





WRITER PETER SWAIN
PHOTOGRAPHER PETER SWAIN



nevisian fare

THOSE IN THE KNOW ALREADY KNOW THAT NEVIS IS ONE OF THE CARIBBEAN'S HIDDEN GEMS, BUT GOURMANDS ARE NOW DISCOVERING THAT THE ISLAND'S CULINARY EXCELLENCE MATCHES ITS RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE

WHEN SEEKING GASTRONOMIC ADVICE, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON.

"A man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry," advised the biblical sage, and that holy trinity can now be celebrated in style on Nevis, St Kitts's sophisticated little sister isle.

Sombrero-shaped Nevis is renowned for its sun-drenched, paradisiacal lifestyle, but so far only a chosen few discerning diners have discovered that its cuisine is ambrosia from heaven.

Hiking up the forest-clad 3,000-foot volcano, playing the Robert Trent Jones II golf course, bathing in natural hot springs, and admiring fine colonial architecture, or simply enjoying beaches equally good for combing, loafing, kite surfing, sailing and snorkelling—all promote a healthy appetite.

The choice of dining on Nevis is as much a matter of setting as style of cooking, with restaurants falling into two broad categories: those up the Peak and those beside the beach. Next time, MACO will be visiting the former; in this edition we sample the island's littoral eateries.



While you are enjoying a pre-prandial aperitif, the Four Seasons' waterfront restaurant **MANGO** is the perfect venue on island to watch the sun go down. And of late, Mango's tasty international cuisine has been enhanced by Executive Chef Jason Adams' decision to give the whole mise-en-scène more of a Caribbean twist.

Take the new rum-tasting menu. Mango boasts 101 vintages, so each of four or five courses is accompanied by a different glass of rum carefully selected and introduced by local mixologist extraordinaire, Kendie Williams. My delicate Trio of Ceviche—shrimp and coconut, snapper and corn, conch and mango—was complemented by a light Naked Turtle rum from St Croix, while my spicy skirt steak tacos, with a sweet pico de gallo, was washed down by a robust 21-year-old Appleton Estate rum from Jamaica.

This is innovative, stylish fare ideal for a celebratory dinner, but the varied à la carte menu has dishes to suit all tastes, plus an extensive wine list to match. And afterwards, diners can enjoy a cigar from the well-stocked humidor. Nirvana.





THOSE SEARCHING FOR AUTHENTIC NEVISIAN SANDY-FOOT CHIC SHOULD VISIT SUNSHINE'S, AN INSTITUTION FOR OVER 20 YEARS. WITH A "SOURCE IT LOCALLY, AND KEEP IT SIMPLE" PHILOSOPHY, THE CHARISMATIC PROPRIETOR DIRECTS PROCEEDINGS WITH CHARM AND LAIDBACK EFFICIENCY



Just along Pinney's beach towards Charlestown, those searching for authentic Nevisian sandy-foot chic should visit **SUNSHINE'S**, an institution for over 20 years. With a "source it locally, and keep it simple" philosophy, the charismatic proprietor directs proceedings with charm and laidback efficiency.

Wine is served, and beer, like the barman, is chilled, but Killer Bees are the main event. Thanks to endorsements from the likes of Ian Botham and Meryl Streep, the lethal rum punch has even achieved international fame. Its recipe? "If I told you, I'd have to kill you," jokes Sunny.

The colourful, noisy, family-friendly ambience encourages inter-table banter, with the food deceptively excellent. After a succulent baby lobster starter, my red snapper was lightly barbecued over charcoal to absolute perfection, my companion's ribs spicy and succulent; salads are fresh and tasty, the rice and beans filling. Beach bonfires and regular full moon parties round out a classic Nevisian experience.



Further up the west coast, on Major's Bay, **CHRISHI BEACH** is an altogether more European affair. Norwegians Christian and Hedda Wienpahl have created a chic beach bar that wouldn't feel out of place in St Tropez, and which has become the favourite lunchtime watering hole du jour for many locals, who take advantage of comfortable loungers and the azure water to make a whole lazy day of it.

The menu features a variety of healthy salads with light dressings, a divine grouper burger, tasty spaghetti vongole, Angus steaks from North Carolina, and my favourite, a distinctly picante Thai shrimp dish. The Mediterranean vibe is enhanced by Euro-lounge music, a good selection of Provençal rosés, terrific presentation, and service that always comes with a smile.



In contrast, **COCONUT GROVE** has aspirations towards the gourmet end of the spectrum, featuring Balinese décor under a traditional Dominican Republic-style vaulted thatched roof. Cooking is imaginative, cocktails inventive, and service attentive.

So if you're hankering for foie gras with a mango compot accompanied by fresh brioche, or mahi-mahi en papillote with Bajan seasoning, this is epicurean bliss. Owner Gary Colt has probably the best wine cellar on island, featuring worldwide vintages to suit every palate and pocket, although I found the house Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire just right for beachside quaffing.

The restaurant, only open for dinner, is always popular with Four Seasons guests who can put the cheque on their room tab. Groups of up to 200 can be accommodated, with a large deck ideal for dancing.



OWNER GARY COLT HAS PROBABLY THE BEST WINE CELLAR ON ISLAND, FEATURING WORLDWIDE VINTAGES TO SUIT EVERY PALATE AND POCKET, ALTHOUGH I FOUND THE HOUSE SAUVIGNON BLANC FROM THE LOIRE JUST RIGHT FOR BEACHSIDE QUAFFING



On the same St Kitts-facing, sunset-watching coastline, **YACHTSMAN'S GRILL** is in an upscale American-style sports bar and restaurant with TVs behind the bar, live spiny lobsters in the tank, and a traditional brick oven producing exceedingly tasty thin-crust pizzas.

With tables inside and out, the nautical décor gives the joint a New England feel, although garrulous owner Greg actually hails from Michigan. In a fine example of Nevisian cultural fusion, his wife Evelyn adds Austrian flair, while their Argentinian cook excels at both Italian and Mexican cuisine.

Open all day, this is a great spot for a cold beer and relaxed, well-cooked comfort food like smoked barbecue pork ribs, and coconut lime pie. Quality wines are sold by the glass, cigars reasonably priced, and the restaurant well laid out for larger groups.





The Caribbean's only historic plantation inn actually on the beach, Nisbet, has three good restaurants, of which **SEA BREEZE** is the best for relaxed oceanside dining. With a steel band regularly in attendance, it's the sort of establishment to which you'd happily bring your aunt or grandchildren for Sunday lunch; loyal staff greets regulars with jovial banter, and newcomers with a welcoming smile.

The green and yellow colour scheme has something

of the Florida Keys about it, with the loungers offering a fine view of kite surfers performing astonishing stunts on nearby Herbert's beach, and the sandy seashore excellent for swimming.

The eclectic menu includes local favourites like sweet potato and pumpkin chowder, conch fritters and roasted jerk pork wrap, as well as international standards such as Greek salad and penne pasta with spinach.



MANGO

Open 7 days a week for dinner from 6 p.m.
fourseasons.com/nevis/dining/restaurants/mango,
(869) 469 1111

SUNSHINE'S

Open 7 days a week
Breakfast | Lunch | Brunch | Dinner
sunshinesnevis.com (869) 469 5817

CHRISHI BEACH

Tue-Thurs lunch noon-4p.m., Fri-Sun brunch 11a.m.-5p.m.
chrishibeachclub.com (869) 469 5959

YACHTSMAN'S GRILL

Open 7 days a week for lunch and dinner
yachtsmangrill.com (869) 469 1382

COCONUT GROVE

Open 7 nights a week for dinner,
and lunch on special occasions
coconutgrovennevis.com (869) 469 1020

SEA BREEZE at NISBET

Open all day till 6 p.m. for lunch and light snacks.
Lunch daily from noon - 2:45 p.m. + happy hour
nisbetplantation.com (869) 469 9325

DOUBLE DEUCE

Open for lunch and dinner 7 days a week
doubledeucennevis.com (869) 469 2222

LIME

Lunch | Dinner | Light snacks
Open 11a.m. till late, Mon-Sat
Twitter.com/LimeBeachBar (869) 469 1147

LIME IS RELIABLY FLAVOURFUL, BUT IT'S BEST KNOWN FOR TERRIFIC LIVE MUSIC AND DANCING ON FRIDAY NIGHTS, MAKING IT THE PERFECT VENUE FOR CELEBRATING ANOTHER DAY'S LIMING—EATING, DRINKING AND MAKING MERRY

Alternatively, homesick expats yearning for an English pub can head to **DOUBLE DEUCE**, where roast beef and Yorkshire pudding is served on Sundays, and traditional gastro-pub food, with fresh locally caught fish a speciality, the rest of the week.

Right next door, the food at **LIME** is reliably flavourful, but it's best known for terrific live music and dancing on Friday nights, making it the perfect venue for celebrating another day's liming—eating, drinking and making merry—on the divine island of Nevis.M

