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# Oregon's Underground Treasure Gets a Scientific Refresh

BY KATHERINE GUSTAFSON

The truffle scene in Oregon has gotten a refresh! Previously referred to as *Leucangium carthusianum*, a name originally given to the French black truffle, the Oregon black truffle has now been scientifically distinguished thanks to a University of Florida study that found distinctions between French and Oregon varieties. Thus, the Oregon black truffle's scientific name has been changed to *Leucangium cascadiense*, recognizing its relationship to the great Cascade Mountains of the Northwest.

Moreover, this incredible study proved a symbiotic relationship between a quintessential Northwest tree, the Douglas fir, and the truffle. Most truffles gain nutrients from trees, and while the relationship between the Douglas fir and the Oregon black truffle had been theorized, it had never been proven until now. Long awaited, this scientific distinction promises to enhance the notoriety of this Oregon delicacy.

For those unfamiliar, truffles are an edible underground fungus, usually small and irregularly shaped with a bumpy exterior. Their flavor has been described as earthy, funky or nutty, and these tiny delicacies have been revered for centuries. Difficult to cultivate, tricky to preserve, and slow to grow, truffles come with a hefty price tag—usually \$800/lb. But this does nothing to dissuade truffle enthusiasts. This name change and ecological discovery is sure to fan the flames of local pride in the industry and supports theories that other distinct truffle species exist, waiting for discovery. When it comes to eating truffles, they are typically shaved directly onto cooked dishes like risotto or seafood, to add flavor complexity and umami. Although, real gastronomes dive deep into precise food and aromatic pairings.

The harvesting of truffles requires the use of superior dog noses to sniff out these delicacies. Before the integration of dogs in the industry, most truffle farmers used pigs. This led to quality problems as the pigs were more likely to eat the nuggets instead of delivering them safely.

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Additionally, truffles grow under hyper-specific conditions, and it requires many hunters and dogs to meet quotas, as they are dug out by hand. For this reason, the new findings confirming the symbiotic relationship between the Oregon black truffle and the Douglas fir could assist in more precise cultivation.

If all this sounds overwhelming, you are not alone. The world's truffle industry has long been shrouded in secrecy and been inaccessible to all but a select few harvesters and chefs. The Oregon Truffle Festival, founded in 2006 by Dr. Charles Lefevre and his wife Leslie Scott, was created to remedy this predicament. With their festival, the couple works to celebrate native Oregon truffles and assist the growing truffle industry with a variety of culinary and educational programs. The 2026 festival will take place each weekend throughout February, and the lead author of the UF study has been invited to speak at the festival. Other authors have spoken or volunteered at the festival in previous years. Past events have included expert-led truffle hunts, winery luncheon truffle pairings, grand dinners catered by celebrated guest chefs and an annual truffle dog championship. In addition to their yearly festival, the organization hosts a Truffle Growers' Forum and Truffle Dog training seminars—two efforts to further provide education and discussion around North American truffles.

- ▶ To experience these local delicacies for yourself, visit [oregontrufflefestival.org](http://oregontrufflefestival.org).



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