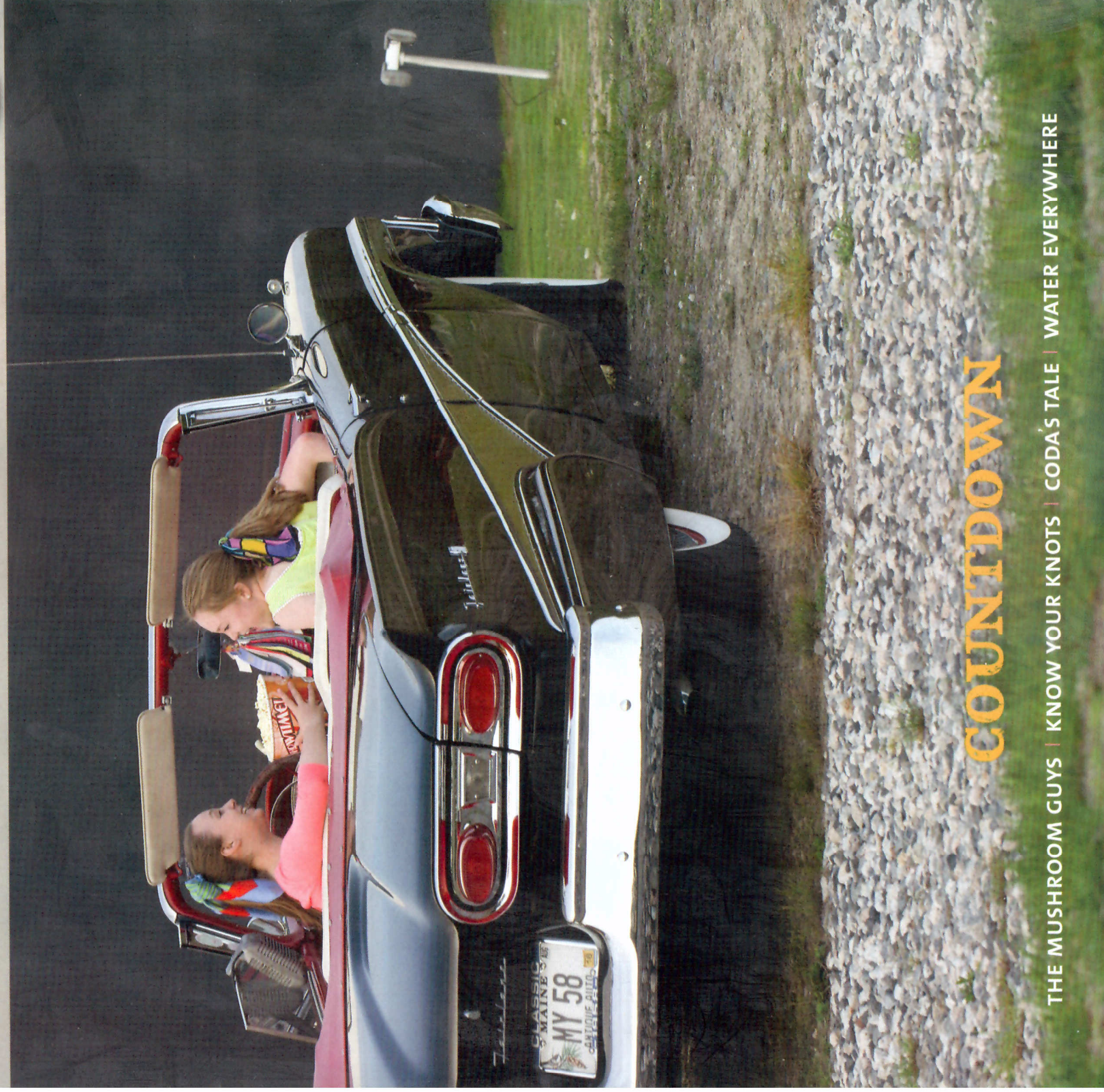


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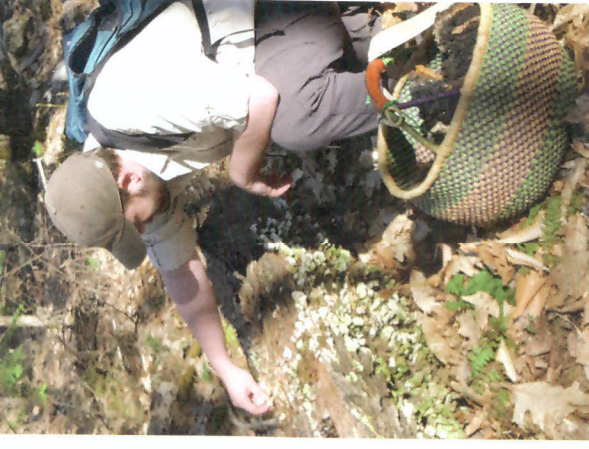
COUNTDOWN

THE MUSHROOM GUYS | KNOW YOUR KNOTS | CODA'S TALE | WATER EVERYWHERE



THE MUSHROOM GUYS

TEXT BY LEIGH MACMILLEN HAYES
PHOTOS BY PARKER AND JIMMIE VEITCH



They appear where they had not previously been. Fungi, that is. Not the Veitch brothers of Lovell—but then again, it often seems that Parker and Jimmie Veitch do suddenly emerge from the woods grasping collection baskets and camera equipment as they quietly pursue their fascination with mushrooms.

The Veitches were in their mid-to-late teens and living in North Carolina during the school year and Lovell, Maine, during the summer months, when their journey into the fungal world began.

It all started at a party. If you are thinking, “Of course, ‘Shrooms,” you are on the wrong track. Their cousin’s friend showed up with Chanterelles he’d gathered earlier in the day and transformed into an appetizer. Parker was immediately intrigued and accompanied the newly found friend on future forays. Soon, Jimmie was also hooked.

At first they wanted to know all the edible species, but in time they desired to identify all the mushrooms that they could—including those that look like others, aka look-alikes.

“We’ve been camping since we were born,” says Parker, “but once we got started mushroom hunting, we started hiking and backpacking more. I get outside every day, whenever I have free time.” Both young men acknowledge that a mushroom hunt is about more than the fruiting fungi. In order to identify them, it helps to know the trees and that leads to a study of habitat, and then there’s bedrock. “Nothing

in nature is not related,” Parker concludes. As their understanding grew, their lifetime habit of hiking and hunting evolved into photography and microscopy. The more they learned, the more they wanted to know. And it directed their college careers—Parker began at North Carolina State as an electrical engineering major. He graduated with a degree in Environmental Technology and Management. Jimmie, who has another year to complete at the University of North Carolina, is also an Environmental Tech major.

Since they relocated permanently to Lovell two years ago, they realized they could turn their passion into a profitable business, and to that end developed White Mountain Mushrooms, LLC.

On their Web site, www.whitemountainmushrooms.com, they state their mission as the following: “White Mountain Mushrooms was founded to inspire inter-

est in mycology, eradicate mycophobia through knowledge, and supply affordable, high quality mushroom products.” The Web site includes links for mushroom edification, recommended books, services offered such as walks and fungal surveys, plus gourmet and medicinal mushrooms sold by the pound.

Education is key and they are eager to share their knowledge and help others gain a better understanding of mycology. To date, either together or with others, they’ve led over 200 mushroom walks. They’ve also started several groups including the North Carolina Mushroom Group, Piedmont Mycological Society and White Mountain Mycological Society. Most forays led by them or others are posted at www.meetup.com. All are easily accessible either via Facebook or their Web site and cover every state.

Should you stumble upon a mushroom that you can’t identify and the Veitch brothers aren’t beside you—never fear. You’ll find this on the services page of their site: “Enter your location, a brief habitat description, and some photos into our Mushroom Identification Request Form to have your mushrooms identified free of charge. We may request more information.”

In France, foraging for mushrooms is practically a national pastime and French pharmacists are trained to identify fungi for customers. The Veitch brothers recognize that many of us who have not grown up with the European culture of harvesting mushrooms have developed a



fear of the unknown—triggered by lack of knowledge about what is safe or not safe to consume. Jimmie says, “Even if you are just a beginner, there are mushrooms you can eat safely without being scared.”

On Greater Lovell Land Trust and Lakes Environmental Association walks I’ve taken with the Veitches, I’ve watched both young men harvest a mushroom, sniff it, take a nibble and spit it out. Parker reminds me that you can taste test even the deadliest of mushrooms—and that this helps with identification. “You aren’t taking a nibble to say ‘Oh, this could be edible,’” he says. “It could taste sweet or hot—and be poisonous.” But the flavor and smell are important in making positive identifications



in the field, where a spore print cannot be quickly obtained for ID.

I often tease them, but am truly impressed because they’ve made a point of learning the Latin names for the genus and species, while I speak only common. They are quick to point out that there may be several common names, such as the beefsteak fungus which is also called beefsteak polypore and ox tongue polypore, but the Latin gives the mushroom unique botanical nomenclature as it describes the fungi and its characteristics. The Latin term for the beefsteak is *Fistulina hepatica*. *Fistulina* means “small tube” in reference to the mass of tubules on the mushroom’s underside, while *hepatica* means “liver-like” and in this case describes the consistency of the mushroom’s fleshy surface. From Parker I also learn more about the common name for beefsteak. While *Fistulina hepatica* is edible, some people use the term beefsteak in reference

to the deadly *Gyromitra* species, the ones with MMH—the same stuff in rocket fuel.

Still nervous, but want to know more? Join one of the groups they suggest on their Web site, or set up a time for a personal foray. No matter what your level of knowledge is, you’ll gain insight from your time spent with these two. Walk with them and I guarantee you’ll learn how to safely, sustainably and fruitfully forage for fungi.

If foraging isn’t your thing, but you love to add mushrooms to a dish, then that’s another reason to check out their Web site. They supply fresh mushrooms to restaurants within an hour of Lovell and ship dried mushrooms anywhere. Jimmie says, “We provide a quality product that we pick, clean and dehydrate.”

Right now they don’t have a retail location, but it’s on their radar.

Burly, yet soft-spoken, these two fungi-philies are eager to share their love of the natural world with everyone. They bring their own talents to the table and I chuckle when I ask about their respective areas of expertise. Each immediately answers for the other. Parker tells me that Jimmie is better at ID and Jimmie

replies that Parker is better at reading the habitat and knowing what edible species should be found in a given area. Oh, they disagree at times—in fact, one thinks people are overly cautious, while the other thinks you should approach mushrooms with a bit of caution. And they aren’t afraid to find fault with the other’s reasoning. But ... both agree that their favorite species to eat is the *Boletus edulis* (King Bolete) because it has a texture that feels substantial when cooked. As for their absolute favorite mushroom—it’s one they haven’t found yet: *Rhodotus palmatus*, which is aesthetically pleasing with a pinkish red cap and deep reticulation that looks like netting. They’re still hunting for it in Maine and New Hampshire.

I always enjoy time spent with the mushroom guys because I come away with a better understanding of the forest around me. I guarantee you’ll feel the same. ☺

MIKE’S MUSHROOM BREAD

1 loaf Italian bread
1/2 c softened butter
1 lb chopped fresh chanterelles
2 c shredded mozzarella cheese
6 green onions, chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced

Preheat oven to 400°F. Slice bread in half horizontally. Using your fingers, pull out most of the soft bread to form a hollow shell. Save pulled-out bread for another use. Mix together butter, mushrooms, cheese, green onions and garlic. Spread mixture on both cut sides of bread. Place bread, cut sides up, on baking sheet. Bake in pre-heated oven until the cheese has melted, about 10-15 minutes. Cut into wedges to serve.

Note from Parker: a simple appetizer but this is a similar recipe to the appetizer my buddy made—it’s what started it all.

SHRIMP AND MUSHROOM LINGUINI WITH CREAMY CHEESE HERB SAUCE

1 (8 oz) package linguini pasta
2 tbsp butter
1/2 lb fresh black trumpets mushrooms,
or 1 oz dried, rehydrated
1/2 c butter
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 (3 oz) package cream cheese
2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
3/4 tsp dried basil
2/3 c boiling water
1/2 lb cooked shrimp

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add linguini and cook until tender, about 7 minutes. Drain. Meanwhile, heat 2 tbsp butter in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms, cook and stir until tender. Transfer to a plate. In same pan, melt 1/2 c butter with minced garlic. Stir in cream cheese, breaking it up with a spoon as it melts. Stir in parsley and basil. Simmer for 5 minutes. Mix in boiling water until sauce is smooth. Stir in cooked shrimp and mushrooms; heat sauce through. Toss linguini with shrimp/mushroom sauce and serve.

Both recipes from allrecipes.com