



Kings of Autumn

by Tobiah Orin Moshier

Here in Oregon, the first few post-winter months find me chasing down one of two fungal culprits—either the distinctly elusive *Morchella*, or the spring King, *Boletus rex-veris*. The weather has just started to warm, and snowmelt whizzes by as I make tracks through the Ceanothus and Grand fir of the central Cascades. There is true magic in the air, even if it might just be due to the daunting swarms of neon yellow pollen wafting down from a nearby Ponderosa pine. However, this season dies a quick death as I run out of elevation to climb, and 100-degree days begin to bake the landscape into a desolate earthen crust. As July and August approach, I scurry to north ridges and relentlessly comb small, cool microclimates in hopes of harvesting a few more porcini buttons or a small handful of wet morels. My head hangs lower as I find only remains at 6000 ft. Where once a monster patch of black morels stood, a couple petrified bug hotels stand tribute to latter days of rain. And where once the buff red cap of a king button pushed tirelessly through a shrump of fir duff, lies a foot and a half wide pile of decomposition, fit only for low-class flies and those little black gnat things.

Ahhh, but then there is autumn. So since I already have already described spring in the Cascades as “magic,” let me say

that autumn on the Oregon coast is indescribably mystical; it holds a special place in my heart that no other time or place seems to fill. The dog days of summer are soon past. My air-conditioned electric bill eases downward as the wind shifts to northerly and the bold colors of the local flora and fauna starts to deepen. Again, as in the days of winter and early spring, the rain begins. This is not cold rain though—at least not yet. The early days of September are still seasonably warm, and showers appear on days of 65–70 degrees. So here, in all the glory of autumn, I find myself amidst one of the most productive edible mushroom seasons of the year. Now is the time for the fall king, *Boletus edulis*.

To some in the Northwest the words “fall King” conjure up images of fat shiny Chinook on their homeward-bound mission up one of many local streams or

