

Lyophyllum *Decastes* (Fried Chicken Mushroom)



Photo by Michael Wood

[http://www.mykoweb.com/CAF/photos/Lyophyllum_decastes\(mgw-01\).jpg](http://www.mykoweb.com/CAF/photos/Lyophyllum_decastes(mgw-01).jpg)

When I first ate *Lyophyllum decastes*, I was unimpressed. It didn't taste like fried chicken or most mushrooms. In fact it didn't taste like much of anything at all especially when I combined it with more flavorful mushrooms. Since then I've changed my opinion of it for I learned that what it's cooked with is the secret of its tastiness. It is especially good in stews and soups where it retains a wonderful texture. I've even enjoyed it in chili where the strong flavors contrasting it actually brought out its delicious nutty flavor. Contrast is its secret just like a light object gets lost in a light background. *Decastes* gets lost with other more mushroomy flavors.

Just as *decastes* hides its flavor with anonymity it also has an anonymous appearance. It's a simple and substantial mushroom usually growing in clumps with a flesh-to-tan-to-cream colored cap and white gills with a solid fibrous stem. There's nothing to easily distinguish it from several *Clitocybe* and *Tricholoma* species, including poisonous *T. pardinum* and *C. dilitata* which also grow in clumps. Even its microscopic characteristics are hard to identify. Only a thorough familiarity with its taste, smell, texture, habitat and appearance make it identifiable. But its features are extremely variable and can trick even a seasoned pot hunter occasionally.

Decastes is a popular mushroom around the world, especially in China and Japan. Researchers in those countries have found that it does also have a variety of healthful effects, but there have also been reports of some people experiencing severe gastrointestinal upset. Good advice is to go easy when first eating. Of course that's good advice for any mushroom.

A more complete discussion of *decastes* will be in the December issue of *Symbiosis*. An excellent web site with much more information about *decastes* is at BC Mushrooms:

http://bcmushrooms.forrex.org/ntfp/pages/lyophydecas/lyophydecas_syn.html

Dave