

TASTES

Dine right from the garden

» Heard of *food miles* yet? That's the term of the moment for the distance vegetables and other ingredients have to travel to reach your dinner plate. But as more and more Northern California restaurants cultivate their own burgeoning gardens or farms, the food miles can be, as one owner puts it, mere feet.

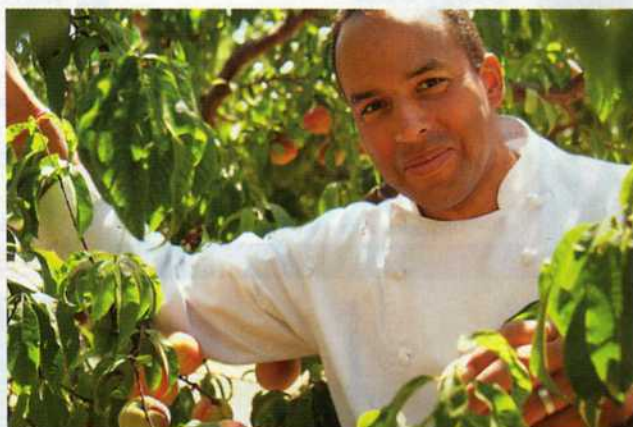
The restaurant-garden trend kicked off years ago in San Francisco at **Greens** (415-771-6222, greensrestaurant.com), where vegetables from the Zen Center's Green Gulch Farm have long graced the menu. Now the **Cliff House** out at Ocean Beach (415-386-3330, cliffhouse.com) serves 41 varieties of organic tomatoes harvested from partner Ralph Burgin's farm. "They are never refrigerated," Burgin says. Heart-shaped Anna Russians show up in a zingy gazpacho, anchor a *caprese* salad with mozzarella, and are roasted with olive oil, garlic, and thyme to top crostini.

San Francisco's **Spruce** (415-931-5100, sprucesf.com) and its Woodside sibling, the **Village Pub** (650-851-9888, thevillagepub.net), use a truck fueled by fryer oil to deliver veggies from their five-acre plot. "Guests can really taste the difference," says chef Mark Sullivan. His salads sometimes feature English peas and shavings of heirloom carrots in a green goddess dressing with avocado, basil, watercress, chives, parsley, tarragon, and chervil.

The cooks at Santa Rosa's **Zazu Restaurant & Farm** (707-523-4814, zazurestaurant.com) can step outside to pick ripe raspberries or the Cherokee tomatoes and *gigante* beans they layer in a gratin. At **Go Fish** in St. Helena (707-963-0700, gofishrestaurant.net), a dozen apple varieties ripen in the orchard in front while garlic and leeks sprout by the patio in back. In the city of Napa, **Ubuntu** (707-251-5656, ubuntunapa.com)

offers vegetarian fare from its garden and greenhouse, such as multicolored radishes arranged with slices of chèvre.

Just-picked English peas, heirloom tomatoes, or haricots verts round out dishes at Guerneville's **Applewood Inn** (707-869-9093, dineatapplewood.com), where truly lucky guests wake up to proprietor Jimmy Caron's plum upside-



Orchard supply: Chef Victor Scargle grows his own fruit and vegetables for diners at Go Fish in the Napa Valley.

down cake. In Sebastopol, a 30-acre farm supplies produce for the Paris-trained chef at the **French Garden** (707-824-2030, frenchgardenrestaurant.com). You might taste zucchini blossoms stuffed with goat cheese, or golden raspberries, gooseberries, and strawberries served with honey from the owners' hives.

Up at **Ravens'**, a vegetarian eatery in Mendocino (707-937-5615, ravensrestaurant.com), salads include apples and pears from trees so old the varieties are forgotten. There's also a retail nursery for diners who get inspired. As Burgin of the Cliff House says, "To go back to the earth and grow things yourself just completes the cycle." —GAYLE KECK