

Home

eat



In Grenada, those in the know don't just eat like the locals, but *with* the locals. **Ally Wybrew** finds fine company and even finer dining within the Spice Isle's home-style food scene



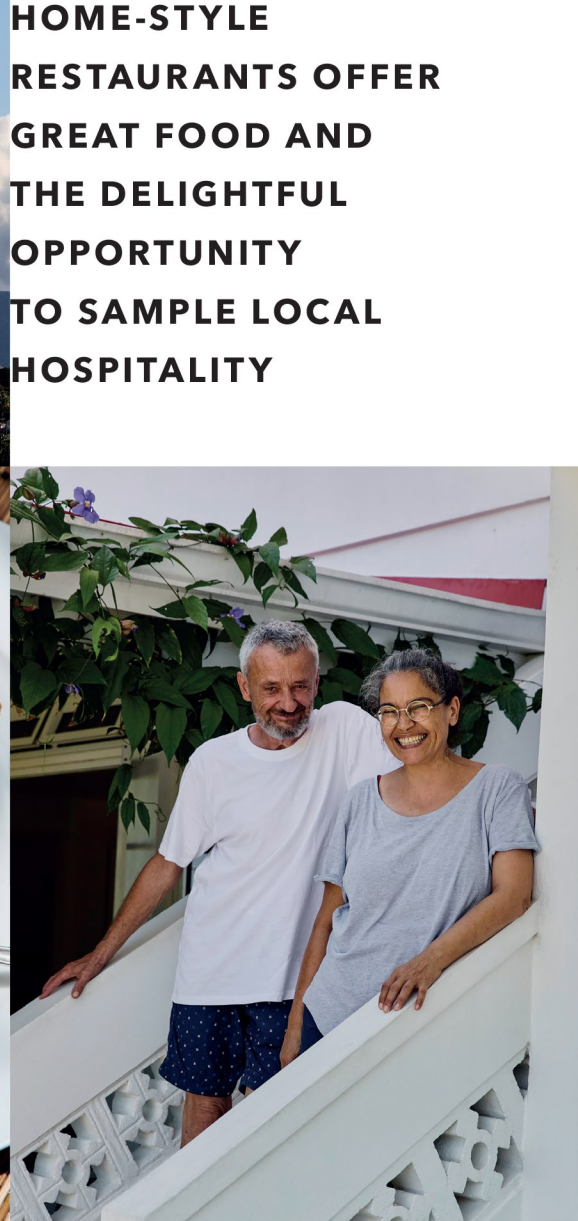
home



Gourmet grub
Grenadian gastro king
Dexter Burris. Far left:
red snapper ceviche
at Armadillo



National pride
From far left: island legend Dexter Burris; his pan-fried crevalle jack with plantain and avocado salsa; Grande Anse beach; lime pie with passionfruit at Armadillo; chef-proprietors Bernhard Huss and Andrea Nyack



HOME-STYLE RESTAURANTS OFFER GREAT FOOD AND THE DELIGHTFUL OPPORTUNITY TO SAMPLE LOCAL HOSPITALITY

As he rustles up dishes of pumpkin and ginger soup, plantain cake and pan-fried crevalle jack from the kitchen of his family home in Grenada, Dexter Burris exudes the low-key confidence of someone who mastered his craft decades ago. Yet, sitting on the terrace of the 57-year-old's home, from which he now runs a 50-cover restaurant, and having been welcomed by his wife and served by his son and knowing his daughters, cousins and extended family members are beavering away behind the scenes, you might feel that this intimate dining experience seems at odds with the credentials that brought the chef to this point. Namely: 14 years working on the *QE2* (many alongside Gary Rhodes), 17 years as head chef at Grenada's prestigious Calabash Hotel and two years jetting around the world as the private chef to a billionaire.

Dexter's, located in a white-washed, two-storey house perched on the hillside slopes of Belmont, has become word-of-mouth famous and is booked up at least a month in advance in the summer. Happily, this family-run joint is by no means the only home-style dining experience in Grenada. House-hosted restaurants have a long history throughout the Caribbean, and particularly on the Spice Island. Feeding people at home and sharing culinary wealth with the local community dates back to the island's elders and their focus on self-sufficiency. Naturally bountiful in a plethora of produce – tamarind, breadfruit, cashews and a host of tropical fruits – the land has

historically made it easy for residents to grow their own ingredients, so communal dining was commonplace. The practice can still be seen prominently today in Saraka festivals: huge celebrations where people gather to share home-cooked food with each other. Home-style restaurants are a modern extension of this, offering tourists the chance to sample local life and taste authentic Grenadian dishes.

The easy access chefs have to a range of invigorating ingredients such as nutmeg, mace, cocoa and vanilla makes for diverse menus and a carefree attitude to dietary requirements found in few other places. At Dexter's, Burris couldn't be less fazed by vegans, reeling off the ways he'll adapt his dishes with ease: "Your risotto will not have any butter or cheese. Your soup will not have any cream. Your third course will be plantain cake with a mango and avocado salsa." He barely blinks at alterations other chefs might balk at.

Somewhat surprisingly, though, this attitude, and his motivation for a homestead lifestyle, weren't inspired by Burris's homeland. Rather, it was a friend who retired to Norway, filled his garden with livestock and opened a six-table restaurant serving whatever he and his wife deemed to cook. "You would die at that restaurant," he tells this plant-based diner. "I try to make my menu in such a way that anyone can come and can still have five courses, whether they're gluten free, vegetarian or whatever. I just tweak it. I don't change my menu – I just increase it."

It's this expansive menu that leaves our group stumped by the sheer choice of ice-creams – salted caramel, chocolate, nutmeg, soursop, coconut and peanut. Of the five courses, the three starters are fixed, so guests only have to choose their main and pudding. After dining handsomely on callaloo-stuffed chicken, garlic and Cajun-infused shrimp, roast pork tenderloin, duck with orange sauce, medallion of lobster, beef tenderloin, stroganoff and vegan risotto, dessert selection has triggered food FOMO.

Burris is not only an excellent chef, but an entertaining host. When not gushing about Grenada – "This country is the best there is. I can leave my house unlocked. Where else in the world can you do that?" – he amuses the British contingent with comments such as, "I like the sky to be grey. The UK has the best weather in the world."

After so many years working in fine dining environments, Burris was keen to share some of that decadence with his fellow Grenadians. "I created this whole thing so locals could have an experience like the tourists do at Silversands [a five-star resort by Grand Anse beach] and pay a fraction of the price," he says. "I wanted to give back to people." Prices here are the same for tourists and locals (approximately EC\$150), though the latter occasionally lose out on bookings due to Dexter's reputation. "Tourists hear about the restaurant in London, New York or wherever they are, and make reservations before they arrive," Burris explains.

Known for its food culture, Grenada tempts travellers who want to taste crab back, saltfish, curried goat and oil down – its national dish. Visitors will have no trouble finding these on menus across the tri-island state (Carriacou and Petite Martinique are also in Grenada), from side-of-the-road food trucks to haute cuisine diners – something Grenada is no stranger to. At Silversands' Asiatique, guests can sample modern Thai-inspired meals, such as seared mahi-mahi and crispy lentil tempeh, alongside drinks from a 1,000-bottle-strong wine cellar. In Rhodes Restaurant at Calabash, Dexter's old haunt, fresh Caribbean fare includes grilled spiny lobster, nutmeg barley risotto and pan-seared grouper.

But the home-style restaurants offer great food alongside the delightful opportunity to sample local hospitality. Near the island's northernmost point, in the hills of Mount Rodney, Swiss-born, half-Grenadian, Andrea Nyack and her husband Bernhard Huss had a similar idea to Burris's: to create bespoke menus based on seasonal produce. Guests can book at Armadillo via their website or Facebook page, and, once there, can dig into dishes such as lentil soup, ceviche, kingfish, lobster and lime pie on the couple's veranda, while flitting hummingbirds and dramatic sea views compete to distract from the plated attractions. Their back garden is bursting with nutmeg, cinnamon, lemongrass, turmeric and more. And with only one eight-seater table, it's an intimate evening. ●

Twenty-nine-year-old vegan chef Joachim Jameal prides himself on the choice he offers at his takeaway and food delivery service, Volcan Vegan, based near Grand Anse beach (he can be booked via messaging on Instagram). In a pleasing evolution of home-style dining, however, he also concocts fresh vegan food in some of his homeland's most scenic spots. Before guests arrive at the waterfall, marina or beachside idyll, they're asked to select from a staggering 35 meal options. Cost depends on what they pick.

Though Jameal became vegan in 2019, he discovered a love of cooking as a ten-year-old. "Grenadian mums don't usually like people in the kitchen," he explains. "So it was nice that mine allowed me to join in. Within weeks, she was taking breaks and letting me cook lunch for my family of six." Now, he considers himself to be "so good at everything, I guess my hands are blessed". While tossing nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves and allspice into the stew he's rustling up over a fire on the banks of Annandale Falls, he espouses his love of Italian (*zucchini parmigiana* is a favourite), Mexican and Caribbean cuisine, as well as how his mushroom burgers are lauded as the best on the island – and not just among vegans. In fact, about 80 per cent of his customers aren't vegan. "They just love good food" he says.

On one afternoon, after dabbling in the freshwater streams, crayfish-spotting and cooling down from the 32° heat, I grab a calabash bowl full of hot food and tuck in. Moorish coconut dumplings and roasted breadfruit wedges complement fried shredded cabbage with cherry tomatoes, garlic and onion flavoured with Szechuan peppers, pimento and Scotch bonnets, as well as the spices the island is famed for. Apparently it's missing thyme and chives (hard to come by in the dry season) but I don't notice.

Back at Dexter's, we've settled on our ice creams. The stars come out and the ocean has melted into the night sky. Amid the quiet of satisfied diners, I'm struck by how lucky I am to feel so at home, while so far from mine. But it's precisely this feeling that makes Grenada – and dining experiences like Dexter's – so incredibly special.



Food to go
Vegan chef
Joachim Jameal.
Below: his famous
mushroom burger

FIVE MUST-TRY GRENADIAN DISHERS

Buss up shot

A beaten up paratha roti (resembling a 'bust up shirt'), often served with curried potato and stewed mango. Try it at Boogie B in Grenville. [@boogiebussupshotjoint](#)

Callaloo soup

Dasheen leaf transforms into a deliciously creamy soup thanks to a blend of coconut milk, okra and often beef or crab meat. Experience the Savvy's version in Mount Cinnamon hotel. [mountcinnamongrenada.com](#)

Fresh coconut water

Stopping at side-of-the-road-stalls and drinking fresh coconut water from a machete-wielding salesman is a far superior experience to buying a carton from a supermarket. After hydrating, scoop out the soft inner flesh with a piece of shell for bonus flavour.

Oil down

Grenada's national dish is a one-pot stew stuffed with meat, fish, breadfruit, coconut milk and spices – and plenty of oil. As the ingredients absorb the oil and it dries out, the oil goes down while the flavour goes up. Sample it at Patrick's Local Homestyle Restaurant in St George's. [facebook.com/patrickslocalgrenada](#)

Crab back

This classic Grenadian dish is best sampled at BB's Crabback on the marina in St George's. Fresh crab meat is baked with herbs, wine and cheese and served in the shell. [bbscrabbackrestaurant.com/i_about_us.html](#)



British Airways flies direct to Grenada from London Gatwick. [ba.com/grenada](#)

