

## 2012 Chinatown Foray

By Claire and Michael King

On a sunny, blustery morning, we headed to Chinatown along with our son and two granddaughters to partake in the BMC Chinatown Foray. Once we reached the Chinatown Trade Center, we met Marcia Jacob, event organizer, and 70 other adventurous souls seeking relief from mushroom foray deprivation so often experienced in the chill of winter.

### The Foray

The attendees set out in small groups equipped with shopping bags, knapsacks and maps of store locations in search of Chinese fungal treasures. Chinese local grocery stores/super markets are inspirational places, filled with fresh produce, intriguing spices and prepared sauces, layers of shiny fish, all kinds of noodles, snacks, cooking supplies, endless Chinese customers, and fungi. Right now there are just a few major types of fresh species, but endless dried ones, packed in many sizes. We were informed that there are differences in the quality of the dried mushrooms of the same type, so you may need to consult a knowledgeable store owner. No wonder Chinese food is so diverse and such a treat to the taste buds.

We did due diligence on the fungi holdings. The first market, C-Mart on Washington St., was a source of both fresh and dried varieties at very good prices!



*At C-Mart, Club members found a wide variety of fresh and dried mushrooms.*



*Examining fresh Oyster mushrooms at C-Mart.*

The fresh ones available included Enoki, King Oysters and other Oyster varieties. Our initial team sort of cleaned out the place of fresh mushrooms, and we moved on to the next place, CWH Co on Beach St. This store was a little more kempt and a bit more expensive. Its aisles were wider and every thing was easily seen. It, too, had beautiful oyster mushrooms and the other varieties as well.

From store to store, we wandered filling our shopping bags with fresh and dried mushrooms, vegetables, and irresistible cooking utensils (Sun Sun Co on Oxford Street was especially good for cooking hardware). The vegetables were extremely fresh and very well priced compared to the meager offerings in our home markets. Also if time allowed (it didn't) we could have examined some of the tantalizing unknown foods that beckoned from colorful packaging. The only thing marring our shopping pace was the darn Chinese labels. Friendly shop owners and sales people were always at hand to assure that a language barrier would not limit our ability to splurge.



*Some members bought lethal weaponry (a cleaver)!*

One of the more fascinating stops was Nam Buk Hong Chinese Herbs on Harrison St. Shelves were loaded with remedies for ailments you should be glad you don't have! We were faced with numerous imponderables, including an item called Sea Dog Pills.



*The shopkeeper at Nam Buk Hong Chinese Herbs prepared three batches of tea ingredients.*





*Cordyceps are among the ingredients available in Sea Dog Pills at Nam Buk Hong Chinese Herbs.*

## **The Feast**

At noon we assembled at the Hot Pot Buffet on Beach Street. It is a popular place for throngs of Chinese families who make their weekly pilgrimage to Chinatown to buy their groceries, and to get their fix of home food. Here we feasted on a Chinese hot pot lunch featuring many of the mushrooms found in our foray.



*Waiters delivered plates laden with Chinese mushrooms.*



*Fresh and dried Chinese mushrooms, and vegetables, and went into the hot pot. See the end of this article for species identification.*



*Diners put mushrooms and vegetables in the aluminum hot pot to cook.*



*Hoisting Enoki mushrooms to cook in the pot.*

During this incredible feast we tasted the familiar. And we tried some less familiar items.



*How old were you when you tasted your first stinkhorn?*



## Identification

Ben Maelson identified the mushrooms served in our hot pot meal. The following table lists the ingredients by Latin binomial, and Chinese and English common names.



*Agaricus bisporus*  
*mo gu*  
Button mushroom



*Agrocybe cylindracea*  
(*aegerita*)  
*cha shu gu*  
Tea tree mushroom  
Willow mushrooms  
Pioppino



*Auricularia auricula*  
*mu erh*  
Wood ear fungi



*Dictyophora indusiata*  
*ju sun*  
Bamboo fungus  
Long net stinkhorn



*Flammulina velutipes*  
*jin zhen gu*  
Enoki  
Golden needle mushroom



*Hericium erinaceus*  
*hóu tóu gu*  
Monkey's head  
Lion's Mane



*Hypsizygus marmoreus*  
Also *Hypsizygus tessellates*  
Shimeji



*Lentinus edodes*  
*dong gu*  
Shiitake  
Winter mushroom





*Pleurotus eryngii*  
*wang zi gu*  
**King Oyster**  
**Chicken Leg**



*Tremella fuciformis*  
*yun erh*  
**Cloud ear**  
**White jelly mushroom**  
**Chrysanthemum Mushroom**

Following the lunch, many of us returned to the markets to acquire some of the newly found fungal varieties discovered at lunch. Walking back to a car, we made a startling discovery: a lone mushroom was there in clear sight, resting on the sidewalk.



We are not sure what this means, but hopefully spring cannot be far behind.