

The wild world of mushroom hunting



The mycology class hits the forest in search of rare fungi

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"This is not a harvest," said mycology teacher Bob Misley. "It's an educational opportunity."

Misley was speaking to his mycology class, which studies all things mushroom related, before they embarked on a hike in the Mount Hood National Forest near Ripplebrook. The choice of words reflected both the limitations placed on harvesting by the Oregon Forest Service and the philosophy of picking.

Misley told his class not to overpick, "so we don't wipe out the population, and they don't come back."

The students worked their way down the trail for most of the day, occasionally taking brief forays into the damp undergrowth to search for mushrooms. The best finds are always off the beaten track, hidden in gullies or underneath rotting logs.

Many students were search-

ing for edible mushrooms, specifically white and yellow chanterelle, which are highly prized for their taste and texture. Also on the list, although none were found, was the matsutaki mushroom, an expensive delicacy only native to the Northwest.

While many may snicker when they think of eating mushrooms, the students of Misley's class had more on their minds than *those* types of mushrooms.

"I don't want to die," said student Blaine Moody. "I don't want to get sick. I don't want to get high. I just want to eat 'em."

Fairy Mills had similar sentiments, saying she just wanted "to find edibles."

Student Sebastian Immel chimed in as well:

"I have a genuine interest in the field of mycology," he said. "I think it's incredibly cool that you can go out in the forest, pick some mushrooms, take them home, cook them and eat them."

Another student, Ruth Hazen, said, "I thought mushrooms were just so interesting, and I saw the class; I just had to take it."

Misley himself was one of the biggest fans of edible mushrooms. He admitted, though, that first you have to "get over

the gross factor," specifically when dealing mushrooms, because sometimes they may be infested with insects. To the naysayers, however, he had this to say:

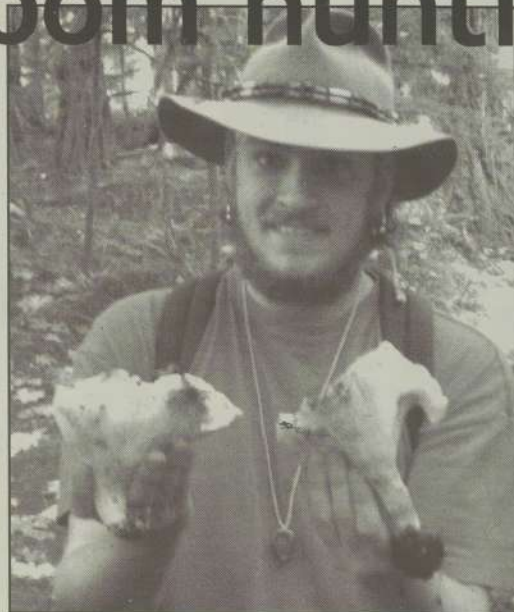
"I'm going to marinate a big Portobello mushroom, slice and grill it, and you're going to think you're eating steak."

Besides edible mushrooms, the class was also on the lookout for rare and unusual mushrooms, specifically of the mycorrhizal category.

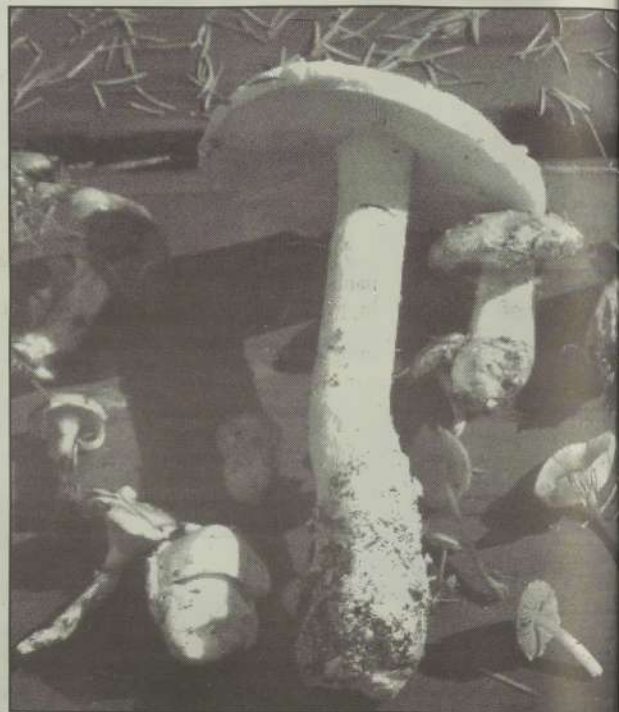
"Mycorrhizal," which Misley said is the "word for the class," describes a category of mushrooms that are impossible to grow outside of their natural habitat, because scientists still cannot replicate the complex forest environment they depend on to grow.

"We have more questions than we have answers," said Misley, speaking of how the mycorrhizal mushrooms interacted with the forest floor.

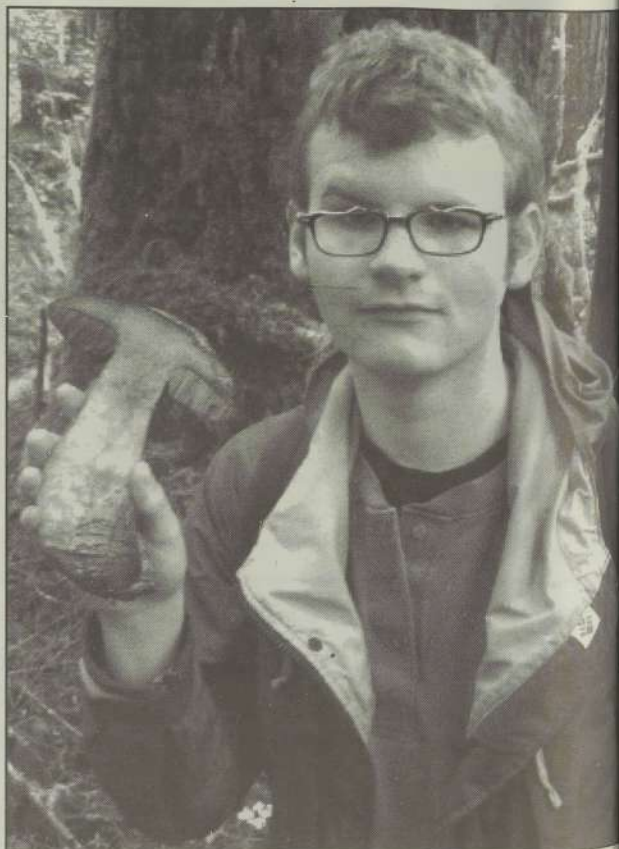
At the end of the day, the class reconvened at the trailhead to examine each other's finds. The mushrooms were laid out on a picnic table for all to see, and Misley pointed out the choice specimens of the trip. Highlights included a huge lobster mushroom, a king bolete and several white chanterelle, which are more scarce than their yellow counterparts.



(Left) Bob Misley, in the hat, discusses a find with student Blaine Moody. (Above) Happy hunter Kevin Nash shows off two choice chanterelle mushrooms. (Below) Students displayed their favorite finds at the end of the day. (Bottom) Sebastian Immel holds up the cross-section of a king bolete.



Photos by CJ Ciaramella and Sam Krause Clackamas Print



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