



SALADE DAYS

No stranger to elevated thinking, Chef Eric Ripert shares the fruits — and vegetables — of his labor. BY CRISTINA VELOCCI

When Eric Ripert's head is in the clouds, it's generally a good thing. The celebrated chef and co-owner of the Michelin three-starred Le Bernardin — one of just three restaurants in New York City to earn such a distinction — has thought of some of his best recipes while flying around the country on his friends' private jets. "It's a mystery to me, but I think it's because I'm disconnected from everything," he says. "I'm not reachable, I'm relaxed and I'm captive. There is nothing to do, so it allows me to be creative."

As the recurring guest judge on Bravo's *Top Chef* pondered what to make for *Private Air*, he allowed himself to blue-sky it as usual, and then it came to him: Mom. Named after his mother, Monique, this seasonal dish pays homage to the big, rustic salads Mère Ripert would assemble from whatever greens, vegetables and fruit she'd find at the market on any given day. "You have a lot of freedom to put whatever you want in it based on what you find," says Ripert, noting that this autumnal version of the dish features such fall staples as mushrooms, beets and turnips. "It's something that everyone on board will enjoy because it's refreshing. In a plane, nobody wants to eat heavy."

It's also easy. In fact, Salade Monique is so easy to prepare, you might even consider making it yourself: cooking the vegetables the night before and then simply microwaving them on the plane to create the illusion that you've just whipped it all up in the galley from scratch. Or you can just hand the recipe to your caterer, as we ordinarily recommend. After all, maybe you have more important things to think about, too. ■

SALADE MONIQUE

- ½ pound small potatoes
- 6 baby red beets
- ¼ pound haricots vert, ends trimmed
- ¼ pound baby carrots, halved
- ¼ pound chanterelle mushrooms, cleaned and sautéed
- ¼ pound hon shimeji mushrooms, cleaned and sautéed
- ½ pound mesclun greens
- 12 grape tomatoes, halved
- 2 baby turnips, sliced
- ½ fennel, thinly sliced
- Fine sea salt
- Freshly ground white pepper
- 2½ tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Place potatoes and beets separately in small pots with cold water. Add 2 tablespoons salt to pots. Bring to a boil, and lower heat to simmer. Cook until tender, about 10 minutes for beets and 15 for potatoes. Drain and cool in the refrigerator. Once cool, peel beets and cut in half and peel potatoes and thinly slice. Place two pots of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add haricots vert and carrots into separate pots. Cook haricots and carrots until tender, but still a bit crisp, about 4 minutes each. Plunge vegetables in ice-water. Place greens and vegetables in large bowl and season with salt and pepper. Drizzle with balsamic and olive oil and toss. Divide salad equally on six chilled plates; serve immediately.