

SPOILS OF THE WOODS

Mushroom foraging on the North Coast

BY RYAN HUME

To a child, the forest can be a place of mystery and magic, teeming with lichen, knots and hollows.

As we grow older, sometimes this sense of magic is replaced with plain serenity, and the forest becomes a calm environ – a place to breathe without the buzz of phones or the pulse of traffic.

For local foragers like Matt Nevitt of Forage & Farm, both are true. Sprouting from crevices, nooks and many other unlikely places beneath our fertile canopies is an array of delicious fungi, ready for the picking if you know what you are doing. And yeah, you really need to know what you are doing.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, wild mushroom foraging has blossomed into a multimillion dollar industry. Here in the Pacific Northwest, foragers like Nevitt can pluck a pretty penny from the depths of the forest to supply restaurants and consumers who partake in these earthy delights.

The Wild Mushroom Celebration on the Long Beach Peninsula includes nearly every restaurant and institution in the area, all of which dedicate some of their time and menu to celebrating the peak harvest. Once relegated to October, the celebration is officially trickling further and further into November. See upcoming events at wildmushroomcelebration.com.

Forage & Farm is getting in on the fun with a two day foraging and preservation workshop on Nov. 23 and 24 hosted by the Pickled Fish at the Adrift Hotel.

For Nevitt, there's no typical day on a mushroom hunt, but it usually starts, "with an early morning drive up foggy mountain



Chicken of the Woods.

back roads, with a little breakfast and coffee on the tailgate of the truck while loading up our packs and tools before heading into the misty forest, down secret trails and into secret mushroom patches we have been taking care of and returning to year after year."

Nevitt grew up in Raymond, Washington, playing in the woods. "Along the way I became an Eagle Scout and thus spent a lot more time in the forest camping, hiking



King Bolete or Porcini.

See Mushrooms / 20