

TRUFFLES

Truffle (*Tuber magnatum pico*, *Tuber melanosporum* and *Tuber aestivum*)

The Romans thought that the underground fungus called tubera was the result of lightning, because it grew under or near the trees and could find no other explanation for something so delicious and intoxicating the pigs.

Centuries later the truffle came to be seen as a delicacy enjoyed only by educated people and unlike any other fungus. So the aura surrounding the fungus was so high that it became a kind of elitist food, accessible only to those with a lot of money. However, in Italy, even at high prices, almost every Italian eats truffle at least once a year and even if it's just a few slices on a pasta dish.

There are three varieties of truffles and all belonging to the same genus and described below:

Tartufo Bianco or White Truffle d'Alba (*Tuber magnatum pico*)



The large area of Piedmont is the capital of the white truffle or Alba as it is known in Italy. Although it also grows in regions such as Emilia-Romagna, Marche, Umbria, Tuscany and Calabria none can compare to Piedmontese with its pungent aroma. Because it is the best and most sought after it is also the most expensive and the kilo can cost almost 3 thousand euros.

The truffle can be eaten raw into thin chips made with a special cutter called mandolino or lightly sprinkled on a plate to lend its precious flavor and so intense when the truffle is placed in a refrigerator its aroma will permeate all the food inside it.

On the other hand, like most recipes for truffles one with cheese known as fonduta was created in Piedmont, where the truffle is queen and is a type of creamy egg, milk and fontina cheese mixture over which the truffles are scraped off and Eat the mixture with pieces of bread like a Swiss fondue.



Other classic dishes in which the truffle plays an important role include risottos, tagliolini pasta, boiled or fried eggs, raw meat and porcini salads. Truffles are also used to flavor olive oils and butters, as well as used in the preparation of crostini truffle cream and in any other dish.

Tartufo Nero Invernale di Norcia or Black Truffle Winter or Perigord (*Tuber melanosporum*)

Tuber melanosporum grows from winter to late spring in Umbria and especially around Norcia as well as in Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna and Calabria. A similar truffle can be found in Campania near Bagnoli Irpimia, but unfortunately it has a strong smell of carbolic acid or phenol and for this reason is not much sought after and despite the locals consuming it with gusto.



Tuber melanosporum has much softer skin than its summer version, but it is the taste and aroma that make it worthwhile.

It has recently been discovered that it is possible to grow the black truffle by impregnating the roots of selected young oaks with the truffle spores. However, it takes ten to twelve years for truffles to be harvested and despite innovation prices remain high as demand is beyond what nature can supply.

The truffle can be used scraped like the white truffle, but is most often used in sauces, pâté and pâté un crôte to maintain maximum flavor and in Umbria the truffle is chopped into butter to serve as a pasta sauce.



Scorzzone or Summer Truffle (*Tuber aestivum*)



The truffle grows from early summer to late winter and due to its low aroma has no commercial value and is generally used with truffle olive oil to enhance its flavor.

Truffles are generally sought after by trained and mostly mutt dogs and rewarded with cookies for not eating the specialties. In the past pigs were used to look for truffles, but pigs liked truffles so much it was difficult to keep pigs from eating truffles.

