

Giada
De Laurentis
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

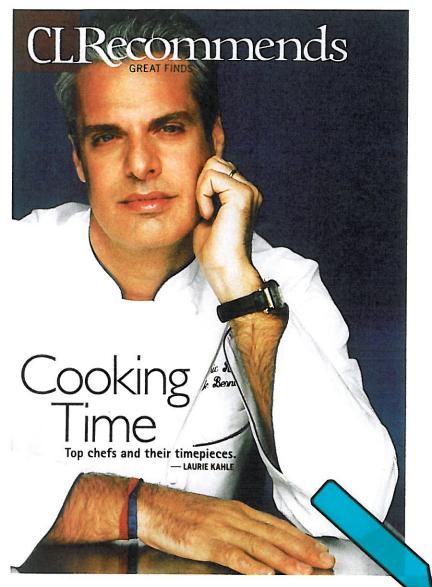
COCKTAIL COMEBACK Classic Spirits Hip it Up BEST QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

FOODIE NEWS

Cutting-Edge Kitchens
Best of Barbecue
Farm-to-Table Favorites
Gourmet Ingredients

The Food and Wine Issue

OUR ANNUAL GOURMET GUIDE



hen 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.

nyone who's ever watched A 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 Michelinstarred 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 oldguard 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."

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.

