

Mushroom lover opens business to share hobby, harvest with others

By **Matt Hawthorne**

Fall rains send Mark Cozzi into the woods to harvest mushrooms for sale around town.

Cozzi started Fun Guy Foraged Products last year and has been harvesting chantrelles, hedgehogs and other fungi to sell at local markets and directly to customers.

Cozzi founded his business after manning a booth at a Christmas bazaar in 2005. He has expanded to include fresh and dehydrated mushrooms, field guides, posters, mesh mushroom hunting bags and special fungus-collecting knives that have a whiskered brush on the handle for cleaning off debris.

"I was amazed at the interest locals and visitors had in what I was doing."

The grandson of Italian immigrants who foraged mushrooms and other foods in the hills of California, Cozzi started in the woods after moving to Haines five years ago. For two years, he collected fungi and studied them before eating his first wild edible, a puffball. It was "probably one of the scarier ones to start out with," he said, since they have poisonous brethren and can be misidentified.

Encounters with hikers in the woods led him to begin selling products to novices. "I'd come across hikers and they'd always say 'Can I touch it? Can I smell it? What kind is it?'"

With a half-dozen severely poisonous and two deadly mushrooms found in the forests of Southeast, he said he hopes

individuals will pick carefully.

"If you have any doubt of what you have picked, throw it out," he said, adding that individuals should always pick with a field guide and consult knowledgeable pickers before eating an unknown mushroom.

Mushroom hunters should always cut their mushrooms from the ground, so as not to damage the invisible, underground mycelium that live in the soil.

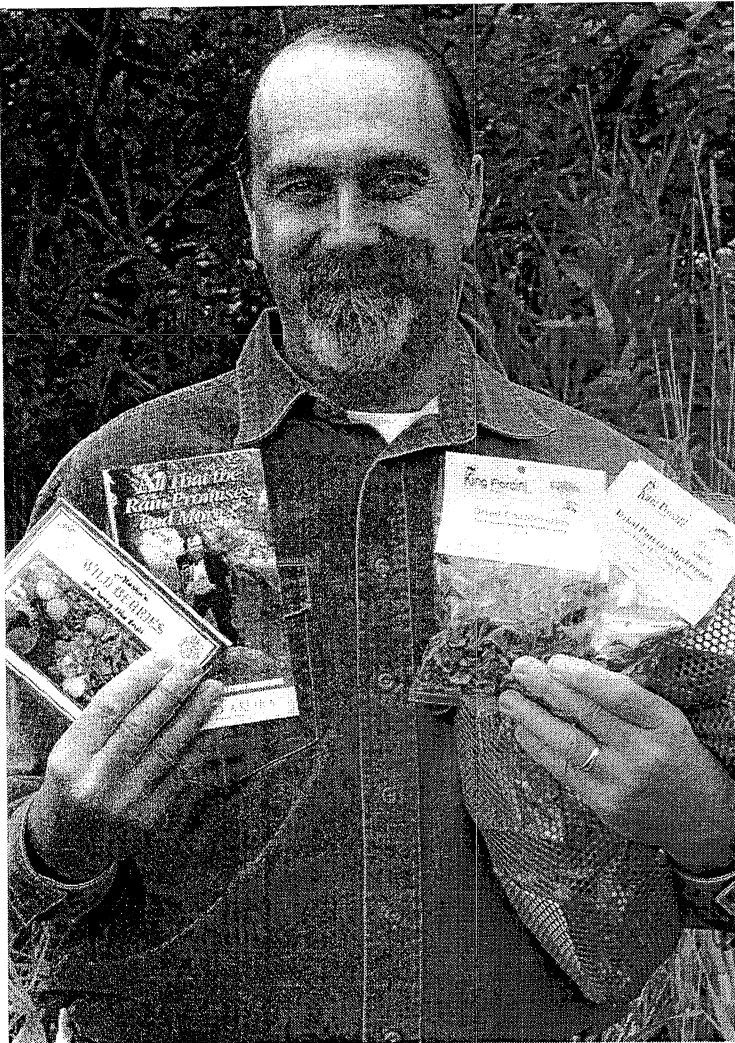
Cozzi collects around 10 species that he feels "very comfortable picking and eating." His favorites are spring morels and fall hedgehogs. Most of his picking is on private lands, with

permission of owners.

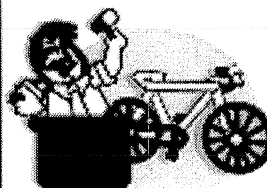
Although the products he sells could ultimately undercut his business selling mushrooms, Cozzi said he'd like to get people outside enjoying the woods.

"I have to have the realization that the more people that I turn on to the joys of mushrooming, that they're going to find my spots, and I'll have less to harvest. But it's so much fun, I want everybody to enjoy it."

Cozzi will be selling his wares at Saturday's Arts, Crafts and Fun Foods Market from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the ANB Hall. He can also be reached at 766-2992 or kingporcini@aptalaska.net.



Mark Cozzi and some of the products he sells as Fun Guy Foraged Products.



AUCTION

**Haines Borough Police Department
Stolen, Abandoned, Found Property &
Haines Borough Surplus & Obsolete Items**

**Saturday, September 29, 2007 @ 1:00 p.m.
Public Safety Building, 213 Haines Highway**

Items available to view @ 11:00 a.m. All sales as-is All
Sales Final Sales under \$1,000 paid with cash or
certified check only 10% deposit required with sale over
\$1,000. balance in 30 days. possession after paid in full
Information @ Haines Borough Offices 766-2231 ext 25
Online www.hainesborough.us

The **Commander's Room**
Restaurant

at The Hotel Halsingland

September 15th is the last day the restaurant
will be open for the 2007 season.