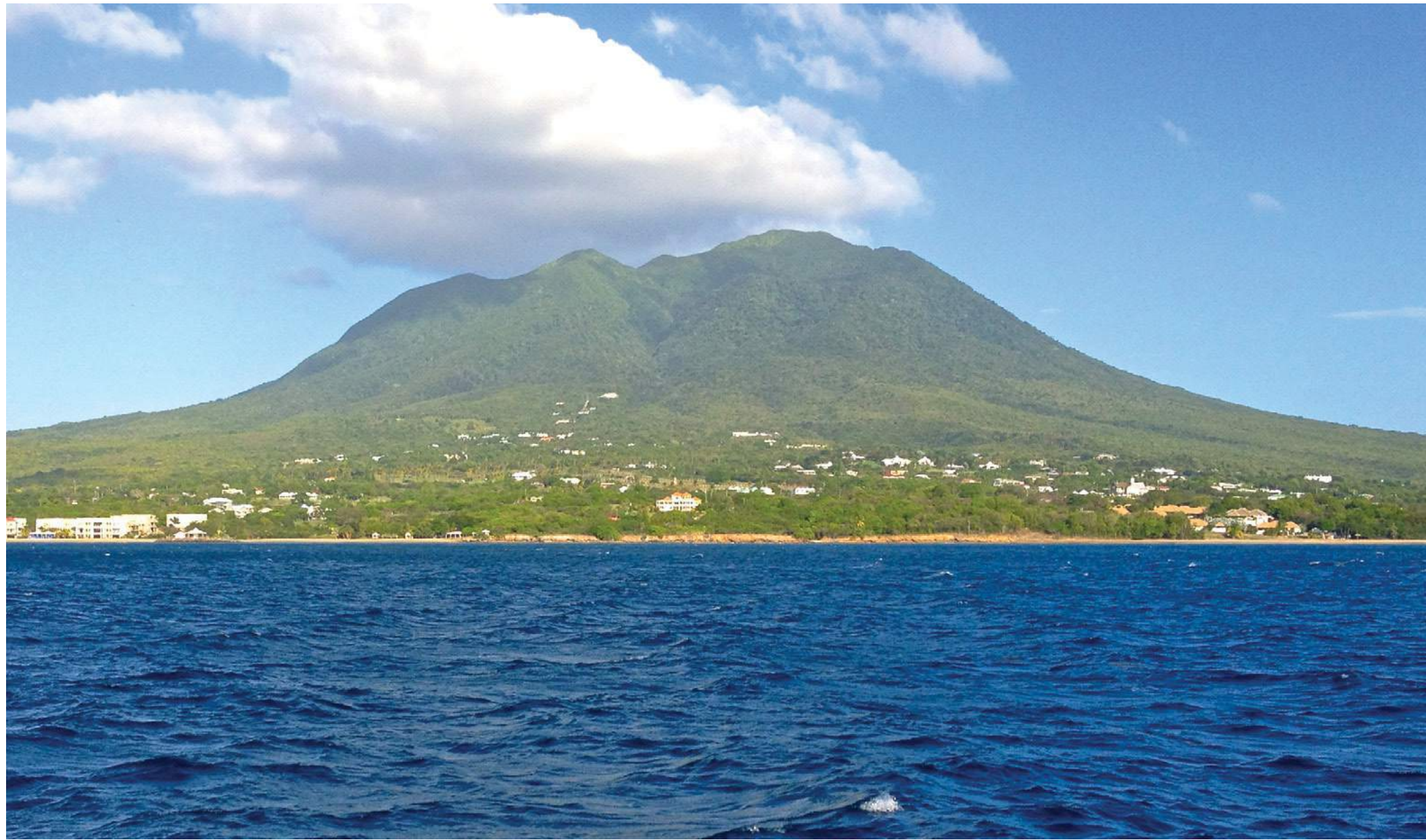


# MACO

C A R I B B E A N L I V I N G



US \$7.95



## a peak repast

NEVIS STORES ITS TASTIEST TREATS UP ON THE SLOPES OF THE 3,232-FOOT PEAK, FROM GOURMET GRANDEUR AND PLANTATION INN PLEASURES TO “SNACKETTES” STRONG ON LOCAL FLAVOURS

IT’S UNUSUAL IN THE CARIBBEAN TO CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN TO FIND THE BEST RESTAURANTS, BUT THAT’S PRECISELY WHAT FOOD-LOVERS ON NEVIS DO. It’s well worth the trek, or drive, to seek out new venues—and you can even wear off that four-course meal with a stroll back down.

At 750 feet and part of Relais & Châteaux, **MONTPELIER** combines Caribbean flair with French sophistication, complemented by a well-stocked cellar. The effortless elegance of this historic plantation inn is largely down to Muffin Hoffman, its stylish chatelaine for the last decade, who has created a refined yet relaxed “country house in the tropics” atmosphere which guests find utterly seductive.

The colonial splendour of the barrel-vaulted Great Room, divine for canapés and a pre-prandial aperitif, leads onto Restaurant 750 where gourmet classics such as pan-seared scallops with Serrano ham and white asparagus cream, together with innovative fare such as crab-encrusted mahi-mahi, can be paired with fine wines recommended by the knowledgeable sommelier. Both presentation and flavouring display

real finesse—my yellow-fin tuna tataki with couscous and roasted-apple purée, eaten under the inscrutable gaze of a rather fine abstract painting, was memorable.

The sumptuous tasting menu at the 300-year-old Mill Privée is perfect for a celebratory dinner, while the contemporary Indigo restaurant promotes a much more casual, poolside ambience. Montpelier is a lovely property in which to stay, but no visitor to Nevis, however short the trip, should pass up the opportunity of at least one repast here. There are even cooking classes for those wanting to unravel some of the chef’s special secrets.





Higher up the Peak at 900 feet, **GOLDEN ROCK** has the most beautiful setting of any restaurant on Nevis, and maybe in the whole Caribbean. Using luxuriant tropical landscaping combined with heroically exuberant design, artists Brice and Helen Marden have transformed a sleepy, if historic, plantation inn into the chicest of venues.

Film stars as well as international movers and style shakers appreciate the serenity engendered by elegant reflection pools, views across to Montserrat and Redonda and, in the evening, the kind of subtly restrained lighting only seen in feature films—it's only a matter of time before James Bond himself drops in. He would certainly appreciate the lethal rum punch.

The local chef prepares snapper, conch and lobster, as well as prime steak, lamb and vegetarian dishes, with panache. Only the best locally sourced vegetables and tropical fruits appear on the menu, and I would advise guests to leave room for the spectacular desserts created by Annalise, the best baker on island. Lunchtimes are always convivial, with the lobster sandwich a perennial favourite, while those in the know also appreciate the eggs Benedict at breakfast time. It is another venue, quite simply, not to be missed.



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Reflecting the natural exuberance of its owner Gillian Smith, a former dancer and all round bon viveur, **BANANAS** is a friendly, colourful restaurant-cum-art gallery high up in the historic Hamilton estate. There are two sides to the menu: international and local. The latter includes goat water (stew), tannia fritters, and, best of all, a "Taste of Nevis" meze platter for two. There's also a good selection of vintage Caribbean rums to tempt the unwary.

On the international carte du jour, guests can choose from braised Moroccan lamb shank, fresh local lobster, or a healthy gorgonzola, roast pear, endive and toasted walnut salad. This is stylish, well-seasoned comfort food served in relaxed surroundings—the perfect place to round out an exhausting day down on the beach. Shabby chic Bananas also has a small gift shop and an ever-changing exhibition of first-rate, honestly priced Caribbean paintings.



Also at altitude, but older by about 300 years, **HERMITAGE** is a family-run plantation inn with traditional Nevisian colonial décor, old-school trappings and a cosy English pub-style bar. Dining is relatively formal, with a fixed-price four-course dinner featuring such belt-loosening delicacies as lemongrass rack of lamb with tamarind sauce, pan-seared mahi-mahi with herb lemon butter cream sauce, followed by rum-soaked vanilla bread pudding or walnut pie.

There's a regular and delightfully sociable West Indian buffet on Wednesday nights, in which a suckling pig is usually presented together with Nevisian specialities such as jerk chicken, pumpkin stuffed with black beans and fried plantain. An after-dinner cigar and glass of vintage port can also be enjoyed in the well-stocked library, lending the venue a raffish charm redolent of days gone by.

The rather more contemporary Botanical Gardens, a lush arboretum just below Montpelier, melds Nevisian exuberance with Buddhist tranquillity. Water features, exotic orchids and rare palms surround an elegant colonial-style mansion, on the upper floor of which sits the **OASIS** Thai restaurant.

The views out over the ocean and tranquil location are a delight, as are the cocktails, either alcoholic or detoxifying. Those familiar with Thai cuisine may find dishes more heavily influenced by Chinese flavouring than they expect, but overall the restaurant is a welcome addition to the island's gastronomic scene.



Visitors to Nevis also appreciate the vibrant local food set-up centred on the dozen or so “snackettes” and Friday night pop-up venues dotted around the island. So, if goat or conch water, breadfruit, ochro, saltfish and johnny cakes float your boat then the **OLE HOUSE CAFÉ** on Pump Road, presided over by the ever-attentive Las Vegas-trained Cleo, is the lunchtime place to be. Service is cafeteria-style and prices modest, but so delectable is the locally produced fare, regulars include government ministers.

Practically opposite, the **PUMP ROAD BBQ** is just one of several Friday night pop-ups specializing in hot ribs, cold beer, and of course barbecued and fried chicken. This smoky venue, aptly run by the Water Department, gets fired up after dark and, thanks to the enthusiastic DJ, can be heard from some distance away. Over on the western side of the island and open all week, **MANSA'S** and the **PARADISE DRIVE-THRU** are similar establishments also serving excellent homegrown produce like jerk pork and “cook-up”—



rice, peas, vegetables, salt fish and chicken.

The best rotis on island are to be found at **CULTURAMA**, a modest-looking café in Jessups. Don't be deceived by the décor—the chicken, fish and vegetable rotis, ready any time after mid-morning, are the genuine taste of Nevis.

Most impressive is the sheer range up on the Peak, making this mountainous spot one of the most highly regarded gastronomic destinations around. From savvy locals to enthusiastic visitors, the hills are alive with the sound of well-sated diners.M