



New Zealand Truffle Association

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a truffle? Truffles are the fruiting bodies of a type of fungus which grows on and around the roots of certain types of trees. Unlike other mushrooms which grow above the ground and spread their spores in the wind, truffles have evolved to produce a smell which entices animals to dig them up and eat them, spreading the truffle's spores in the process. Edible truffles have a very distinctive aroma and taste and are sought after in French and Italian cuisine.

Are all truffles the same? There are several different species of truffle used in cooking, but the Périgord black truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*) is the most popular in French cuisine, and is the main truffle grown in New Zealand. Other truffles include the summer truffle (*Tuber aestivum*), Chinese truffle (*Tuber indicum*), and white truffle (*Tuber magnatum*) – these are generally not as aromatic as the Périgord black truffle and tend to be less valued.

How big is a Périgord black truffle? Périgord black truffles can be anywhere from one centimetre to 15 centimetres across, and can weigh up to a kilo.

How big is the truffle market? Current Périgord black truffle production in France is estimated to total less than 100 tonnes, with this scarcity driving up prices worldwide. It is difficult to estimate global production or global demand, but it has been said that while New Zealand's current truffle production is in the order of 20 kilos per year one New Zealand grower regularly has requests for 100 kilos of truffle every week.

Where can I buy truffles? At present, most New Zealand truffle is sold within the country to top restaurants, up-market lodges, and hotels. Because fresh truffle is only available during winter (June – September in New Zealand), there are plans to supply the northern hemisphere in their off season as production increases.

How much are truffles worth?The highest price ever paid for a New Zealand truffle was NZ\$9000 per kilo, but a typical price is a more modest NZ\$3700 per kilo.

Where are truffles grown in New Zealand?There are currently nine producing truffières in New Zealand. These are spread from the Bay of Plenty to Canterbury, and there are many more trees planted throughout the country from Northland to Central Otago which have been infected with the truffle fungus but are not yet producing truffles.

When does a truffière start producing truffles?It can take anywhere from five to fifteen years for an infected tree to begin producing truffles.

Where can truffles be grown?Climate and soil type are key factors determining the success of a truffière. The Périgord black truffle requires high pH soils (pH 7.8 or higher) – this can be the natural pH of the soil or modified by the addition of lime. Reasonable summer warmth is required, and soil moisture must not be excessive. Potential truffle growers should ask an expert for assistance in assessing factors such as rainfall, temperature, soil type, soil pH, and the presence of fungi which may compete with the truffle fungus.

What kind of trees are used for growing truffles?Hazelnut, English oak, and holly oak are the three main trees used to grow truffles.