**7 Tips, Tricks & Recipes for Cooking With Truffles**

… Below are seven truffle tips, tricks, recipes and lies that were unveiled by Ken Frank, Executive Chef/Owner of Michelin Star La Toque restaurant at **The Westin Verasa Napa**. Chef Frank says he has eaten more truffles than anyone he knows. He bought his first fresh truffle in 1976 from legendary Sacramento food and wine merchant, Darrell Corti, and has been hooked ever since.

**One –** The best way to store a fresh truffle is to carefully wash it, pat it dry and store it in a paper-towel lined, sealed Tupperware container. “No matter what, don’t do something stupid like storing a truffle in raw rice. All it does is dry out the truffle,” said Chef Frank. To get the biggest bang for your truffle buck, you can put a couple of wrapped sticks of butter or raw eggs in the container. The aroma will easily permeate the shells and wrapper. Use both to make a decadent omelet, further enhanced with some truffle shavings.

**Two –**“There is absolutely zero flavor difference between wild or farm-raised truffles and if anyone says otherwise, they are full of [crap]! I’m excited about our local orchards and believe that they can produce truffles every bit as good as their European counterparts,” said Chef Frank. He also mentioned that farm-raised Australian truffles are now “spectacularly good” and he can’t wait until he can call up a neighboring farmer and say, “Could you please drop off a couple of fresh-picked truffles this morning?” It takes approximately five to seven years for a truffle orchard to start producing. Chef Frank’s neighbor, Robert Sinskey Vineyards, planted truffle-inoculated trees in 2010, so hopefully he won’t have much longer to wait.

**Three –**Commercial truffle products (truffle oil, honey, salt, etc.) are a fraud. Because of truffles very short shelf life, real truffle flavored oil is simply not a viable product. Commercially produced truffle oil is invariably artificially flavored, no matter how fancy the bottle or prestigious the purveyor, they are all chemically made utilizing a synthetic derivative, 2,4-dithiapentane.

**Four** **–**Truffles are best eaten ASAP since they lose half their flavor after the first week. If you want to store for later use, the best way is to fold shavings or minced peel scraps into butter, and then freeze for later use. Add truffle butter to hot angel-hair pasta with a little Parmesan, for a glam dish. Chef Frank stated that “Butter is really good with truffles. Too much butter is never enough.”

**Five** – A scrumptious way to show off your truffle is to get a nice creamy cheese (Chef Frank recommends Mt. Tam from Cowgirl Creamery) and carefully cut it into three layers. (He wraps fishing line around two wine bottle corks and holds the corks firmly to slice even layers. Shave fresh truffles over each layer, and then put back together. Be sure not to cover it completely or else the cheese layers won’t adhere. Wrap the cheese tightly in Saran wrap and let it infuse for 48 hours.

**Six** – When it comes to selecting a truffle it’s all about freshness and fragrance. You want one that feels firm and not too spongy, unless you plan on using it that day. This is one case that bigger is not necessarily better (think golf ball to lemon-sized), and you do want a truffle with smooth skin and not a lot of warts. I know how mean it seems to go on and on about an event that is already over so I just have two final tips for you.