

Out and about foraging free

There are some wonderful, flavoursome things to be found while out in the lush Wales landscape

THE damp and drizzly summer may not have been good for beach goers but it has produced fungi in abundance. The lush Mid Wales landscape particularly is a mushroom mecca, and keen foragers are already out and about collecting a succulent harvest for free.

Ceps, known for their delicious flavour, are thriving this summer. Many wild mushrooms sell for a hefty price in delis – the only problem, of course, is knowing which mushrooms make for great eating, and which ones are better left where they are.

Justin Baird-Murray, MD of the four-star Metropole Hotel and Spa in Llandrindod Wells, runs popular fungi forays with expert, and

self-confessed fungi fanatic, Daniel Butler.

“Porcini, wood hedgehogs, giant parasols, ceps and chanterelles are all delicious to eat, but most people, understandably, don’t want to take the risk when they are not completely sure what’s safe to eat,” says Justin.

“With Daniel, foragers can have a great day out and learn what’s good for cooking. They can also take the mushrooms they have collected home with them, having learnt how to dry them for future use.”

■ **To celebrate all things mushroom, the Metropole chef Nic Edwards has put together two simple mushroom recipes that are very tasty but easy to prepare**

Creamy wild mushroom and asparagus risotto

Ingredients

- 1tbsp olive oil
- 50g butter
- 30g shallots chopped
- Half tsp herbs, such as thyme and rosemary, finely chopped
- 100g fresh wild mushrooms, sliced if large
- 30g dried porcini mushrooms
- 100g arborio risotto rice
- 400ml hot stock – chicken or vegetable
- 2tbs of single cream
- 30g Parmesan shaved
- 8 tender asparagus spears
- Free-range eggs

Method:

Soak the dried porcini in a little hot water for a few minutes to soften before removing and finely chopping.

Heat the oil and half the butter in a large heavy-based frying pan over medium heat. Add the shallots and herbs, and gently fry for a few minutes until the shallots are translucent. Add the mushrooms and cook until they begin to soften.

Add the rice, stirring constantly.

When the rice has absorbed all the moisture in the pan, stir in a ladleful of the hot stock. Keep stirring until it’s all absorbed then add another ladleful. Continue stirring and adding stock until all the liquid has been absorbed and the rice is al dente.

Stir in a dash of cream and the remaining butter. Season to taste.

Add the asparagus to boiling water for three minutes before removing and adding to risotto.

Poach free range egg and place on top of each portion.

Scatter the Parmesan over the top and serve.

Sautéed wild mushrooms on toast

Ingredients:

- 400g mixed wild mushrooms
- 2tbs chopped parsley
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1oz butter
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Good bread for serving

Method:

Melt butter in heavy-based frying pan.

Add mushrooms and garlic, and season with salt and pepper.

Cook until the mushrooms are golden brown, add parsley and stir through

Serve on hot, buttered toast.

- **Fungi forays run from mid August, through September and October.**
- **Call 01597 823 700 (www.metropole.co.uk) for further information and booking.**

> Sautéed mushrooms on toast



STRAIGHT OFF THE VINE

Neil Cammies

I AM currently selecting some wines for a charity dinner I’m helping to host in September and giving a chef pal some assistance – whether he needs it or not – to put a wine list together.

I know there are no hard and fast rules to food matching, however you can use a few guidelines that will enhance, not detract, from a lovely plate of nosh.

Fish normally goes well with crisp, white wines and great coastal regions will have their natural accompaniments.

Areas such as the south-west of France by the Mediterranean has wines such as Picpoul de Pinet – perfectly suited to delicate fish dishes, Muscadet hails from the west of the Loire Valley and the great

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Both will do a sterling job with a lovely roast chicken with all the trimmings

seafood city of Nantes and on the Gallician coast of Spain to the north west is the region of Rias Baixas and the super grape varieties of albarino and godello. I think you get the picture.

If poultry is on the menu then you can ramp up the weight a tad.

White Burgundy can be a belter, with chardonnay taking centre stage. It can range from a steely, mineral-laden Chablis to the north of the region to a Macon, with plenty of sun on its back and a smidge of oak, to the south. Both will do a sterling job with a lovely roast chicken with all the trimmings.

You can, of course, go a little heftier still and plump for a barrel-fermented white Rioja – there is considerable value in this sector – with some lovely examples around a tenner.

Light reds will always work as a one-size fits all wine – suiting a wide range of dishes – look to a crisp, perfumed Beaujolais or maybe even a tarrango, a variety that hails from Australia and does a very similar job to the gamay grape found in Beaujolais.

You can, of course, choose either of the two red wines that make up the majority of posh wine lists



> Wild mushroom and asparagus risotto



When front of all wine knowledge Gérard Basset OBE puts his name to a wine book, it's probably worth a nose. Currently the only person in the world to be Master of Wine, Master Sommelier, Wine MBA and the World's Best Sommelier title and co-founder of the Hôtel du Vin chain, his input in the delightful tome **30-Second Wine** is refreshingly free of jargon and flowery nonsense (See my column for that!). This useful and delightfully packaged book covers many subjects such as regions, personalities, production and varieties – which are cleverly illustrated to show the aromas and tastes that should be associated with them. A cracking little read and as it implies, it should only take you 30 seconds to cover each subject – an aperitif if you will.

would probably be velvet-lined.

Again, there is value to be had as long as you do a little research into growers and negotiators. The big boys of Louis Jadot and Louis Latour have straight up Bourgogne, a wine from the region of Burgundy as opposed to a specific area or vineyard, that again hover around the £10 price point.

Bordeaux is a fuller bodied red that is normally a blend of cabernet sauvignon and merlot that can include cabernet franc, malbec, petit verdot and sometimes carmenere, and suits red meat.

There has been a leap in quality in more reasonable Bordeaux – mainly due to the New World countries producing wines of a great value to quality ratio snapping at their heels, so it's a good time to buy.

Especially when coupled with the long tradition of drinking Bordeaux with food that has been going on for hundreds of years in this country

– Bordeaux and Burgundy. The latter is lighter in style and made up of that super-sniffy, narky grape variety pinot noir. So posh, that if you bought a box of them it

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