

FIND. EAT. DRINK.

CAYMAN FOODS CHEFS LOVE AND WHERE TO EAT THEM



Brasserie chef Joe Mizzoni showing the local catch from their own fishing boat.



"One of the most important aspects of travel is where to eat. To truly learn about a culture is to see the history of the country, but food is so essential. We want local; we want the best."
- Chef Lidia Bastianich at the Cayman Cookout

“It’s very powerful to see how tourism, travel and food moves the economy forward on an island.”

- Chef José Andrés
at the Cayman Cookout



Grand Cayman is located just below Cuba in the Caribbean Sea and has always been known as a diving destination. In the last few years, the island has enhanced its reputation as a dining destination, calling itself the “Culinary Capital of the Caribbean.” There are two annual events dedicated to food and wine, the Cayman Cookout hosted by chef Eric Ripert and the Taste of Cayman which showcases dishes from the island's restaurants.

With the population descended from the first British, Irish, Scottish and African settlers, you'll find an interesting culinary mix with added influences from Cuba, Trinidad and Jamaica. There is a lot of seafood available and unique fruits and vegetables that are made into curries, stews, fritters, ceviche and braises.

We explore some of the island foods that chefs recommend trying and divulge their picks for restaurants to discover them.

CONCH

THE FLAVOR

"Conch has a great texture and is unbelievably sweet with a long lasting flavor. You would not think that you are eating seafood. When it is in season, I eat it all the time."

- Chef José Andrés



HOW IT'S USED

"Conch is a seasonal item that is available for about five months of the year. It is acquired by free diving for them in unprotected areas of the sea. I really feel it is best eaten as a ceviche, meaning raw with citrus juice, fresh herbs and peppers found here on the island (scotch bonnets and seasoning peppers). Conch has its own unique ocean sweetness to it and is best served sliced very thin so that it is not too tough. It is also served as fritters, but unless you have a local make them you are not having the proper conch fritter. It should be made into a batter with flour, milk, peppers, seasonings and then pan fried like you were frying good old fried chicken, the real way."

- Chef Joe Mizzoni of The Brasserie



"I like to come to here when the conch is in season for their conch ceviche."
- Chef José Andrés on The Cracked Conch & Macabuca

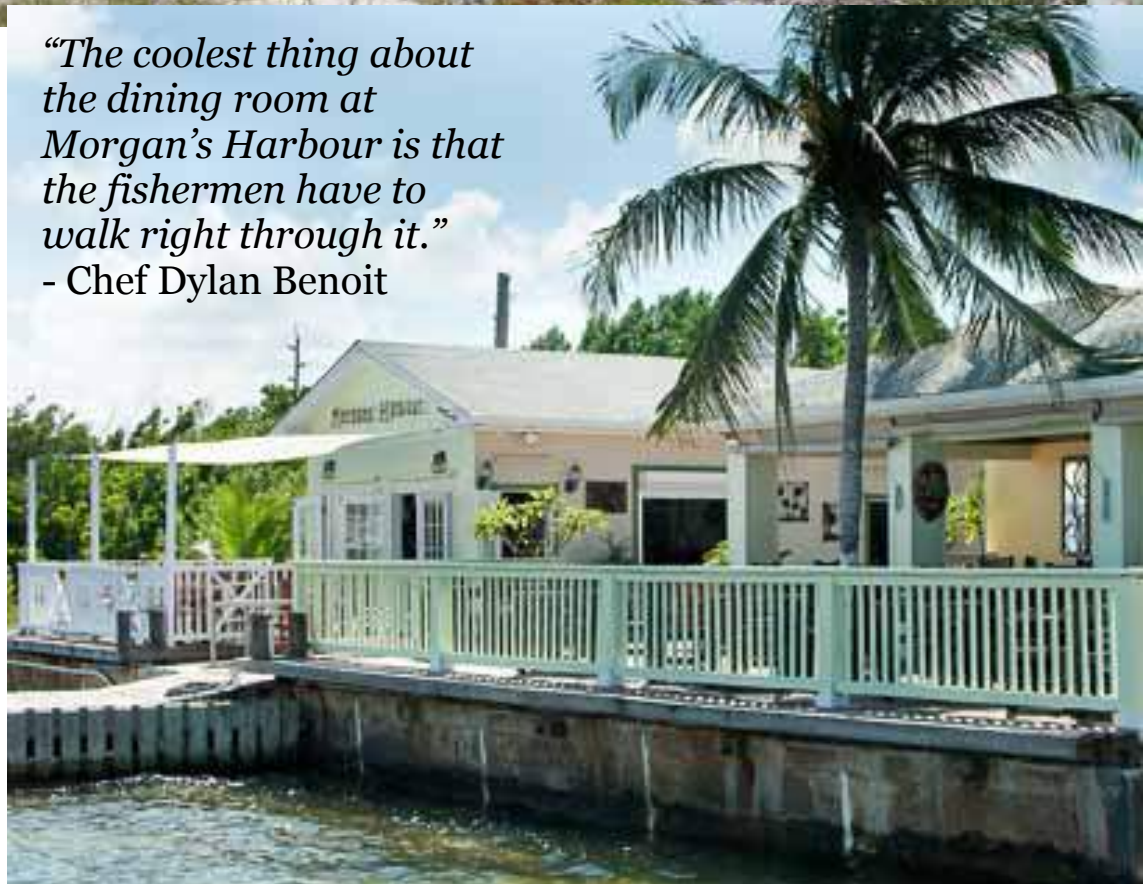


WHERE CHEFS EAT IT

Cracked Conch &
Macabuca
North West Point Road
West Bay
T: 1.345.945.5217
crackedconch.com.ky

Morgan's Harbour
Morgan's Harbour,
West Bay
T: 1. 345.946.7049
morgansharbour.net

"The coolest thing about the dining room at Morgan's Harbour is that the fishermen have to walk right through it."
- Chef Dylan Benoit



LIONFISH

"If the fish that clean the reefs from algae overgrowth are decimated or hurt from lionfish there's nothing cleaning the reefs. The reef starts to die. When the reefs die there are no fish. When there are no fish what am I going to come look at when I come here for diving? Some dead rocks? No. People want to see live coral, live fish."

- Chef Thomas Tennant



Chef Thomas Tennant prepping lionfish

WHAT IS IT

Lionfish are sweet to eat, high in omega-3 and similar to snapper and grouper. However, they are invasive predators threatening the beauty of the island, eating anything and everything they can. They are destroying the natural ecosystem and growing at rapid rates. Lionfish have the ability to reproduce every 4 days, with a single lionfish spawning over 2 million eggs in a year.

WHERE CHEFS EAT THEM

When chef Thomas Tennant isn't fishing for or preparing lionfish at Michael's Genuine, he heads to Tukka in the East End. One of their signature dishes is the Thai Lionfish Fishcakes. Tukka was the first restaurant on the island to serve lionfish and recognize it as something worth eating.

Michael's Genuine
Camana Bay
The Crescent
T: 1.345.640.6433
michaelsgenuine.com

Tukka
898 Austin Conolly Drive
Gun Bay
T: 1.345.947.2700
tukka.ky

WAHOO & TRIGGER FISH

HOW IT'S USED

"I love to eat Wahoo raw with flavors of spice, citrus, sweet, and salt. We use it for sashimi dishes, ceviches, even grilled or seared, served with a vinaigrette, buttery or gremolata-style sauce."

"Triggerfish, also known as island turbot, is a local favorite. It has a bit more fat than wahoo, so it should be cooked through. We can roast it, baste it with butter and thyme when it comes out of the oven and finish it with a bit of local Seville orange."

- Chef Joe Mizzoni of The Brasserie

"Wahoo is one of my favorite fish in the ocean. It has a very lean flesh and a mild, lightly sweet flavor."

- Chef Joe Mizzoni of The Brasserie



Wahoo at Blue by Eric Ripert

WHERE CHEFS EAT THEM

"Morgan's Harbour is my favorite restaurant on the island. I love sitting outside with the north sound breeze and the fresh seafood bought from local boats." - Chef Dean Max of The Brasserie

"I love the 'farm' to table experience at The Brasserie -- they have their own fishing boat and produce garden." - Chef Eric Ripert of Blue

The Brasserie
Elgin Avenue, George Town
T: 1.345.945.1815
brasseriecayman.com

Blue by Eric Ripert
Ritz Carlton, Seven Mile Beach
T: 1.345.943.9000
ritzcarlton.com/blue

Morgan's Harbour
Morgan's Harbour, West Bay
T: 1.345.946.7049
morgansharbour.net

LAND CRAB



"Land crabs are sweet, earthy and taste like where they're from, and that's a good thing."

-

Chef Thomas Tennant



Land Crab cakes from Over The Edge,
Restaurant pictured above.

HOW THEY ARE USED

"We use them in sauces or in small fritters or crab cakes."

- Chef Dean Max of The Brasserie

"Land crabs are a little bit different from the crabs that you get from the sea. They're found mostly in swamps and mangroves."

- Chef Thomas Tennant of Michael's Genuine

WHERE CHEFS EAT THEM

Over The Edge

312 N Side Road, Old Man Bay

T: 1.345.947.9568

over-theedge.com

BREAD FRUIT



WHAT IS IT?

Breadfruit is a workhorse in the Caribbean. The consistency is a like an uncooked potato so chefs use it to make everything from chips to lasagna. Chef Dean Max of The Brasserie says, "We use it to make gratins or fry it to make crispy chips to go with ceviche and tartars."

WHERE CHEFS EAT IT

Some of the causal local Caribbean shacks serve breadfruit as a side dish. Heritage Kitchen, Grape Tree Cafe and Vivine's Kitchen are all recommended by chefs Dylan Benoit, Michael Schwartz and George Fowler.

Grape Tree Cafe
Bodden Town Road
Bodden Town

Vivine's Kitchen
524 Austin Conolly Drive
Gun Bay
T: 1.345.947.7435

Heritage Kitchen
Boggy Sand Road
West Bay
T: 1.345.916.0444



Breadfruit Photo Credit: notsogoodphotography [flickr]

ACKEE



WHAT IS IT?

It is originally native to West Africa and was brought to the Caribbean in the 1700s. It looks like a bean, but when cooked it becomes more like a scrambled egg. You'll see it on many menus served with saltfish cod, which is a Jamaican dish.

"Ackee is a local fruit. It's actually poisonous to eat until it blooms and opens up on the tree. Inside you will find this yellow fleshed fruit that is cooked ever so gently. It has a neutral flavor with a bit of nuttiness to it. A local favorite is salt cod and ackee, which is a breakfast item that includes scotch bonnet for a bit of kick. My favorite dish I have made with this was with potato gnocchi, fava bean, crispy garlic seasoning and pepper butter sauce. It was simple and the textures were smooth and creamy. I really enjoyed it."

- Chef Joe Mizzoni of The Brasserie

WHERE CHEFS EAT IT

The Brasserie
Elgin Avenue, George Town
T: 1.345.945.1815
brasseriecayman.com

Over The Edge
312 N Side Road, Old Man Bay
T: 1.345.947.9568
over-theedge.com

Market at the Grounds
Lottery Road, Savannah

CASSAVA



WHAT IS IT?

"Cassava is a root which grows like potatoes. It is high in starch and is typically served fried or steamed. We use them as chips, fries and tots -- mostly crispy applications. The chips are great with roasted garlic or a style of chimichurri (herbs and oil, peppers)." Chef Joe Mizzoni of The Brasserie

You'll see cassava used to make crispy savory chips and sweet pastries like pies and cakes. Cassava cake is sweet, sticky, and heavy -- just what you need after a rib sticking plate of oxtail stew with rice and beans.

WHERE CHEFS EAT & BUY IT

Heritage Kitchen
Boggy Sand Road
West Bay
T: 1.345.916.0444

Market at the Grounds
Lottery Road, Savannah

Vivine's Kitchen
524 Austin Conolly Drive
Gun Bay
T: 1.345.947.7435

WING BEANS



Photo Credit: STRONGK7 [wikimedia commons]



Photo Credit: Rick Bayless

WHAT ARE THEY?

"They look like they come from outer space. They are square and hollow in the middle and have all these feathery protrusions on the outside. Before my Cayman Cookout dinner at Ortanique, I had never cooked with them. We grilled them quickly to char them in spots since they are very delicate and very crunchy. We then sliced them across so they looked like little stars, almost the same as cutting a starfruit, except these are square with wingy protrusions."

Chef Rick Bayless

"Referred to as a bean, they are actually a pea. Wing beans, like snow peas can be eaten raw, thinly sliced to top a salad or cut into larger bite size pieces and added close to serving to finish a stir fry, sauté or soup. They are a Super Food and they're darn fun to look at."

- Local Grower Patrick Panton of Garden of Eden


WHERE CHEFS EAT IT

Farmer Patrick Panton is one of the most popular vendors with chefs at both the Camana Bay Farmers Market and the Market at the Grounds. The local farm to table movement is gaining popularity on Grand Cayman and you'll find winged beans on the menu at Ortanique and Michael's Genuine in Camana Bay. "My favorite wing bean dish was prepared by chef Thomas Tennant of Michael's Genuine. He served a bean salad using our Asian long bean and wing beans blanched. The fresh flavors of the produce has been very memorable."

Ortanique Cayman
47 Forum Lane, Camana Bay
T: 1.345.640.7710
ortaniquerestaurants.com/cayman

Michael's Genuine Food & Drink
47 Forum Lane, Camana Bay
T: 1.345.640.6433
michaelsgenuine.com/grand-cayman

SCOTCH BONNET & SEASONING PEPPERS



*"We use scotch bonnet peppers for both heat and pepper flavor in all kinds of savory dishes."
- Chef Dean Max of The Brasserie*



PEPPERS

SEASONING PEPPERS

"They're known as the heatless scotch bonnet. They are packed with flavor and are a staple on the island. They are very abundant and work with almost any dish prepared on the island. We cook with them as aromatics, using them in ceviches, crudos, and aiolis. They have a very bright, fresh taste to them and the texture is great when used uncooked. There is no spice to them and a flavor that you will only find in this pepper in the islands. I've tried to grow them in the states, but it's just not the same."

- Chef Joe Mizzoni of The Brasserie

SCOTCH BONNET PEPPERS

"We use them for both heat and pepper flavor in all kinds of savory dishes."

- Chef Dean Max of The Brasserie

FISH TEA

You can find fish tea at many restaurants on the island, but The Brasserie and Heritage Kitchen are worth trying for their elevated and authentic local versions.

ESCOVITCH & STEAMED FISH

Chef Ervin Horvath of Agave Grille loves the Jamaican food at Welly's Cool Spot and Caybrew brewer Garfield Griffiths recommends the steamed whole fish with vegetables and okra at Da Fish Shack. Chef Thomas Tennant enjoys the fresh fish at Calypso Grill, where you'll find a tangy Wahoo Escovitch on the menu.

WHERE CHEFS EAT THEM

You'll find both seasoning and scotch bonnet peppers at the farmers markets and in numerous dishes around the island. The heat in fish tea (a traditional fish-based soup) and escovitch dishes (Jamaican poached or fried chicken and fish with vinegar, onions, carrots and peppers) comes from scotch bonnet peppers. In her locally-made Pepper Patch Jelly, Carol Hay uses a combination of seasoning and scotch bonnet peppers grown in her garden. Buy her jelly at the Bay Market in Camana Bay.

Calypso Grill

10 Morgan's Lane, West Bay
T: 1.345.949.3948
calypsogrillcayman.com

Welly's Cool Spot

110 North Sound Road, George Town
T: 1.345.949.2541

Da Fish Shack

127 North Church Street, George Town
T: 1.345.947.8136
dafishshack.com

Bay Market

38 Market Street, Camana Bay
T: 1.345.815.1080
camanabay.com/bay-market

SEVEN FATHOMS RUM

“A very unique rum that is aged in old Makers Mark barrels and anchored 7 fathoms under the sea. The natural motion of the ocean removes the need to rotate barrels resulting in a delicious libation that is uniquely Caymanian.”
- Chef Dylan Benoit



WHAT IS IT?

What makes this handcrafted golden rum so unique is that the wooden barrels that contain the distilled, fermented sugarcane and molasses are aged seven fathoms underwater (42 feet).

HOW TO DRINK IT

Drink a simple cocktail of rum and fresh coconut water. At Cayman Cookout, chef Dean Max offered guests a unique experience by pouring Seven Fathoms rum into a fresh coconut and adding just a straw.



WHERE CHEFS DRINK IT

Cayman Spirits Distillery
Bronze Road
T: 1.345.926.8186
sevenfathomsrum.com

Agua Restaurant
Galleria Plaza, West Bay Road
T: 1.345.949.2482
agua.ky

Calico Jack's
West Bay Road
T: 1.345.945.7850

Michael's Genuine
47 Forum Lane, Camana Bay
T: 1.345.640.6433
michaelsgenuine.com



TAKE HOME A TASTE OF CAYMAN



LOCAL DELICACIES

Stop by the Camana Bay Farmers Market on Wednesday afternoon and The Grounds on Saturday morning to buy jams, jellies and sweet and sour pickles from vendors selling their artisanal creations.



TORTUGA CARIBBEAN RUM CAKE

Though not artisanal and definitely ubiquitous, they make great gifts. You can find them in liquor stores, grocery stores and at the airport. They are moist and sweet. World class chefs at the Cayman Cookout couldn't help but gobble them up. Chef José Andrés admits to dipping the cake into his rum sour before eating it and chef Dean Max makes a rum cake bread pudding.

A SMALL BACKYARD MARMALADES

These are a variety of citrus marmalades sold at the Camana Bay Farmers Market each Wednesday. The fruits for the marmalades are sourced from trees in the maker's backyard (hence the name) or from her neighbors' trees. She makes a Seville Orange Marmalade, a Wild Tangerine Marmalade, a Lime Marmalade, as well as a Pumpkin, Tomato and Pepper Chutney.



CAYMAN SEA SALT & SEA SALT BBQ RUB

Take home a taste of the pristine, clear sea waters to season your food. They let nature do all the work and use recycled glass from sliding doors discarded after Hurricane Ivan for the bottles. Their salt is used by chef Eric Ripert's team at Blue, as well as many other restaurants on the island. They also make a Sea Salt BBQ Rub with a blend of sea salt, cane sugar, onion, garlic, cayenne, black pepper, smoked paprika, chili powder, allspice and cumin. The result is a salty, sweet, smokey, hot rub that's ideal on pork, chicken, roasted vegetables, and even popcorn.



CAYMAN GOURMET PEPPER JELLY

This pepper jelly is truly artisanal. Carol Hay started making the pepper jelly as a hobby from scotch bonnet and seasoning peppers from her backyard. She adds freshly ground Jamaican pimento, nutmeg, cloves, garlic, onions, and other locally grown species of West Indian peppers and sweet peppers to round out the flavors.



CAYMAN SMOKE ISLAND FRUITWOOD BBQ CHIPS

These BBQ chips are made by Elizabeth and Mark McCoy on Little Cayman and are created from local fruitwood. Elizabeth discovered the wood in the mid '80s when building their house on the north shore of Little Cayman. When they started winning amateur cooking competitions, they knew they were onto something. Bring some home and add island fruit and smoke to your food.

CONTRIBUTORS



***Chef Eric
Ripert***

Blue by Eric Ripert
Le Bernardin



***Chef José
Andrés***

Think Food Group



***Chef Rick
Bayless***

Frontera Grill
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Xoco
Tortas Frontera
Frontera Fresco



***Chef Dean
Max***

DJM Restaurants



***Chef Joe
Mizzoni***

The Brasserie



***Chef Dylan
Benoit***

Market Street
Group

CONTRIBUTORS



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Michael's Genuine
Food & Drink



***Chef George
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Calypso Grill



***Grower Patrick
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East End Gardens

GET THE APP

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Get the full Grand Cayman guide with
chefs' recommendations for where to
eat, drink and shop on the island.

