

# MUSHROOM FORAGING AND LUNCH WITH MAITRE ROTISSEUR CASTRO BOATENG NOVEMBER 3RD 2019



Not a hint of rain, brilliant sunshine and the stage was set for 18 intrepid Chaine Members and their guests to head out to a “secret” destination in the wilds of the forest. We found ourselves about 50 kms west of Victoria in search of the elusive mushrooms that we understood grow there in profusion. Armed with baskets, gloves, knives, gum boots for some and loads of enthusiasm, we received our marching orders from Chef Castro. He is very protective of the environment and is an experienced forager, but strictly in so far as it provides fresh and unique menu ingredients for his restaurant patrons. Our focus was to gather Chanterelles but there were many “look-alike” imposters growing throughout the area, and most of us could not tell the difference. The plan was that later, Castro and Chef Moto would inspect our harvest and remove any non-edible species.

Well, after 3 hours and visiting three different foraging sites, it was clear that others, with the same idea, had been there before us so we had found very few Chanterelles. Except that is, for a couple of determined guys who braved a steep embankment and found a field of the elusive fungus. Meanwhile my half-full basket turned out to only contain the “imposter” and inedible variety when examined by Chef Castro. Result: empty basket! All terribly disappointing after clambering over mossy fallen logs, braving thick, dead brush and trees whose branches were not hospitable to folk wanting to push past them.

But our adventure in the woods was soon over and the lunch at Castro’s restaurant was about all we could think of as 3pm approached and Chef had promised to feature mushrooms in the menu. Five more Members and guests joined us for lunch. Our traditional glass of “Bubbles” accompanied an Amuse Bouche of a delicately seasoned, shredded lamb and sliced mushroom served on a crouton. This was followed by, as one guest said: “the best mushroom soup I have ever had”. And it was. Thick and creamy, yet incredibly light, garnished with pickled cauliflower mushroom (a species that only two present had ever seen before) and tiny pieces of pickled purple cauliflower. In a word, Yum!

The main course was a mushroom risotto with shreds of Romano cheese, accompanied by cubes of very flavourful root vegetables and a melt-in-your-mouth Harissa coated and roasted chicken breast. A cool and delicate Panna Cotta with a blackberry glaze, served with a House-made almond brittle wafer followed for dessert.

After lunch, Chef Castro made a point of saying that he enjoyed not only hosting our type of event, but also that he appreciates everything new that he can learn along the way. In addition, he put particular emphasis on the comraderie that we have in the Chaine and encouraged us to support our Bailliage and encourage potential new members to join.

The Bailli thanked Castro and his team for their hospitality and for guiding our foraging efforts. So that none were disappointed with the results of their foraging, Chef had prepared a gift bag of wild (yes, edible) mushrooms for everyone present to take home.

We were pleased to host a Vancouver Member, and a Grand Officier from the Bangkok Bailliage, as well as a new and several prospective Victoria Members enjoying their first Chaine event.