



Interview

JORDI SERENTILL



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CEO of LAUMONT

«A truffle's «good look» is more and more valued»

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Truffle is the most valuable gourmet mushroom, the rarest and most expensive, but simultaneously the most mysterious. Previously, it was considered the «devil's mushroom,» which was eaten by witches, so it was not found in the recipes of medieval cookbooks.

Truffle, a well-known aphrodisiac, has many healing properties. It is 80% water and

contains vegetable protein, fiber, vitamins C and B, and minerals. It is low in calories: only 24 kcal per 100 g product. It has many antioxidants, the primary function of which is to slow down the aging process and prevent the onset of cancer.

LAUMONT is the leader in Spain in the sale and distribution of truffles and mushrooms. The company operates an extensive network of mushroom and truffle pickers who supply fresh products to the center for the selection and distribution of truffles in Tarrega (Lleida) and the center for the selection and distribution of

mushrooms in Valladolid.

During the season, the company provides its customers with freshly picked truffles and mushrooms, while during the year, you can find dried mushrooms, canned truffles or truffle products (such as truffle oil or tartufata).

Jordi Serentill, CEO of LAUMONT (left), shared with us the peculiarities of the truffle business.

-Tell us about your company, LAUMONT. How many people work with you?

-Our specialty is truffles and mushrooms of the highest quality. We are a reference in this sector

on a national and international scale, as we have over 40 years of experience. We can make about 500 transactions per day as we have clients all over the world, including the main wholesale markets of the country (Mercabarna, Mercamadrid and Mercabilbao). We have about 60 permanent employees.

-What is the sales volume of the truffle market in Spain (were we talking about kilograms or tons)?

-The truffle is a product that ends up, for gastronomic purposes, either in a restaurant, in an industry to make truffle products

or for retail sale in a supermarket.

If we talk about fresh black truffles, the most famous and used in gastronomy, it is difficult to answer here for two reasons. On the one hand, there is no official data. On the other hand, its harvest varies yearly depending on climatic conditions. It is also important to know that many of this product's sales come from exports to other countries such as France, the United States or Japan.

-Why are truffles so much more expensive than normal mushrooms? What indicators affect the price of truffles?

-The truth is that nowadays, the price of a truffle is practically the same worldwide. Every week, its quote changes depending on whether it is enough to supply the market.

Truffles are more expensive due to their high gastronomic value, especially because they are scarce. To give you an idea, it takes 7 to 8 years for truffle plantations to start bearing fruit, and during that time, they need to care for the truffles to grow at their best.

The main factor influencing the price of black truffles is the amount of harvest, as the quality is usually the same from year to year.



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-What are the quality standards for truffles?

-I would say that it is its taste and the natural aroma it gives off. But the truth is that a truffle's «good look» is more and more valued: it is more if the truffle is completely spherical and without bumps than a truffle with an uneven shape. Although both may have the same gastronomic value.

-How are truffles from the Pyrenees region different from the Alps region?

-Suppose we talk about wild truffles today. Unfortunately, their production has decreased so much that we do not sell them. But at the end of the day, it's the same type of truffle, and its qualities are very similar whether grown in the Pyrenees, the Alps or Australia.

-Who are your main customers?

-We have clients from all over the world. We export to more than 50 countries worldwide (including Andorra), and the main customers are distributors, supermarket chains and food industries. But we also sell to restaurateurs directly through market stalls or our online store.

-What is truffle harvesting technology?

-As for harvesting «technology,» this is... a truffle dog! There are dogs trained to detect truffles underground. They help the truffle grower look for them. Without truffle dogs, we wouldn't be able to detect truffles!

-What are the storage conditions



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for truffles?

-The storage of fresh truffles is similar to that of mushrooms. They must be refrigerated and consumed as soon as possible. Those that we know will not be sold fresh. We either preserve, freeze or dehydrate them.

-Please tell us about the product line (truffle juice, truffle pearl etc...). What freezing technologies do you use?

-We have many products derived from truffles and mushrooms: canned, dehydrated, frozen, condiments... Each product is treated differently. Although we have clear

product lines, we also often adapt to the needs of our customers as we are manufacturers.

-Do you have many competitors? What are your competitive advantages?

-Our competitors in the international arena. While there are a few companies that keep up with our volumes, there are many other smaller companies that also specialize in certain product lines.

Our advantage is our production capacity and professional experience. This helps us win recognition at the international

level. We are serious, trustworthy partners and have a large network of truffle growers and pickers. This allows us to have a fresh product daily and ship it anywhere.

-What is the investment volume for 2023 and the expected profit?

-The turnover for our financial year reached 35 million euros, which is our record and confirms the positive dynamics of recent years.

-How do you plan to develop?

-We are currently in the construction phase of a new warehouse in Tàrraga with an area of approximately 4500

m2. This is a clear bet to increase our production capacity and expand our product range related to truffles and mushrooms. In this way, we will be able to reach the most demanding customers in the retail sector and serve our current customers even more effectively.

We will also take the opportunity to create an immersive space where our visitors can fully understand what it means to pick truffles or mushrooms. We also plan to organize cooking shows, where the best chefs will cook from our star products and then conduct a tasting of the dishes. ≡

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