

A photograph of a path leading through a lush green forest. The path is paved and leads towards a bright light at the end. In the foreground, there is a large, round chocolate truffle with a textured surface, resting on a bed of dark brown mulch. The text 'Truffles for London' is overlaid on the image in a white, elegant font.

Truffles  
for *London*

Dame DJ

**TRUFFLES**  
**FOR**  
**LONDON**

By

**Dame DJ**

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**Truffles for London** has been compiled from notes taken by a London truffle seller, giving a rare glimpse into meeting top chefs in the best restaurants on the vibrant London restaurant scene in 2015/16. It also includes some truffle history, further information on world producers and some classic truffle recipes.

No details of any purchases, orders or transactions are given in this confidential business.

# TRUFFLES

## THE

## LEGEND

“It’s all about sex. It’s all about the aroma on the nose.” Said a chef as he picked the biggest and the best truffle from the pile on his table.

Truffles are not ‘harvested’ or ‘picked’ but are ‘hunted.’

It’s all about the smell and those messages we get *because* the truffle tuber profligates via its scent and grows underground.

Does that smell evoke such a reaction because we know they are so expensive? Would the ‘swooning’ and the ‘glazed eyes’ seen in folks exist if truffles were the same price as radishes, shallots, walnuts or ginger?

“No!” You say truffles are rare, hard to find, fiercely protected, smuggled, fought over and sometimes killed for.

How did that happen? When did that happen? How did we fall so deeply for a black knobby hard lump of fungus grown underground on a few particular tree roots?

Is it because only the top restaurants, in most luxurious settings, handled by talented and caring chefs, set the stage for love of this tuber?

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As far back as 4,000 years ago Zimri-Lim last ruler of the city of Mari, now Tell Hariri in modern day Syria, left an abundance of clay tablets, with texts from his palace and a letter, which read;

“Ever since I reached Saggartum five days ago, I have continuously dispatched truffles to my lord. But my lord wrote to me: "You have sent me bad truffles!" But my lord ought not to condemn with regards to these truffles. I have sent my lord what they have picked for me.”

Known both to the Greeks and Romans Theophrastus (371-287 B.C.) wrote on the subject of botany and especially a truffle called *misu*, which grew near Cyrene in Libya, while the Moorish great Arab physician Avicenna prescribed truffles to patients grown in northern Tunisia, which Romans had colonized making Cathage a major port in the Bay of Hammamet.

Roman Pliny the Elder (23-79) wrote that the most highly valued truffle came from "Africa" which is now modern day Tunisia, north-eastern Algeria and western Libya, all of which needs

further investigation and rediscovering.

The Roman's and the Greeks both loved truffles and thought they were an aphrodisiac, which started as the aroma hit the nose, before being actually eaten.

Theophrastus thought they came from heavy rains combined with a clap of thunder and lightening, while Plutarch suggested they were mud cooked by the lightening, which might sound ridiculous until you realize how incredibly difficult they are to grow.

The word 'lucullan' which means luxurious, gourmet and lavish comes from the great Emporria Lubcullus who loved truffles, was very knowledgeable and a great cultivator of apricots, cherries and Swiss chard on his huge estates in Rome and Naples.

The truffles the ancients enjoyed were described as reddish, white or black and they respected this unpredictable 'tuber' alongside other edible rare pungent mushrooms.

After hundreds of years and attempts at cultivation in Périgord, Limousine and most recently California one further understands how they spore spontaneously and only then are 'sniffed out' by valuable pigs and dogs.

The truffle then disappears for most of the Middle Ages then reemerges on the tables of the French king Francois 1.

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THEO RANDALL  
ONE HAMILTON PLACE  
PARK LANE  
LONDON

<http://www.theorandall.com/>

Theo Randall is good-looking man and he can't help it.

He also has a nice expression, exudes charm and a professional patience-at least that's what I saw in him. I could be wrong, as I had previously seen all those qualities in men I had married, then divorced but they couldn't cook.

"What a great kitchen you have" I said instead of "aren't you handsome" and embarrass us both. It was a huge, spotless, calm sea of stainless steel.

"Thank you. Put them all over here please" and he broke away from what he was preparing and I tipped out the bag of the precious black gold.

His name is forever linked to Chez Max and the start of River Café in which he spent 17 years and they must still miss him.

We went to the River Cafe when it first opened and hated driving through the backstreets of Hammersmith, feared for our lives, rarely saw the pretty river Thames view because it was already dark, but enjoyed the food, drank great wines and swore to return for lunch.

Nowadays it's a couple of turnings off the Hammersmith roundabout and often there's a fleet of chauffer's sitting outside; how London and Londoners have changed.

"I presume your tan is from Italy where you had to go and search out best truffles in gorgeous locations while suffering long al fresco lunches on our behalf?" I asked him with a smile.

"Something like that" he replied knowing I was totally envious.

"Is Ashley in today? (Ashley Wells Ex Head Chef) I would love to say hello?" I asked about all my favourite people.

"You're looking well also! What are you all eating down here?" I asked Ashley who looked great. It was a stupid question as this kitchen was full of the best food in the capital.

Theo was preparing some fish on a huge steel counter and I wanted to help, ask plenty of questions, stay all morning, taste something; anything not to leave.

Truffles came out and truffles went back in and we sniffed, turned and examined each and every one like comparing our fancy marbles at school.

“Take a look at the new restaurant refurbishment please,” said the suntanned Theo with a Hollywood smile.

“Yes, thank you that was my intention I cant wait to see what you have done” and off I went into the beige, pale cream, tranquil dinning room that reminded me of California and wondered if his days at the wonderful Chez Panisse still flowed around his veins like a good Napa wine?

A large glass bowl of perfect shinny red peppers took center stage by the front door reminding diners it was all about high quality, world-class preparation and honest tastes.

The restaurant décor was in total contrast to the Intercontinental Hotel’s very Middle Eastern clential filling the lobby and the opulent lounge areas; it was two different planets, with two different species, divided by a single restaurant door.

Years ago the Intercontinental Hotel was the slightly dull cousin to an elegant and sophisticated Four Seasons Hotel opposite, but this is no longer the case. This ugly cousin has grown long legs, eyelashes, stylish features, is now full of confidence with a fleet of chauffeured cars outside.

I went back outside clutching my precious bag of truffles, through the revolving doors into the cold London sunlight and remembered I was here on a freezing February night when he had first opened.

He was one of the first celebrity chefs ensconced in a grand five star hotel with his name over the restaurant door that guided guests away from the bland, ordinary, dull hotel food of the past.

Theo is a legend in his own lifetime, has remained gracious, and hardly aged a bit.

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# WORLD TRUFFLE GROWERS

## AUSTRALIA

Who would have imagined truffles in Australia? Why?

Because truffles are normally so French or Italian? So mystical and romantic?

Because we cannot assume these mysterious phenomena could occur naturally anywhere other than Europe?

Perhaps, like great wines, fabulous cuisine and great chefs the Australians got fed up with importing, so got on with producing their own, and do a fabulous job.

The Australian Truffle Growers Association web site starts of very bluntly, puts their information clearly, and takes out some of the mystery we have suffocated in.

<http://trufflegrowers.com.au/>

“Truffles are a fungus and grow under the ground as a result of a symbiotic relationship with the roots of particular trees (such as oaks and hazelnuts) infected with the appropriate mycorrhiza (literally, fungus root). While they were originally were confined to the wild, the past century has seen considerable research, particularly in France, into developing the capability of cultivating them as a domestic crop. The truffles form in late summer and slowly mature during autumn and are ready to harvest in winter. They can be found breaking the surface of the ground or down to 200 millimetres deep and are best located by a trained dog, from the aroma they emit when ripening. The truffle then has to be assessed by a trained human nose to determine whether it is truly ‘ripe’ or should be left in the ground for another few days or a week before being harvested.”

“Simple right? No problem. Got that mate? And whose going to cook them cos they aren’t for the BBQ?”

The Australians now supply some of the best London restaurants from about late June and as one Italian Mayfair chef said in a slightly guilty manner “please let me know when they arrive as I love them and use them a lot”.

This years 2016 season was now running 2-3 weeks late, as they had not yet ripened. It was said about the terrible weather in Europe “good for truffles, bad for grapes” but they don’t want hot weather either.

The Australians are keeping a very close eye on another source of competition from Chile and China, they intend to stay ahead of the game and protect their quality.

Interestingly The Canberra Times quotes "The Australian Truffle Growers Association confirmed that New South Wales holds the record for the biggest French Black Périgord truffle ever recorded in Australia, weighing in at 1.172 kilograms.

It was absolutely fitting that the industry's key event be hosted in this region," Said Mr Barilaro a member for Monaro.

Reportedly New South Wales now has the highest number of truffle growers, while Western Australia has the biggest yield and there was potential to catch up to Western Australian producers, who harvested six tonne last season.

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## CHAMPAGNE & ALBA TRUFFLE RISOTTO

Ingredients;

- 5-10g of cleaned Alba truffles from a good supplier
- 300 g quality unsalted butter
- 400g Carnaroli risotto rice
- 1200 ml of mushroom stock
- Truffle oil
- Salt and fresh ground black pepper
- 2 finely diced shallots
- 125ml Champagne
- 150g freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 80ml double cream

Method;

- Melt 100g of the butter in a wide bottomed pan and gently stir in the rice with a wooden spoon until it becomes translucent.
- Adding the mushroom stock slowly stirring after each addition so the stock has been absorbed before adding more but do not over cook the rice.
- Stir in the butter a few cubes at a time and when that is mixed in pour in the Champagne.
- Add Parmesan cheese, double cream and seasoning.
- Serve but make sure the plates are not cold.
- Drizzle with the truffle oil and shaved truffles
- Porcini mushrooms are a good substitute if truffles are out of season.

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ROUX AT THE LANDAU  
THE LANGHAM HOTEL  
1C PORTLAND PLACE  
LONDON

<http://rouxatthelandau.com/>

I had heard about the film 'Burnt' but only saw it long after visiting the elegant Roux at the Landau Restaurant at the Langham Hotel.

Having found a handsome black and white head shot of Bradley Cooper in his chef whites I immediately felt I recognized him from some London kitchen I regularly visited but couldn't quite place him. I pushed it to the back of my mind assuming one day he and I and the truffles would be reunited one day in a sea of grey reflective stainless steel below ground. Nothing had ever felt more natural.

Several months after being in Roux restaurant and sitting down to watch the film in France I realized who Bradley Cooper was, connected up the dots and exclaimed to the person next to me what I had previously assumed.

He looked over, never said a word and thought I must be deeply stupid or just very protected from the actual world.

The Langham was always a good hotel in an amazing position but partnering with a Roux chef really put it on the map because the restaurant shines with grace, style and expectation.

It has its own street entrance, and a short elegant corridor leading into a stunning high ceiling, curved windows in a room of soft colors hung together with gold's and aristocratic celadon green.

The interior designer David Collins who managed to combine fair, style, elegance, colour, atmosphere and dignity into an historical room that felt permanent. Quite masterful.

Some doorways beckon you in, some prohibit, others are a nuisance but this restaurant entrance halts you like an invisible beam, so the staff greet you personally.

I handed over my business card and was escorted across the room of guests finishing off full English breakfasts and into the kitchen. It was like going into the Vatican, past the tourists and straight into the Papal chambers.

"I'm in and I'm staying in-forget about the outside world; this now has my full attention." I thought to myself as I wove between the silver steel furniture looking for the most important person in the place.

A very tall pale-faced young Frenchman and I got deeply involved in conversation, he gave me a fresh apple juice squeezed on the Denham Estate in the English countryside and we talked about famous chefs he had previously worked with.

Not only had the outside world disappeared so had the rest of the kitchen and everyone else in it as we bonded with our enthusiasm and shared passions, but I had a bag of truffles and had to meet the Executive Chef Chris King.

Abruptly the young Frenchman disappeared into the ether as did the apple juice and I was face with the commander in chief himself. He was precise, direct, isolated in his importance, bold and unfaltering and almost military.

“Well that snapped me out of my romantic reverie” I thought looking at him for the first time; Chefs always surprised me as individuals.

Was it the tiny and important measurements of ingredients chefs had to deal with? Was it the heat and temperatures they need to control? Was it the addiction to constant perfection on every dish or the risk of losing their stars and reputation if a dish failed to impress? What made chefs so different?

I once watched a chef measure out precise ingredients for a salad dressing and realized I had never measured out a single ingredient; I didn't even bother to read recipes- all I needed was to taste a dish.

He peered at me through finely ground German lenses devoid of fingerprints and apologized for some small detail to which I replied it was “no trouble”, after which he re explained his sentiments. I let it go. I was in *his* kitchen as a guest and if he wanted the last word it was fine.

Like a good lawyer he wanted to make sure we understood each detail exactly. He must have been amazing to train under, be part of his team, inner circle or partnered with as this was a man who chose everything carefully. He was a scientist of food. This was almost alchemy but the results ended up on a plate for the lucky to consume.

People like that were not on the same wavelength as people like me, who shook oils & vinegars in bottles, poured them over salads, and hoped for the best.

Could he see that in me? Was he saying inside “ah there goes some fool who can't balance up the oil and the vinegar; who hopes for the best; who think they can taste their way through cooking?

Did he see all my imperfections through those spotless lenses? Suddenly I wanted to disguise myself but there was nowhere to hide amongst all that polished steel.

As the minutes past I felt he was counting each second and weighing, itemizing those moments of his life on some mental Excel sheet in his head, so we kept to the point and I did not chatter.

We concluded our meeting in the most cordial polite manner, worthy of a presidential matter then fleetingly I caught a glimpse deep in his eyes retina, amplified by those spotless lenses, and saw him delete all memory of me in a millisecond.

Where was sexy Bradley Cooper?

The film 'Burnt' was released in August 2015 by The Weinstein Company it had a few critical reviews and initially only grossed \$5 million dollars but did eventually get a return of \$750 million worldwide against a \$20 investment. The whole cast was much more than a BC's performance as an individual and I am sure he would be the first person to agree.

He had called his restaurant 'Langham' in the film so was I talking to the 'John-Luc' character -his mentor - or 'Tony' who was running the hotel?

The man I stood in front of was controlled, mature, measured and acclaimed not like 'Adam' the main character in the film who was a crazy, over emotional, young chef with an ego problem (Bradley Cooper)

On the way out I met a white haired gentleman, sitting on a low chair and holding a huge ledger doing the wine inventory with two male helpers. With very serious expressions they took out each precious bottle from behind two heavy metal framed glass doors of a gigantic wine cabinet and check it against an oversized book.

"I'm here for the tasting and I suggest we start at the very top with the vintage champagnes," I said bending down to peer onto the list with an authorities air.

He held his pen mid air, stared and blinked at me trying to place who, what, why and what the hell I was talking about.

"Oh yes! You are just in time I was just about to open one of the magnums would that do? He got up and we laughed together while his assistants stood open mouthed in horror.

I flashed them a generous smile and said to him "you are my kind of man but I must rush so lets take a rain check?" And headed for the exit thanking God someone still has some humor in this world

The breakfast crowd seated under huge arched windows had gathered their belongings, mobiles, signed the checks and spilled out onto the London streets, leaving the elegant room empty.

Hesitantly I cast my eye around the stunning walls, lovely solid chairs, bay windows and breath taking flower arrangements for one last time and stopped in the 'Postillion' private dining room, which seated about 18 around a long table, interior high ceiling painted with cherubs.

The word comes from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century describing the rider on the front horse leading the team near the coachman.

I made a mental note to one-day host a lunch there so I might stare up at the wonderful romantic murals, tease the staff and savor Chris's exquisite food of ingredients measured to perfection performing alchemy on a plate.

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# HOW

Trees, whose rootlets cultivate truffles include: pines, firs, Douglas fir, oaks, hazel nuts, hickories, birches, beeches, and eucalyptus.

No one knows why the rootlets under oak, beech, hazel and chestnut tree 3-12 inches below ground play host to their fungus but digging in at random can damage the underground network of mycelium, which has grown underground up to 10 meters across.

The 'scorched earth' look above ground means the grass has not grown and looks 'burnt' because of the mycelium have drawn out the nutrients from the earth like an imposing thief and the fungus it is.

Truffles do well in damp, not in dry, conditions but they can also rot in too much summer rain.

The truffle fly burrows into the ground and lays eggs and was thought to penetrate the roots of the oak producing a nut, which then became a truffle but the fly looks for the truffle to lay its eggs in. An experienced truffle hunter will watch to see where an egg-laden fly will settle then carefully dig into the ground to find a rich bed.

Others use dogs, or pigs usually a sow, trained from an early age, and fed on a few bad quality rotting tubers so she instinctively passes up the best quality and munches the cheaper ones.

Dogs are mostly used in Provence and don't have a taste for eating truffles but foxes and badgers have also been used.

'Seed' truffles for sale in France are a fraud, as cultivation of acorns near oaks already growing truffles does not work.

Trade fairs in Alba, Périgord Piedmont are more about the business and truffles themselves are rarely displayed but the pungent aroma let the noses know they are there.

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# NUTRITION

The nutritional value of truffles is often overlooked and buried beneath the excitement.

Up to 20 % protein

Minerals like iron, sodium, zinc, calcium, magnesium, manganese, copper and surprisingly aluminium

Not many vitamins.

About 60% carbohydrates

Very little fat (3-7%)

Most importantly they act as Immunomodulators, which control the immune function dealing with both an overactive or weak system.

They are also antioxidants, anti bacterial and believed to be anti –tumour.

If truffle oil was all natural it would possess medicinal properties and a high antioxidant capacity but there are very few real truffle oils.

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THE RITZ CLUB  
150 PICCADILLY  
LONDON

<http://www.theritzclub.com/>

The Ritz Club and Casino is a legend in its own time, and while the Ritz Hotel in London is still in business the world has hope.

“If there is any kind of nuclear fallout, invasion from foreign forces, massive pollution of the water supplies, take your credit card and go check straight into the Ritz.” I told my kids in case of emergencies.

They have never lost a guest intentionally, probably have a tunnel connected to Buckingham Place and definitely have a back door used for political figures who should not be seen gambling.

“Don’t worry we can always sell the house and pay the bill as it’s the safest place in London in times of war.” I reassured them as they grew up, they blinked in agreement but might have dismissed the idea after I left the room. In my mind it saved me the horror of relying on relatives.

Cesar Ritz introduced innovations to the hotel like brass beds, en suite bathrooms and it was the first steel building of any consequence in London which he described as ‘ a small house to which I am proud to see my name attached’.

The hotel returned into English hands in 1995, after a complete overhaul of the Grade II listed building, restoring every detail both seen and unseen.

In 2002 The Ritz Hotel received a Royal Warrant for Banqueting and Catering Services awarded by Prince Charles and the first hotel to get such an award. Given we don’t see the Royals popping in and out on a regular basis, and given its proximity I presume it’s become the royal ‘take away’?

“Hello, is that David?” I asked the well-spoken man who answered the phone in a firm and polite manner. After informing him the reason for my call and my desired meeting with his head chef we chatted about a few relative topics and the past.

“My ex husband was one of your members but you probably won’t remember him and he has since passed away” I went on to explain which actually had very little to do with truffles.

“Oh, I am so sorry to hear that” he kindly added.

“Please don’t be, he is probably eating Dover sole in heaven, if they have any left...and please be assured his death was not related to any gambling debts!” He laughed, I laughed as he had no need to worry another family had left with starving children, and a widow, because yet another man thought he was a better black jack player than he actually was.

Thank God there was humor still left in the world and a couple of days later I arrived at the Ritz Club door, gave my card and took the small but ornate lift down into the ormolu red and navy plush basement.

Never has a basement been made so splendid if you like Baroque meets Shar of Persia 1980’s. It’s the classic style, opulent, wood paneling, imposing but comfortable and all the luxuriant furnishings a high roller would have expected.

It had none of those modern minimal grey hard lines of industrial chic that we have had thrust upon us, which essentially make people look ugly, badly dressed, jaundiced, greasy and unwanted.

David was a young man in his mid 40’s but polished and confident befitting such a position in one of London’s most important gaming casinos.

I followed him, and the very beautiful cut glass tumbler of Perrier water he held, into a private room and he said he would call for chef as we passed two Russian men, in their mid 50’s, drinking large chilled glasses of champagne at 11.00 am.

”How civilized” I thought to serve a decent large glass and not one of those silly little ‘coupe’ sized B breast. While we all poisoned ourselves with fattening coffees all day the Russians drank the sparkling grape. They will outlast us all in the end.

I emptied my case of black gold, and a set of scales, taking care not to spoil the starched fine white cotton virgin white tablecloth.

One day in the future tablecloths themselves will be a restaurants selling point as I see most of them serving food directly onto tables with the odd slither of paper in place, while the generation who still expect such luxuries, are slowly dying off.

“Hello, how are you?” said a tall man entering the room dressed in whites with his arms folded in front of him. He had obviously been dragged away from something important and perhaps dreaded meeting me. “Oh... what do we have here?” he turned his attention and gazed at the field of various sized black lumps emitting nothing but their dusky distinctive aroma.

“Truffles” I said, knowing he really didn’t need to be told.

“May I?” He asked as he reached forward with all the tension in his face having now disappeared. He looked over at David who delicately and hesitantly reached in “whispering I love truffles.”

Unlike babies, truffles ask to be touched and smelt but retain no fingerprints. They should be clean and these had no soil on them, dog hairs, leaves from the forest or residue from any handling.

We talked about the Ritz Casino, the hotel's fascinating stories, our memories, food they served these days to the international clientele and the ingredients they now needed to cook them, often very late at night.

The kitchen, and the staff, did not set the hours or the requirements of customers who ultimately pay the wages as the casino (separate to the hotel) is open 24/7.

"I remember one of our party knocking over a large bottle of Petrus over the white table cloth many years ago on a table of about 10 people, and how seamlessly the waiters cleaned up, replaced it and re set everything in minutes, like professional Norland Nannies looking after clumsy toddlers.

The platters of smoked salmon and oysters were continually brought from the kitchen on large trays as if the waiters were nurses delivering medicine to patients.

Customers didn't read the menus because they knew them by heart, they understood what was best, and had no intention of experimenting and every table was taken by 7.30 pm.

The wealthy middle classes dressed up, turned up, ate up and could afford to do so even if they weren't compe by the casino. It was a meeting place, and a place to be seen except on the weekends when most regular folks went to the country.

"These were wonderful days, we didn't know what was coming or how lucky we were," we all agreed but it was now mainly the high rollers who flew in that all the casinos wanted these days and besides most of the folks I once knew had virtually all died....

In 1987 Kerry Packer (the legendary Australian tycoon) reportedly lost over a million pounds playing cards in the private salon according to an eyewitness. Playing two tables at a time he played all seven hands at each table, staking £10,000 pounds per hand but eventually tiring of signing his name for his losses he handed over a cheque for £1 million pounds – that was a lot on money in those days.

The stories we don't get told about are even more interesting but you need to know someone in gaming to hear them.

"Can you carry all those?" chef asked as we packed up my bag and headed for the maze of interior corridors. "Come, I will show you the kitchens" which I was always delighted to see given there was nothing cooking, hardly anyone around, no food left out and nothing to smell.

Perhaps, I kept going on kitchen tours with chefs in the hope that someone was going to ask me to the chefs table and sample something delicious like a lobster thermidor.... something else we no longer see on a menu these days...



# NORTH CAROLINA

<http://www.susanalexander-truffles.com/in-the-media/>

Susan Rice has cultivated the largest truffle orchard of 200 acres in NC after learning all the skills of truffle farming in Europe.

Susan Rice Truffles says;

“Some people laughed at me. They said ‘You can’t grow truffles in the United States,” said Alexander after buying a 200 acre farm with no experience of agriculture.

“I studied. I went to Europe. I associated with some of the best experts in the world and I learned as much as I could,” she said.

Her efforts have now paid off as now Alexander has the second largest truffle farm in the world.

I wanted everyone here to have a taste of how the truffle tastes and put an American twist on this beautiful food,” said Alexander.

“On a typical day, you take your dogs or your pigs out, you set them free and they naturally go to the truffle,” said Alexander.

“When you get it from France, it has to go through customs so you are looking at 10 days of the beautiful truffle losing it’s moisture,” said Alexander.

She had said “Maybe I’ll farm truffles, I like those” and she did, now hoping to harvest 100 lbs an acre which is an impressive return, if she can achieve the right price.

# OREGAN TRUFFLE

Originally associated with Douglas fir trees and found in California it's a major source of food for small animals as the fungus and the tree depend on one another.

They retail at about \$150 a kilo so well below the famous European truffles.

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## CLASSIC SCRAMBLED EGGS WITH TRUFFLES

We look to complicate things when some of the simplest and best recipes are old time favorites.

Ingredients;

- 6 eggs
- 50 grams of black truffles
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 4 tablespoonful's of cream
- Rock salt course black pepper

Method;

Heat the olive oil and the shredded truffle

Put in eggs and cook slowly, stirring, over low heat

Add the cream

Season with salt, pepper

Add slices of black truffles on top, and then serve immediately

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LE GAVROCHE  
43 UPPER BROOK ST  
LONDON

<http://www.le-gavroche.co.uk/>

Years ago we could hardly pronounce the name 'Le Gavroche', as the name itself didn't resonate with any of the better known French words we used.

These days' names of new restaurants are often just 'sounds' rather than actual words, and the dining crowd accept they need to *know* how to pronounce these words/sounds regardless of their meaning.

Tucked on the right hand side of Upper Brook St Le Gavroche somehow it seemed hard to find in a building that looked like an apartment block or offices.

Where was the valet?

Where was the grand entrance? A bar upstairs that descended into a basement dining room?

Who would 'fine dine' underground in W1?

Now days the building is worth a fortune, it's in the heart of Mayfair, anyone can get down those stairs and everyone can pronounce the name perfectly.

'Le Gavroche' means 'the newsboy' in English and that poor scruffy Les Miserable looking starving child icon is less uncomfortably associated with the best French food.

We have come to accept the paradox of the two extremes of our world and live alongside without asking 'why'?

Across the road in Hyde Park are a new wave of homeless Romanians all encamped on the Marble Arch roundabout, overlooking Mayfair, sleeping rough and no one can seem to move them.

Mayfair looks back with their property prices ticking upwards as fast as the national debt so contributing to an absurd world of extreme contrasts that we are too willing to accept. Quite bizarre.

The younger generation of the Roux family, especially Michael Roux Jnr, has taken to TV, social media, books like a *carre d'agneau in jus*.

I met him and he had a generous smile, a lot of charm, great ease and none of the intense nervousness of a great chef. He was a delightful surprise

His cute and charming daughter Emily has trained under Paul Bocuse and Alain Ducasse and will offer the family business another new wave of vitality one day.

Her grandfather, the famous Albert Roux, and his brother Michael Snr have become legends in their own lifetimes, way before ordinary people started worshipping celebrity chefs. Apparently there is link between the fall of a culture, decadence and chef worship, but I don't think the Roux family needs to concern themselves.

The restaurant looked closed on a snowy February morning as the front door was locked, so I rang the doorbell and was greeted by a gentile petite young lady who was warm and courteous; a bit like the sister you wished you had.

"Ah the upstairs bar, how comfortable" It was a weak comment but honestly I never remembered this room and I don't know why. It was like meeting an auntie who immediately says "do you remember me?" but you don't have a clue she is.

I saw dark green, gold framed prints on walls, long fringes under upholstered arm chairs, a large thick bamboo strip around the walls painted in another green, and a splash of tartan and red. I couldn't get my head around the decor but I could see it had not changed since the original conception.

"Yes, we have kept the old world charm as I customers like that" she said in a wise way and beyond her years.

Recalling the old saying 'don't fix it until it's broke' perhaps was the philosophy here.

So many fabulous quality interiors have been ripped out to create grey, steel, glass faceless, bland restaurant interiors-I call the "Terminal 5 look" and often the change has *obliterated* a loyal customer base.

"I would be very interested to know the conditions of their lease or if they owned the premises?" I asked myself, as that would account for keeping the original decoration but this was none of my business.

I remember descending those stairs on my first visit so many years ago and being a mere child amongst the sophisticated cliental. I held a huge oversized menu; searched desperately for a word describing a food I recognized, sat up right and never said a word. My host ordered for me, the morsels of food were unrecognizable (except for the soufflé) and it was very tiring.

I do remember their famous soufflé. They are known for it and have probably made more soufflés than anywhere in Europe; after all we can all pronounce soufflé and they are fun. It was so rich and filling you don't need many following courses and I bet the regulars didn't eat much more than that.



Fascinatingly, she explained how she opened the telephone booking line 3 months in advance for the days lunch orders which are sold out within a couple of hours each day. Lunch is around £52.00 including petit fours, half a bottle of wine and coffee, which is a good deal. I never know where I will be in three months time or whom to invite...I could end up sitting alone!

“What about the ‘no shows’?” I asked and she explained they call customers to confirm and might take card details.

I had sat in Le Gavroche awe, because a fine French dining room was a rare thing and the closet experience to something palatial and mysterious beyond our daily world.

Most European restaurants had hanging fisherman’s nets, loud music, dripping candles stuck in bottles and waiters with thin hips and greasy hair. We thought it was very exotic.

This was classic old school, a superb wine cellar, chefs who were legends and awards covering the walls.

The empty room was spellbinding, expectant, calm, and perfect like a famous West End stage but waiting to host the next round of eager diners.

I didn’t want to leave, but I didn’t want to share the room either.

“See you again,” said the pretty girl as I reluctantly opened the heavy front door.

Had I been Mr. Roux I might have locked the door and kept the magic to myself, but had Mr. Roux been me, no one could have experienced his sublime soufflé....

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# CANADA

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

News item below found on;

<http://www.truffletree.com/cultivated-french-black-truffle-found-in-british-columbias-fraser-valley>

### CULTIVATED FRENCH BLACK TRUFFLE FOUND IN BRITISH COLUMBIA'S FRASER VALLEY

The famous Périgord black truffle of Southern Europe (*Tuber melanosporum*), regarded as the ultimate luxury food was harvested for the very first time in the Fraser Valley, British Columbia creating a new industry for Canadian farmers.

*"It takes considerable effort to produce truffles in our country, because one has to – as much as possible – duplicate the climatic and soil conditions of Southern Europe. It has been done in Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S.A. but never before in Canada."* says, Donald Shaw at the BC Truffle Association. *"This is a monumental occasion for the truffle community in BC and across Canada."*

Truffles grow alongside with the roots of European Oak or Hazelnut trees and never poke their heads above ground so must advertise their presence by their smell, which wafts up from their location, 2 to 10 inches underground. Humans, of course, do not have a strong sense of smell, so dogs are used to locate the truffles. The dogs need to go through a multi year training process, hunting sample truffles placed further away as training progresses.

Dr. Charles Lefevre, owner of New World Truffieres, Inc. based in Eugene, Oregon, supplied the inoculated trees for both the orchard in Abbotsford, British Columbia, and the one in the Willamette Valley, Oregon which is very exciting news for truffle enthusiasts there and worth watching in the future.

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# TRUFFLE PATE

## Ingredients;

- 10-20 grams of truffles
- 1 onion
- 1 apple
- 1 cup of beef broth
- 3 shallots
- 1 lbs. chicken liver
- Salt and pepper
- Dijon mustard
- 1-cup butter
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ lemon juice
- 2 envelopes of gelatine

## Method;

Simmer the cleaned and diced truffles for 30 seconds in the broth and sieve keeping the truffle pieces.

Mix water, gelatine and lemon juice and stir in a bowl so the gelatine dissolves.

Pour in the livers and add the butter little by little and blend.

Put the onion, apple, shallots, livers and broth into a pan and boil for 1 minute then simmer for 5 mins.

Mix all the ingredients together and leave for 20 mins then blend until smooth in a food mixer.

After pouring into a mould cover the top with the truffles pieces.

Chill for at least 24-48 hours.

Delicious.

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# 5 HERTFORD STREET LONDON

<http://www.5hertfordstreet.co.uk/>

I remember when 5 Hereford Street was built as it was the renovation of the entire block in Sheppard's Market Mayfair but it took so long the scaffolding became a permanent feature which hid hammers, brick dust, and workman and a lot of money spent.

This was prime real estate, which was going up in value like a clock adding up our national debt in an area previously known as a red light district, with narrow lanes, small ethnic restaurants and the odd old English pub, all tucked away behind Park Lanes five star hotels.

When word got out No 5 was going to be an exclusive club it was announced with great fanfare, as a new magnet for the rich, the beautiful and competition to Annabel's Club in Berkeley Square W1.

The web site is so *understated* it must have taken dozens of meetings, for many hours to actually come to such a decision.

Its just one page with a simple watercolor painting, no links, photos, menus, interactive drop down, flip up menu, or even a Google map.

The subtle message is "if you are important enough to become a member, here is one page with the address."

Interestingly the web page makes no mention of the intriguing Mark Birley whose personal history has already set him apart and whose presence in the club sends tremors through the staff who are so eager to please.

Often the more exclusive the venue, the more polite the staff behave just *in case* you are someone of importance they had not recognized, arriving at their burgundy glossy front door.

It didn't take them long before they realized I was of no importance but well dressed enough to be allowed entry and to get the chefs business card.

I thanked them with sincerity, went outside to make a call and with in 10 mins I was back inside.

"Hello I have a meeting with chef as he has a few minutes to see me before the lunch service begins" I smiled and delivered the words as this was a directive not a suggestion.

“Oh..... I see..... let me see if he can see you....?” She wanted to ask me questions being sure I had just left and was confused to see me back at the desk, but it was not her place to. I wasn't auditioning here.

I sat down in the most comfortable large duck feather chair and melted into it like a sculpture drinking in the elegant surroundings and relaxed muted tones of sands, greys, creams, gilt framed paintings, and fringed furnishings.

Men with suntans came in, handed over cashmere scarves, inquired about treasured guests from long distant lands, and accepted the explanation with grace.

Ladies, with large eyes, smooth obedient hair, clutched treasured calfskin handbags like babies, studied each other while listening intently to stories unfolding.

Staff in soft gold/beige uniforms, floated between them like solid ghosts bringing offerings that would sustain and calm their hungry souls.

Noises were hushed, like a private hospital, not to wake up a baby, and there was no need to insist or ask twice the nurses wearing gold brocade.

Time slowed down in here, the madness of the outside world ceased to exist and I didn't really care if the chef saw me or not.

As I watched the clean and the beautiful come and go I wished everyone would forget I existed so I could claim that chair as my own, and blend into the wallpaper.

My thoughts flickered involuntary back to my anonymous black bag filled with precious truffles.

Smiling, it dawned on me I could nibble, suck, crumble and gnaw on my precious cargo and keep myself alive for days if I were left undisturbed, sinking like Venice deeper into the feather chair, utterly forgotten.

My reverie was shattered by a tall women who marched across the floor and said “chef will see you now” and it took all my will power not to reply, “does he have to?”

The more you pay for food, the smaller the kitchens, as the real estate gets pricey in bowels of downtown historical Mayfair and as I entered the cramped kitchen that reminded me of a yacht galley. Instinctively I was looking for a very small chef.

He wasn't small but his kindness, Italian charm and almond brown eyes were even larger. We sniffed, we turned, we squeezed and we prodded but spoke about so many other things, his country, and his history all at the same time.

“Are you married?” I asked him as he picked up a particularly large truffle and he looked at me over the bumpy black gold his eyes flashing but too polite to ask, “why is she asking that!!!”

“Perhaps we should marry? I have always wanted a chef as a husband but don’t worry it won’t last; I won’t stay long—in fact you will hardly see me—and I never take any alimony” I explained earnestly not even waiting for him to answer my question and on some level he knew I was serious.

What a lovely person he was but I had to be going as the lunch service was marching upon us like a 12.00 pm curtain lift with music, action, and lights please.

I left as quickly, as I had arrived, and made a point to sweep out of the rich glossy burgundy door as was expected by one who had been so lucky to get inside.

Crossing the small but cozy entrance, I gulped in the air, as I wanted to take the magic with me allowing it to permeate my being.

This wasn’t just about money it was about being invited, belonging, extended family, genetically related, safe, protected and perhaps a bit deluded. It’s what exclusive clubs offer to their handpicked members.

Outside the Mayfair cobbled pavement looked worn down after hundreds of years invisible footsteps as it undulated into Sheppard’s Market disappearing into twisted illogical alleyways whose end was out of view.

The cold air attacked me with a host of unrelenting small pricks passing through my clothes shrinking my ego back down as I blended back into grey.

I suddenly realized that it was almost dangerous to have so many wealthy privileged folks, all shut up in one easily accessible place at one time, and in relief I felt safer, anonymous and insignificant back out on the street.

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# HOGS

According to The New York Times March 24<sup>th</sup> 1982;

The explanation, it seems, relates to the sex life of pigs - and perhaps of human beings as well. Researchers in West Germany have found that truffles contain large quantities of a substance also synthesized in the testes of boars. In the boars it is secreted into their saliva when they court females. The Germans report that the substance's musk like scent, "emanating from the saliva foam, is smelled by the sow and prompts her standing reflex."

I did say our love of truffles was all about sex and if they turn pigs on they will affect humans as interestingly experiments in Birmingham note some small quantities of these steroids are also found in celery and parsnips.

"There is less chance of a well-trained dog eating ripe and precious truffles than a vicious pig whose has an insatiable taste for them". Said an Italian truffle hunter.

Using hogs goes back to the Roman Empire but is also well documented in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe.

Europeans (except Italy which banned it in 1985 due to the damage to the mutually beneficial network of mycelia it caused) use female pigs to detect the truffle for up 3 feet below ground as she becomes excited when sniffing a chemical similar to male swine extract.

The aromas can differ slightly depending on the type of host tree, composition of soil and the microclimate as together the fungal mycelium and the root cells create mycorrhizae which means the plants provides sugars and the fungus provides minerals, water and nutrients from the soil.

Truffles need to be eaten in order to disperse unlike a mushroom above ground, so as they mature the truffle pheromones and gasses become stronger and more attractive.

Pigs are risky as they tend to eat anything and hog owners who have wrestled a 300 lbs. animal for a truffle have often lost fingers. Also a pig on a leash is a sure sign of a truffle hunter where as a dog on a leash might be just a day out.

Unfortunately, each season several dogs are either killed or stolen such is the ferocity of the trade.

In the Oregon USA they are retraining ex retired military dogs to hunt truffles, which is an easier more relaxed lifestyle for both dog and handler in preference to the 'raking' method, which mindlessly destroys the environment in which the fungus grows. It is also very short term and stupid.





# CRAB AND TRUFFLE SALAD

## Ingredients;

10-20 grams of black truffles

Mustard Vinaigrette:

1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Pinch salt

1/2 teaspoonful of honey

Pinch ground white pepper

6 to 8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 to 2 ounces truffles

A lemon

3/4 pound fresh cooked crabmeat

## Method;

Make the dressing mixing the mustard, honey, vinegar, salt, and pepper and the oil.

Arrange truffle slices in between chunks of crab on a large dinner plate.

Pour over the dressing.

Add something green like parsley, or broccoli on the side of the plate.

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CORRIGANS  
MAYFAIR  
28 UPPER GROSVENOR STREET  
LONDON

<http://www.corrigansmayfair.co.uk/>

At the door of very chic and serious Corrigan's restaurant I was confronted by Mr. Snappy and Mrs. Snappy who stood like twinned sentries' behind a small reception desk that might have well been columns and a great metal draw bridge. The floor in front of me felt like a minefield and I wasn't going to take a step forward with out their permission.

They had no idea who I was when I arrived, or what I wanted, but dressed smartly, with hand luggage, holding out my business card they both stared as if they had been interrupted, were slightly suspicious of outsiders or just plain menopausal.

The words were brief and they did not want to give my card to chef so I peered over his shoulder to glimpse into the classic room of browns and greens of an expensive interior.

Richard Corrigan is Irish and whom I imagine to be warm hearted, generous, twinkle eyed master of wit and charm but he obviously ignored those qualities when choosing the two Nazis on the restaurant door.

Richard's web site is stylish, global, full of his many awards and easy to navigate and I was even more curious to learn about the man himself as there was something Manhattan and very sophisticated about it.

Many Irishman had become successful restaurateurs in NYC and like the Italians they mixed their native foods and recipes with some big, quality, memorable, expensive USA flair.

The Irish had a natural affiliation to the East Coast and blended in easily, found fellow souls, acceptance, and appreciation and made a lot of money.

It is a very 'grown up' restaurant where customers make alliances, proposed trade deals, appointed fund trustees, set up offshore companies while sampling London's best. Discretion was everywhere.

On the website under the 'shop' category they offer a luxury picnic service with personal butler service, which could be a very exciting surprise al fresco lunch with the butler was there I wouldn't even have to invite any troublesome guests...who ever argued with a butler?

It reminded me of Scotts on Mount St in the early days before the girls arrived with big handbags, sipping cocktails, hoping to be 'snapped' up by a rich man or photographed by the pap's.

This was a secret world of fine whiskeys, dark leather chairs, thin spider webs in the table lamps and succulent roast Goosnargh duck.

Of course I could see they didn't have Italian truffles on the menu but that was a mute point as leaving my card was a courtesy as taking theirs was to me and Richard does have very smart olive green and gold lettered cards.

"I need to celebrate something so I can return and feast on the Elwy Valley loin of lamb." I said to myself as I took a card knowing the two guards on the door would not let me near the kitchen even if every dish were smothered in truffles.

I had a better chance in getting into his 200 acre private estate in Ireland if I had arrived unannounced via parachute" I chuckled as I trotted back out, crossed over to the sunny side of the street and headed towards the comparable warmth and 'bon ami' of Mayfair.

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# NORTH AFRICA

News item below found;

<http://plantationsystems.com/desert-truffles-in-africa/>

“Last month we had the pleasure of harvesting Desert Truffles in North Africa. The desert truffles are not so aromatic or tasty as European truffles but are still good to eat”. I was told.

There are more than 30 different species of Desert Truffle, and they all (as the name suggests) grow in the hot, dry regions around the Mediterranean, from Southern Spain through North Africa, to the Middle East and Turkey.

The traditional way of finding these knobbly, pale, whitish-brown truffles is by hitting the ground with a stick, to see where there is resistance. Nowadays the collector will be looking for the right plants, such as *Helioanthemum spp.*, and around them the little cracks and humps that are indicative of the truffles growing below.

Dusk and dawn shadows also help to show the lumps and bumps in the sand where these truffles grow.

Sadly, because of the lack of scent, they don't command the prices of European truffles and are often used as subsistence food, however they can be cultivated.

Desert truffles are also found in Algeria Libya, Iraq, Oman, Kuwait and of course Spain none of which are known for high rain fall, lush forests or large trees but were all under Roman occupation.

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# TRUFFLE BUTTER

Truffle butter is an easy way of incorporating the truffle aroma into so many dishes.

Grate the fresh truffle until softened into unsalted butter and let it stand at room temperature for an hour.

Spread onto your chosen food to add the aroma and let it melt in well.

Truffle butter freezes very well so make it ahead of dinner parties.

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# THE DORCHESTER HOTEL PARK LANE LONDON

<https://www.dorchestercollection.com/en/london/the-dorchester/>

The words “The Dorchester Hotel” can send a tremor through men’s hearts but I have always felt very relaxed and safe like being in comfortable country house.

Perhaps it’s the opulence, staff, sense of security, that long high endless foyer, tea room that just pulls you in further, enveloping you totally until the outside world ceases to exist. Las Vegas casinos are masters of the same feeling.

“Don’t bring me the car keys please; it’s a lovely day I just might walk” I said to the door man in a top hat, and soft greens with brocade on every seam as I pointed to a huge, glossy, red Bentley parked by the door.

He hesitated and smiled at me and replied, “Are you sure? It’s no problem but your probably better off having some exercise. Shall I keep them then?”

I took my hand off his dark green, velvety warm arm and gave him a huge grim knowing we were both on the same wavelength.

“I can always take it tomorrow” We both laughed.

“Can I help you with the bag? He asked outstretching a gloved hand.

“No darling, I’m good” and clunked the case up the black granite curved stairs, through that magical revolving door and on through towards the legendary The Grill Room.

Standing by the grand open double doors I looked into a room I no longer recognized but mumbled something to two young girls at the welcome desk looking like air hostesses.

The breakfast crowd had gone, leaving the room empty and lunch service had not started, but I wanted to see the new subtle, peachy, shimmering designer décor, which everyone was talking about.

“Do you remember this room before?” I asked them and they both said ‘no’ as I had expected because they were too young. London Hotels and restaurants are staffed by youngsters who have no idea about the history of the place they worked in.

The Dorchester Grill was once a symphony of red tartan, high backed chairs, baronial splendor, big statements for brave people who had the guts to go in there. It was 'all man', testosterone, and heavy on 'impressive' and light on 'escaping'.

My last breakfast there had all the trimmings bacon, eggs, toast, mustard, mushrooms, orange juice and coffee.

"My, you don't mess about with a croissant do you?" remarked the American man I sat with.

"It took me an hour to put on a good suit, made up and travel over, here so a *small* croissant isn't going to do it for me" I replied looking him in the eye. We then spent the next 13 years together.

Now I was standing, slightly confused, before some kind of international stylish room in a blush peach, more reminiscent of a cocktail lounge with dining tables. "What was I looking at?"

The young women showed me the very long pale peach wall louvers with Japanese's style writing on them, which turned at night to show a darker evening colour. It was all impressive and expensive, as one would expect.

"How nice" I said flatly, I was not yet convinced. I could see work, money, time and effort and a room that would photograph beautifully. The problem was some of these super designer rooms make the actual dinners look tatty, unwashed and ugly.

I had to move on.

They gave me the chef's card and I would call and set up a meeting.

I crossed over the hall to the bar opposite entering into the dark purple hall they refit about 15 years ago so ripping out the classic Delft blue and white tiles, pale wooden paneling, side banquets, white grand piano, small tables with starched white table cloths and little silver salt and pepper pots.

The heart, soul and elegance of the hotel was ripped out when they destroyed that room. I waked down a couple of large dark purple curved stairs to stare in horror mumbling it was "room murder" again.

The updated decor now looked like a worn out old hooker who should have left town and gone off to the country while her legs could carry her. Only the dark tall glass sculptures by Dale Chihuly still looked vibrant, pleasing, worth displaying and were the only items not to have wilted, dated or saddened.

I asked the young barman "Is Guido here?"

"No sorry madam its his day off" I gave him my name and asked him to convey my best to one of the most charming, good looking, elegant barman whom the Dorchester Hotel had the brains to keep.

Turning pensively, like it was my last visit to this empty sad room I saw two young men in their early 30's drinking water in a far corner and I thought they might be plumbers.

"Please, do us all a favor and put that room out of its misery and redecorate it," I pleaded to one of the 'directors of something' I found outside hanging outside the door of Alan Ducasse. He laughed nervously but admitted he had never seen the blue and white Delft Tiled bar and probably thought this 'brothel look' was quite chic.

At least the hotel had the secured the great Alan Ducasse Restaurant before someone else had. I had eaten in the Paris Plaza Athenee several times, and in Monaco, which was very exciting, full of surprises, including the bill, which could have made a strong man weep.

Back in the central gold, green, brocade, fringed, and pillared central tea room I realized it was very hard to keep up the standards, while the customers were constantly dragging them down.

The mix of interior styles all seemed to compete with each like jealous sisters.

Even Disney World kept a theme running through the park, while keeping the customers interest but this felt odd.

The truffles and I went back out through the magical revolving doors, stood on the curved steps in the sun, looked out towards Hyde Park and admired the view.

It wasn't such a large sweeping entrance but my God it packed a punch as a hotel entrance; it was the unnoticed classical details that one 'felt' with out even consciously 'seeing' them.

"Leave the car please, I can't deal with the traffic," I said to both the doorman who laughed saying it was a wise idea.

I wondered if the owners of those stunning unique cars parked outside had actually taken a walk today or were still in bed upstairs sleeping and I wondered if they ate truffles...?

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# DOGS AND POODLES.

There are historic references to Poodle dogs and the rare Barbet dog being used to hunt truffles.

Information below quoted from web site Poodle History;

<http://www.poodlehistory.org/PFINDTRUFFLES.HTM>

"Training should begin in the summer so that the dog remains in practice. Initially, one practices retrieving at home by sewing strong-smelling truffle into a small leather pouch and hiding this in various parts of the room and making the dog find and retrieve it. Once he does so willingly and without 'mouthing', it is then hidden in shrubs or under moss or leaves, and let the dog find it, consistently using the same command such as 'Seek,' 'Lost,' 'Truffle.' Later the pouch is hidden under deeper layers of moss or leaves. Once the dog finds it quickly and surely, one takes him to parts of the forest where truffles are known to grow, and makes him find and retrieve under ever more trying conditions. During training, one should talk to the dog as little as possible, not using any words other than those commands chosen for the truffle hunt. When the dog has found the truffles he is to be praised and patted, and made to sit, then rewarded with a 'treat.'

"Not until the middle of September after it has rained, does one take the dog off the leash, and into areas in which truffles are suspected, where one hides a fresh truffle (not in a pouch) on a number of occasions under two inches of earth and leaves. If the dog scents the truffle and starts to scratch to recover it, one should quickly go to the location and recover the fruit oneself, showing it to him and putting it into one's pocket. From now on the dog should not be allowed to retrieve, but merely indicate the location. When he does so, he should be made to sit, praised, and rewarded.

"Once the dog discovers the truffles even underground, take him into a truffle region and cause him to quarter upwind, since this will cause the scent to be found faster and more easily. An experienced and eager dog can scent truffles at 20 paces, and 6" below ground, indicating his find much in the manner of a Pointer.

"After return from the hunt, the dog should be fed his normal food, never before the hunt, when he should not get anything but fresh water. During the hunt he should be given treats only when he has actually found truffles. If he finds nothing, which can happen in dry and hot weather, he should not be given anything other than his food upon returning home." Occasionally a truffle hunter himself will be able to pick up the scent with extraordinary olfactory senses but a trained assistant helps.

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# TRUFFLE POTATOES

## Ingredients;

- 1/2 to 1 ounce grated truffles
- 4 large potatoes
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- Salt and pepper to taste

## Method;

Wash the skins well and score with a knife but cut the bottom so they don't fall over.

Wrap in aluminium foil and bake in a hot oven 400° oven until tender, for 50 minutes.

Unwrap and let stand until cool.

Cut the top of the potatoes and scoop out the pulp, leaving enough of a wall to support the stuffing.

Mix the pulp with the grated truffles, cream, salt, and pepper.

Spoon it into the cavity of each potato shell. Replace the cap; brush each potato with butter.

Place on a baking sheet.

Bake in a preheated oven at 400° for 20 minutes until golden brown.

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LES AMBASSADORS  
5 HAMILTON PLACE  
LONDON

<http://www.lesambassadeurs.com/contact/>

“He married an ice maiden,” said the well-groomed, curly haired middle-aged woman who was pure Manhattan sitting opposite me in a chic NYC bistro.

“Well, you are the opposite of that!” I thought seeing her as explosive, vocal, intelligent and a frightening female. She was talking about her only son.

It sounded like something out of a storybook but I had to think hard of what character she was? Gruella da Ville?

“You have to get your husband very well insured for a couple of million dollars as he wont last long and you regret not doing so” She told me directly like she was saving my life.

“He wont like that” I replied in defense.

She lost interest, turned away, began speaking to another woman behind her and I didn't blame her.

I was too young and too naïve to catch up to her level and we both knew it but I could tell her son had upset her and probably was the only person in the world who could have done so.

A year later I heard she had died of lung cancer and I thought “what a waste of a good brain.” She wasn't warm and cozy but she had succeeded in business and had consciously decided against developing into a loveable old fool.

Behind the welcome desk of Les Ambassador Casino sat two ‘ice maidens’.

They weren't platinum blonds with blue eyes, tall, Nordic with porcelain skin they were just simply cold. Cold eyes that had blinked at a thousand customers none of which they were impressed by or interested in. It was a defensive coldness and one that enabled them to deliver any line needed to clients;

“Your membership has been revoked”

“Your line of credit has run out”

“Please cash in and leave”

“Your wife is here playing inside” And the rest.

They didn’t need to be warm or welcoming this was the best luxurious, impressive, international gambling club, exquisitely decorated in an era of riches.

Silks, brocades, ormolu, rich woods, marbles, chandeliers, thick rugs and a few tropical fish in a large tank by the front door lucky to be there, and lucky to not be on the menu.

“I would wear a glove cleaning that pond water because if it contains septicemia you could get blood poisoning.” I told the young man whose arm was deep inside a murky green aquarium scrubbing at the glass.

“I know, I heard of a fish tuberculosis that’s in the water but I’ve been ok so far,” he answered without looking up.

“Up to you but a cheap glove could save your life. Hello ladies” I looked back over at the ice maidens and flashed them the huge smile they reserved for the high rollers.

“Good afternoon how can we help you?” They mumbled professionally.

“I am here to see chef about the truffles. I should perhaps have used the side door but I don’t know where it is and anyway I’m here now” I smiled again, just because I could.

“Do you want to go around to the side door, I can show you?” One of them volunteered.

“No, not really I am here now; why would I want to reenter? If you could let him know I am here please he’s expecting me”. I was well dressed, clean, and smart and my small black bag was airport hand luggage so showed no sign of what I was carrying.

She lifted the phone, mumbled something and asked me to wait so I sat down on deep cushioned midnight blue velvet sofa facing the fish tank.

Chef arrived with style and panache and greeted with all the warmth an Italian is born with - something we will never learn.

“What joy there is some civilization left in life” I thought following him through huge marble patterned doors down into his basement office in the kitchen.

The spotless kitchen was quiet and clean and unhurried, as they don’t do a set lunch service and it was too early for the big clients to come in, eat, gamble, drink and socialize.

I unzipped the bag, got out the truffles, sniffing each one and we started to talk about Sardinia.

“There are two airports one in the north of the island where all the big boats are. I hire a car and take a trip north which is about 4 hours to explore. You must go there, it’s wonderful, the best food and the weather is perfect.” He went on and I became intrigued.

“I have a wonderful book on Sardinia which I bought 10 years ago but now I promise to make this journey.” I said in earnest.

Meeting charming people makes you want to go and see their homeland as they are like advanced ambassadors.

He walked me back upstairs to the enormous dark rich, glossy, mahogany front door which swung open masterfully on polished secure brass hinges, said a warm Italian goodbye and I went back into the sunlight.

Curzon Street now looked different, better somehow, as if I had taken some of the magic me from this opulent, majestically, unique emporium.

This was why the wealthiest people in the world came back year after year to experience, be part of, validated by a club as exclusive and historical as this.

Back in the outside world those ice maidens behind the desk must have melted into grey meaningless puddles...

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# EUROPEAN PRODUCTION

There were more truffles harvested in Europe in the past than now as for example a harvest of 2,200 tons was reported back in 1890 when man lived off the land but only 300 tons in 1914 when the first world war devastated communities.

Nowadays harvests found are more like 15-150 tons as forests have disappeared and developed for urban housing.

It takes about seven years for a sapling tree to be inoculated then establish a growth of truffles despite their predictable life cycles so cultivation is a big investment.

The host tree will then bear fruit from between fifteen to thirty years so new trees have to grow to replenish the market while presently we wait to see how the inoculated trees in North America develop.

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# ROAST GROUSE WITH BLACK TRUFFLE

## Ingredients;

- 2 grouse
- Olive oil
- 1 onion
- Garlic
- Fresh thyme
- Carrot/celery diced
- 150 ml red wines
- 150 ml chicken stock

## Method;

Wrap the bacon around the breasts of the grouse  
Sear the birds all over so they have a good rich colour on each side then take out the birds.  
Reduce the heat to medium and soften the onion, celery and carrot and fry gently adding the garlic in the same oil.  
Pour in the wine and extra stock and warm.  
Mix them all and cover with foil then put them in the oven.  
Roast for 20 minutes, take out and squeeze so firm on the outside but soft and pink and juicy inside  
Take out and set aside to rest for at least 5 minutes.  
Return the pans to the hob add more wine/stock whilst roasting.  
Strain, taste and season, return to the pan adds in a knob of butter to make silky.  
Finally stir in the minced black truffle.

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# THE SQUARE RESTAURANT LONDON

<http://www.squarerestaurant.com/>

I was very privileged to eat at The Square many years ago when it was on the corner of Hanover Square in what looked like the ground floor of an office block.

There is no restaurant there now but at the time it felt very 'Manhattan' to eat in a styled venue but we had wonderful food, with an impressive wine and a stylish St James international clientele.

We followed it to a couple of other venues until it nested permanently into the exclusive Bruton St address and it became more business like.

Gone were the short lace shirts, high metal stiletto heels, low cut black lace and red painted nails and in came a more understated Armani, Zegna clad group with intelligent conversation, with a reason to be there other than some hedonistic desire to eat.

Partially out of fondness, and partially because I had truffles with me in Bond Street on a brisk cool winters day I opened the door and slipped into The Square to see the chef.

"Hello" said a very nice young lady who thought I was probably a customer coming into book as it was far too early for lunch and as I explained the reason for the visit her expression turned to pain.

"He's not here," she explained after we negotiated she check the kitchen.

The contemporary simple sophisticated interior looked better without the 'grey suits' cluttering up the place- save one person cleaning some glasses- as the restaurant has become more of a public 'board room' in later years.

These kinds of interiors didn't cater to wannabes, 'look at me' types but rather negotiated equals who want to secure an alliance out of the office, with style, over great food and wine.

"Here is the business card for Head Chef Gary Foulkes" which I took, studied and was grateful to receive and left.

Bruton St is a common artery between Bond St and Berkeley Square, which I often found myself on cutting from one part of Mayfair to the next.

Any chance of exchanging words with the charming manager Charles Peto is another good reason for visiting as he's usually a lot more interesting, informed and opinionated than many



of the guests-shame he cannot take a seat at my table.

I would like to adopt Charles into my family as a new relative, and would willingly remove someone and create a position for him, all in time for Christmas.

Then I begun to wonder what a fine dinning experience really was.... a dream? A rainbow of sensory intensity? Which we kept on trying to recapture?

It was a wonder past customers weren't hanging around outside the door literally pressing their noses onto the windows to glimpse those enjoying delicious rare delicate morsels.

Was fine dining the zenith of mans experience or was that between the sheets? Perhaps it was easier to attain than other pleasures if you could afford it?

The Square restaurant and team are serious about food for people who are serious about eating.

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# TRUFFLE HUNTING IN GREECE

<http://meteoramuseum.gr/en/exhibitions-and-events/truffle-hunting/>

Fascinatingly this Greek web site organizes local truffle hunts near the ancient Monastery and checking on Google Maps it looks right in the middle of the country, near a river and at the bottom of a small mountain range.

The Natural History Museum of Meteora and Mushroom special effort to create alternative touristic activities, now also hosts truffle-hunting activities.

Specially trained truffle dogs with their trainers are search for this unique fruit of Greek nature and they offer an original experience that can be enjoyed by visitors from all over.

Participants are provided with information about this special fruit and they learn about kinds of truffles and how they can be used, enriching their knowledge about the “black diamond” that is “hiding” in the ground.

They then have the opportunity to taste an exceptional truffle pasta dish in the forest with some local wine.

This truffle pasta dish is cooked in an impressive cooking pan that can feed 50 people by a special chef.

After truffle hunting, the participants visit the unique mushroom museum and they can enjoy a mushroom product tasting with 5-6 kinds of mushrooms and traditional mushroom desert accompanied by a glass of local wine.

This is a unique experience for passionate truffle enthusiast.

The program of truffle hunting is:

10.00: Leaving from the Museum

10.30: The truffle hunting begins

11.15: Truffle pasta dish cooking

12.15: End of the truffle hunting

12.45: Visit to the Museum, guided tour, mushroom product tasting

13.30: End of program.

Every Sunday there is a special truffle-hunting offer: 25 euros per person

For more information, you may contact the Museum at: 00302432024959 or at [info@meteoramuseum.gr](mailto:info@meteoramuseum.gr)



# PARMEASAN RISOTTO WITH PAN FRIED FOIE GRAS

## Ingredients;

- Fois gras
- Risotto rice
- Onion
- Shallot
- Chicken stock
- Garlic
- Double cream
- Parmesan cheese
- Truffle oil
- Salt and pepper

## Method;

- Pan fry the foie gras until its golden brown then bake for 3 minutes.
- Salt and pepper
- Warm the oil for the onion and garlic then fry.
- Add the stock to the rice and stir continually
- When the rice is soft with a firm centre add the cream and truffle oil.
- Serve topped with warm foie gras.

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NOVIKOV  
ASIAN & ITALIAN RESTAURANT  
50A BERKELEY ST  
LONDON

<http://www.novikovrestaurant.co.uk/>

Novikov is so huge you would think any one with normal eyesight couldn't miss it. I missed it.

Just off Berkeley St it's a block down from the Mayfair Hotel towards the Ritz Hotel and almost opposite Nobu in the area of Mayfair I call "Little Russia." Except there is nothing 'little' about the huge amounts of money uber Russians have invested into business there and the eye watering bills I hear they rack up eating at Sexy Fish opposite.

Perhaps because the entrance looks a bit like an office block with an anonymous glass revolving door or because the word itself Novikov doesn't really register in our minds as a restaurant as it doesn't translate into anything; I researched it.

The revolving glass door were locked and it was dark inside but I saw the figure of an adult male with a long pony tail behind a huge bar so I waved and knocked with intent. He called over a sweet little girl who struggled with some keys and opened the door saying

"So sorry about that" and let me in.

"I'm here to see chef" I said peering past her into the cavernous darkened huge dinning rooms to left and right not mentioning which chef I should see.

"The Italian or the Asian chef?" she asked looking up at me with big brown eyes.

"The Asian? "

"He's not in"

"Ok the Italian will do nicely" and she guided me right to an even larger area down a few generous pale beige marble steps to a grand restaurant under a bright skylight. It was all very glamorous, very European, a place to people watch or be seen in.

The website says "you cannot miss the great wood burning oven, the suede wall paneling, oak framed mirror's etc. etc." I missed the suede paneling but I did get 'huge room, plenty of white table clothes and flowers, a handsome wine collection and plenty of waiters.... or was that 'handsome waiters' and 'plenty of wine' collection?

I get my messages mixed up when faced with such generous proportions and abundance.

The open kitchen was already busy with prep with a young Roman chef bashing some basil to death in a pestle & mortar to make a fresh pesto sauce.

“I’m from Napoli and I have been here for over a year,” he explained.

“Oh I love Capri, Positano, Sorrento and whole of the Amalfi coast what are you doing here?” It was a stupid question as he was in a kitchen ripping basil to shreds.

“Working. There is not much work over there nowadays and yes, I am so happy here” he explained in that charming relaxed way only Italians have in their DNA.

Everywhere I went was now full of young Italians under 35 years of age and I assumed it was the largest influx of Roman cousins on British shores in 2,000 years.

Italians had all descended on NYC after WW11 which gives Manhattan some of the best Italian food in the world, often leaving the Americans quite dissatisfied or disappointed when the dining in Italy itself.

The huge long open kitchen had enough room for 20 chefs but these guys all looked to young and too thin to be of importance so I went to seek out whom was in charge.

At last a round, curly haired, bright-eyed chef, cousin to the last Emperor Augustus, arrived who knew his gnocchi’s from his tortellinis.

“Ciao, come stai?” I tried to speak Italian but it didn’t really work but he didn’t care, and wasn’t going to give me lessons.

Out came all the truffles onto a large silver tray and we prodded, poked, squeezed and sniffed talked about Italy and Puglia where he was from.

“Oh I love Puglia!” My friend had a café on Old Quebec St with very sweet pastries from there 15 years ago when no one even knew they had an airport.

The sweets were over sweet so we never bought them; they were fattening and lay on her counter for weeks but the coffee was excellent.

We should have all gone down to Puglia as the property was cheap but the thought of dealing with an Italian realtor, a lawyer, local builders was too much to bare, especially as London prices were soaring so why invest in Italy?

This chef was built to survive marching with Roman legions all the way to England in 200 B. C. having a lean muscle to fat ratio, and a bright mind not fettered by the modern nanny state. It was refreshing to meet such old souls.

“Tell your Mum I will be over for the month of July with all my suit cases and will eat anything she prepares” I said affectionately touching his arm and smiling.

“Only July? You don’t prefer August?” He quipped back his eyes glistened imagining the screams from his family seeing a strange English woman, in a beaten straw hat, dragging baggage up a flight of cobbled village steps, like a 1950’s film.

“Ok, I will stay both months, I’m not so busy and I will tell her you sent me!”

I began to regret not having explored those villages in the 1980’s and 90’s before developers, migrants, the Euro and globalization had hit them.

Were we all that afraid of going off the tourist path? Was it before budget airlines?

Before package tour companies set up all-inclusive deals you were on your own in Europe so most of us never went further south than Capri and the Amalfi coast.

We parted affectionately and I noticed Italians had a lovely way of saying ‘arrivederci’ as I think they really expect to see you again one fine day, unlike us, who are satisfied with just the one fleeting moment.

The lunch service was about to begin but the time had flown between us and I knew he had given me his valuable time today.

As I left I looked back for the young man holding the large pestle and mortar grinding up the green grass fresh pesto but he had disappeared, along with the basil, leaving the scent behind.

“Doesn’t *any one* need me to taste anything in here...?? I mumbled to myself as I crossed the sun kissed cream beige marble and heading out towards noise and London traffic.

They probably felt the same way about my truffles...

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# TAGLIOLINI WITH BLACK TRUFFLE

## Ingredients;

- 1 packet of tagliolini
- 2 oz unsalted butter
- 50 grams of black truffle
- Truffle oil
- 50 grams grated Parmesan
- Salt & pepper.

## Method;

- Boil the pasta in salted water.
- Melt the butter with truffle oil and the sliced truffle
- When the pasta is cooked drain and add it to the butter and truffle NOT the other way a.
- Keep a little of the hot water back.
- Top with Parmesan cheese and salt and pepper
- Drop a couple of spoonful's of the water if needed to add a touch of liquid
- Serve and enjoy.

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# AMARANTO RESTAURANT THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL LONDON

<http://www.fourseasons.com/london/dining/>

Some doors never stop opening, and others closing, unlike real life, where the doors mostly feel shut.

The grand bronze and glass doors of the Four Seasons Hotel seem to be permanently revolving open for all their privileged well-heeled guests that had for years graced the sweeping portico.

Hotel entrances are important, like noses on faces, and the original architect in charge of the concept of such a structure seemed to have got the proportions just right unlike her sibling rival hotel opposite the Intercontinental Hotel who reminded me of a struggling sister.

Both buildings could have looked like 1970's office blocks at the end of classical Park Lane, but the architects successfully managed to incorporate two 5 star hotels naturally.

Smart, young, fit, smiling doorman in thick brown wool coats noticed every person's arrival graciously acknowledged them, which somehow alleviated my guilt, as it was important not to have resentful staff hating the guests.

The original lobby had been predominantly mahogany, high ceilings; mock regency, pale blues in a large generous French palatial style both elegant and a bit intimidating. People want to be impressed, or they would stay at home.

Unusually in the 1990's that lobby was a hang out area in itself well before the middle eastern clients made lobby's places to sit for hours, for no particular reason, as lobbies did not serve drinks, and had no waiters.

They were places for old ladies to be collected, nannies with small children to wait for the chauffeur, and guests, whose limo was on the way for an event.

The Four Season's Hotel lobby was the place in London where a crowd just sat and talked or waited and some very interesting characters paused and stopped so rivaling the upstairs bar.

Now the lobby looks smaller, a dark rich chic red burgundy with plenty of dark woods, very modern like a private club but with no one very interesting.

The new renovation took years and cost a fortune and we all held our breath as to what they were going to do to this elegant old lady in silks, pearls and aristocratic white gloves.

Those rooms have gone and remain nothing but a memory in folks but now its transformed into a red, black, dimly light sexy bar and restaurant like an unrecognizable relative having undergone a dramatic and life changing face lift.

The new hotel is still that 'familiar woman' but the face-lift had been so dramatic no one recognizes her so our affection is now offered to a virtual stranger who has not proved herself, all dressed up in blacks, red, chrome, glossy woods and angles. This new female is a high-class tart.

Gone is the main sweeping grand staircase, whose stairs were at a half height so easy to negotiate, plus you got a great view of everyone walking below. We never used the lift it was too boring.

The new staircase off to the side, wrapped around a huge chandelier and is quite forgettable. We always now use the two lifts.

To the left, under the old salon staircase, was a long elegant paneled tea room like a country house meets a Regency gentleman's club with white table cloths, pale blue silks, bone china, silver teapots, pale watercolors, a piano, fresh flowers and a queue of people begging for tables on weekends.

No one ever left, gave up a table or cancelled as it was 'first in last out' and if you weren't seated by 3.15 pm, you were never getting in.

We all dressed up to make polite conversation fuelled by earl grey tea, crust less cucumber sandwiches, anemic pale small cakes and the famous scones with Devonshire clotted cream, rich red fruit jam, and a little silver dish of butter. They were the highlight of the afternoon and stuck in our stomachs for days.

No one drank alcohol as 'tea' meant 'tea', not coffee and not vodka cocktail.

Now the new red, black glossy smart bar, on the way to the restaurant, feels like a funnel. Who stops and drinks in a funnel?

Beyond the funnel/tunnel is the Amaranto restaurant and an outside terrace patio.

Off to the right, towards the huge windows are a few sub divided spaces of comfortable elegant contemporary slightly 1930's seating areas in reds, black, creams and browns which are very impressive, sophisticated, international, sexy but slightly foreboding.

This was for a new generation of visitors and it was exciting, bold comfortable and important looking.

I took some pictures and wandered back to the empty restaurant.

Four men, speaking Russian, were finishing off a very expensive breakfast but I thought they might be lost.

Upstairs the banqueting rooms stood silent and abandoned.

Where were those giggling naughty children who once rolled over the floor in starched party dresses? The flashy young women wandering in high heels, too much make up, tight gowns and a perfumed haze? The cocky pubescent young men just sprouting chin hairs, swaggering in pointed toed black laced up shoes? Fat old ladies squeezed into sequins with powdered white faces?

Slumped back into a red plush chair, I handed the waiter my card and said I wanted to see chef so he disappeared behind a screen, leaving me the only person in the cavernous empty room.

He sensed I was in no hurry as he walked back and kindly explained to my glazed over eyes it was chef's day off but could I come back tomorrow?

It was too emotionally draining, as I had re lived the past and forgotten about the silent truffles, nestled comfortably in my bag.

As I left I hesitated in the lobby and looked at the large empty black modern sofa and mumbled;

"I met Elliot Gould in that exact spot and it was dynamic. I wonder how he's doing these days?"

Another young doorman offered to take my bag from me.

"No thank you, I am walking today" I replied which was perfectly normal in 2016.

Back outside through the ever-swinging doors, pushing between the ghosts coming in and those going back out I gasped the cold fresh air and I came back to life.

"Taxi for you ma'am?" Mr. Charm in deep brown wool offered, but unusually, I noticed the roadway was empty so there weren't any...

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# CHINESE TRUFFLES

The Chinese are providing us with some good quality wines, a roaring caviar trade and now home grown truffles, which they once fed to the pigs, while in return, their blooming middle class, has developed a huge appetite for European luxuries.

In 1987 the first trees were mycorrhized in Taiwan with *Tuber Formosanum* (related to *Tuber Indicum*) and 8 years later the first 10 kg of cultivated truffles were harvested in that orchard.

The *Tuber Indicum* (their biological name suggests they originated in India the other side of the mountainous Himalaya except India does not grow any truffles) is the most popular variety.

Interestingly inside they are black during the winter and white during the summer months, but with less fragrance.

Another variety *Tuber Himalayensis* grown in huge areas of Yunnan and Sichuan, bordering Tibet, resembling the French truffles, but these are always black inside and being available from Nov. to Jan.

The truffles are 'tubers' and are not fakes, are edible and with the same nutrients as the French and Italians but generally less aromatic and possibly rubbery.

The *Tuber Indicum* is the bigger, but the aroma of *Tuber Himalayensis* is better and more expensive, looking similar to *Tuber Melanosporum*, with the females of both being smaller with a weaker smell more like a *Tuber Borchii*.

There are now dozens of plantations in Sichuan and Yunnan of about 4-7 years old, along with collaborations, several nurseries and research centers with the Hunan Academy of Agriculture producing 10,000 *melanosporum* trees annually.

Meanwhile, the Italians are alarmed in case *Tuber Indicum* has invaded their soil because they have found tree roots in Piedmont that had Chinese DNA, so terrifying them the two species could even cross breed.

The problem was thought to have started in 2004 after a drought and 30 tons of Chinese truffles might have been imported.

In a global market where a white single Italian truffle can reach £165,000 any invasion by a lesser item is absolutely perilous.

# SEARED SCALLOPS WITH TRUFFLE

Ingredients;

Try to get scallops about 2 ounces each.

Make sure they are dry before cooking and do not touch them once in the pan.

Cover the pan with 4 tablespoons of butter and heat well but keep the scallops away from each other.

Turn each one after 3-4 mins

They should be firm but soft on the inside and are sometimes a bit pink inside.

Serve topped with a slither of truffle on the top.

Add some parsley.

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# RIVINGTON GRILL LONDON

<http://www.rivingtongrill.co.uk/>

The truffle-sniffing dogs and pigs have sensitive and acute noses, but to hunt down potential truffle restaurants you need vision like a hawk.

A vision that can see down grey, rain swept narrow, cobbled streets, spot crisp white table cloths behind old thick historic walls, a wine cellar stocked with the classics under tarmac roads and a dedicated chef in whites who has no interest in being spoken to.

It was an unconscious flick of my eye, as I crossed a small back street in Shoreditch while mounting the opposite pavement that my antenna reached out to my left, way beyond my gaze, and spotted The Rivington Grill.

I twisted on my heel mid step, like a champion tennis player and turned 90 degrees left down a boring side street, I was magnetically pulled in, by something I had not even fathomed.

Within steps I was peering inside, eyes cupped, into small lead windows set into an ancient London yellowed thick brick wall. I knew I had struck restaurant gold.

A traditional handsome dark bar, super crisp perfectly ironed tablecloths set waiting virginally for another round of ravenous dinners.

Wine glasses cupped towards heaven lined up opposite three bronze pig sculptures on a dark wooden bar set the tone of the menu. Fine British ingredients, uncompromised and solid fare had built us an empire, offered us comfort and consistency with not an Italian truffle in sight.

“Oooh” I said as I entered the empty dining room with a few staff finishing off laying tables here and there.

I dragged my truffle case in behind me its wheels scraping the wood, and floorboards like a reluctant child.

“Hi, where’s chef? I’m here to see the chef. If that’s ok? Will he see me?” I fired questions at a faceless young man behind the bar, who was the last obstacle between me, and the man who made this place spin.

In a few seconds a thin chef, about late 40’s with big blue eyes came hesitantly towards me and I could read his body language.

I was delighted to meet him and we were soon in excited conversation about Spanish pig farming, what the Chinese were buying, what he was buying and why. He offered me a coffee but he was going to start the lunch service soon so I respectfully declined but said I would take a 'rain check' come back and try the roast pork.

"It's meeting such interesting people like you that keeps me in the truffle world Simon" I said as I grabbed his arm and he knew I meant every word.

"You need to look up Peter Gott to understand pig farming" and he wrote down the name as he made piglets sound fascinating and I promised I would research him.

Time is always short when you find someone so interesting and Simon had relaxed, sat on a bar stool but we didn't have time to look at truffles, besides he didn't use them.

"Some people put a cloth soaked in truffle oil into the bag or spread the oil around the top of the jar so you get the aroma," he explained to my horror as I imagined all those damp smelly cloths. I would never entertain such an idea and he knew it.

It made sense, as smell was the first powerful thing to hit you with truffles. It was an incredibly complicated business and that harmless faceless knobby tuber lump of black gold held plenty of secrets.

It had made my day meeting Simon Wadham who had been chef in this Richard Carlings restaurant for ten years.

"Who can I bring here for lunch?" I thought as I ran back down the street towards Old Street tube. "Who can take me for lunch there, which would be even better" I asked myself but drew a blank on both questions.

I was running late and had 15 mins to get to Angel so forgot about the bus incase the traffic was bad and descended back down in the bowels of London for one stop further up the Northern Line.

I wondered where they got those three black sculptures of the pigs? Did they put the suckling pigs on the menu before the sculptures or because of the sculptures? I must study the menu further and get my head around pork cracking, the Chinese and Spanish pig farming methods.

Finding Simon Wadham was like finding another hidden jewel under a pile of manure and I felt warm and satisfied that my truffle/restaurant chef nose was still sharp.

I sat on the tube and stared at my black suitcase filled with truffles wrapped up snugly with no one around me knowing what valuable morsels I carried.

"I may be having a fascinating time but you guys have to go into a truffle dish and soon". I mumbled, so my fellow passengers could not hear me.

They would eventually die in there and I had to find them a worthy new home.





# ENGLISH TRUFFLES

<http://www.truffle-uk.co.uk/>

Reports that UK truffles are now growing in the Chilterns and North and South Downs, as well as Hampshire, Wiltshire and westwards into Dorset, between Hull and Lincoln according to Dorset-based [Truffle UK](#).

Britain's two native varieties (are black, roundish in shape, and covered in polyagonal warts) tend to grow best in south-facing beech, oak, birch and hazel woods, on chalk or limestone but according to the British Mycological Society are found as north as Darlington.

Our native species in especially damp weather often breaks through the surface but a dog will help find those beneath the surface.

Prices can reach £150 per kilo but I have never handled any so cannot confirm that.

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Melissa Waddingham, a truffle hunter on the South Downs to teach respectful groups what she knows but in a secret location because too many groups have been operating on a commercial scale in the New Forest and Epping Forest. She has a blog and an interesting gallery of photos to look at.

Her truffle hound Zebedee has become as famous as her but it's his nose folks are paying to follow...we are but the 'tail who wags the dog' in this case.

<https://truffleandmushroomhunter.com/>

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Over at The English Truffle Company they have run truffle-hunting days since 2011 in Dorset from October to the end of January then later, due to increased demand added another venue in Wiltshire in 2013.

Fascinatingly they also have a 'rent a truffle hound' service with out without a handler for those landowners with woodland interested to see if they are growing fungi with out knowing it.

They are also in need of more dogs and handlers to actually go and search on their behalf but as this is an extremely personal business a confidential relationship would be all-important. Certainly they are vetting the callers carefully as so much is at stake for a landowner if he finds truffles but the company is constantly searching for new sites.

Very exciting stuff.

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# LOBSTER CELERIAC SOUP WITH LOBSTER FOAM AND TRUFFLES

## Ingredients;

Diced cubed celeriac about 2 cups

Two cubes of unsalted butter

1-½ cups of water

### TO MAKE THE FOAM

Extra Virgin Olive oil

1 cup double cream

10 lobster shells

### THE GARNISH

1 small cube of butter

4 ounces lobster meat

Salt and pepper

½ ounce black truffle

## METHOD;

Simmer the celeriac until it is soft in a pan of salted water

Puree until smooth adding some of the cooking water

Set aside.

For the foam heat the oil and put in the lobster tails until they turn red then add in the tomatoes paste and cook for 2 mins.

Add the cream and simmer it all until it's reduced by 25%.

Strain and leave aside.

Melt the butter and add the lobster, salt and pepper and heat.

Meantime boil the soup and add the lobster cream slowly using a blender to make it frothy.

Put the lobster meat into bowls and pour over the soup then add the lobster foam on top.

Grate the truffle over the foam and voilà.

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# MASH STEAK HOUSE 77 BREWER ST LONDON

<http://www.mashsteak.dk/blog/spring-is-finally-here/>

Missing Mash Steak House was like having missed a European country with out noticing....embarrassing.

It's situated on a corner in Soho, somehow the giant door seemed awkward to open and looked like an office block but even someone with impaired eyesight could see *if* they were looking.

The name is simplistic but has nothing like what they have to offer which is nothing short of excellence, sophisticated and impressive.

The entrance lobby is impersonal but they guided me over to large black lifts to descending into the basement decorated with the grandeur of a Manhattan 1930's of ocean liner, and a few million bucks from a consortium of Danish international investors. It's a statement.

An amazing large bar of serious proportions dominated the space and demanded respect.

That was far as I got. I was caught in its web, rolled around in the spider's silken threads and offered my self up as easy prey.

I climbed up with dignity onto the end leather barstool, gave over my business card and introduced myself.

This bar had to be understood before I marched off into another kitchen before saying 'mash potatoes' then back out into the freezing cold grey wind; I did need to warm up as a very smart barman gave me a glass of water.

"So please tell me, what's the story behind this great looking place?" I asked the professional, smart, neat young man.

Straight ahead I could see French style banquets, a forest of dark mahogany, a furnace of polished brass, and high ceilings with 1930's handsome architectural details. The more I saw the higher the prices climbed in my mind. This was not a place of 'mashed potatoes' this was serious black/platinum card dining for those with time, an appetite and money.

He told me about the aged N.Y. Strip, Uruguay Rib, Serrano Ham, the Key Lime Pie, the crowd and how his cocktail bar was one of the best award winning innovative, world famous bar, with

a dedicated team who marinated cherries, made their own syrups and changed the drinks menu seasonally.

I don't remember how exactly but in no time my truffle bag was opened and I proposed he make a Hungarian Honey truffle cocktail, with a touch of truffle-flavored honey.

By now another barman had joined in, sniffing, squeezing and suggesting combinations so I was cemented to the bar stool balancing with core muscles drinking in their every word.

"There voila. That's our suggestion based on a champagne Honey truffle cocktail" As he pushed over a slender elegant flute filled with the golden liquid whose tiny bubbles has slayed many a man.

"Can I taste it?" I asked reaching out tenuously.

"Its yours-you can drink it. Tell me what you think?"

I took a slip, careful not to suddenly swing, and fall to the floor still clutching onto a broken glass like a fool. My legs swayed frantically, searching for an anchor and wedged themselves against the bar at a very uncomfortable angle.

"Oh... this is sublime" I replied as the heavenly liquid hit my tongue, the roof of my mouth, the back of my throat and I swallowed hesitantly. "If we lined them up, one after another, until we ran out of ingredients would that be rude???" I thought of asking, but didn't.

I took lots of photos. Photos of the two smiling proud men, photos of the glass, of the truffles and photos of the bar and I asked them if they would like to include this on their next seasons menu.

Their words faded into the background as I stared at the flute wondering how long I could make it last.

Perhaps they sensed my hypnotic state as they wondered off and left us to get deeply acquainted.

It was the end of lunch service and only a few diners were left over coffee, brandies and petit fours, thrashing out the fine details of global industrial mining deals.

A small grey suited man had excused himself from another table and took a seat at the far end and ordered a very special whiskey in cut glass tumbler, which he nurtured with love and affection.

He didn't want anything in the world to disturb him and had someone screamed 'fire' we would have not moved until the flames were at our feet.

I forgot about the chef. I didn't care if he had left the building and rather wished he had.

Deep melodious tones swept the high ceilings drooling out some New York City type of jazz that had no name but all the right notes.

I loved the music, loved the 1930's, loved champagne, loved truffles and loved the fact we were all together united, while hoping someone would lock the doors and leave us alone.

"You are a genius-thank you so much" I said warmly as watched the young man take away the glass and little black napkin.

"Who do I like enough to bring to such a fantastic place, spend a fortune and spoil with the best money can buy?" I asked myself as I went back up in the office lift, which now began to look positively cozy, and across the black gloss lobby entrance.

"No one." Said a voice from inside my head. "The place is big enough to get lost in so go there on your own if you need to" the voice ordered me.

"Ok" I agreed with myself and crossed the busy narrow grey windswept street, which disappeared into Soho, promising to see the chef on my next visit.

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# A TRUFFLE BLOG

<https://trufflefarming.wordpress.com/>

Without any intention of promoting a particular individual, or institutions, I do feel Marcos Morcillo and his very informative blog needs a mention.

It's a fascinating update on a myriad of topics for everyone to enjoy regardless of their prior knowledge.

I hope very much that one day our paths will cross, as he is just the type of person I would be grateful to meet.

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# TRUFFLE OIL

What is truffle oil? Is it simply normal oil with some truffle bits thrown in?

Can we make our own truffle oil? Why is it so expensive?

It was traditionally made from submerging truffles pieces into so the oil takes on the flavor natural just as eggs put next to truffles take on the flavor.

Different oils and using different truffles will logically produce different effects.

Very often they don't use truffles but a chemical compound 2,4 dithiapentane, an odorant, which is cheaper and produces a one-dimensional flavour and a lot of chefs wouldn't touch it.

That compound is then added to a grape seed or an olive oil base.

Antony Bourdain once famously said, ""Let it be stated here, unto forever and eternity, truffle oil is not food.

Its strongly described by Joe Bastianich as "It's made by perfumists. It's garbage olive oil with perfume added to it, and it's very difficult to digest. It's bad for you.

These people are not mincing their words as the product is derived from the gasoline industry and the average truffle mac-cheese dish is swimming in this poison.

Good chefs won't surrender to profit margins, or reduce their standards of excellence, by enhancing dishes with a manufactured product being so committed to only using fine produce.

Thank God for them and the miracle of nature's truffle, but I do confess to having added it to scrambled eggs on a Sunday brunch.

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MORTONS  
28 BERKELEY SQUARE  
LONDON

<http://www.mortonsclub.com/>

In its heyday, mounting the steps leading up to the seemingly permanently open door of Morton's, added to the excitement and heightened blood pressure as you approached the welcome desk where luck, membership, good looks, and contacts might get you in the door.

Without these meant you had to walk back *down* the steps, having been turned away, and walk against the tide of those coming in; only fools or the stupid would attempt such a hopeless assault.

Women were proposed to, children conceived, divorce lawyers hired, property bought and adultery was committed behind those doors.

Positioned at the top of Berkeley Square, literally on raised ground, gave the super large window an incredible view of mature London Plane trees, emerald green grass, folks rushing across the gravel paths between wrought iron railings, and a view towards Piccadilly.

It was a positively poetic spot for customers consumed with themselves, conversation and each other as many a time I looked out and hummed "A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square...."

Mounting naked looking steps, missing the previous long serving familiar doorman in red brocade, directing a fleet of chauffeur's, double parked Rolls, Bentleys, and Lamborghinis it now all felt a bit dull.

I didn't recognize the young lady behind the desk and I doubted if she was even born during Morton's peak.

After giving her my business card and mumbling something about chef Robi I wandered off to the right and into the long bar that over looked the square and stood still with horror.

What had they done to that room?? It had been murdered! Someone with a pen, a name, an address and a tax number had taken the decision to remove *all* the vestiges of the classical, charming, brass, mirrored brasserie style long mahogany bar so many had fought to get near.

I was now standing alone in what felt like some miserable, grey, dull, faceless, half empty, unrecognizable, depressing room.

There are places of slaughter, torture, lies and fraud that have not been so hideously destroyed by a new interior designer who held some personal grudge against the original interior; and some one paid for that! Why??

I was outraged.

Sadness, now mixed with gratitude of having seen, felt, smelt, and witnessed the original era of the legendary Morton's overwhelmed me.

It was a heavy and poignant lesson.

Nothing is forever; fun, excitement, style is a fragile mix with no particular formula and an interior designer with a fat budget can wipe all that away with a sweep of their pen, then send the bill. Disgusting. They should be *made* to restore it back or hung in public in Berkeley Square with Morton's supplying the drinks and hors d'oeuvres to the baying crowd.

"Have you seen this? Have you seen what they have done to the bar...? Do you even remember the place before it was ripped to shreds..?? I asked her as she stared at me expressionless.

"No sorry I didn't" she answered not wanting ask why I was so upset.

"What have they done to the restaurant? Did they rip out the restaurant and murder that as well...they must have! They would not have saved the restaurant and slaughtered the bar... I don't want to see...I can't stand any more. Sorry you have my card. Say hello to chef Robie I'm sure he's busy. I need to go"

"When is the scaffolding going up in Berkeley Square to hang the two idiots for doing this? The client who paid and the interior designer with zero taste?" I asked her from the door. She shrugged. How could she know or care.

She was probably relieved to see the back of me and shared none of my pain or the lesson I had just learnt.

As I walked down the stairs back into the sunlight a passed a couple of grey 'suits', badly dressed, boring, young men coming up the stairs chatting and probably thinking they had 'arrived' in life.

"Appreciate what special places there are left in London and give them your business, patronage and support before they go" I lectured myself and promised to make a list.

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# HIGH PRICES

These are a few old stories about crazy high prices paid for truffles some of which are well known in the restaurant world but are amusing and never cease to amaze.

In 2010 the Macau casino tycoon Stanley Ho bought two pieces for \$330,000 that weighed 2.87 pounds.

Apparently an anonymous bidder from Hong Kong who might have been a “famous Chinese writer” called into a white truffle auction by satellite phone at a castle in Italy’s Piedmont region and paid \$120,000 (three times the price of gold) for two pieces weighing a total of just over 1 kilo.

In 2012 Jay-Z paid more than \$20,000 at Alba’s local truffle haunts, traders thought that he could affect their market as he did Cristal champagne.

And the crude but repeated story of rapper P. Diddy who once demanded, “shave that bitch” regarding a truffle to New York-based French chef Daniel Boulud.

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# WHITE TRUFFLE WITH VEAL SCALOPINI

## Ingredients

600 g of sliced veal  
butter  
cream  
white wine  
salt  
pepper  
flour  
Meat broth

## Method

Flour the meat slices and cook them with salt and pepper in a saucepan of melted butter.  
Add the white wine when they are half cooked.  
Add the meat broth and the cream and allow to cook very slowly.  
Slice the white truffles on the top and serve.

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BAR EIGHT  
8 MOUNT ST  
MAYFAIR  
LONDON

[www.8mountstreet.com](http://www.8mountstreet.com)

On a stunningly sunny day I passed Bar Eight in full stride while looking straight ahead towards the timeless Connaught Hotel as something caught my eye, I swiveled on one foot, turned back towards the door of Bar Eight.

The interior looked intriguingly dark against the building's red brick exterior clocked in sunlight but not foreboding just fascinating.

"What do we have here?" I asked a very tall good looking doorman who should have been in a film and probably thought the same.

His eyes peered down his chiseled features, as I was too big to be ignored but he didn't reply and he opened the door and I slipped through.

"Hello, how are you?" asked a very nice well-dressed young lady exuding confidence but not remotely worried I had arrived way before lunch had started.

My eyes swept the interior like lasers picking up on huge slabs of white streaked terracotta Italian marble, dark rich floors, a long stylish bar and expensive bar stools with brass back spokes.

"I love those bar stools!" I exclaimed wondering if I needed more stools for a house somewhere and would they sell me a couple? A ridiculous idea.

"Oh, thank you. They are from Italy I am so glad you like them" she said stroking the matching chairs which I had not yet noticed.

On a corner table was a couple of well-dressed European men deep in conversation over an espresso thrashing out some kind of deal. It reminded of the days when all the interesting deals were done between people in restaurants and not via emails from boring offices.

"I'm here to see chef. I have the black truffles," I said patting the bag and smiling like I was delivering him gold.

"Is he expecting you?" She asked.

“Not exactly but if you give him my card please I will only take a few mins of his time” I also want to meet and see chef and get down those perfect dark granite stairs under that hugely expensive slab of orange marble.

Very New York City I thought, where the Italian restaurants love that minimal, expensive, classic, modernist look.

She disappeared and I looked around further soaking up the ambiance of Mayfair’s relaxed, laid back, understated chic.

Opposite was the Sexy Fish Restaurant full of girls with big hair, big rings, big boobs, stiletto shoes but Bar Eight was cashmere, white silk, strings of pearls, and classic Armani, a restaurant for thinkers, people with specific conversation, who had a point and a message.

“Please come down stairs chef can see you” She broke my reverie and my fascination with starched white empty tables.

“Hello, my name is David,” said a very nice looking man with large blue eyes, a fine skin and delicate white hair. I studied his face while he recounted his history, saw his attention to detail and courage, but he still looked so cool after lifetime in a tough business. He seemed relatively unscathed.

I trotted around the kitchen behind him, toured the downstairs bar, peered into the larder, read the menu, looked at photos of delectable dishes and forgot the sun outside.

The lunch service was fast approaching but just like sitting next to a delightful passenger on a long haul flight, the arrival now seemed irrelevant.

“Here take my business cards” and he gave me few, which I put into my case.

“I like using truffles” he said and I repacked my case and zipped it up.

We walked up to the ground floor and the glass front door where the doorman stood with his hands behind his back like a grey granite statue. I had forgotten about the outside world or that I should be in it.

“We shall meet again,” I said and I looked at those fabulous bar stools again which begged for sophisticated customers.

I had arrived curious and a stranger but now I was leaving a confident member of the family... even if they didn’t recognize it.

“Good bye” I said looking up to the tall granite model featured doorman who opened the door as I left, and he grunted in a Russian accent.

“You don’t look so cold any more either,” I thought stepping out into a hot sun that could have warmed him up and the huge slabs of Italian marble.



# CHAMPAGNE & ALBA TRUFFLE RISOTTO

## Ingredients;

5-10g of cleaned Alba truffles from a good supplier  
300 g quality unsalted butter  
400g Carnaroli risotto rice  
1200 ml of mushroom stock  
Truffle oil  
Salt and fresh ground black pepper  
2 finely diced shallots  
125ml Champagne  
150g freshly grated Parmesan cheese  
80ml double cream

## Method;

Melt 100g of the butter in a wide bottomed pan and gently stir in the rice with a wooden spoon until it becomes translucent.  
Adding the mushroom stock slowly stirring after each addition so the stock is absorbed before adding more but do not over cook the rice.  
Stir in the butter a few cubes at a time and when that is mixed in pour in the Champagne.  
Add Parmesan cheese, double cream and seasoning.  
Serve but make sure the plates are not cold.  
Drizzle with the truffle oil and shaved truffles  
Porcini mushrooms are a good substitute if truffles are out of season.

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# 34 MAYFAIR GROSVENOR SQUARE LONDON

<http://www.34-restaurant.co.uk/>

34 Mayfair restaurant looks like it had always been there but it actually opened in November 2011 but now I struggle to remember what the building was ever used for; an office block I think? Certainly nothing as interesting as the restaurant now is.

There seemed to be something slightly absurd about the oversized piece of modern sculpture on the steps leading up to double black and glass doors as it looked humorous.

The mature doorman was from the 'old school' charming, friendly, non-judgmental, secure and very London; they don't make men like this any more.

I walked across to the neat small welcome desk in an empty restaurant with staff busy preparing for service and waited to be noticed.

The room had tones of a Parisian French brasserie, a thirties luxury ship, London club and an art gallery all mixed together so essentially catering for a variety of tastes.

I noticed how Caprice Holdings (the owners) spared no expense or effort in getting every detail right and finding that magic ingredient that shouted 'timeless'.

While half of restaurant interior designers rip out gorgeous old crafted bars and banquettes, people like Caprice Holdings seem to be installing them at every opportunity. There is 'banquette war' being waged in the capitol.

According to legend the Champagne coupe known as the first 'Bol Sein' was shaped around Marie Antoinette's breast so the British artist Jane McAdam has now created a mould from Kate Moss's left breast for a glass, which 34 Mayfair sell at £340 for two in a satin box. Kate is of slender frame so its hardly the DD cup of todays ample women therefore a very economic way of serving champagne.

Another contemporary twist is the 60 seater private Emin Room, with out the unmade famous Emin bed which always represented to me the deterioration of society and its wanton waste of money.

Richard Caring knows how to rope in the household big named artists but I suppose they do complement each other as a look.

“Thank God someone’s got some taste and isn’t trying to recreate Terminal 5,” I said to the room as I leaned on the desk like a statue trying to merge.

“What’s that? Are you being helped Madam?” said a nice clean black and white uniformed young person.

“Is Harvey Ayliffe here?” I asked and smiled knowing he might not be.

“I have the Italian truffles-perhaps if a sous chef is free please?” I followed him dragging the case ready for another performance on an otherwise empty stage.

“Something smells delicious,” I said sniffing the air and noticing a few staff eating in the corner before the lunch service began. It was a curry.

On the open kitchen counter bar I met a charming young man who was not Harvey but with a sense of authority beyond his years.

He sniffed and examined and inspected carefully and we talked truffle words to each other and we agreed on points.

“I had lunch here when you first opened all alone on that table for four and it was very nice,” I pointed to the corner table that had probably been given to me hoping someone would turn up.

I was very comfortable dining alone and tried to guess what Andrew Neil was discussing, with associates on the table opposite, across starched white tablecloths.

The waiter had recommended some dramatic desert, which I didn’t need and was a huge let down after two perfect first courses; it was my own fault as I should have quit eating while satiated and content. Another lesson learnt laden with unwanted calories.

As I left, the stage was set for the players to arrive, but for now the air was still and sweetened by the scent of a delicious curry, that probably wasn’t even on the menu.

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# CHINA

Chinese truffles are now sold in packages 25.00 Euros for 100 grams in the large French supermarket **Casino** for the general public in 2015.

They are black, about 25 grams each and generally of equal size laid onto a bed of straw in a cellophane box which shows how standardized the Chinese have become. To get such a luxury product onto a supermarket shelf is a miracle, even if it's not to everyone's taste.

To complicate matters it has now been proved the Chinese variety truffle (*Tuber indicum*) is now growing in Europe which is of great concern to truffle producers from America and Europe, some of whom already provide DNA certification.

Scientists have identified at least 4 species all coming from Yunnan (50%) Tibet (10%) and Sichuan (35%) and the low cost of this item means it can be incorporated into other foods giving them the 'truffle identity' even if the product has much less aroma. It will be a huge commercial business and a future problem to truffle growers.

The scale of their production can be seen in this comparable chart;

1	China, mainland	9,291,928	5,150,000
2	Italy	1,416,342	785,000
3	United States of America	700,864	388,450
4	Netherlands	553,907	307,000
5	Poland	396,936	220,000
6	Spain	263,421	146,000
7	France	210,329	116,574
8	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	158,188	87,675
9	Canada	147,949	82,000
10	United Kingdom	131,891	73,100

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# TRUFFLE CHICKEN

## Ingredients

- 100m olive oil
- 1 chicken cut into 8 pieces
- Salt and pepper
- 200g bacon lardons
- 200g shallots
- 1 garlic
- 500g clean wild mushrooms
- 50g unsalted butter
- 500ml home made chicken stock
- 200ml double cream
- 1 bunch of tarragon
- 1 small truffle

## Method

Add half the oil to a large hot pan then season the chicken pieces with salt and pepper and fry until deep-golden brown on each side.

Heat a large casserole pan until hot then add two tablespoons of oil.

Fry the lardons, then add the shallots and garlic and cook until coloured.

Transfer the chicken in the casserole.

In the same frying pan, fry the mushrooms in the butter for 3-4 minutes.

Add the stock, cream and tarragon.

Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Pour the sauce over the chicken and simmer for 20 minutes.

Pile the chicken in a serving bowl, cover in sauce.

Shave over the truffle and serve.

THE END



## About the Author

Dame DJ

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Dame DJ describes herself as "married young, divorced young, had two children young, & lived in a few different countries to learn about life"

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*['Downsize to Freedom'](#)* FREE Part 1 (Part 2) eBook was written about liquidating, removing all financial obligations, selling overpriced assets and "downsizing" - to everyone's horror.

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<http://amzn.to/2dBd7Ut>

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<http://amzn.to/2dQqP99>

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Our guest author is

DAVID GREY

New book

THE POT HOLE.

A Pot Delusion.

<http://amzn.to/2dmGA5p>

David Grey gives us a very personal and revealing account of his two-year drug habit in The Pot Hole as he describes his marijuana use, its potential addictiveness and consequences many pot smokers are likely to suffer. David's honest insight into his conflict of wanting to advocate the legality and end prohibition of marijuana whilst struggling with the personal conflicts brought on by the dependence on a destructive drug habit. The Pot Hole gives us a fascinating intimate glimpse into the mind of a pot user and illustrates the conflicting perspectives of addiction and the powerful seduction of this forbidden plant. Following him for two years from his initial introduction by his pretty girlfriend CC in romantic Barcelona to isolation in a French mountain village we journey with him along a bumpy route all too familiar with drug issues.

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