

Featured mushroom



petaloides on my counter



H.

H. petaloides in wild (Oona-Margaret Burke)

Hohenbuehelia petaloides

I haven't seen an abundance of oyster mushrooms in certain woods near Iowa City like I used to, but for two years in a row now I've found *Hohenbuehelia petaloides*. Last year I didn't try eating any and I didn't expect I'd missed much. Several sources list it as edible but not very good. The only mushrooms I'd had so far this year were very good morels and I was getting bored, so I decided to see how not very good these "Ho-Hum-behelia" were. They were very young and fresh. If they were edible at all they were most edible at this stage. Maybe I would be surprised.

I already knew they were tough and sure enough they needed more than just sautéing, but, even as I was chewing leather, I tasted a very good mushroom flavor. They merited further experimenting.

I boiled a couple pieces in the microwave. They foamed up rapidly and gave the water they had cooked in a pleasant aroma. I tried one piece. Even better, the thin fleshed outer reaches of the cap were now chewable with a nice oyster mushroom like flavor! I then fried the remaining piece in olive oil till golden brown. That was it! It was crispy but firm and just slightly chewy with a flavor that demanded I eat more. The rest of the mushrooms (outer cap portions) parboiled then fried were part of a delicious meal.

I confess that only after eating it did I begin having doubts about this mushroom's Identity. Yes, it had all the important field characteristics, thin tough pliant cap and decurrent unnotched gills. Still it missed descriptions in two important ways. Its odor was pleasant not "mealy" and it definitely had "culinary value." Plus, I hadn't confirmed its identity by looking at its gelatinous layer under a microscope and the younger caps had an almost purplish hue that is not described elsewhere. I investigated the only mushroom I could have gotten it mixed up with *Lentinellus cochleatus* (Aniseed-cockleshell) a very good mushroom. *Lentinellus cochleatus* grows during the fall, has stiffer flesh and much more noticeable serration on gills.

This left only one conclusion (though only my opinion.) Harvested and cooked properly, *Hohenbuehelia petaloides* is a very good mushroom. I do, however, believe that, as the mushroom matures, it continues to get tougher and less flavorful. I wouldn't be surprised if older specimens are not very good after all. Much more interesting information about *Hohenbuehelia petaloides* such as how this species ingests nematodes can be found at these websites:

botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms_fungi/aug2000.html

www.mushroomexpert.com/hohenbuehelia_petaloides.html

[messiah.edu/Oakes/.../species pages/Hohenbuehelia petaloides.htm](http://messiah.edu/Oakes/.../species%20pages/Hohenbuehelia%20petaloides.htm)

Dave