

**A**fter Europe, the Manjimup region in Western Australia is the second-largest producer of the prized French black truffle (Perigord). A major achievement considering the region's truffle cultivation and harvest industry is just 16 years old.

"We have a large natural resource in our region which will still be developing for years to come," says Warren Burns, head chef at Karri Valley Resort.

While truffles might still be a way off being readily available in the supermarket, the burgeoning truffle-growing scene in the South West is good news for truffle lovers. Accessing the 'black gold' is now far easier than ever before, with many festivals, including the annual Manjimup Truffle Kerfuffle, offering the delicacy.



Image: Sarah Hewer

At this year's festival, Burns will join celebrity chef Poh Ling Yeow for a masterclass that takes the formality out of truffles and reinvents them for the home kitchen.

Can't make it? Ahead, they share some of the tips they'll be teaching. You'll be an expert at cooking with truffles in no time.

## Store your truffle in an airtight container



Image: Jessica Wyld Photography

The first thing to know about cooking with truffles is how to store them. Truffles have a shelf life of anywhere from a few days, up to three weeks, though they are best used within 10 days of harvesting. To extend the life of truffles, they must be kept in an airtight container in a cool place, and be checked daily for excess moisture.

Store the truffle in the container with a small piece of kitchen towel, or a small amount of raw rice. This will help absorb some moisture coming from the truffle. Replace the towel or rice daily.

If the truffle gets too moist in the container and a white fur grows, simply rinse gently, pat dry with paper and leave to air dry.

To squeeze more life out of your truffle, Burns suggests popping them in the freezer. “When brought fresh, try freezing them in vacuum bags. It is a great way of storing them for semi-long periods of time.”

## **Infuse truffle to get more out of it**

The truffle perfume has an impressive power to permeate almost anything nearby. This opens up a whole world of different truffle-infused foods. While truffle oil and salt are familiar pantry inclusions, Ling Yeow suggests finding other clever ways to infuse your truffle to get more out of it.

“Store truffles in rice or amongst eggs for infusion, to get more bang for your buck,” says Ling Yeow.

Even the shell of a raw egg poses no obstacle to the aroma of a truffle. Place a truffle in a sealed container with half a dozen raw eggs and a touch of rice for moisture control, and leave it in the fridge overnight. The truffle will flavour the yolks beautifully.

## **Pair truffle with creamy foods**





Image: Jessica Wyld Photography

According to Ling Yeow, “truffles and creamy foods, like soft cheeses and eggs, make great friends”.

Not only are eggs, butter and soft cheeses an easily accessible vehicle for truffle, but the subtle flavours of more creamy foods let their delicate flavour shine. Burns is a big fan of storing truffle in butter, trapping the raw flavor and gently releasing it when the butter is heated up in dishes.

“My favourite way to use truffles is with eggs. There’s no greater marriage – the silky texture and subtle flavour of perfectly cooked eggs is just such a great vehicle for truffles,” says Ling Yeow. Try using truffle infused eggs to make a simple scrambled egg dish, or shave a bit of fresh truffle overtop a fried egg.

## **Pair truffle with strong flavours**

Surprisingly, the delicate aromas of a truffle pair well with bolder flavours.

“My relationship with truffles is to treat them like mushrooms. An earthy flavor goes well with strong flavors like thyme, pepper, smoking – all the flavors of the forest,” says Burns.

## **Try adding truffle to doughs**





Image: @eatsbyblake

Flavouring doughs extends truffle a long way. “Try adding it to fresh pasta dough. You will need to grate the truffle finely, but it stores very well in the fresh pasta, only to be released later in the sauce,” says Burns.

He suggests cooking truffle-infused pasta dough in truffle butter, truffle salt and oil, topping with shavings of fresh truffle, fresh herbs and pepper.

## **Cook them with a gentle heat**

Ripe truffles generate volatile aromas, so preserving them wherever possible is key. “Gentle heat is best or the aroma dissipates. Enclosing them in something like a dumpling skin or pastry is great for trapping and protecting the aroma,” says Ling Yeow.

Burns says that you don't even need to take the cooking that far, because the truffle begins to release oils and aromas at around 37 degrees. "I have found that just the heat from heat lamps is enough to get those aromas going, just before the food goes to the guests."

*(Lead image: Danica Zouks)*

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