

# French importer hopes to grow truffles in the Texas hill country

**United Press International**  
**DRIPPING SPRINGS** — Buried in the Texas hill country, where culinary tastes usually run toward barbecue and tacos, are seeds that could make the state into the truffle capital of America.

Black truffles, ugly little round fungi that for centuries have been considered delicacies by gourmets, are among the globe's most expensive foods, at upwards of \$500 per pound retail.

Francois Picart, a native of southern France, hopes to

change the high-brow image of what have been called "black diamonds" by cultivating them in Dripping Springs.

Picart says that tiny Texas town, 30 miles outside Austin, has plenty in common with the French fields that for centuries have been the exclusive domain of the black truffle.

In an interview he said he scoured America for a suitable growing spot for them before settling on the the Hill Country, whose well-drained, limestone-rich soil and summer rainfall

provide a good growing environment.

"I liked the name," Picart, 36, said of his new hometown. "Obviously, the limestone is here. The Hill Country is a very beautiful place to live. It's very similar to the southern part of France. And people are friendly."

In the summer of 1982, he sent soil samples from Central Texas to laboratories in France, which heartily approved of the Texas dirt for truffle cultivation.

Picart also spent a summer without air conditioning in hot, humid Austin to test the climate firsthand.

"It wasn't too hot for me, so I figured it wasn't too hot for them (truffles)," he said.

Truffles resemble spongy charcoal. Fresh ones impart a strong, earthy flavor to foods such as meat, poultry, eggs, rice and pasta.

They grow 2 feet underground, on the roots of filbert (hazelnut) or oak trees. Difficult to harvest, they must be sniffed out by specially trained pigs or dogs.

They also take years to reach maturity.

Picart, who has lived in Texas about a year, began by sprouting acorns to grow oak seedlings.

The seedling roots then are injected with truffle mycelia, the vegetative part of fungi taken from their spores.

The seedlings grow six to nine months in pots of sterilized dirt before they are planted in the earth.

For each surviving tree, he hopes to realize about \$25,000 an acre by the end of the decade.

"That's the highest (dollar per acre) legal crop in the United States," he said. "There's nothing more profitable."

The Frenchman has trained his pet Labrador, V.K., to sniff out truffles. He said dogs are better truffle hunters than the pigs traditionally used in France because it often is hard to convince a 300-pound porker to let go of the fungi after rooting them out.

While waiting for his own crop to grow, Picart sells oak seedlings to other prospective growers, and imports truffles from France to sell in the United States.

His U.S. customers include the Neiman-Marcus specialty shops, which are selling his imported black truffles in tiny wooden boxes for Christmas.

The price is \$60 per 1 1/2-ounce truffle, which Picart said is cheap.

"The market for truffles is already established in the United States with stores and restaurants," Picart said. "But they're sold at \$250 a pound wholesale, which winds up being between \$400 and \$500 retail. That (expense) is really what's hurting the truffle market."

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Another five to seven years must pass before the tree forms a "brule," or burned-out circle, around its base that signals the presence of truffles.

Tree and truffle form a symbiotic, rather than a parasitic, relationship, each providing needed nutrients to the other.

Picart will plant about 30 acres of oaks this year, with 250 trees per acre. Allowing for trees that die, and based on a yield of one-half to 4 pounds of truffles

## Protestors plan to stop weapon-bearing train

**United Press International**  
**BOISE** — Members of a group opposed to nuclear weapons say they will block railroad tracks in western Idaho when the next train carrying

warheads passes through the state on its way to a Washington missile site.

Jane Foraker-Thompson, spokeswoman for Ada County Citizens for Peace, said the

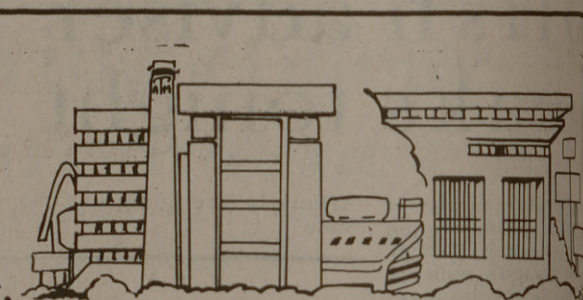
group has already begun "civil-disobedience training" to teach its members how to stage the protest and what to expect from law enforcement authorities.

"This is not something we take lightly," Foraker-Thompson told a news conference Monday outside the Union Pacific depot in Boise.

She said the group includes leaders and members of several churches, and representatives of the Snake River Alliance, Boise Women for Peace, and teachers and parents, she said.

"You can see we are not a wild-eyed, radical group of people," said Foraker-Thompson, a professor of criminology at Boise State University.

She said the group plans to peacefully lie across railroad tracks in western Idaho when it is notified the next train carrying warheads from a Pantex plant in Amarillo to a Trident missile base in Bangor, Wash., is enroute.



## Around town

**Group to present self-help workshop**

A self-help workshop, presented by Student Activities Minority Adviser Kevin Carrethers, will be held tonight in 401 Rudder. The workshop, sponsored by the MSC Black Awareness Committee, will include topics such as how to be successful in the classroom, advice on the "and feeding of a professor," avoiding an inferiority complex, and improving self-image. The presentation is free and open to anyone interested.

**Pre-theology group presents lectures**

The Texas A&M Pre-theological Society will present tonight the second of two opposing lectures on "The Foreknowledge of God and Human Freedom: If God Knows What I Will Do, I Can't Fail to Do It, Can I?" Professor Richard Stadelmann discusses the topic from the viewpoint that God's foreknowledge and human freedom are not compatible. His speech will be held in 510 Rudder, beginning at 7:30 p.m. An open discussion and refreshments will follow the presentation. Admission is free and everyone is welcome to attend.

**Student "wellness" phone line open**

The Student Wellness Network offered by Student Services offers a telephone reference service for information, counseling and assistance. By dialing 845-WELL, students can talk with a trained individual who can give reference information on nutrition, stress management, fitness and sports activities, counseling services, social activities, medical services, alcohol and drug awareness and religious or spiritual activities and counseling.

**Society offers free help sessions**

Pledges from Tau Beta Pi, a national engineering honor society, will be available to help any student in Math 151 and 253, and ME 211 and 212. The help sessions will be held every Tuesday and Thursday from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. in 1001 Zachry, through dead week. For more information call Glynn Lunney, chapter president, at 846-3316.

**Aggieland photos still being taken**

Juniors, seniors, veterinary and medical school students can have individual pictures for the 1984 Aggieland taken today and Nov. 28 through Dec. 2 at the Yearbook Association office at 1700 S. Kyle behind Culpepper Plaza; and Dec. 3 at the Pavilion on campus.

To submit an item for this column, come by The Battalion office in 216 Reed McDonald.

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Tickets \$10.00, \$9.50, \$8.50

Option Pass period, Nov. 15-18  
 General Admission go on sale Nov. 21

**MSC TOWN HALL**

## Nurse indicted, charged with injury to a child

**United Press International**  
**SAN ANTONIO** — A Bexar County grand jury Monday indicted licensed vocational nurse Genevieve Jones on two counts of injury to a child, charging she injected a four-month-old boy with a blood-thinning drug.

Jones, who is facing murder charges in the death of a Kerrville infant, was charged with injecting four-month-old Roland Santos with heparin, causing the child to bleed excessively, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Nick Rothe.

The child, which was being

treated for pneumonia at the Medical Center Hospital pediatric intensive care unit, survived and was eventually released from the hospital.

Rothe said the two-count indictment charges Jones with causing serious physical impairment and bodily injury to the child. The injection occurred Jan. 9, 1982 in the pediatric care unit, where Jones was employed, the indictment said.

Rothe said the investigation, which began 10 months ago, would continue, and that more indictments may be forthcoming.

The grand jury is also investigating the possibility that hospital officials tried to cover up the incident.

District Attorney Sam McMillen filed contempt of grand jury charges against Dr. Mark Dunn, dean of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, for allegedly subpoenaed by the grand jury.

A contempt hearing is scheduled Dec. 1 before District Judge David Berchelman.

**TEXAS A&M vs LSU**  
**AGGIE BASKETBALL**

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 Total cost of package: \$21.00, \$23.00, or \$25.00

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