

For Immediate Release



Eureka! First Scientifically Cultivated Truffle Harvest in America



SONOMA COUNTY, Calif. (December 14, 2018) – Robert Chang, Managing Director and Chief Truffle Officer of American Truffle Company (ATC), the science-based cultivator of European black truffles in North America, is pleased to announce the first harvest of a Périgord black truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*) from the Otellini Truffle Orchard in Sonoma County, California, on Tuesday, December 11, 2018. While there have been other prior truffle harvests in the U.S., this marks the first resulting from application of rigorous and systematic scientific methodology that is consistent, reproducible and reliable.

Estate owner Sandy Otellini was notified of the truffle find by her orchard manager Chris Majcherek, who discovered the truffle with Bella, his Border Collie who's been training to sniff out truffles. "It didn't really sink in until I smelled it," said Majcherek. "What an aroma. I'll never forget the moment!"

The truffle that Bella found was of substantial size, unusual for a first harvest and testament to the power of using science to produce truffles commercially. This first specimen measured three inches across, weighing in at 108 grams. It was harvested from trees inoculated by ATC with the black Périgord truffle fungus and rigorously managed following ATC's strict scientific protocols tailored to the specific microclimate and soil conditions at the Otellini Truffle Orchard, which was planted in 2011 by Sandy and her late husband, former Intel CEO Paul Otellini.

Sandy Otellini was in a meeting when she heard the news. "My first reaction was how big? Then Chris sent an image. It was a sensational moment." She plans to share the truffle with friends shaved over pasta dressed with "lots of butter" in a truffle egg yolk sauce. "This is my favorite truffle recipe. The simplicity allows the truffle to shine."

European black truffles (both the summer Burgundy and the winter Périgord varieties) do not grow naturally in North America. Of the two species, the winter Périgord is the most expensive and sought after black truffle in the world, historically fetching up to \$1,200 per pound.

Chef Ken Frank of Michelin starred La Toque in Napa was present for the weighing in of the truffle at the Otellini estate and ready with ingredients on hand to whip up a dish of Sandy's favorite truffle pasta. "I always knew it would happen," said Ken. "But I didn't expect that my first Périgord truffle of this season would be from California. The perfume of this fresh truffle was tremendous - just what we chefs swoon over. This is the real thing. It is a game changer!"

"We're absolutely thrilled with the successful scientific cultivation of black truffles here in wine country," said Chang. "This achievement demonstrates the consistency, reliability and reproducibility of our proven scientific methodology, and is indicative of future successes for all North American truffle orchards that have been planted in partnership with the American Truffle Company. We're expecting many more harvests, and look forward to ramping up to commercial quantities to supply to professional and home chefs alike."

Dr. Paul Thomas, ATC's Chief Scientist, was able to view the truffle from his office in Scotland. "This is brilliant," he said. "The success of our scientific truffle cultivation technology now spans four continents. I look forward to more harvests in North America as more of our truffle orchards mature and systematically produce high quality truffles."

How Truffles Grow

Truffles are the fruiting bodies of a type of underground fungus that grows on the root system of living host trees. The fungi help host trees absorb nutrients more effectively, in return the host tree provides sugars and energy to the fungi. This relationship is called 'mycorrhizal' and is symbiotic. To grow truffles successfully, the fungus is introduced to the root system of host trees in a highly complex inoculation process, and the resulting saplings are planted in a scientifically prepared field site. After planting, the orchards need to be carefully monitored and scientifically managed to ensure success. The most common host trees for truffle cultivation are various species of oak and hazelnut.

About American Truffle Company

Founded in 2007 by Robert Chang and Dr. Paul Thomas, American Truffle Company (ATC) offers reliable and predictable scientific truffle cultivation methodologies to commercially grow and market European black truffles. ATC expects to help meet the growing global demand for ultra-fresh, high quality and consistently-grown truffles from both professional and home chefs. ATC has been actively establishing truffle orchards across North America, partnering with land owners to create a custom-tailored approach for cultivating truffles that relies on years of scientific research and data from geographically diverse truffle orchards in over 25 countries across the world. ATC also distributes high quality truffles grown by its network of client-partner truffle orchards directly to chefs and the public. For more information about ATC, please visit www.americantruffle.com.

About Robert Chang

Robert brings his technical training (Stanford University: Bachelor and Master degrees in Electrical Engineering and qualified for Ph.D. program) to continually push the scientific envelope in truffle cultivation. He combines his technical background with wide ranging business experience from senior management roles in Silicon Valley to help ATC continue to break new grounds in truffle cultivation, distribution and business. In his role as ATC's Managing Director and Chief Truffle Officer, Robert is responsible for all aspects of the business and looks after ATC's client-partners in

North America while fielding growing interests from new ones. On behalf of ATC and its client-partner truffle growers, Robert has built strong brand recognition and relationships with leading chefs and truffle end users, central in the successful distribution of truffles produced by ATC's client-partners. Based in San Francisco, Robert also holds an MBA from Stanford University Graduate School of Business.

About Dr. Paul Thomas

As Chief Scientist of the American Truffle Company, Dr. Paul Thomas is also the lead researcher and managing director of Mycorrhizal Systems Ltd. in the U.K. Dr. Thomas is an internationally renowned truffle scientist who received his Bachelor of Science with honors in Natural Environmental Science from the University of Sheffield (England), followed by a doctoral dissertation focusing on long distance signaling pathways within the plant kingdom, which is central in truffle cultivation. Having published throughout the course of his study, Dr. Thomas quickly earned his Ph.D. from the University of Sheffield. Towards the end of his doctoral studies, he was awarded a university grant to commercialize the technology developed during his time at Sheffield and enhance a new system he pioneered to inoculate trees with numerous truffle species. He has built a solid international reputation and developed what is now the largest and most diverse range of truffle research sites worldwide. Spanning four continents and a wide range of climatic and edaphic (soil) zones, the results from these ongoing sites have changed and challenged the traditional understanding of truffles and their biology. Dr. Thomas regularly presents at international academic conferences and publishes papers on all aspects of truffle biology.

About Chef Ken Frank

Michelin star Chef Ken is widely considered the top truffle chef of North America. He holds the distinct honor of being the first, and so far the only, American chef invited to participate in the *Fiera Internazionale Tartufo Bianco D'Alba*, the world-renowned annual Alba White Truffle Festival. More recently, Ken received the distinction of being knighted by the *Order of the Knights of the Truffle and Wines of Alba*. He's been cooking with truffles for over 35 years, and is widely recognized as the most talented and experienced truffle chef in America. The Italians certainly agree! You can savor Ken's masterfully prepared truffle dishes throughout the Napa Truffle Festival weekend, and at his La Toque restaurant in Napa: www.latoque.com.

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Images and video available upon request.