2014 Chinatown Foray

By Claire and Michael King

On March 29th, 90 BMC members assembled at the China Trade Center for a mushroom foray. We first met with our fearless leader, Marcia Jacob, who provided us with a map of food stores and general directions. We fanned out into small groups exploring the shops for mushrooms and other Chinese delicacies.
With our baskets (shopping baskets) full of local produce we arrived at the China Pearl restaurant on Tyler Street where the highlight of the day was a 9 course Chinese banquet. It was held on the third floor in a private dining room reserved for special occasions.

The banquet was the brainchild of Mei Ching and Ben Maelson, who worked with Patty Moy, Operations Manager at the restaurant to come up with a magnificent and affordable feast. Not surprisingly, every course highlighted mushrooms and was beautifully served by well attending staff. Patty Moy circulated around the room, stopping at each table to describe the ingredients and cooking techniques for each dish as it arrived.
The banquet began with a Szechuan Enoki Mushroom Cucumber role after which we were presented with a seemingly endless variety of mushroom dishes (see menu below). One of the most interesting and beautiful creations was “Cream of Mushroom Medley in a Japanese Squash”.

Reminiscent of Moo Shi dishes, the “Jing Jiang Shredded Mushrooms of Beech, Portabella, King Trumpet and Wood’s Ears Mushrooms served on pancakes” was elegant, crunchy, and tasty.
Not only was it delicious, but it also served as a mid-banquet diversion for the younger set.
In true Chinese tradition the last course, “Dried Shitake Mushroom Sticky Rice drizzled with sticky rice sauce topped with Red Onion Strings and Fresh Cilantro” was more than anyone could possibly eat.

After the last final course we were presented with the real final course, a dessert named “Cauliflower Mushrooms (snow fungus) and Red Dates Sweet Soup”. We must admit that we are not particularly fans of Chinese desserts, but this was not too sweet and a great way to end the meal.
We understand that this is the third Chinese Foray in recent times. It is a grand way to reenter the world of mushrooms following the winter doldrums.

Many thanks to Marcia, Ben and Mei Ching for all their planning that went into this exciting event.

As forays go we are pleased to report that no one got lost and there was no mention of mosquitoes, black flies, or ticks.

Note:
*If you want to learn more about the Chinatown shops and mushroom varieties, we suggest reading our previous article on the BMC website describing the 2012 Chinatown Foray. In that article we describe 8 of the most common Chinatown mushrooms with their Latin binomial, and Chinese and English common names.*