Get-Fit-Fast Special!

Women's Health

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Food Bonus

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LEAVE YOUR KITCHEN COMFORT ZONE

Whether you hit the farmers' market or the grocery-store aisles, right now a bounty of fresh food is at your fingertips. So abandon your safe signature dishes and try these inventive, healthy, ridiculously yummy ideas.

Market photographs by Jake Stangel » Recipe photographs by Romulo Yanes

Food Special

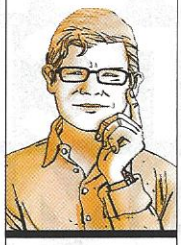
To Market We Go!

There's no better place to find the top crops than at your town's farmers' market. Make the most of local offerings with help from renowned Los Angeles chef **Ben Ford.**

by Shelley Levitt

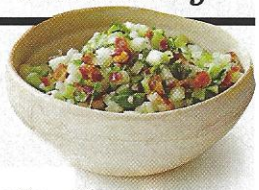
"This makes me want to be a better chef," says Ben Ford, admiring neatly stacked rows of miniature heads of romaine lettuce at the Santa Monica Farmers' Market. That's saying something, coming from the owner of one of the Los Angeles area's top-rated restaurants.

To Ford, produce is clearly the star. A full 95 percent of what he serves at Ford's Filling Station is grown within a 150-mile radius, and his menu changes daily based on the latest offerings. "Food tastes better when it's harvested and cooked at the height of the season," he says. As he wanders through the aisles, he shares with *Women's Health* his inside info for navigating the stalls and picking the best produce—and then later, he sent these delish recipes, inspired by the ingredients he found there.



Ben Ford, 45, trained with Alice Waters, one of the foremothers of sustainable cooking, at her famed Berkeley, California, restaurant, Chez Panisse. Later, he worked at George Lucas's Skywalker Ranch; Lucas had directed his father, actor Harrison Ford, in *Star Wars*. In 1994 when he was a chef at Campanile, a James Beard award-winning Hollywood restaurant, Ford began frequenting the Santa Monica market. Six years ago, he opened Ford's Filling Station in Culver City, California, where he continues to celebrate local ingredients.

Salsa's Split Personality



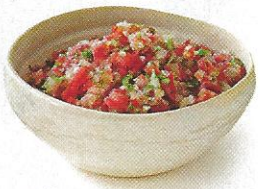
Sweet Green Papaya–Date Salsa

- 1 green (unripe) papaya, diced
- ½ cucumber, peeled and diced
- 2 jalapeño peppers, minced
- 2 serrano peppers, minced
- 3 shallots, diced
- 1 cup chopped dates
- 2 fresh oranges, juiced
- 3 fresh limes, juiced
- 2 Tbsp chopped cilantro
- 2 Tbsp chopped mint
- ¼ cup agave nectar
- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

1. Combine the first eight ingredients in a large skillet. Warm over medium heat.

2. Remove from heat; add cilantro, mint, agave nectar, and olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Refrigerate, covered, for 1 hour before serving.

MAKES 10 SERVINGS. *Per serving (¾ cup): 200 cal, 7 g fat (1 g sat), 38 g carbs, 0 mg sodium, 4 g fiber, 2 g protein*



Spicy Salsa Fresca

- 1 jalapeño, seeded
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 medium onion
- 1½ lbs Roma tomatoes (about 5 or 6), seeded
- ½ cup fresh cilantro
- 4 Tbsp fresh lime juice (about 2 limes)
- Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

1. Pulse jalapeño, garlic, and onion in a food processor until minced. Add remaining ingredients and pulse to desired consistency.

2. Season and let stand 30 minutes before serving.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS. *Per serving (¾ cup): 50 cal, 0 g fat, 11 g carbs, 10 mg sodium, 3 g fiber, 2 g protein*

FOOD STYLING (FOR RECIPES): JAMIE KIMM/APOSTROPHE. PROP STYLING: MOLLY FITZSIMMONS/BIG LEO. ILLUSTRATIONS: JORGE COLOMBO

Food Special

Boost Your Market Potential

1. **Be an early bird.** At markets that open at 8 or 9 a.m., even produce that was gathered that morning will be picked over and starting to wilt by noon.

2. **Try before you buy.** Ford won't buy anything he can't taste first. "Some greens have more of a spicy taste, while others are sweeter. I need to know that when I'm planning a dish. Tasting is part of the experience of a farmers' market."

3. **Bargain hunt.** Do a full lap of the vendors before plunking down any money. While haggling is generally frowned upon, you can score deals on bumper crops. "If a farmer has a big inventory of tomatoes, you might find those at a third the normal price, or less," says Ford.

+ *Blazing Sombrero Cocktail*

- 1 strawberry, stem removed
- 2 fresh basil leaves
- 1 slice jalapeño (size can vary depending on the spice level you prefer)
- 1 oz fresh lime juice
- ¾ oz agave nectar
- 2 oz silver tequila
- Additional basil, for garnish

1. Combine first five ingredients in a shaker and muddle.

2. Add tequila, shake vigorously for 5 seconds, and strain over ice into a rocks glass. Garnish with a basil sprig.

MAKES 1 SERVING. *Per serving: 250 cal, 0 g fat, 21 g carbs, 0 mg sodium, 1 g fiber, 0 g protein*

+ *Fiery Ceviche*

- 3 lemons, juiced
- 3 limes, juiced
- 1 orange, juiced
- 1 lb local halibut or white sea bass, diced into ½-inch cubes
- Sea salt, to taste
- 1 stalk green garlic, finely sliced on a bias
- 1 serrano pepper, minced
- 1 jalapeño pepper, minced
- 12 chives, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp chopped fresh mint
- 3 Tbsp chopped cilantro

1. In a glass bowl, combine all juices and add fish. Season with sea salt and mix well to coat. Refrigerate, covered, for at least 2 hours.

2. Pour out most of the juice and add all remaining ingredients. Mix and return to the fridge for another hour. Before serving, adjust seasonings to taste. Garnish with cilantro flowers and serve with a lime wedge (optional) and tortilla chips.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS. *Per serving: 110 cal, 2 g fat (0 g sat), 7 g carbs, 40 mg sodium, 1 g fiber, 16 g protein*

Flower Power

Blooms can be more than just eye candy.

Some bouquets are as palatable as they are pretty. Ford saves young chamomile blossoms, which resemble daisies, after brewing the leaves into tea, and uses them to make this lemon-flavored simple syrup: Boil equal parts sugar and water until the sugar dissolves, add chamomile flowers, cool, and strain. Try it in iced tea, cocktails, or drizzled over berries. (If you plan on cooking with flowers, make sure they haven't been treated with chemicals.)

Pickled Vegetables

- 4 cups watermelon radishes, quartered
- 8 small white boiling onions, cut into thin wedges
- 2 cups cauliflower florets, separated
- 2 cups baby carrots, peeled and trimmed
- 2 cups late-harvest Riesling or white balsamic vinegar (or skip and double both the cider vinegar and sugar, below)
- 2½ cups cider vinegar
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 Tbsp salt
- 4 Tbsp pickling spice
- 3 cups hot water

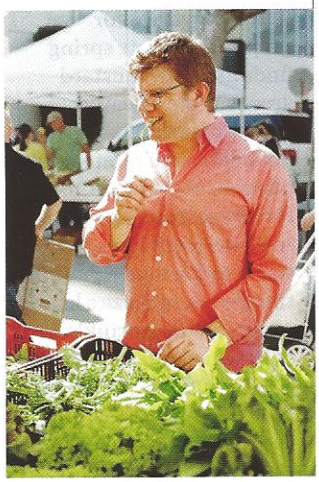
1. Slice radishes and onions into matchsticks or thin rounds. Add cauliflower and carrots and pack into a large glass jar with a lid.

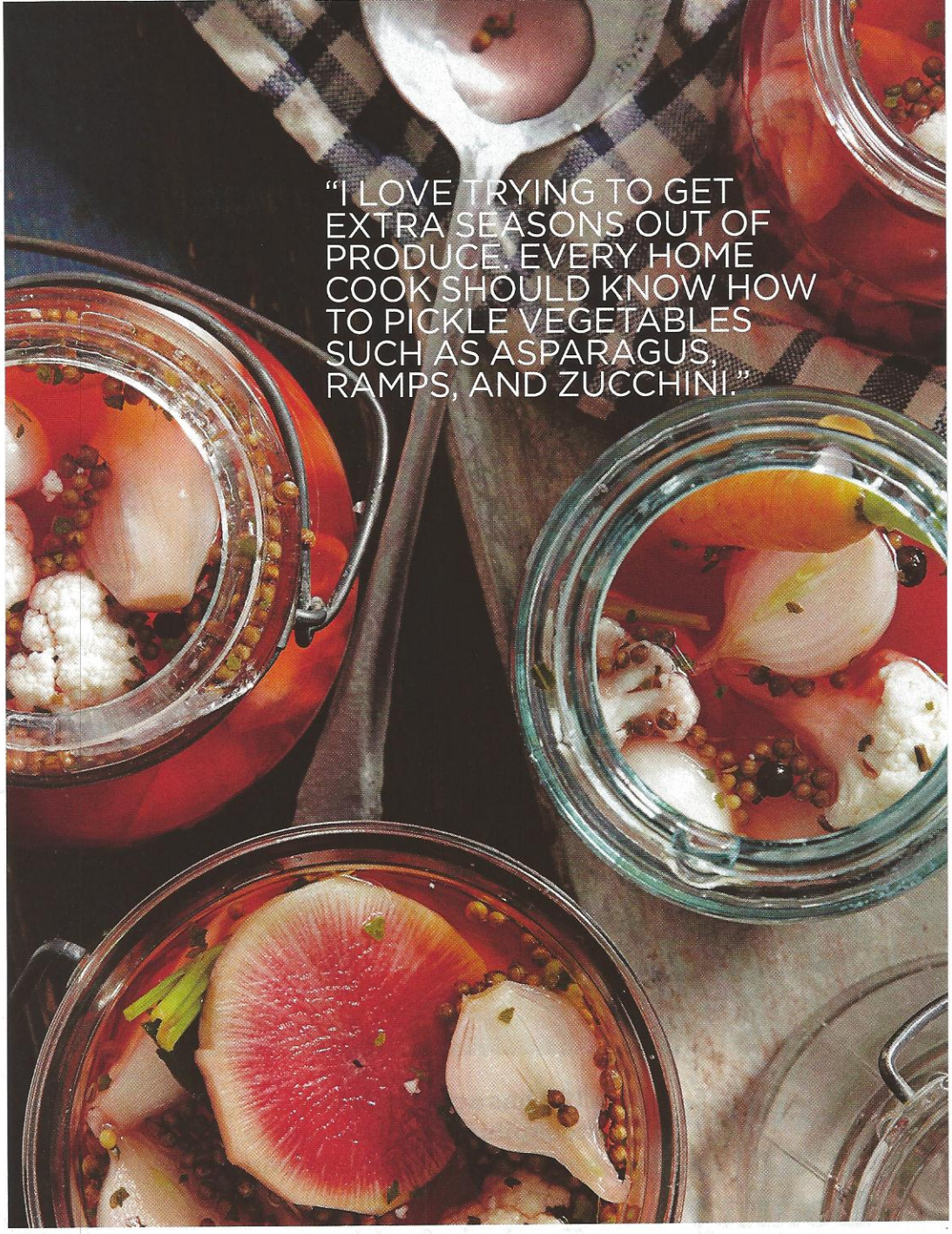
2. In a bowl, stir together vinegars, sugar, salt, pickling spice, and hot water until sugar and salt dissolve.

3. Pour the pickling mixture over the vegetables until fully covered. Cover and refrigerate at least 8 hours or overnight before serving. Will keep for up to three months in the refrigerator.

MAKES 20 SERVINGS (OR 10 CUPS).
Per serving: 100 cal, 0 g fat, 20 g carbs, 1,440 mg sodium, 3 g fiber, 2 g protein

"YOU CAN SMELL GREAT BERRIES, TOMATOES, OR STONE FRUIT FROM A DOZEN FEET AWAY."





"I LOVE TRYING TO GET EXTRA SEASONS OUT OF PRODUCE. EVERY HOME COOK SHOULD KNOW HOW TO PICKLE VEGETABLES SUCH AS ASPARAGUS, RAMPS, AND ZUCCHINI."

Crop-Choosing Secrets

Get the most from your farm-to-table shopping experience.

1. **Weigh the options—literally.** Produce that's heavy for its size is going to taste the best. Through practice, Ford knows that when, for example, a head of cauliflower is too light, "it has lost all of its moisture."

2. **Be adventurous in small doses.** Buy produce you've never tried (even things you're not sure how to cook!). But limit yourself to one or two new items so that you have a chance to use them.

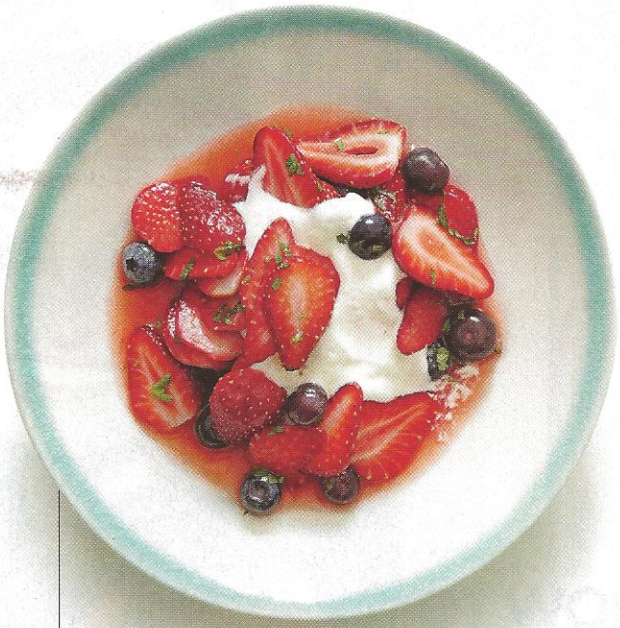
3. **Look for beets, radishes, and carrots with tops.** Though often neglected, these greens are delicious and nutrient-packed but ripen at a different rate than the root veggies they're attached to. They will keep for up to a week and can be added to salads, stir-fries, and soups.

Ripe with Possibilities

Bursting with antioxidants, fiber, and juicy flavor, berries may be the ideal food. Sure, you can eat them by the handful, but here are two ways to save them for later:

1. **Frozen:** Rinse berries and pat them dry, then spread them on a shallow dish or baking sheet. Freeze, then transfer to a freezer bag. You can easily scoop out a handful to toss into a smoothie or to thaw for a yogurt topping.

2. **Preserved:** In a heavy-bottomed pot, mix four cups of crushed berries and a few tablespoons each of sugar and lemon juice (to taste). Stir over low heat until sugar dissolves. Increase heat and bring the mixture to a full rolling boil, stirring often, until it reaches 220°F (105°C). Transfer to hot sterile jars, leaving a quarter inch to half inch headspace, and seal. Process in a water bath; instructions at WomensHealthMag.com/Jam.



Berry Salad with Lemon Yogurt and Mint-Lime Dressing

LEMON YOGURT:

- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 large egg
- Pinch of salt
- 3 Tbsp unsalted butter, cubed
- 8 oz Greek yogurt
- 1 Tbsp honey
- ¼ tsp pure vanilla extract
- 6 cups sliced strawberries and whole blueberries
- 3 Tbsp sugar
- 4 Tbsp limoncello liqueur

MINT-LIME DRESSING:

- 3 Tbsp lime juice
- 3 Tbsp honey
- 3 Tbsp brown sugar
- 3 Tbsp chopped fresh mint, plus fresh mint sprigs for garnish

1. In a small bowl whisk together all ingredients for dressing. Refrigerate.

2. To make lemon curd: In a saucepan over medium heat, whisk together lemon juice, sugar, egg yolk, egg, and salt. Add butter, whisking constantly, until melted.

3. Increase the heat and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens.

4. Immediately press lemon curd through a strainer. Whisk together with yogurt, honey, and vanilla and set aside at room temperature.

5. Carefully toss together the berries, sugar, and limoncello. Allow them to stand at room temperature for about 5 minutes to let the berries macerate a little.

6. To serve, fill bowls with fruit mixture, top with a dollop of the lemon yogurt, and drizzle dressing on top. Garnish with fresh mint.

MAKES 8 SERVINGS. *Per serving: 260 cal, 9 g fat (5 g sat), 47 g carbs, 20 mg sodium, 3 g fiber, 4 g protein*

Snap Decisions

Sugar snap peas are a near-perfect vegetable: high in fiber and vitamin C, and low in calories (about 60 per cup) with, says Ford, "a sweeter, more consistent taste than other peas" and no need for shucking. Eat them raw, pod and all, when you want a quick, no-hassle snack. Or slice them on a bias, blanch, and add to a salad of radishes and baby greens. Ford also likes them pureed into a sweet-pea rémoulade for crab cakes. ■