



# Best Dressed



COSSI HOUEGBAN

“Olympic cyclist”, “naval special operations officer” and “hotel security consultant” aren’t qualifications one typically looks for on the resume of the average cook. However, Chef Cossi Houegban is anything but average. The same can be said of his healthful and robustly flavorful menu at Essense, the restaurant nestled within the Two Bunch Palms Resort ([twobunchpalms.com](http://twobunchpalms.com)) in Desert Hot Springs, California.

In celebration of its 75th anniversary this year, the hot springs hotel constructed a 3.5-acre solar field, making it one of the only carbon-neutral resorts in North America. Sustainability translates to its kitchen too, where a farm-to-table food philosophy rules.

A Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef, Houegban worked in kitchens in his native France, as well as London, Hong Kong and Los Angeles, before settling in the Palm Springs area. Inspired by local fare and the resort’s “healthy gourmet” culinary strategy, Houegban devised this easy-to-prepare salad, which showcases house-made *burrata* cheese (though store-bought versions work just as well). Organic heirloom tomatoes and organic honey are sourced from neighboring desert towns and basil is plucked from the resort’s own garden.

Burrata isn’t exactly calorie-free, but a little goes a long way, and the creamy, melt-in-your-mouth cheese melds perfectly with tomatoes, which boast vitamins A, B<sub>6</sub>, C and K, fiber and potassium. Arugula is another good source of vitamins A, C and K, and is packed with folic acid, copper and iron too.

“Not only do our guests appreciate that the salad’s ingredients are all fresh and locally grown or made, they also love its fusion of summer flavors and colors,” says Houegban. “It’s an ideal seasonal dish that feeds the senses and indulges the palate while still being healthful!” —Rachel Kossman

## Burrata Salad

SERVES 1

- 3 oz. green, yellow and/or red organic heirloom tomatoes**
- 2 oz. burrata cheese**
- 1 oz. balsamic-soaked strawberries**
- 1 oz. frisée blonde**
- 1 oz. arugula**
- 1 oz. basil emulsion (see below)**
- 1 tsp. basil oil**
- Balsamic vinegar (to taste)**
- Salt and pepper (to taste)**

Cut and place tomatoes in the center of a salad plate; toss frisée and arugula with basil emulsion and layer dressed greens over tomatoes. Scoop burrata into the center of greens and arrange strawberries around cheese. Drizzle with basil oil and balsamic vinegar, then season with salt and pepper.

### BASIL EMULSION

- 4 oz. basil oil**
- 1 tsp. organic honey**
- 1 tsp. sherry vinegar**
- Pinch of sea salt**

Blend all ingredients together in a food processor. (Leftovers can be refrigerated for up to two weeks.)