

STAR POWER

Santa Barbara's chefs serve up their favorite ingredients

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Everyone has an ingredient they cannot cook without. Whether it is an old staple that forms the basis to an array of dishes or a secret weapon that packs the punch, there is always one food item indispensable to any chef. So we recently asked eight of Santa Barbara's leading chefs what is the one ingredient they cannot live without.

Finger Lime

Since arriving in Santa Barbara at the beginning of 2010, Alessandro Cartumini, executive chef at the Four Seasons Resort, The Biltmore Santa Barbara's Bella Vista, has delighted in exploring the region's seasonal produce. And one of his favorite local discoveries has been finger limes.

"They are also called caviar limes," explained Mr. Cartumini, as he sliced a fruit open to reveal an array of circular juice vessels. "They have a texture very similar to caviar, but you can use them wherever you would use a lime. It is very unique, but also very versatile. It's a little bag of gold."

Mr. Cartumini has introduced the Santa Barbara Farmer's Market sourced produce in an array of menu items. He uses finger limes to garnish a crab meat and avocado risotto, as key a component within salads, to accompany raw seafood such as oysters and ceviche, and to add a little more zing to cocktails.



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