

City Dirt

Adventures in
Urban Gardening



"Work, motion, life. All rise from the dirt and stand upon it as on a launching pad."
From *Dirt, The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth* by William Bryant Logan.

November 25, 2009

[Hunting the Wild Mushroom](#)



Luckily for people in Northern California, mushroom season overlaps with the holidays, and foragers head out into the wild to find holiday fare. As porcini season is waning, chanterelles are appearing, and then there are black trumpets to look forward to in the new year. Seasoned fungi hunters often have their secret spots and enjoy the tromp through the woods as much as the mushrooms. Chef Donato Scotti, proprietor of [Donato Enoteca](#) in Redwood City claims his secret foraging grounds

are in the Santa Cruz mountains not far from Half Moon Bay--but he would not reveal more than this.

Donato Scotti is originally from Bergano, Italy which is in the north, near Lake Cuomo. He learned how to hunt porcini from his father. "Every family has a spot there," he said. He explained that porcini season was as much a rhythm of life as the changing months. "In November, we killed a pig. In September we hunted porcini." The common method there is to scrape the bottom right at the spot you pick them. This both cleans the mushrooms, and helps scatter spores for future years.

In October, northern Italian mycologist head to the Alba Truffle Market in Piedmont for the white and black truffle festival where prices are set for Italian truffles. This year, they came in at \$2400.00 a pound. He unveiled some of his white truffles, which he kept in a jar with whole, raw eggs. These he let absorb the truffle essence, and then he fried them for breakfast. Sometimes a stick of butter went into the jar. And if too much moisture started to form, some rice that could later be cooked. But alas, the rare white truffle is most commonly found in the bay area restaurants, not in the ground. But there are other delicacies to be found, just make sure you don't eat a mushroom that you aren't absolutely, 100% positive won't make you ill. Chefs, natural science professors and mycological societies can be good resources for sorting the delicious from the deadly.

A good way to get started with learning your wild mushrooms is through field courses with experts. Try the seminars at [Point Reyes National Seashore](#) or to hunt and then taste, sign up for a Wild Mushroom Foray and Cooking Class with chef Elissa Rubin-Mahon at the [Relish Culinary Adventures](#) in Healdsburg.



Recipe: Pappardelle ai Funghi by Donato Scotti Executive Chef at Donato Enoteca

Servings: 6 for the pasta; 1 for the sauce (multiply sauce recipe based on number of servings you desire)

Ingredients:

For the dough:

8 eggs

1lbs buckwheat flour

1/8 lbs all purpose flour (optional for consistency)

Olive oil

Pinch salt

Water if need it

Method:

Sieve flour onto a work top surface in a pile and make a shallow pit in the center.

Add 4 yolks in the center, olive oil and salt. Starting in the middle, beat egg mixture with a fork, gradually adding in flour from the outside in. Make into a ball by adding a little bit of water to obtain an elastic dough. Let rest for at least 1 hour.

Roll out dough with a rolling pin into a long strip. Feed strip through a pasta machine roller until approximately 1-2 millimeters thick. Cut pasta sheet into 3cm wide strips and make 3-4 oz bundles (individual servings), adding some extra flour as necessary to prevent sticking.

Ingredients for the sauce:

3oz porcini mushrooms (or mixed wild mushrooms), thinly sliced

1 Tblspn olive oil

1 garlic clove

3oz dry white wine(trebbiano)

1 Tblspn of chopped Italian parsley

Salt pepper

2oz Grana Padano

Method:

Brown garlic clove in olive oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. Remove garlic and add porcini mushrooms and salt pepper. Cook for 2 minutes at medium heat. Add white wine and reduce completely. Cook one 3-4oz bundle of pasta in boiling salted water between 3-6 minutes depending on the thickness of the pasta.

Drain pasta and place pappardelle in sauté pan with mushrooms along with little bit of the cooking water. Remove from fire and stir in the Grana Padano. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

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