

Alabama Mushroom Society Newsletter

August 2022

Hello Funiphiles!

We are enjoying the rain that is providing some much needed mushroom therapy for all of us. Although, this summer pales in comparison to the fungi boom of last summer, we have our fingers crossed that this Fall will make up for it. We've seen an interesting uptick in some species that are not usually so prevalent, including *Sparassis spathulata* (Cauliflower Mushroom)

The first ever Alabama Mushroom Festival is coming up FAST! We are nearly sold out of campsites. As of writing this, there are three left. We will be going down and measuring out to see if we can squeeze in a few more, but this may be it. The space suitable for setting up a tent is very limited. There are plenty of hammock sites left and we will not be capping weekend passes, you just may need to arrange your own off-site accommodations. Day tickets will also be available at the gate.

We are still trying to get some additional food vendors arranged to be there, but there will be a communal fire pit you can utilize and there are food options in town as well. We have quite a few merch vendors booked and are very happy with how everything else is coming together! It's going to be a great time and I can't wait to see everyone there! Festival details are available [HERE](#).

The [Alabama Fungal Diversity Project](#) is going strong, and as a facet of the project, we are continuing to run DNA sequencing on interesting collections. We are currently waiting for the last batch to come back from the lab, when we will begin to analyze the data. As another part of the project, we collect specimens for researchers who are researching fungi, and this month we mailed out 30 mushrooms and cultures to 4 different researchers! Click the link if you would like to get involved! You don't have to be an expert to make a difference in the study of mycology!

Mush Love,
-Alisha Millican
AMS President



**Suspect
Mushroom
Poisoning?**
Call US Poison Control
at
1-800-222-1222
EMERGENCY ID:
[FB Poisons Group](#)

AMS Board

President
Alisha Millican

Treasurer
Spencer Lowry

Secretary
Becca Mahoney



Ramaria by
Randall Jason Humphrey



Clavaria zollingeri by Sarah Evaeth
Watson

Upcoming Events

Click [→HERE←](#) for more info or to register for an event!

- Sept 6th ----- AMS Meeting via Zoom
 - Sept 10th ----- Baldwin County Monthly Foray
 - Sept 10th ----- Cullman County Foray
 - Sept 17th ----- Elmore County Monthly Foray
-



Amanita volvata By Brad Lackey; a tie for the winner of our Calandar Contest this month! We had to tie-break with heart and wow reacts!



Lactarius indigo art by
Keyal and Leni Loveland

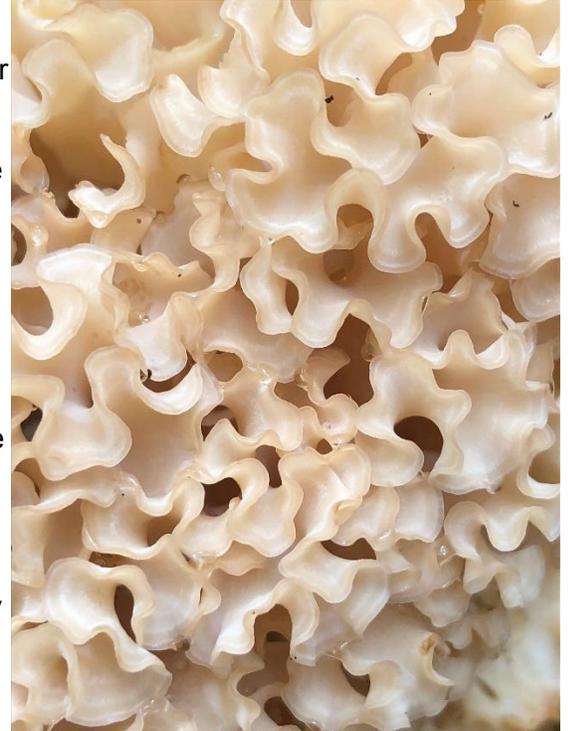
Mushroom of the Month

Sparassis

By Anthoni Goodman

Colloquially called the cauliflower mushroom, *Sparassis* is a genus well regarded as a hard to find but 'worth the wait' edible. There are several species worldwide which are divided into two forms and further separated by both geographic location and genetics. Housed in the Order *Polyporales* and Family *Sparassidaceae*, this genus' sole sister is *Pyncoporellus* (with a shelf fungus and a fleshy toothed crust like a deformed *Hericium!*). All species are known to range from parasitic to passively saprobic on dead or dying wood. None of these species have notable pores and as such the hymenium and overall flesh is smooth.

On one side of the formation spectrum is *Sparassis crispa*, a European taxon associated with pine from which older texts refer to but have been divided into our newly (relatively) minted *S.*'s *radicata* (in the Pacific Northwest), *americana f. arizonica* (in the Southwest), and *americana* in the East. These species are all characterized by their cauliflower-like build with egg-noodle-like ends. They have been aptly described as looking like a pot of egg noodles overturned at the base of a tree. Their color ranges from white to yellowish tans with the edges 'burning' dark brown to black as they dry out. At their heart is a dense trunk with a 'rooted' stipe from which they emerge, the organism itself usually consuming well buried wood. The heart or trunk is a thicker, slightly denser form of the same flesh comprising the egg-noodle ends. By feel, the texture is unique, somewhere between amphibian flesh (frog legs if you've had them) and a soft rubber (not fibrous, and easy to sink your teeth into). This description may sound off, but I assure you it's a treat. These species are more commonly found associated with pine, but may be found near oak or similar hardwoods.



♣ Sparassis americana close texture



♣ Sparassis americana growing at base of pine



Sparassis americana over saturated/wet and thick flabellae



Sparassis americana by Dan Albee DeRidder showing wider than usual flabellae

On the other side of the formation spectrum is the more fan-like (flabellate) *Sparassis spathulata* which lacks the robust heart/trunk and whose outer shape may be closer to a pot of lasagna noodles growing in a rosette. More pronounced in this species is the zonate coloration (whites and creams) running laterally along each connected noodle-like fan. In this species, the fronds/fans take up much more of the total fruitbody, typically making them less substantial in weight than their *S. crispa* – form cousins. Perhaps related to this difference in morphology and girth, *S. spathulata* seems to grow from more superficially buried wood (especially oaks and related but sometimes pine) with a stalk that is more intergrown with the roots and soil in its path.



Sparassis spathulata



Sparassis spathulata single flabellum, close
Sparassis spathulata close texture of wider flabellae



A thicker form with the same general morphology is called *S. spathulata forma herbstii*. This form also has more discernible zonation. This form is most commonly associated with oak, but can be found with other hardwoods or pine.

In the middle of these two formations is a European taxon called *Sparassis brevipes* which contains the broader fronds/flabellae, which twist and curl like *S. crispa*. Occasionally there are reports of *Sparassis americana* taking on elongated and less curly flabellae, or *S. spathulata* with curled flabellae leading us to question the role of the environment in these variations versus hybridization or genetic drift which may someday land us with a less specific delineation. Regardless, the species in this genus are uncommon to find (although have had a particularly prolific year this year in Alabama) and uncommonly tasty, holding up their unique and appealing texture in heavy fat or wet *S.* preparations where few mushrooms could.



spathulata forma herbstii

Potential look alike are scarce due to the unique textures but species of *Podoscypha* (especially *P. aculeata*) and *Cymatoderma*, *Hydnopolyporus* (now *Irpex*) *palmatus* and/or *fimbriatus*, and *Cotylidia* can be compared to *S. spathulata*.

Fungi Foragecast

As always, rains continue to determine our mushroom hunting success. A good rain map will be your key for determining the best locations for a good forage. [This map](#) is my go-to.

We continue to see a wide array of Summer mushrooms throughout Alabama. No sign of the fall species popping up just yet, but we can expect to start seeing them probably later this month, like *Desarmillaria caespitosa* and *Grifola frondosa*

The recent rains over some of the state have reignited the Chanterelles and the trumpets! If you had given up checking your spots, you might venture back out. Chanterelles will continue to pop up as long as you are getting rain until the ground temperatures drop.

We are still seeing our Boletes coming in in full force. These mushrooms have pores instead of gills (well, most of them) and are mycorrhizal with trees. The first question in most bolete identification keys is "what trees is it growing under" so pay attention when picking these guys if you want to ID it later. We've had several reports of *Strobilomyces* (Old Man of the Woods), some *Suilius* species, many of the bitter *Tylopilus*, *Xerocomellus*, *Hortiboletus*, and a whole ton of *Retiboletus*. Here is a link to the newest bolete book, which will certainly help you out with IDing these guys: [Boletes of Eastern North America](#) Remember that for bolete identification help, you should provide clear photos of the stem, cap from above and below, a bisected specimen photo, a report of smell, taste and any bruising, both immediately and after several minutes and what trees are growing nearby. There are some overlapping features that may also require a chemical test (a drop of KOH, ammonia, or iron salts). We have small macrochem kits with each of these chemicals in it available in person at the Cullmen foray and will be available at the Alabama Mushroom Festival as well, for \$5.

Out in the woods, keep an eye out for *Pluteus*, *Russula*, *Lactarius* (including *L. indigo* the indigo milkcap) and *Lactifluus*. We are seeing armies of *Amanita*, especially *A. amerirubescens*, *arkansa*, *banningiana*, *bisporigera*, *flavoconia*, *flavorubes*, *jacksonii*, *murrilliana*, *onusta*, *praecox*, *rhacopus*, *vaginata*, *virginiana*, and *westii*. You may notice I've left out the lepidellas, and while we will certainly see some of them, they have a greater propensity to fruit in the fall. I urge caution and copious education to anyone foraging any *Amanita* for the table as several *Amanita* species will kill you quite painfully if eaten - this is NOT a beginners genus for consumption. Though even the most deadly mushrooms can very safely be handled.



Chlorophyllum molybdites by
Blake Romano

Corals have also been out and include such as *Artomyces*, *Ramaria*, *Ramaropsis*, and *Clavulina*.

As the humidity keeps up also look for insects and spiders parasitized by fungi! If you find any- we have a few that we are collecting for researchers. See our list on facebook [HERE](#).

Don't forget to post your cool and unusual finds both on our Facebook group and on iNaturalist!

Strobilomyces by Joy Marriott



Hortiboletus rubellus by Charles Ciccarelli



Calendar Contest

Congratulations to our August winner Flown Kimmerling with their photo of *Exudoporus frostii* in Etowah County!



Go submit your own mushroom photos for September's Calendar contest on Facebook!!

[Go now!](#)

AMS Merch Now Available!

[>Check it out now!<](#)

New shirts are up! Along with all kinds of new merch goodies!! We also now have AMS vinyl stickers and macrochem kits available in person at any Cullman event



In The Kitchen

By Kevin Hébert

Spicy Chicken (of the woods) and Eggplant in Garlic Sauce

When I found this *Laetiporus cincinnatus* with its tender fruit bodies (and I already had a garden full of ripe eggplant), I knew I wanted to try it out in one of my favorite dishes. The texture and taste (and maybe the smell) of this mushroom really do resemble tender bites of chicken. It was an amazing “substitute” in this savory, sweet, sour, salty, asian-inspired classic!



Ingredients (about 2 servings):

1 chicken of the woods mushroom
(*Laetiporus cincinnatus*)
3 Ichiban eggplants
½ white onion
1 bunch green onion

4 hot chili peppers
2 tbsp minced ginger
4 tbsp minced garlic
1 tbsp fermented black beans
½ cup rice

2 tbsp soy sauce
3 tbsp shaoxing wine
3 tbsp brown sugar
2 tbsp rice vinegar
1 tbsp water

½ tbsp cornstarch
½ tsp toasted sesame oil
salt and pepper
peanut oil

Directions:

Step 1: Prep the ingredients and start the roasting and the rice

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Clean the mushroom and eggplant. Slice the onion half into thick rings. Pull or cut the mushroom into 3 inch pieces (resembling pounded out slices of chicken). Slice the eggplant in half lengthwise, and then in half lengthwise again. Add all to a large sheet pan and lightly toss with peanut oil, salt, and pepper. When the oven is hot, add the mushroom, eggplant, and onion, and roast for about 30 minutes, or until the edges of the mushroom pieces are looking crispy and the eggplant is tender, but not mushy. Flip the ingredients halfway through. Now, I know this dish would normally be cooked in a wok and not in the oven, but I like the texture I get on the mushroom and eggplant when roasted. Start cooking the rice using your preferred method. Slice the green onions, keeping the green and white parts separate. Thinly slice the hot chilis. Mince the ginger, garlic, and fermented black beans.

Step 2: Make the spicy garlic sauce

While the mushroom roasts, and the rice cooks, combine the soy sauce, shaoxing wine, brown sugar, rice vinegar, sesame oil, cornstarch, and water in a bowl and whisk together. Add 2 tbsp of the minced garlic, one of the sliced hot chilis, and a pinch of the green onion tops. Stir to combine then set aside.

Step 3: Cook the sauce

When the mushrooms are about 10 minutes from being done, heat a saute pan to medium high heat and add a drizzle of peanut oil. Add the remaining hot chilis, garlic, ginger, green onion bottoms, and black beans and stir frequently. After a few minutes, add a splash of shaoxing wine to remove any stuck on bits from the bottom. When the wine cooks off, add the prepared bowl of sauce and simmer to reduce slightly. When the sauce begins to thicken, remove from the heat.

Step 4: Finish the dish

When the mushroom, eggplant, and onion are done roasting, the rice is cooked, and you have thickened your sauce, toss them all together to combine, then spoon the mixture over a scoop of rice. Garnish with the sliced green onion tops and enjoy!

Meeting Information

AMS meetings take place the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm CST via Zoom and are open to the public, so invite your friends!

Join us Sept 6th where, after a brief business meeting, we will enjoy a presentation by Sarah Prentice and Kaori Hall!

Sarah Prentice is the co-founder of the Florida Academic Lichen and Fungi Enthusiasts League (FALAFEL) and has led dozens of mushroom walks and fungal forays. She is active on Mushroom Observer and moderates a number of online mushroom identification forums, including Florida Mushroom & Fungus ID. Sarah is a University of Florida alumna and has worked at UF Marston Science Library since 2013.

Kaori Hall is a senior undergraduate Microbiology and Cell Science major at the University of Florida. She is currently working in the Smith Lab at UF studying Chanterelle diversity and distribution in Florida. She is interested in host-fungal interactions, evolution, and ecology. In the future, Kaori hopes to pursue scientific illustration after obtaining a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology.

Join us to hear them talk to us about Kaori's research into the genus Cantharellus- the Chanterelles!

Link to the zoom meeting: [Join Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 814 2087 5105

Passcode: 18

2022 Scavenger Hunt



Have you heard about our scavenger hunt yet?! Find and properly identify as many mushrooms in Alabama as you can and win prizes at the end of the year! You get credit for finding the mushrooms when you add them to our project on iNaturalist. Read the full rules on our website [here](#). Any observations you upload to iNaturalist will be automatically submitted to the project after joining. Joining the project is easy!

1. Download the iNaturalist app on your smartphone or access it via the website www.inaturalist.org.
2. Sign up for free to make your account.
3. Join the iNaturalist project titled "AMS 2022 Scavenger Hunt"

→Must be a paid AMS member to win←

Is there something you would like to see included each month? Do you have foray photos, a recipe or something else you would like to contribute? Reach out to us at www.almushroomsoc@gmail.com