

Live your Life



CHOW HOUNDS

Some dogs have a nose for the finer things in life.

SUPER-SNIFFING CANINES are renowned for their work with police officers and exterminators, but they can also put those olfactory skills to use for a fancier purpose: truffle hunting "Dogs really can be taught to find almost anything," says Alana McGee, cofounder of the Washington-based Truffle Dog Company, which trains canines to locate the highly prized fungi that grow on tree roots. And unlike pigs, the better-known truffle trackers, pups are less likely to chew their haul. Instead, McGee rewards her scouts with their favorite treats: "Lolo likes cheese. Da Vinci gets hot dogs, and Duff would do anything for a Dorito."

Whether a dog is roaming in the wild or in an orchard, the mission is simple: catch a whiff, track it down, and mark the site by tapping it with nose or paw. "A gentle touch is preferred," says McGee, 32, a professional dog trainer and food lover who launched Truffle Dog in 2013. "My business partner has a dog who looks at her, barks, lies down, and then pokes the truffles with his foot—in that specific order!"

Though truffles are a gourmet treat (some types sell for \$1,000 or more per pound), even the humblest pooch can become a decent hunter. McGee believes that any breed—from pugs to poodles—can sharpen their snouts in about six months, although larger dogs might be able to cover more ground: "Having a Chihuahua check 10,000 trees wouldn't be practical," she says. "But it would be adorable." —ELYSE MOODY