

## Four Fab Foodie Destinations

By Ed Wetschler - April 1, 2017



Breakfast in bed at Hotel French Coco in Martinique.

Is it a coincidence that two of the islands in this story are part of France, and that even the two that aren't once lived under French rule? Maybe not, so let's look at some culinary highlights, and... Hey! Stop snacking between meals; you'll ruin your appetite!

### Grenada

Grenada's French connection was the shortest in this quartet, but the Louis' did hang in there long enough to help make this the spice island. It seems only right, then, to book a hotel whose name is **Spice Island Beach Resort**, but the property's moniker is not the real reason to stay there. This all-inclusive combines unparalleled authenticity and luxury: It's owned by a local family and one of only seven five-diamond resorts in the Caribbean. Chef Jesson Church, who oversees the two restaurants, is pure Grenada, too, albeit a Grenadian who has cooked at Michelin-starred Locanda Locatelli.

Church maintains a 30-day rotating table d'hôte menu, so a guest would have to stay for a month to see the same menu twice. Popular entrees at elegant Oliver's include braised rabbit loin with brunoised vegetables, mango and nutmeg sauce, and grilled barracuda with an herb crust, saffron potatoes, and chardonnay sauce. Many of the desserts spotlight Grenada's nutmeg, cinnamon, and other spices, and guests also enjoy local flavors at the Sea and Surf Terrace & Bar.

WiFi, golf, tennis, entertainment, the fitness center, bicycles, nonmotorized watersports, and supervised kids activities are complimentary. The spa (extra charges) is first-rate. Spice Island's 64 suites marry modernity with Caribbean warmth; many have private plunge pools, dining terraces, and four-poster canopy beds. At press time all-inclusive rates for an *Oleander Garden View Suite* for two adults start at \$1,145 (\$8,015/wk). The 1,200-sq.-ft. *Anthurium Pool Suites* with private entrances, plunge pools start at \$1,344 (\$9,408/wk), and *Seagrass Beach Suites* start at \$1,387 (\$9,709).

If your clients feel compelled to leave all this for a dinner some place else, there's no need to go very far. At nearby **Laluna**, an intimate hotel that evokes a Balinese retreat, dishes like spicy, gluten-free Thai peanut chicken curry with garden vegetables on rice noodles are exquisite.

## Guadeloupe Islands

My vote for most sophisticated resort on Grande-Terre, the beachy east wing of the Guadeloupe Islands' "butterfly," is **La Toubana Hotel & Spa**. Perched atop a bluff near Saint-Anne, one of the most copacetic beaches for both locals and tourists in the entire Caribbean, La Toubana has its own beach, too. Still, it's hard to leave the infinity pool, with its panoramic views of the sea and Marie-Galante. At night, the lavender lighting is cool, sexy.

Chef Frederic Marcelli, who oversees Le Grand Bleu, the main restaurant, and the beach restaurant has worked at some of Europe's great hotels. He's a master of Creole fusion, such as breaded mahi-mahi with coconut and passionfruit whipped cream.

Most accommodations have white walls and clean, uncluttered furnishings. At press time rates begin at \$168 (\$1,178 a week) including breakfast. One of the *Classic Suites* would cost twice as much—\$347, or \$2,426 a week—but they're worth it. The ground-floor living room of these 1,160-sq.-ft. duplexes have a sofa bed, full kitchen and bar, Nespresso machine, washing machine, bathroom, and terrace. Upstairs, the bedroom has its own bathroom and balcony.

Culinary travelers to the Guadeloupe Islands would also enjoy the rum distilleries of Marie-Galante and Basse-Terre, tastings at La Maison du Cacao, the unpretentious Creole restaurants along Saint-Anne's Beach, and these four standouts:

- La Rhumerie du Pirate ([larhumeriedupirate.com](http://larhumeriedupirate.com)), in nearby Saint-Francois, looks like a "mere" beach bar, but it's a cut above. My fave: *lasagnes de lambis* (conch).
- Orchidea ([orchidea-restaurant.fr](http://orchidea-restaurant.fr)), also in Saint-Francois, showcases Chef Arnaud Bloquet's modestly named 3-course Menu Petit Plaisir (49 €), intriguing Menu Passion (76€), and swoony Menu Emotion (170€ for two).
- Coco Kafe ([coco-kafe.restaurantguadeloupe.biz](http://coco-kafe.restaurantguadeloupe.biz)), whose indoor and outdoor tables overlook the marina at Gosier, offers both refined Creole (e.g. Pave de Daurade Grille with Creole sauce) and classic French (e.g. Entrecote Grillee with Roquefort sauce).
- L'amer Bar-Resto ([l-amer.fr/en](http://l-amer.fr/en)) in northern Basse-Terre, the Guadeloupe Islands' scenic "left" wing, where BBC One's "Death in Paradise" is filmed, serves Creole dishes such as cabri, or goat, and Colombo de poulet—chicken in a vaguely curry-like sauce.

## Martinique

This French Caribbean outpost is one of the best islands for gastronomy south of Manhattan, a place where even the *rum* has AOC status. The restaurants are mostly French or a sophisticated French-Creole fusion, and, as in Guadeloupe, the weak euro is a bonus.

Chef Nathanaël Ducteil is one of two Martinican chefs who have worked with culinary god Alain Ducasse. (What were the odds of that?) As the chef at **Hotel French Coco**, a new boutique property in the hills above the Caravelle Peninsula, he honors locavore values by procuring raw materials from local fishermen and the hotel's organic garden, and his contemporary Caribbean dishes are both flavorful and photogenic.

Not surprisingly, people from other hotels dine there, but the smart ones looking for a quiet hideaway stay there, too. A member of **Small Luxury Hotels of the World**, this hideaway has 17 suites with plenty of natural light and secluded outdoor spaces, and most of them have private pools. It's also but a short drive to Fort-de-France, the beach, great rum distilleries (Saint-James, Habitation Clement, etc.), and other must-visits of Martinique. Rates start at about \$330, but for \$400 you can book a *Creole Suite* with a private pool. Other restaurants for that must-visit list:

Le Bredas ([facebook.com/Restaurant-Le-Brédas](https://facebook.com/Restaurant-Le-Brédas)) is the garden of gastronomy created by chef Jean-Charles Bredas, who has coveted status as a Maitre Restaurateur of France.

Le Petibonum ([lepetibonum.com](http://lepetibonum.com)), a haute "beach shack," showcases chef/owner Guy Ferdinand, aka Chef Hotpants. Order the lionfish. Or anything else.

Le Zandoli ([la-suite-villa.com/en/restaurant-2](http://la-suite-villa.com/en/restaurant-2)) is the office of Ivan Duchene, Martinique's other Ducasse alum. He serves French-Asian-Creole fusion in a colorful, whimsical art hotel, **La Suite Villa**.

### **Saint Lucia**

**Bay Gardens Resorts:** [baygardensresorts.com](http://baygardensresorts.com)

**Cap Maison:** [capmaison.com](http://capmaison.com)

**Saint Lucia Tourist Board:** [stlucia.org](http://stlucia.org); [stlucia.org/travel-trade](http://stlucia.org/travel-trade)

**Sandals Resorts:** [sandals.com](http://sandals.com); [taportal.sandals.com/landing](http://taportal.sandals.com/landing)



Dining with stunning views at Cap Maison in Saint Lucia.

### Saint Lucia

Having a disappointing meal in Saint Lucia is like finding a Yankees fans in Boston: They may exist, but I've never found one. The French ruled this prize for much of the 1550s to 1814, and their legacy lives on in the island's knack for gastronomy, cacao, and *amour*.

**Cap Maison**, a village-like cluster of rooms, suites, and villas, sits on a hill near Rodney Bay. Its guests enjoy swimming pools, the beach, watersports, a spa, a fitness center, and prize-winning cuisine. Named Caribbean Hotel Chef of the Year for 2016, Craig Jones oversees two of the best restaurants on the island and a jaw-dropping wine cellar. The open-air Cliff at Cap features masterpieces such as braised Kobe short rib with caramelized plantain and sweet potatoes; the Naked Fisherman Beach Bar & Grill serves fresh fish and grilled meats with Creole *sauveur*. Cap Maison also offers tasting menus and food-wine pairing experiences.

Foodies could stay in a *Garden View Room* (from \$337.50 plus 21 percent tax and service charge, for \$2,859/week), but for \$460.50 plus 21 percent (\$3,909/week) you can book a 1-bedroom courtyard villa. Folks who love to love as well as dine might want a 1-bedroom *Ocean View Villa with a Jacuzzi* and four-poster from \$531 plus 21 percent (\$4,515/week). All-inclusive plans are available.

The south of the island has two influential destination restaurants:

- Orlando's, in Soufriere, is a must because chef Orlando Satchell is to haute Caribbean as Thomas Edison was to the phonograph.
- Dasheene, at **Ladera Resort**, features Chef Nigel Mitchel's refined Saint Lucian cuisine, replete with views of the Pitons from between the peaks.

Two more fab food facts about Saint Lucia:

1. **Bay Gardens Resorts'** all-inclusive option includes meals at eight local restaurants in Rodney Bay. Smart, because this makes the all-inclusive model attractive to people who don't normally choose it.
2. Guests at any of the three **Sandals** resorts may eat at the other two, so they have 27(!) restaurant choices. Booking for the *Over the Water Honeymoon Butler Bungalows* at **Sandals Grande St. Lucian** starts next month, **Sandals Regency Le Toc** just unveiled fab accommodations in five categories, and a fourth Sandals will open later this year.

### Contact Information

#### Grenada

**Grenada Tourism Authority:** [grenadagrenadines.com](http://grenadagrenadines.com)

**Laluna:** [laluna.com](http://laluna.com)

**Spice Island Beach Resort:** [spiceislandbeachresort.com/](http://spiceislandbeachresort.com/)

#### Guadeloupe Islands

**Guadeloupe Islands Tourist Board:** [guadeloupe-islands.com](http://guadeloupe-islands.com)

**La Toubana Hotel & Spa:** [toubana.com](http://toubana.com)

#### Martinique

**Hotel French Coco:** [hotelfrenchcoco.com/en](http://hotelfrenchcoco.com/en)

**Martinique Tourism Authority:** [us.martinique.org](http://us.martinique.org)