

Current Affairs - Rare black truffles uncovered in central Moravia

[2009-07-16] By Jan Velinger

The truffle, often referred to as the king of all fungi, has long been considered one of the world's finest delicacies - found in five-star restaurants around the world. In the Czech Republic the edible fungus is extremely rare, but that is changing. The reason is due changes in temperature and humidity: just recently samples of the rare fungus were uncovered in Moravia.



Summer truffles

Truffles are native to areas around the Mediterranean: Croatia, Italy and France and can cost up to 30,000 crowns (more than a thousand US dollars) per kilo. Surprisingly the rare tubers have now been uncovered in the Czech Republic. Mycologist Jiří Polčák, who had long set his sights on uncovering samples, proved successful recently - an event that made headlines in the Czech papers. The location has not been disclosed but he did reveal it was an oak grove somewhere in central Moravia. When I spoke to him over the phone he explained that conditions this year were ideal for the rare fungus.

“We have seen perfect conditions: warm temperatures and humidity perfect for summer truffles. Without question, they are very rare in the Czech Republic, found before in only very few areas. About a month ago I found my first sample. In a way it was unbelievable. People searched for truffles in the area for years without any luck.”

In the Czech Republic the tuber is so rare it is protected by law: uprooting truffles can land offenders heavier fines. One thing is certain: Jiří Polčák's discovery won't make it onto any dining room tables. Still, the specialist says he has no regrets.

“They are among the world's most sought-after delicacies and it's true that truffles are incomparable to any mushroom. But I myself am perfectly happy just to have made the find. It may be the northern-most find in Europe. I'm happy just to be able to photograph samples and to see them grow. I don't need to eat them”