

The Fungus Among Us

BY SARAH DOYLE

Thanks to new technology—which allows young oak and chestnut tree roots to be inoculated with black truffle spores—several U.S. wine producers are planting the tasty tuber *melanosporum* alongside their Pinot and Cab.

Growing secondary crops on a vineyard promotes biodiversity and is key to the long-term health of the land, says Robert Sinskey, of Sinskey Vineyards, which is home to Napa Valley's first truffle orchard. And given the fact truffles are in such high demand—selling for as much as \$1,200 a pound—planting an orchard made perfect sense.

“In the past, many wineries diversified vineyards with olive trees,” says Robert Chang, managing director of the American Truffle Company, which is designing orchards for several prestigious wineries in Napa and Sonoma counties. “But the cachet of producing truffles is greater and the profit far higher.”

In Templeton, California, near Paso Robles, the owners of boutique winery Giornata are planning an orchard of their own.

“There are a select few restaurants on the Central Coast that could really benefit from having truffles,” says co-owner Stephanie Terrizzi. “We would love to sell them locally.”

Chang has seen the wine industry interest in the fungus catch fire the last few months.

“The New World winemakers are just beginning to realize the mystique, and potential of planting truffles,” he says. “We’re definitely on the verge of a very significant trend.”



American Truffle Company