

On the Hunt for Truffles

Dogs are often trained to search for this expensive food that's used in cooking worldwide.

The truffle is one of the culinary world's most sought-after delicacies. Related to mushrooms, truffles are fungi that grow underground. Finding these hidden treasures is not an easy task. Although pigs are well-known for their truffle-tracking abilities, dogs are also used to sniff out these delectable treats. The Lagotto Romagnolo, a breed that's rare in North America, has long been used in Italy to find truffles.

These photos show a Lagotto Romagnolo named Tom hard at work hunting for truffles, with his trainer Jim Sanford from Blackberry Farm in Eastern Tennessee. At the fifth annual Oregon Truffle Festival, held in Eugene, Ore., Jan. 29-31, 2010, Sanford conducted a two-day truffle-dog training seminar open to a limited number of truffle aficionados and their dogs. The seminar included classroom instruction and hands-on training in the woods hunting native Oregon truffles.

Founded in 2006, the Oregon Truffle Festival brings together truffle fanciers and truffle experts from all over the world for three days of educational seminars, truffle-gathering excursions, truffle-cooking demonstrations and research seminars. For more information, visit www.oregontrufflefestival.com