



Growing truffles? Yes, it is possible, and we teach Australians too

by Ilaria Vesentini, published on food24.ilsole24ore.com 6th June 2016

For over 150 years, the Angelozzi family has nurtured the tradition of truffle harvest and sale in the Piceno area (central-eastern Italy). In the mid 19th century, the ancestor Giuseppe started this family tradition, as he hunted for precious winter black truffles to barter them with other basic products, which were essential for his family survival. Angelozzi Tartuficoltura is now a small business based in Roccafluvione, province of Ascoli Piceno, with truffle plantations around Roccafluvione: to the north up to Venarotta and Palmiano, between the Adriatic Sea and the Apennines, to the south in the Abruzzo region and north-west in the Umbria region on a total surface area of 120 hectares.

Exports even in Asia

This niche family business is rooted in a small village of two thousand inhabitants, but it exports 97% of its products all over the world, from the USA to Asia – 4 to 5 tons of truffles depending on the year - with 13 employees and a turnover of 6 million Euros.

“A dogma has always been in our long history, that is the protection and enhancement of quality of our region and products. Our battle against synthetic aromas has ancient roots, as they are used in 99% of truffle products sold around the world. Artificial truffle aromas are the very first competitors of natural truffles”, says Emidio Angelozzi, who represents the 5th generation of hunters of Summer Black Truffles, Winter Black Truffles, and White Truffles, and a pioneer of truffle cultivation in the Piceno area.

“Culture is what is missing in Italy: culture of natural fresh products – Emidio remarks – and the culture of land management. Truffles need a specific habitat, with sandy calcareous soil, with woodlands but exposed to sun light, therefore clear from shrubs. Climate and soil conditions determine the quality of truffles.” The excellence of these truffles has therefore deep roots in the hill ground of Central Italy. This excellence does not have appropriate recognition on the market – although prices of range from 500.00 €/kg for bigger Summer Black Truffles to 3,000.00 €/kg for local White Truffles – because of unfair competition from artificial truffle aromas, “which are very low-cost products and restrict the consumption of fresh truffle”, says Emidio.

A Cultivation System to Learn from

Facing the inexorable decline of spontaneous truffle production in the areas where the Angelozzi family has hunted for wild truffles for generations, Emidio Angelozzi has been able to cultivate the best truffle ecotypes selected during many years of his free-range harvest (with the help of pigs first and dogs later), with a revolutionary planting pattern in 4.5 meter side squares, alternated with rock rose shrubs (*Cistus Incanus*), which is taken as an example all over the world. “Dozens of truffle-cultivation companies come to Roccafluvione to study our techniques, from Spain, Albania, Romania, France, Australia”, says Emidio. The Italian know-how makes the difference even in mushrooms...

