

YVLM met *Jack Ponticelli*

in 2004 as he introduced his Black Diamond Farm and a new crop of black perigord truffles—his oak and filbert trees had been inoculated with spores.

YVLM learned that Jack earned an agriculture degree upon leaving the military; worked as a forest ranger and then started Avian AdVenture Hot Air Balloon Company in New Jersey. He became acquainted with NC's temperate winter when he bought his balloons in Statesville.

Now four years later, Jack is CEO and co-founder with his son Aron, of Piedmont Valley Truffles and has harvested from his original 35 acres in Yadkin County. He has planted an additional 75 acres of 15,000 inoculated trees in Surry County. With a total of 110 acres, he is the largest truffle farmer in the country.

As vice president of the North American Truffle Growers Association (headquartered in NC), Jack touts 50 members. His efforts go to unifying West and East coast growers.

Aron partners with his father and while residing in New York City, flies to NC twice a month dedicating his MBA in marketing and area restaurant contacts to benefit Piedmont Valley Truffles.

Dogs are used on Black Diamond to sniff out the truffles and the "staff" totals seven!

Currently truffles are selling for \$100 an ounce, retail. Both Jack and Aron stick closely to their business plan. The future holds more research on native NC truffles, boosting their irrigation system and organic farming of truffles. Piedmont Valley is currently offering organic oils with the



Left to right: Jack and Aron Ponticelli
Piedmont Valley Truffles, Farm-to-Table,
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intoxicating, earthy aroma and taste of truffles (fabulous for dipping crusty bread) and truffle butter.

The Ponticelli Family continues to break ground in the Yadkin Valley with truffle farming, production consultation services, truffle hunting adventures and if there's time, why not a hot air balloon ride over the Valley!