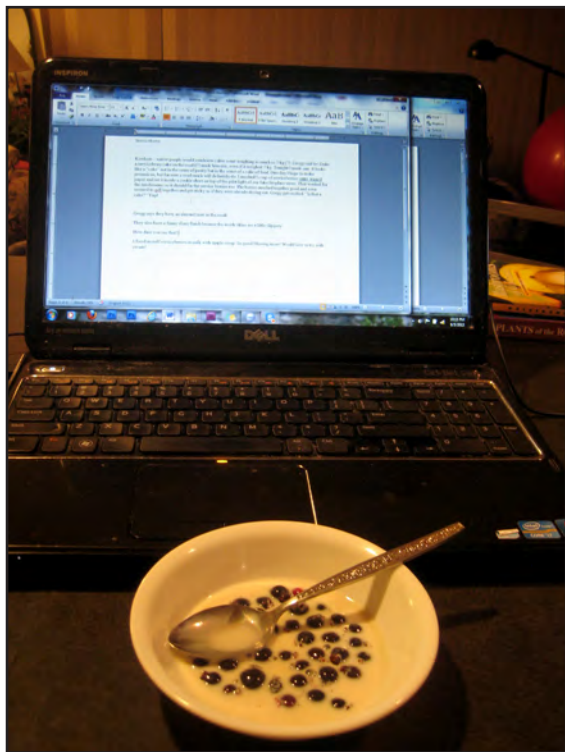
My own serviceberry mania consisted first of me gorging myself on raw serviceberries straight from the tree and pinched from our collecting containers. Later I virtually swallowed them whole in bowls with milk sweetened with maple syrup. It took zero time to become completely addicted to the stuff. That night I helped myself to three servings within a 10 minute window, allowing not so much time as to take a breath of air between servings. And the next morning I did it all over again with granola. I'll admit to a queasy feeling the night of the first gorging, but I don't know how much of it was imagined, and a cup of kefir came to the rescue, if I didn't imagine that also.

7kg Serviceberry Cakes

Between all the raw serviceberry-eating I mushed a small batch with my meat tenderizer onto oven paper atop a cookie sheet to see if I could make a serviceberry cake—not a cake in the sense of something sweet baked in the oven, but a cake in the sense of food caked together into patties to take on a long journey.

Serviceberries have a long history of use by native people, among them Kershaw (2000) writes: “The cooked fruit was mashed, formed into cakes and dried over a slow fire. These cakes could weigh as much as 15lb (7 kg).”

“If you made a 7-kilogram serviceberry cake, I would take it on a long journey,” Gregg said. But instead of making one serviceberry cake weighing 7 kilograms off the bat, I made him a thin, flat, heart-shaped one, measuring



Gorging myself on raw serviceberries took many forms—bowl after bowl of maple-sweetened milk and berries while I worked, and even Nutella-dipped raw berries for dessert. Did I get an upset tummy from so many raw berries? I dunno.





approximately 8x5 inches. "Is that a serviceberry cake?" he asked excitedly. Yup, sure is.

The berries gelled together from the start, and in one overnight on the fake fireplace with lit pilot light were cohesive enough to almost flip without breaking. I say "almost" because I got excited and flipped the serviceberry heart prematurely and my heart broke in one spot. I showed it to Gregg and he pronounced it lopsided, to which I responded that it was all a matter of perspective.

I encouraged him to try it, and after he did he said: "This stuff's slimy and it doesn't go away." Hmm.

My first serviceberry cake came out heart-shaped after I nibbled bits off the edges.

But we both agreed a granola with dried serviceberries is next up. And I want to try making pemmican, a concentrated mixture of fat and protein and fruits and such, again for long journeys.

Purple Pork & Porcini on Toast

This one sounds crazy, I know, but this is what I did next with the serviceberries, along with leftover grilled pork loin and wild-foraged porcini (*Boletus edulis*, which is also going off right now). Gregg could not have possibly



imagined what was to appear on his breakfast plate that morning. I served toasted bread with hot-purple shredded pork in serviceberry sauce on top (I was thinking pulled pork in barbecue sauce), topped with porcini slices and onions sautéed in olive oil with garlic powder and salt. Well, we devoured it.

Wild Carrot & Serviceberry Chutney

That night I smashed serviceberries again, this time to make a chutney. (There's something about mashing serviceberries with the old metal

Above: You might think I'm crazy, but this purple pork was tasty on toast with porcini on top. Below: Chutney with serviceberries and the high country's "wild carrot."



meat tenderizer Mom boxed up and sent me at some point in my post-college life when she was cleaning out the house. They don't mash straight purple. Their insides are whitish and seedy and you end up with this nice pink-purple seedy mush.)

I had on hand the soft, stringy roots of *Harbouria trachypleura*, for which Cattail Bob Seebeck (2012) gives the common name "wild carrot" for the high Rockies region, although it is not the same as the low country "wild carrot" *Daucus carota*. It does have a mild, carrotty flavor. It's a member of the carrot family, which has uber-poisonous members like poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) and water hemlock (*Cicuta douglasii*), so I'd stared at *H. trachypleura* without eating it for years. Anyway, my ID is

right—it helps if the plant is flowering—but the season for roots is wrong, so although I did get roots recently they are squishy and stringy. I'd



Above: It's not the right season for roots, but I'd been meaning to sample *Harbouria trachypleura*, and though stringy they worked well boiled and chopped fine in the chutney.



boiled them a few nights prior and chopped them into small pieces and let them sit in the fridge for a bit while I racked my brain for something to do with them, and then the idea for the chutney occurred to me.

To the serviceberry and “wild carrot” mush, then, I added a touch of brown sugar, a squeeze of lemon, a drop of Balsamic vinegar, and a sprinkle of cumin. I served it alongside Gregg’s amazing crock pot chicken with

brown sauce and porcini that night, and he said he loved them together, that the chutney and chicken reminded him of Thanksgiving. And then he said we’d better put up some serviceberry sauce for Thanksgiving because he’d like to use it instead of cranberry sauce.

Replace cranberry sauce with serviceberries, you say?

Houston, I think we finally have a winner.

A Matter of Perspective

Gleeful as I am over a gallon of serviceberries, Sam wrote back that his family had picked 28 gallons. Here I am doing happy kicks in my apartment with the fake fireplace and no solid earth to call my own for a gallon of serviceberries—and meanwhile he’s collected 28 gallons and is moving on to blueberries while



See? It's all just a matter of perspective.

also building a house. Show off!

“Serviceberries are my favorite fruit,” Sam wrote. “My favorite food, period.”

I can see why.



Dancing for Pineapple Weed By WFG

A couple years ago I chased down a man spraying plants along what I like to call “my secret road,” where the dock plants (*Rumex sp.*) proliferate and few and far between are the vehicles that travel upon it. At the time it was one of my favorite foraging grounds.

“Can I ask what you’re spraying?” I said.

“Chamomile,” he answered.

“What?!” I replied, incredulous. “Because I like to eat that stuff.”

“What?!” he replied, looking at me askance. “I wouldn’t eat any of it around here.”

No kidding.

But it turns out he was spraying scentless chamomile (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*), a tall, invasive daisy with finely dissected leaves that has insinuated its presence throughout the county, and not the low-lying wild chamomile or pineapple weed (*Matricaria discoidea*) that I like to collect and eat. Such can be the confusion of common names. (A local book also refers to scentless chamomile as “mayweed” while the purportedly foul-



Normally I find pineapple weed in places from which I would not want to forage, but this lush patch stretches nearly a quarter mile and is far enough from the road to be worth my while.



*Above and below: Scentless chamomile daisy (*Tripleurospermum inodorum* syn. *Matricaria perforata*) is related to pineapple weed, but to my palate tastes horribly bitter. The top picture is a daisy that has been sprayed with herbicides.*



smelling *Anthemis cotula* is also referred to as “mayweed daisy.”)

After we worked through our misunderstanding, I found out that he was a volunteer who had rented the spray backpack from the conservation center and was going after the daisies to keep them from spreading into the nearby nature preserve.

Both *Matricarias* are in fact edible (Seebeck, 2012), but try as I might I cannot find the taste buds for the taller daisy. I’ve eaten its leaves raw, sautéed, and even pickled—but always there is this aftertaste of awful. But the small *Matricaria* is a different story entirely.

Pineapple Weed

One needs only walk through a patch of *Matricaria discoidea* to understand where the moniker “pineapple weed” comes from, because the pineapply scent is strong and unmistakable. Inevitably this causes my feet to dance, as if overcome by the unwitting “discoidea,” which incidentally is a mnemonic device that works well for helping students to remember the scientific name. (Do stupid disco dance near flower = Helps students remember *M. discoidea*.)

This would be particularly helpful were *M. discoidea* the only binomial used to describe pineapple

weed or wild chamomile, but there is also *M. matricarioides*, which Green Deane explains to be built of “Matrix, Dead Latin for womb but that translates into ‘mother’ and is used to mean it has medicinal uses” and “-oides,” which is “Dead Latin’s version [of] a Greek suffix which now means ‘looks alike.’” So, he concludes “its name kind of means ‘mother herb like itself.’ I think they could have done much better.”

Other synonyms, per the USDA, include *Artemisia matricarioides*, *Chamomilla suaveolens*, *Lepidanthus suaveolens*, *Lepidotheca suaveolens*, *Matricaria*



Pineapple weed or wild chamomile can also be found late in the summer season up on the ski area by my Colorado apartment.



matricarioides, *Matricaria suaveolens*,
Santolina suaveolens, *Tanacetum suaveolens*.
Heavens to Betsy!

In the Colorado high country, *Matricaria discoidea* is low-lying, coming up to my calves in its lushest form. It has very finely divided, wispy, dill-like leaves that attach to the stalk in an alternating pattern. The cone-shaped flower heads are yellowish to greenish and do not have petals on them like a normal daisy, just cone-heads that smell a lot like pineapple if you crush them between your fingers.

Separating the pineapple heads from wild chamomile is painstaking, but they sure are pretty close up.

For possible lookalikes to pineapple weed or wild chamomile, Cattail Bob Seebeck gives poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) and tansy mustard (*Descurainia sophia*) when immature, and blister buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*) when mature. Green Deane gives mayweed chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*) or possibly dog fennel (*Eupatorium capillifolium*) when immature, though he says neither smells like pineapple, and the related commercial

chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*).

Seebeck (2012) points out that only the cone-heads taste like pineapple, and some authors write of bitter leaves, but they are so small that even if there is a bitter punch from them in my salad, I am not overwhelmed by it. I've had bitterer—like our good wild edible friend the dandelion, greens harvested in midsummer after flowering when they are at their strongest. And they certainly do not come close to the bitterness of their tall, furry, invasive daisy cousin, the aforementioned chamomile daisy. Still, Gregg can pick them out in a dish, so maybe the flavor is stronger than I think.

“Disco Idea”

I generally find pineapple weed growing in disturbed areas from which I would not want to forage—the side of the street or among the sidewalk cracks—but recently I found a once-disturbed-area left alone to grow, an old road used to clear a hillside of dead pine-beetle-infested lodgepole pines and then blocked off. It is pineapple weed heaven! This is a place that when you walk you can't help trodding upon it, and as you do so the tiny pineapples underfoot give off a fresh, ambrosial aroma.

Last time I walked through that patch, I swear, my feet started moving to a tropical rhythm as the “discoidea” came upon me, so I went back to the car and grabbed some tools and headed out into the field to harvest some.

To gather it, I snipped off whole stems with both leaves and flowerheads attached, in small chunks within the larger patch, which stretched for nearly ¼ mile. The plant's weedy nature will allow it to proliferate, and I hardly made a dent on the larger patch. If you're

going for the pineapple scent and nothing more, then the flowerheads alone would work for harvest. I took both as I also intended to use the leaves in a salad.

For some of the recipes, I painstakingly separated heads from leaves. I did find, however, that it was much easier to throw them whole into the hot water when I wanted to make a chamomile tea, either to drink or use in a recipe.

Sweet Pineapple Weed Booze

The first thing I did with my pineapple weed bounty was to start a vodka infusion going. I packed copious amounts of whole pineapple weed stems with leaves and flowerheads into a glass bottle, poured cheap vodka in to cover, capped it and stuck it in the closet. We'll see how that turns out.

The idea to infuse vodka with wild chamomile came from Maria at GreenGabbro.net, who enticed me with her liqueur-making back in February when I saw the post. She and I share a predilection for having wild-infused liqueurs constantly on hand. Of course, I did not follow the recipe, as it is my modus operandi almost never to do so.

I found one source online that said left too long, a bitter taste imparts itself into the hooch. I wish I knew how long was long, but I'll probably try to take the greens out a month from now, or maybe taste it as I go. In any case, I will at some point douse the chamomile-infused vodka with simple syrup and pour it over crushed ice in a tiny, frosted glass for a candy-like chamomile after-dinner swill, or mix it with seltzer for a supreme wild girly drink sometime in winter, after a day on the hill, when the happy snow is falling.



Pineapple Weed Kombucha Ferment

There is way too much to say on Gregg's kombucha, a home-brewed, healthful fermented tea he's been manufacturing en masse in our tiny kitchen for more than a year now. Normally, I just flavor it with various wild accents—muddled wild mint (*Mentha arvensis*), rosehip (*Rosa sp.*), currant or gooseberry (*Ribes spp.*) syrup. But during a recent trip to the inventive kitchen of Butterpoweredbike, I learned of the "second ferment," where you take the finished kombucha and put it in another bottle, sans globular Mother, and feed it some

This is wild king troll salmon carpaccio with toasted coriander and cucumber vinaigrette with pineapple weed steeped in the warm oil before chilling. It's garnished with pineapple weed, dill, garden cilantro and lemon. Don't get too excited; I did not make this plate. This was by Chef Bill Greenwood at Beano's Cabin in Beaver Creek. He instructed us not to eat it as with tweezers but rather to "go to town on it it" to get all the flavors together. We went to town on it all right;) Mmmmmmm.

sweet fruity business so it can ferment longer and make what B called "a sody-pop." Her kombucha is the offspring of Gregg's, and even the watermelon one which she recycled to me after determining it disgusting didn't taste too bad to me.

She said the ingredients used to sweeten the second ferment are not so much to flavor it but to cause the increase in effervescence, but for my first pineapple weed kombucha ferment, I loaded the stuff in there such that the flavor did, in fact, impart itself. I also put in a little sugar because I wasn't sure the weed was sweet enough without it. This came out delicious and fizzy, though I'll admit there wasn't much left after I exploded it across the kitchen.

Chamomile Salad Time

I dinked around a lot in the kitchen for this one, and perused the internet for preparation ideas, searching both cultivated chamomile and pineapple recipe ideas. I found people combining chamomile with lemon, so I decided to go that route for my salad. Gregg called the result "gourmet," which I don't mind one bit. I have to admit I was feeling a little inspired, though you can probably find a way to improve upon it in terms of actual proportions, which I do not give anyway. The salad dressing is the

key—lemon juice combined with strong wild chamomile tea and whatever else works.

- **Goosefoot & Wild Chamomile Salad:** Combine goosefoot leaves and flowerheads (*Chenopodium album* or related) with chopped Romaine lettuce hearts and greens, wild chamomile flowerheads and greens stripped from the stems, and one ear's worth of whole, raw corn kernels cut from the cob with a knife.



Wild chamomile salad with Romaine hearts and corn, another good wild/cultivated combo.

- **Pineapple Weed & Lemon Dressing:**

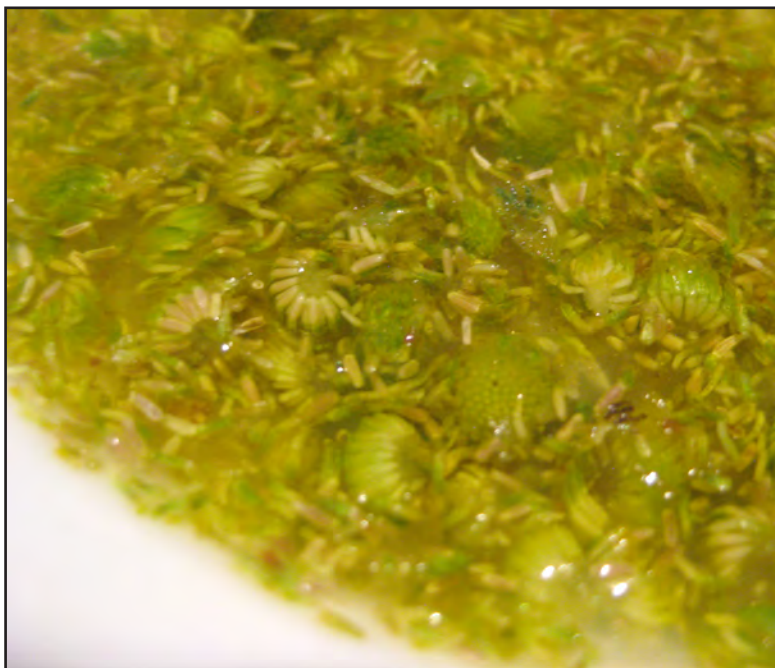
Steep 1 or 2 tbsp of pineapple weed flowerheads in a small pot with just enough boiled water to cover. Cool. Add ½ to 1 clove mashed garlic, the juice of ¼ lemon, and a touch of sugar to taste. Then add olive oil, mix, and drizzle atop salad.

Kefir with Wild Chamomile & Maple Syrup

I know, I'm really jumping into the deep end here with kefir, which is my home-fermentation obsession (thanks Shirl) that involves grains of bacteria and yeast going to town on milk to ferment it into a strong, thin, plain yogurt. But if you don't have kefir and really want to replicate this drink, which Gregg called "interesting" and "good in small quantities," you could probably use that funny store-bought kefir or thin yogurt for the purpose. I like kefir because it settles my stomach. And I like it sweetened with honey—but we are out, so then I thought of the maple syrup and before I knew it I was



Above: Doesn't that pineapple weed look pretty shored up in the corn en route to becoming salad? Below: Pineapple weed salad dressing.



servicing Gregg and I two small, chilled glasses of kefir flavored with cooled chamomile tea and maple syrup.

He tried to drink his, but gave me back the tiny glass nearly full. No matter. He never drinks kefir, and I was happy to drink both. Flavoring kefir with random wild combos is fun! But you have to like kefir.

Pineapple Weed Potpourri

Making the house smell like pineapple weed potpourri was accidental. I set some on the stove with water to make a calming late-night tea after so much fussing in the kitchen, then



Above: No matter how I flavor the kefir, Gregg does not drink it. Below: Pineapple weed grows intertwined among some horsetail (Equisetum sp.) along a trailside above Beaver Creek, Colorado.



immediately passed out on the couch. Gregg heard the sizzling of water missing from a pot on the hot stove, weeds searing to a burn. Thank God for Gregg. He turned off the stove. The living room smelled wonderful. I crawled from the couch and collapsed into bed, then drank the burnt tea in the morning.



If you like the

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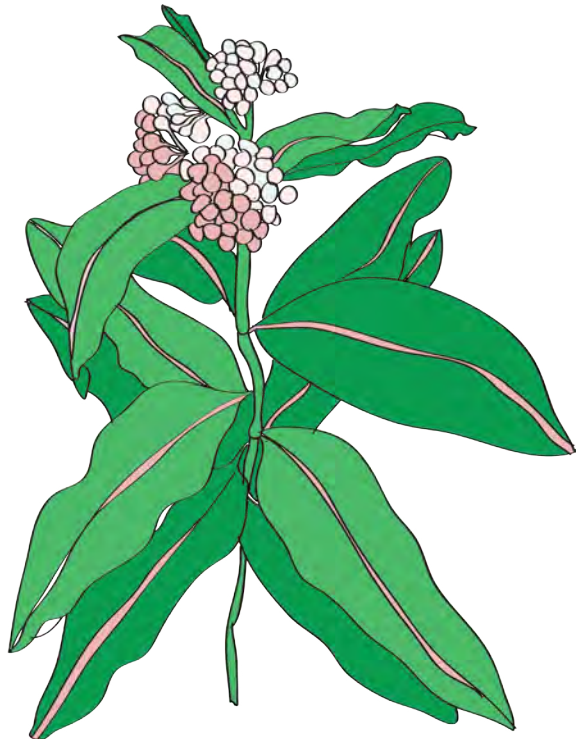
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Thank you so much!

-WFG



Yesterday's Mushroom Hunt By WFG

It rained all morning and into the afternoon yesterday, so we stayed glued to our computers working, but I was of course getting more gleeful by the moment thinking how the rains would soak the warm earth and send more mushrooms up. I just didn't think it would happen so fast.

"What do you want to do for fun today?" Gregg asked around 2 p.m., after I'd been staring at the computer for 9 hours straight. "Go for a hike?" Mind you it was still pouring and the rain did not clear until 3 or 4 p.m.—but clear it did, and the sun came out and the day went from gloomy to dappled with light shining down over blue splotches of sky, while in the highest reaches the mist stayed settled on the mountain peaks, occasionally shifting to reveal glimpses of the season's first dusting of snow.

Gregg picked the spot and drove us there—to a new location he'd been wanting to scout—and I picked when it was time to veer off trail "just to have a quick look" to see if there were any signs of mushrooms.

Oh man, the signs were neon! Well, bright red with white spots, actually—for just the



The beautiful fly agaric, mushroom of legends and video games. Will I ever boil one in copious amounts of water to dispel the psychotropic constituents and then eat it? Time will tell.

barest jaunt up the hill off trail we found ourselves in a veritable fairy land of fly agarics, abundant *Amanita muscaria* var. *flavivolvata*



nested in rich fairy rings like I've seen in books but never before with mine own eyes.

And, of course, nearby were the porcini—big, grandfather *Boletus edulis* and several generations of his offspring, all cohabitating closely in the sunny meadow, some chewed or torn by tiny mouths but none yet touched by human hands, which makes me think we nailed yet another sweet mushroom spot off the beaten path where nobody goes.

I got so overexcited I couldn't breathe. I didn't know what to do first—photograph mushrooms, cut and clean mushrooms, stare in awe, get inhaler? Should I gather *Amanita muscaria*? They are not widely considered edible and are in fact psychotropic, possibly to varying degrees,

Left: An Amanita muscaria fairy ring, so beautiful!
Below: Nearby, these Boletus edulis were hunkered down, making an effort to see how many they could fit into one photo.





with side effects like serious vomiting. But, David Arora and later Hank Shaw wrote about boiling fly agarics in copious amounts of water to dispel the toxins from this “delicious” edible mushroom. (Note that other *Amanitas* are deadly poisonous.)

But no, it wasn't the right time for terrifying *Amanita muscaria* experiments, not with all those beautiful porcini fruiting about. We zigged and zagged up and down and across the hill to get a line on the boletes, but they were pretty much all over the place. Wherever there were fly agarics, there were patches of *Boletus edulis* not far away. Not only were they in the open spots near the Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), but we also picked out

Above: This fly agaric was bigger than my hand.
(After this shot, I had to wash the white stuff off it.)

Below: Oh, hello there, big *Boletus edulis*!
What are you guys doing? Can we come to the party? Can we eat your offspring?





Above: Hey, what are you mushrooms doing down there in that hole?

Below: Beware of gathering puffballs while porcini-hunting. Nature is likely to punish you for your poor decision-making.



patches deeper in the shaded forest, often by spotting the chewed remains of stems and following them uphill to the scene of the crime.

In the process we found some puffball mushrooms—which should be distinguished from *Amanita* buttons, both the deadly and trippy varieties, by cutting vertically to confirm there are not vestigial caps and stems inside; and which should be firm and white of flesh on the interior. Gregg found a good patch so I decided to collect them to go with some other puffballs collected earlier with Butter (and much to her consternation, I might add, as it was boletes we were after, to the point that she said I was not allowed to squeal with glee over puffballs, only porcini.)

I imagine Butter would have said it served me right for going for those puffballs while so many porcini lay in wait, but I managed to cut myself while trying to trim the dirt and mycelia away from the puffballs with the hand-fashioned mushroom-knife-and-brush she gave me. They had so much give near the base, in my hand, that the knife slipped and cut me square on the part of my thumb where I depend on some resistance for processing

mushrooms, against which I usually use a duller knife. It bled like a bad paper cut, right onto the mushrooms.

However, that turned out to be a great opportunity to try yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) as a styptic, or blood clotter, for the first time—and wouldn't you know it, when I crushed those yarrow leaves and pressed them against my small cut, it stopped the blood from flowing. Later, at home, I got to try some *Usnea* lichen to disinfect the wound. Plants are the most awesome things ever! I can't wait to cut myself mushrooming again.

We hiked all over the hill, in and out of dark forest patches, and I saw the biggest specimens of several different mushrooms that I've ever seen. Aside from porcini bigger than my hand, there were also *Amanita muscarias* bigger than my hand, hawks wings (*Sarcodon sp.*) bigger than my hand, short-stemmed slippery jacks (*Suillus brevipes*) bigger than my hand, and even milk caps (*Lactarius deliciosus*) approaching enormity. It was sad to leave all those mushrooms behind—because I eat them all except *Amanita muscarias*—to pursue porcini instead. But I did, and I get it now.

When we got home, in the interest of cleaning out the refrigerator before the great porcini processing commenced, I gathered up all the puffballs from that and previous trips, cleaned and dropped them into a baking pan. I tossed them in oil with wild garlic

flakes and set them in a 350-degree oven for 20 minutes or so. When they were cooked through, I broiled them until the tops browned and sprinkled Parmesan cheese on top.

"These are goood," Gregg enthused, devouring the puffballs alongside some breaded fish and wilted lamb's quarters leaves and flowers (*Chenopodium sp.*). "They're different than boletes, but they're good," he said. (Take that, puffball haters!)

Afterward, I roped Gregg into prepping mushrooms with me for the first time. He watched me clean a couple, separating



I used a compress of yarrow (Achillea millefolium) to stop the small cut on my finger from bleeding.



*There were also hawk's wings bigger than my hand, growing in abundance. Local mushroom author Vera Stucky Evenson cautions that while *Sarcodon imbricatus* is edible, she does not know if other local *Sarcodon* species are edible (personal communication, 2013). Even *S. imbricatus*, she writes, can upset some tummies. Gregg and I have taken to eating them marinated in Worcestershire and soy sauce and grilled.*





Above: Baked and broiled garlic puffballs with Parmesan cheese sprinkled on top. Mmm. Right: mushroom processing station for two.

mature spongy pore mass to dry apart from the sliced, white mushroom flesh pieces the way Butter taught me, and strategically cutting away worm civilizations without opening them up with my knife.

Gregg managed to upset a few worm cities, and to release a few minor “worm situations” onto the counter, but nothing major. About an hour in, he said to me, “I think I’m getting the hang of it.” About two hours in he turned and said to me knowingly, “I see how this is a lot of work.” Thanks for noticing!



The whole apartment is covered with trays of drying porcini now, and we didn't even get the limit our two mushroom permits allow for a day's work. We will be eating porcini all winter long. How was this so difficult last year, and the year before that? It's been a good season for us, to be sure—but maybe we're just getting better at knowing where to look?

Today while we were glued to our computers again, our new upstairs neighbor kids who love to do exercise videos on the floor above us with so much rhythmic banging while I'm trying to write (!) came over asking for cooking oil, and



then became very curious about my 10,000 trays of drying mushrooms on and around the fake fireplace.

It turns out they are culinary students, and the one girl's dad is a hunter of morel mushrooms. So, after some safety lecturing on my part and making them pore through my mushroom books, I sent them home with a couple primo porcini, mushrooms we didn't

***Below:** This guy stood up and had a look around after I inadvertently opened his worm cave with my knife. **Left:** That is a Skype emoticon, "Muscle," which Gregg and I think looks like a worm doing situps. Can you see it?*



process the night before due to falling asleep in our chairs. They asked me how to prepare them and after another lecture on my part they headed off, talk of mushrooms with hamburgers wafting down the hall. I almost followed them back upstairs.

■



I keep meaning to eat Clavaria purpurea, which Evenson writes is edible in "Mushrooms of Colorado and the Southern Rocky Mountains." But then there are so many other good mushrooms around...

Mushroom Safety Stuff

By WFG

The preceding story is lighthearted, but this is not to understate the importance of correctly identifying a mushroom prior to consumption, as some mushrooms can kill you, and others, take out your liver. So, here is some obligatory info on safety and local regulations, reprinted with permission from an article I wrote for the *Summit Daily News*:

Safety Tips

1. Only eat a mushroom when you are absolutely certain of your ID—using pictures and descriptions, spore prints and other tests—and only after consulting

multiple sources on poisonous lookalikes and edibility.

2. Don't collect multiple species into one bag.
3. Always cook wild mushrooms well. Morels, for instance, are poisonous raw.
4. Try one new edible mushroom on yourself in a 24-hour period, eating only a small amount the first time and keeping a specimen in the refrigerator in case you need to visit the toxicologist.
5. Don't eat spoiled mushrooms.

This beautiful porcini appeared to my friend Butter and I as if in a vision while hunting mushrooms around 9,000 feet recently.





Local Mushroom Permits

The White River National Forest in Colorado offers free personal-use mushroom permits that allow individuals to harvest up to 5 gallons per day (approximately two grocery bags) for a season total of ten 5-gallon buckets, 20 paper grocery bags or 67 pounds. Obtain permits at the Dillon Ranger District, 680 Blue River Pkwy., Silverthorne. For national forest areas from Vail Pass to Eagle, visit the Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District at 24747 Hwy. 24 in Minturn. Beyond that, check with regional forest district offices to find out if there are regulations. For commercial permits, which include sale or

Collecting together and coming home with way more than we felt like processing, Gregg and I still did not hit our limit for an afternoon's "work."

commercial use of wild mushrooms, contact Cary Green at (970) 827-5160.

More Info

- The Colorado Mycological Society offers forays and meetings for mycophiles. For more info or to join the group, visit www.cmsweb.org.
- Also check out the Sam Mitchel Herbarium of Fungi at the Denver Botanic Gardens: www.botanicgardens.org/content/sam-mitchel-herbarium-fungi

Recipes



Porcini Bouillon Cubes (Umami Bombs)

By Wendy Petty www.hungerandthirstforlife.blogspot.com

Porcini mushrooms have overtaken meat as my favorite soup base. I'm in awe of the way so few dried mushrooms can yield such an astonishing amount of savoriness when re-hydrated. I was fortunate enough to forage many porcini mushrooms (*Boletus edulis*) last summer, so I am able to take advantage of that flavor at every turn. Porcini broth is now the backbone of nearly every soup I make. It also shows up in my risottos, sauces, and gravies.

Dried porcini create a delightful broth by itself. Many chefs call the soaking water from re-hydrated porcini mushrooms "liquid gold." However, with just a few tweaks and additions, basic porcini broth can be pumped up and transformed into something so tasty that it seems some sort of magic is involved. Through many months of tinkering, I've come up with a recipe for subtly enhancing the rich qualities of basic liquid porcini gold that is so scrumptious I'd be proud to serve it to anyone, so I decided to convert it into an instant, portable version.

A while ago, my foraging buddy Pascal introduced me to his method for making dried soup cubes from nettle and potato. A light bulb



*A happy mushrooer—Wendy Petty—with a baby *Boletus edulis*. Photo by Jennifer Yu.*

went on. It should be a piece of cake to make similar dried cubes—bouillon—from mushrooms. Certainly it would be easier than trying to engineer a meat-based bouillon cube at home.

Porcini bouillon cubes turned out to be shockingly easy to make. They require only a few ingredients, and very few tools to create something ten times tastier than anything you could buy at a store.

At times when I only need a light snack, I brew up a small cup of soup to sip using my porcini bouillon cubes. These cubes can also be used to add a quick boost of savory flavor to pretty much any soup or sauce, though they make a soup that is good enough to stand on its own. I've

taken to calling them umami bombs. Because they are dehydrated and lightweight, porcini bouillon cubes are a perfect food to take along on camping trips, hikes, and other outdoor adventures. They also make a nice hot lunch for office stiffs who only have access to hot water while at work.

Ingredients:

- 2 oz dried porcini mushrooms
- 2½ tbsp dried wild onion powder (substitute onion powder)
- 2½ tsp salt
- 2 tsp powdered gelatin
- 1 tsp fish sauce
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- +/- 2 tbsp water

Instructions:

1. Use a spice grinder (you could also use a mortar and pestle, but in this case, I prefer the efficiency of a spice grinder) to buzz your dried porcini mushrooms into a fine powder. You will probably need to do this in batches. Sift each batch through a fine sieve and into a bowl. Return the larger pieces which haven't passed through the sieve to the grinder until all of your mushrooms are ground.
2. Add the dried ground wild onion, salt, and gelatin to the bowl with the mushroom powder, and fully incorporate the ingredients by stirring. The gelatin will help the porcini bouillon dough stick together when it is wet, and will give the reconstituted soup a silky sensation in your mouth. If you don't have wild onion, I strongly recommend using your own homemade dried onions. My mom used



Tasty porcini bouillon cubes. Photo by Wendy Petty.

- to dice onions, lay them on a baking sheet, and stick them into the oven after she'd baked anything and turned off the oven. The residual heat dries them out easily, gives them a light toasting, and fills your house with a lovely aroma. Commercial onion powder just can't compare to all of that toasty complexity (but will do in a pinch in this recipe).
3. Measure the fish sauce and soy sauce into the dry ingredients, and this time use a fork to start to smush everything together.
4. Add approximately 2 tbsp of water, and continue to mix everything together with a fork. The idea here is to use just enough water to get the ingredients to pull together. This will make dehydrating the porcini bouillon cubes much faster. The raw material should have the consistency of a very stiff dough, like Play-Dough, or corn tortilla dough.
5. When it looks as if all of the ingredients have finally come together, knead the ball of porcini dough between your hands for a few seconds just to make certain that it is evenly moist and sticky.
6. Use your hands to pat the dough into something square-like, then tap each of

the four flat edges on a cutting board to make the square square-er. Use a rolling pin to very gently roll the porcini bouillon dough to 1/2", carefully lifting it with a spatula, and once again tapping the edges on the cutting board to make a respectable square. Then, use a knife warmed under hot water and towel-dried to cut the dough into 1/2" cubes. This recipe makes approximately 40 cubes.

7. Dry the porcini bouillon cubes in a dehydrator (or an oven or strong sunlight) for at least 8-10 hours at 125 degree (F), or until you are darned certain that they are completely dried (this may take many more hours in humid climates). You will cry your eyes out if these little stinkers go moldy in storage, so go the extra mile to make sure the cubes are dried through and through. Store porcini bouillon cubes in a cool dry place, out of direct sunlight.
8. To make porcini bouillon, pour 6 oz boiling water over a cube, and let it soften and brew for at least 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. You may need to smash



A beautiful porcini mushrump pushes out of the duff.

the cube with the back of a spoon as it rehydrates. The porcini bouillon cube will never dissolve completely; instead it will make a cloudy broth with debris that settles at the bottom.

Soy Porcini & Garlic Sauce By WFG

This mushroom sauce, inspired by the culinary adventures of Wendy Petty aka Butter, came out rich and addictive, all flavors fairly represented. Divinity in a pan, I tell you. And this after many failed mushroom sauces of yore. We liked it best over breaded chicken cutlet. Of course it would be lovely with whole mushroom pieces in there as well.

Ingredients:

- Dried porcini (*Boletus edulis*)
- Soy sauce
- Powdered wild onion (*Allium spp.*), garlic, or green onion

Instructions:

1. Powder dried porcini in a spice grinder or coffee grinder and pour into a saucepan.
2. Cover with an equal amount of hot soy sauce and mix into a thick paste.
3. Add dry, powdered *Allium* or similar.
4. Thin with hot water to desired consistency and simmer over low heat, adding more water as needed.
5. Serve atop meat, chicken, potatoes, or whatever occurs to you.



Porcini powder made from wormy dried Boletus edulis (below) in the coffee grinder.



Gourmet Wild Tostadas By WFG

This recipe is inspired by all the amazing wild pizzas Butter has fed to me over the last few years, plus the cheese tostadas mom always used to make in the oven with flour tortillas. Between his first two bites, Gregg called it a “gourmet pizza you’d get at a restaurant.” A few bites later, he called it a “gourmet, gourmet pizza.”

Ingredients:

- ¾ cup serviceberries (*Amelanchier spp.*)
- ½ to ¾ tsp red pepper flakes
- ¼ cup wild huckleberries/blueberries (*Vaccinum spp.*)
- A squeeze of lemon
- ¼ tsp sugar
- 1 small green apple finely chopped
- 1-1½ cups sliced porcini (*Boletus edulis*)
- Garlic powder
- Hawaiian lava salt or other salt
- ½-1 cup young, basal oxeye daisy leaves (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)
- Flour tortillas
- Queso fresco



Instructions:

1. Make purple sauce by mashing together

serviceberries, huckleberries, lemon juice, sugar, and red pepper flakes. Add chopped apple and a dash of water and simmer on the stovetop for 15 minutes or so until the sauce reduces.

2. Drizzle porcini slices with a small amount of oil and saute until they begin to brown. Sprinkle with salt and garlic powder and saute longer, to taste. Right before it’s time to make the tostada, add oxeye daisy leaves and saute until wilted.

- Put flour tortillas in the oven on an oiled cookie sheet at 350 degrees for 2-4 minutes until they turn golden brown and stiffen but do not burn. Take them out, flip, spread the sauce, add slices of queso fresco, and return to the oven until the cheese melts.
- Then top with the mushroom and oxeeye daisy leaf mixture and put it back in the oven for a few more minutes.
- Use a pizza cutter to slice, and serve.





Serviceberries

Colorado Mush Fests

Telluride Mushroom Festival

August 15 – 18, 2013 in Telluride, sponsored by the Telluride Institute. "The San Juan Mountains surrounding Telluride are famous for their bounty of fungal species, with edible chanterelles and boletes often fruiting in profusion," organizers write. This year's theme is Fungi as Medicine, and there is a course on Mycoremediation (environment-healing with mushrooms).
www.shroomfest.com

Eagle's 6th Annual Mushroom Fest

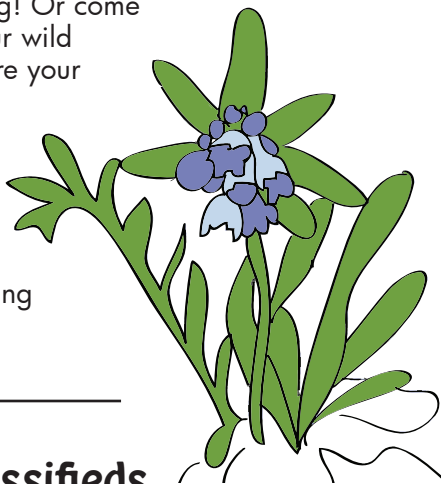
August 30, 2013 in Eagle. There will be variously priced expeditions, ID classes, a mushroom cook-off with local chefs, cooking classes, and "dining on the fruits of your hunt." Hosted by Eagle Community Events.
Phone: (970) 328-9619

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