

Truffles in California Wine Country?

Yes! Very soon...

The demand for European black truffles, the most sought after truffles in the culinary world, far exceeds supply. Current black truffle production is almost exclusively in Europe - predominately France, followed by Spain and Italy, with small amounts in Slovenia, Croatia and Australia. But now, black truffles can be cultivated in select areas around the world - and Northern California, especially the wine growing regions, offer particularly suitable climates and soil.

The remarkable science behind black truffle cultivation was developed by Dr. Paul Thomas, Partner and Chief Scientist of American Truffle Company (ATC; based in the Bay Area), and Managing Director of Mycorrhizal Systems Ltd. (based in London). He, along with ATC Partner and Managing Director Robert Chang, are on a mission to bring these rare and elusive fungi to the forefront of global farming, hence to the kitchens of passionate chefs and the tables of hungry diners.

About Truffles (European Black)

Truffles are a kind of underground mushroom that grow on the roots of particular host tree species, especially oaks and filberts. There are hundreds of species of truffles, but the fruiting body of some, most notably the European black Périgord truffles (*Tuber melanosporum*), harvested in the winter, and Burgundy truffles (*Tuber aestivum/uncinatum*), harvested in the summer, are highly prized by top chefs and connoisseurs around the world for their exquisite flavor, and command exceedingly high prices (the

black Périgord truffle, for example, often exceeds \$1,000/lb).

Truffle orchards are highly profitable and are an excellent and viable way to diversify land usage.

Unlike the white truffles of Italy, European black truffles can and have been cultivated for decades, and truffle orchards are extremely compatible with vineyards. In fact, growing black truffles can be seven to ten times more profitable than growing grapes. Based on data calculated on average per acre for both chardonnay grapes and black truffles in full production, truffles yield a profit of roughly \$30,000-40,000 per acre, compared to about \$3,600-5,000 per acre for grapes. This dramatic difference is due to the much higher revenue per acre from truffles, and considerably less labor and maintenance costs compared to grapes. And truffle orchards continue to produce for 40-80 years, whereas grape vines often decline in productivity and must be replaced every few decades.

These compelling economics explain why in France it is common for vineyards to rip out low producing vines and replace them with truffle-inoculated trees.

While there are many varieties of truffles (hundreds, in fact), ATC focuses on only the two top European black species:

- *Tuber melanosporum*
(black Périgord truffle, aka winter truffle)
- *Tuber aestivum/uncinatum*
(black Burgundy truffle, aka summer truffle)

ATC partners with the Napa and Sonoma County Farm Bureaus to present a series of workshops on truffle cultivation.

For more information about truffle cultivation, visit www.americantruffle.com.

NAPA TRUFFLE FESTIVAL

Save the date for the fourth annual:
January 17-20, 2014



It's not enough to just cultivate truffles, one must consume them – well and often! To that end, the American Truffle Company presents the annual Napa Truffle Festival, combining world class cuisine with cutting edge truffle science.

The fourth annual Napa Truffle Festival taking place in 2014, will again showcase the venerated black winter Périgord truffle: *tuber melanosporum* (aka black diamond), while bringing together a unique gathering of leading truffle cultivation experts and scientists, special guests from the food and wine world, and internationally-renowned Michelin Star chefs to discuss, examine, probe, prepare, demonstrate and, finally, pair truffles with wines to feast upon for breakfast, lunch and dinner!

The Festival traditionally launches Friday night with a reception for guests to hobnob with hosts Robert Chang and Dr. Paul Thomas of the American Truffle Company, and Chef Ken Frank of La Toque; along with special guest speakers and Michelin Star Chefs – sans toques - who are recruited from around the world to prepare the truffles.

The weekend includes scientific-grower programs, exclusive winery lunches, cooking demos, and the grand Truffles & Wine Dinner at La Toque restaurant prepared by Michelin Star chefs. Extracurricular activities include a visit to the Sinsky Vineyards truffle orchard (in progress) with Rico the truffle dog to sniff things out (petting allowed), and a wild mushroom forage in the neighboring woodlands.

The Festival concludes on Monday with a lively Napa Truffle Festival Marketplace showcasing the local wines, artisanal vendors and specialty food products of the Napa Valley – all under one roof at

Oxbow Public Market. Here you will see cooking demos, taste wine, shop for truffle accoutrements and sample a diverse assortment of truffle dishes prepared by the Marketplace chefs—from truffled eggs, pasta and fish, to pizza, tacos and cheese. The merchants also offer other fabulous delights, including fresh truffles, produce and foraged mushrooms, along with fine coffees, teas, chocolates, spices, ice cream, pastries and more.

Winery hosts include...

- 2012: Raymond Vineyards and Robert Mondavi Winery
- 2013: Beringer Winery and Silver Oak Cellars

Michelin Star guest chefs include...

- Host Chef Ken Frank of La Toque, Napa
- 2011: David Kinch of Manresa, Los Gatos; Gabriel Kreuther of The Modern, New York; Nancy Oakes of Boulevard, San Francisco; and Sylvain Portay of Le Louis XV, Monte Carlo, Mix, Las Vegas, and Adour, NY
- 2012: Michael Cimarusti of Providence, Los Angeles; Suzette Gresham-Tognetti of Acquerello, San Francisco; and Andrew Zimmerman of Sepia, Chicago
- 2013: Nicola (Nico) Chessa of Valentino Restaurant, Santa Monica; Marco Gubbiotti of La Bastiglia, Spello, Italy; and Michael Tusk of Quince, San Francisco

The beautiful Westin Verasa in downtown Napa serves as the host venue, offering a special rate for the Festival weekend.

For more information, visit www.napatrufflefestival.com.



Truffles insight bad behavior

- "...there have been gunfights, thefts, accusations of wide spread fraud, even mysterious disappearances of highly trained dogs." foodreference.com
- "The only way the French are going in is if we tell them we found truffles in Iraq." Dennis Miller

Truffles are the ultimate food

- "Presently, we were aware of an odour gradually coming towards us, something musky, fiery, savoury, mysterious, -- a hot drowsy smell, that lulls the senses, and yet enflames them, -- the truffles were coming." William Makepeace Thackeray
- When asked by a social-climbing Paris hostess how he liked his truffles, Curnonsky replied, "In great quantity, madame. In great quantity." Curnonsky (Maurice Edmond Sailland)
- "... The truffles themselves have been interrogated, and have answered simply: eat us and praise the Lord." Alexandre Dumas

- "There are two types of people who eat truffles: those who think truffles are good because they are dear and those who know they are dear because they are good." J.L. Vaudoyer



How they're prepared:

- **Eggs Benedict:** Center a toast round on each warm serving plate; cover with a slice of ham and then a poached egg. Spoon hollandaise sauce generously over each egg and top with a warm truffle slice. Cooking at Home, Julia Child and Jacques Pepin
- **Crostini with Black Truffle Butter:** You don't need complicated dishes to enjoy the wonderful flavor and aroma of black truffle, bread and butter will do. Lidia's Italy, Lidia Bastianich
- **Pasta with Fresh Truffles:** Simply mix together an egg, Parmesan cheese and fresh pasta, and top with shaved truffles. Chef Ken Frank, La Toque, Napa
- **Fluffy Black Truffled Eggs:** If there was ever a breakfast that you'd eat in a silk robe and really fluffy slippers, this is it. Serious Eats, Kerry Saretzky