

Start to Finish

Written by Tess Malijenovsky

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The Outsider and her dad go foraging for wild mushrooms... then cook them and serve them over chateaubriand. ("Papa" happens to be a French chef!)

If you see a brunette man with a woven basket foraging your wooded property for wild, vibrantly colored mushrooms, please don't be alarmed. It's probably my father, or Mr. Mali as many parents and schoolchildren know him.

While many Americans are quick to judge the seemingly crazy Frenchman hunting for mushrooms in their yard, I see my dad harvesting fresh, locally grown chanterelle mushrooms that he will later prepare in a white wine cream reduction over chateaubriand steak for dinner.

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My father's French culture has made for an interesting upbringing as a child in the States, to say the



least. When I was a little girl my dad would take my sister and me to the public park to search for mushrooms. Forget throwing a football. We wandered from park trails browsing the forested floor. Uncovering the humus that cakes the earth, we discovered hidden varieties of mushrooms.

“Deux fourchettes, deux fourchettes!” I’d cry out to my dad in excitement whenever I found a chanterelle, a golden-orange mushroom with gills under its flat hat. In his mushroom guidebook the “deux fourchettes” or “two forks” symbol signified a delicious mushroom to eat.

Some of the mushrooms in the book would be marked with a black skeleton, which meant they were poisonous; others had a red “x” meaning that the mushroom was tasteless or poor tasting. Chanterelles, on the other hand, are easily identifiable and actually considered one of the “foolproof four” (the other three being chicken mushrooms, giant puffballs and morels). As a child I never questioned what my father put on the table for dinner—not just because he was my dad, but because he became an exquisite chef after going to culinary school in Geneva, Switzerland.

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