



tortillas or roasting chilies, and the *molcajete*, a volcanic-rock or ceramic mortar and pestle for crushing herbs, chilies and more.

Because they're purchasing their own food at the market, the group gets to experience the "real" Mazatlán outside the touristy Golden Zone, though Geraghty does warn the more squeamish cooks/yogis that they may want to avoid the meat sections of outdoor markets where the sides of beef and pig's heads are openly displayed. The trip keeps participants active with hikes along the coastal walkway — all the better for sampling margaritas made with tequila from a local plantation. And there's daily free time for satisfying siestas at the homey oceanview B&B.



Mazatlán participants learn to use a *molcajete*, a mortar and pestle that's often made from volcanic rock.

Area Activities:

Yoga, salsa dancing, hike to El Faro lighthouse, fitness walk along the coastal *malecón* (walkway), beach walk on Stone Island, climb up Icebox Hill.

Info: Eight-day Mazatlán Cooking & Yoga getaway includes activities, classes, most meals and B&B accommodations (comfortable by American standards, but not luxurious): \$1,825. www.activegourmetholidays.com



The Age-Old Art of Wildcrafting in Asheville

At work, Los Angeles astronomer Michael Rich, 53, studies outer space. On vacations in Asheville, N.C., he and his family spend hours gazing at the forest floor, in search of edible fungi. Guided by Alan Muskat (a.k.a. The Mushroom Man), a "forest philosopher" who leads "slow food, slow mood" tours through the Blue Ridge mountain forests, they find morels, porcini, bright-red lobster mushrooms and black trumpet chanterelles. What better culinary skill than being able to harvest one's own dinner in the woods?

"Collecting delicious, edible foods that are free for the finding is like a treasure hunt," says Rich.

Muskat leads forest foraging classes that teach people how to find more than 75 wild, edible foods, including mushrooms, acorns, paw-paws, nettles and wild leeks. In a community like Asheville, which has 12 farmers' markets, 250 independent restaurants, and a self-declared "Foodtopian" society, wild-harvesting one's own food complements the region's self-sufficient spirit.

On the tours, Muskat and other native-plant experts take visitors foraging for an hour or two, then prepare the fruits of their labors at the Laughing Frog Estate north of Asheville. Participants can help the chef cook, and the group shares an elegant, four-course dinner. "Gathering food and eating it together develops a camaraderie between people, even if they're total strangers," says Muskat. "In the woods, we realize we all crave connection with nature." And nothing provides that sense of connection like harvesting wild foods yourself.

The nearby campus of the former Black Mountain College made harvesting and cooking a key part of its curriculum during the 1940s and '50s, and its integration of the arts and survival skills seems to have helped it produce a disproportionate number of the landmark artists of the 20th century, including choreographer Merce Cunningham,

poet Robert Creeley, and painter Robert Rauschenberg. Learning to wild-craft one's own dinner must be good for the creative spirit. Or maybe there's just something in those mountain mushrooms. It's worth a trip to find out. 🍄

Writer **Laurel Kallenbach** is always willing to hike steep hills in search of exotic foods.



Area Activities:

Whitewater rafting, hiking, cycling the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway, mountain biking Pisgah Mountain trails, swimming at Sliding Rock, a smooth 60-foot slab that acts as a natural waterslide. Asheville also hosts a number of yoga studios with drop-in classes. www.exploreasheville.com

Info:

■ Forage and Eat dinners: \$125 per person for the experience. Includes foraging, watching or participating in cooking and a four-course dinner with wine pairings. www.NTLH.org
■ Asheville's self-sufficient food scene includes a dozen farmers' markets and 250 independent restaurants: www.foodtopiansociety.com