



Pluteus petasatus

I never thought much of Fawn mushroom (*Pluteus cervinus*) flavor but I would sometimes eat one or two young buttons with still white gills just because they looked good with better flavored mushrooms. I'd never eat them once their gills turned pick because their smell and flavor became more unpleasant as they matured. So I was somewhat disappointed when the robust mature thick stemmed nearly white gilled mushrooms quickly acquired the unpleasant smell of a ripe Fawn Mushroom and dropped salmon colored spores.

What I'd found was some kind of fawn mushroom anyway. Still, there were too many major differences for this mushroom to be *cervinus*. This mushroom was much stouter larger and firmer in both stem and cap. Plus the gills remained nearly white even in a mature specimen. They also emerged from a buried chipped up stump in small groups rather than individually. These mushrooms had to be a different species and they were!

In Mushrooms Demystified, they fit David Arora's description (including growth pattern) of *Pluteus petasatus* perfectly. More interestingly, he described them as, "Edible and very good – the best of the genus for the table." It was too bad that these mushrooms, which had emerged soon after a rain, quickly became soggy and insipid in my fridge while I worked on their identification for a couple days. It was too late to eat them and find out how good they really were.

Fortunately, they grew right across the street from my office window. Yes, I know what you're thinking, "Doesn't he have better things to do at work than sit and stare out the window?" Whether I have better things to do or not, looking out the window paid off this time, for when I came back after the weekend there were a dozen more beautiful, fresh, firm young buttons. A sample in the microwave confirmed a pleasant flavor indeed.

I sautéed several caps with onion, and fresh oregano, then I poured eggs on top as a sort of omelet. They had a rich fatty flavor with a hint of Pluteusness, though not at all unpleasant. They tasted and digested fine, though the overall richness of the meal was a little much. I think they would have been even better in spaghetti sauce or a stew or casserole. One thing for certain though is that they were by far the best of the genus that I'd ever eaten. The abundance and repeated fruitings of these mushrooms is also exciting. It means that it's very important that I continue to devote a portion of each work day to looking out the window.

Dave