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CELEBRATED LIVING

Giada De Laurentiis

A Winning Combination

INSIDERS' DINING GUIDE

8 Cities, 16 Experts,
24 Delicious Possibilities

ITALY IMMERSION

A Feast for the Senses

Why You Must Visit These
9 UNIQUE WINERIES

COCKTAIL COMEBACK

Classic Spirits Hip it Up

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FOODIE NEWS

Cutting-Edge Kitchens
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OUR ANNUAL GOURMET GUIDE

Cooking Time

Top chefs and their timepieces.

— LAURIE KAHLE

Anyone who's ever watched a cooking show knows how important timing is to the preparation of a successful meal. "Timing is something we deal with both consciously and unconsciously on a daily basis," says chef Eric Ripert of New York City's Michelin-starred Le Bernardin and *Avec Eric* on PBS. "Sometimes, we have to be very patient and let things cook for a long time. Other times, we have to be very fast, because if something cooks too long, the flavors die." The pace of the service is also crucial to any fine dining experience so that you don't feel either neglected or rushed. With so much attention focused on the clock in restaurants, it's no wonder that A-list chefs are drawn to fine watches.

Reflecting his appreciation

of premium quality, Ripert (pictured) favors VACHERON CONSTANTIN, one of Geneva's oldest and most prestigious watch houses; Alain Ducasse and Sam Talbot admire AUDEMARS PIGUET, another old-guard Swiss manufacture; and PANERAI counts among its fans Daniel Boulud, Wolfgang Puck, and Thomas Keller. "It's about craftsmanship more than anything else," explains Ripert. "You see artistry in watches when the watchmakers create the design, put the pieces together, and develop different complications for calculating time. For chefs, the artistry is in the way we create dishes and craft flavors by combining various ingredients. We control flavors like watchmakers control time, and that similarity connects us in some way subconsciously."

Southern Flavor

When you think of the South, certain comfort foods come to mind. The RITZ-CARLTON LODGE, REYNOLDS PLANTATION, situated on beautiful Lake Oconee, just east of Atlanta, offers guests a true flavor of the South. Dedicated to sourcing local high-quality ingredients, chef James Balster has created a menu at GEORGIA'S BISTRO, the resort's signature restaurant, that features many regional favorites including roasted-tomato-cheese grits, bacon-wrapped lamb sirloin with yellow grits soufflé, cream of Vidalia onion soup, bourbon-molasses-glazed chicken breast, spoon bread, and of course, fried green tomatoes. Mix in Georgia peaches throughout the menu and you have a culinary experience that is spot-on Southern. ritzcarlton.com/reynolds — M.W.

Hill Country Haven

Tucked in the serene Balcones Canyonlands Preserve in Austin, Texas, the TRAVAASA AUSTIN resort envelops its guests in nature. But a visit to this quiet, calm resort is anything but boring. Its daily menu of activities includes yoga, hiking, equine, zip-lining, core fitness classes on a mechanical bull, and a challenge course. And for those who want to not only taste hill country cuisine but learn how to prepare it, chef Ben Baker's classes — themes and topics change daily — will have you whipping up (and sampling, of course) flourless chocolate chipotle cake and other Texas treasures in no time. travaasa.com/austin — L.S.