

## The Identity card of Truffles

### What are Truffles ?

Truffles are fungi, which grow underground, close to trees or bushes with which they live in symbiosis, exchanging certain essential nutritional substances. There are more than twenty varieties of truffle in Italy but only a few are edible and have commercial significance.

### Where to find them ?

The presence of Truffles is connected with those species of trees and bushes which are commonly found in Tuscany, such as oak trees, poplars, willows, lindens, pines, hazelnuts and cistus trees and inside woods, either isolated plants or in rows. However each truffle has its own specific area of growth. In general, the most valuable truffles are also the rarest. Because of the varied types of environment in Tuscany, all types of edible truffles may be found there, from the most prized ones to the so-called "lesser" varieties. Truffles are picked with the aid of a specially trained dog.

**Fresh truffles may be stored for a rather short time** (one or two weeks at most) for example by wrapping them one by one in porous paper (to be replaced every so often) and putting them in glass jars in the fridge.

### How to enjoy them

The truffle is one of the best condiments, which can be used in the kitchen. It is advisable to use it fresh. When fully ripe it best displays its qualities. Each variety of truffles has its own particular, typical aroma, which is suitable for specific culinary uses.

### Cost

Truffle prices may vary a great deal from year to year, due to the seasonal nature of production. As a general rule, this mainly depends on climatic conditions such as rainfall; summer temperatures etc. which can cause price variations even during the production season itself. On the domestic and international market the most important truffles are prized varieties, for which as a rule demand exceeds availability of the product. In recent years the lesser varieties are also becoming more important such as the Marzuolo the Scorzone and the Uncinato.

The precious white truffle (*Tuber magnatum* Pico)

Ripening period: from September to December.

The whitish truffle (*Tuber borchii* Vitt) also known as "Marzuolo" truffle

Ripening period: from January to April.

The precious black truffle (*Tuber melanosporum* Vitt)

Ripening period: from November to March.

The winter black truffle (*Tuber brumale* Vitt) also known as "Brumale" truffle

Ripening period: from January to March.

The summer black truffle (*Tuber aestivum* Vitt) also known as the "Scorzone truffle

Ripening period: from June to November.

The black truffle (*Tuber uncinatum* Chatin)

Ripening period: from October to December.

### The precious white truffle

This is the most valuable variety with the largest diffusion in the region. It boasts a picking tradition, which is not inferior to that of the more renowned regions. It is found in certain areas of the north-eastern Apennines (the areas of Mugello, Casentino and the Val Tiberina) and in the fairly large central hilly area which extends from the lower Valdarno up to the border with Lazio (San Casciano dei Bagni). This area includes the lower Valdarno, the Valdera, the Volterrano, the Chianti hills, the Valdelsa, the Val d'Arbia, Crete Senesi, part of the Val di Chiana and the Val di Paglia.

The area's where truffles are found coincide with very special environments, with characteristics able to guarantee this valuable fungus the presence of symbiotic plants and damp, soft clayey earth. For example, the precious white truffle may be found in woods at the bottom of the valley, in woods close to rivers and streams, on poplars, willows, hazelnuts or on oak trees closed to the cultivated area's or at the edges of meadows.

### Protection and valorization

#### REGIONAL LAW ON TRUFFLES

In Tuscany the truffles industry is regulated by a special law the Regional Law of 11<sup>th</sup> April 1995 no.50 (and subsequent amendments). The legislation governs the picking, cultivating, conserving and selling truffles in order to safeguard and preserve this important product.

In particular the law establishes that:

- Only nine species of truffles may be picked and sold
- Picking may only be carried out at the times permitted by the regional calendar; sale of fresh truffles is permitted during the periods included in the regional picking calendar and in the week immediately following the end of picking;
- A special authorisation card is required to be able to pick truffles;
- The search for truffles must be carried out with the help of a suitably trained dog and digging must be performed with the appropriate tool (the "vanghetto", fitted with a cutting blade on a short handle).

### Picking calendar

Precious white truffle (*Tuber magnatum* Pico) 10 September - 31 December.

Precious black truffle (*Tuber melanosporum* Vitt) 15 November - 15 March.

Musky truffle (*Tuber brumale* Vitt.var.moschatum De Ferry) 15 November - 15 March.

Summer black truffle (*Tuber aestivum* Vitt) 1 June - 30 November.

Black truffle (*Tuber uncinatum* Chatin) 1 October - 31 December.

Winter black truffle (*Tuber brumale* Vitt) 1 January - 15 March.

Whitish truffle (*Tuber borchii* Vitt) 10 January - 30 April.

Smooth black truffle (*Tuber macrosporum* Vitt) \* 1 September – 31 December

Strong black truffle (*Tuber mesentericum* Vitt) \* 1 September – 31 January

\* Truffle varieties not described in the details because only found sporadically in Tuscany