



MUSHROOM HUNTING SEASON

By Theresa & John Maybrier

A good friend of mine said the Christmas season and the Morel season only come once a year... and that the anticipation drives him crazy. Well,

Christmas has come and gone and now comes the real wait. Now that morels are our business we start now doing the sport shows. We're already talking about the upcoming season, selling books, bags and soups to enjoy these cold winter months while we wait in anticipation for the morels to start popping up. We've spent the fall creating new food products for your enjoyment; a morel flavored rice side dish and a morel flavored gravy.

But like all real fans of morels the anticipation is in the hunts. Where are we going, how far are we going and how many days can we devote to it? Many morel hunters plan their vacations

around mushroom hunting. Now that we know how to best preserve the morels and how to travel with morels and how to use the mesh bag to make more mushrooms for the future, we as hunters can plan to pick as many as we can carry.

We had ideas last summer for bringing morels back to Kansas City from the ones John and Paul picked in Alaska. We tried a couple of the ideas including our standard of sealing ice in the bottom of the cooler, keeping the moisture separate from the morels, and packing the mushrooms on top of a barrier such as newspaper or cardboard. That works great but Alaska is thirty-five hundred miles from Kansas City, and temperatures through Canada and the Dakotas



are still pretty warm in July. To further guarantee that the mushrooms would arrive home so that I could have some fresh and share with our friends we tried a new idea (based on Springtime experiments) of individually wrapping the fresh morels in toilet paper, then packing them separated in the ice/cooler method. We chose toilet paper because it is easily accessible, relatively inexpensive and in a roll... it is easy to manage in the wilderness. What a success. It will be an addition to philosophy of traveling and preserving fresh mushrooms for longer periods of time. They keep great in the refrigerator like this too. We were able to eat fresh morels from Alaska for almost three weeks once they reached Kansas City by car.

The drying method is still the easiest and best method for keeping morels long term. Once a person can get past the idea that their mushrooms are drying out either in the field or in the refrigerator when they are keeping them fresh and understand that they easily reconstitute, the drying method and fresh preservation method will make perfect sense to them.

There is still controversy about the mesh collection bags. However, anyone who has dried morels and has seen the spore buildup will have visual proof that morels continue to spore after they have been captured. Spore can be seen on paper towels or now, toilet paper, when morels are kept in the cooler or refrigerator for later use



fresh. In the wild, morel spore is microscopic and without the "buildup" it is nearly impossible to be seen. The spore starts the reproduction process as soon as the morels start to dry out in nature. HELP IT ALONG...MAKE MORE MUSHROOMS!

So, while you wait for mushroom season to come, read up, spoil yourself with some good morel based foods and get out the maps. Remember, you can always join us for a hunt in Michigan mid-May when your season is mostly over. Everyone has a good time, everyone gets mushrooms and everyone learns something new about how to be a better mushroom hunter.

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