

discovering them in the wild, including cepes and morels.

"There were all types of mushrooms," he says, "but there wasn't any tradition of eating them, nor of using them for medicine."

When Mycoboutique relocated last November, it was a very different story, at least in this city. "Now you can't find a renowned restaurant in Montreal that doesn't have at least one dish with wild mushrooms. It's really evolved, a lot of people go out now to find mushrooms."

Mycoboutique supplies many of those renowned restaurants with fresh mushrooms, and offers bilingual foraging expeditions in and around Montreal from May to October. There are also tasting evenings, and courses (generally in French) for those wanting to become foraging guides or commercial growers. A free fungi-identification service is offered in-store (but be prepared to wait, as the former risk manager is thorough).



Actor Hugh Jackman and family on a foraging expedition. (Photo courtesy of Mycoboutique.)



Mushroom pasta. (Photo by Patricia Maunder)

Fresh mushrooms are sold to the public year-round (some imported, some local, including chanterelles from mid-July to mid-August), as well as many dried varieties. Prepared ingredients include truffle oil and unusual products such as house-made mushroom cookies and porcini ice cream.

So what is Pierre Noël's mycological Holy Grail? "The local truffle. I've tasted a few but I've never seen any in nature," he says. "Friends who have found some won't tell me where ... so it's a bit mysterious."

Mycoboutique, 4324 St-Denis St., Montreal, www.mycoboutique.ca

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