

Travel Blog

Just Back From: Caribbean Food and Wine Festival

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You've heard of wildlife safaris in Africa; maybe underwater safaris off Australia's Great Barrier Reef; and perhaps even surfin' safaris in California. How about a gourmet safari? During an expedition in search of deliciousness, a roving party of gourmands explored five restaurants, one course at a time, in one evening. The island of Providenciales, Turks and Caicos, serves as the habitat for an annual gourmet safari during the [Caribbean Wine and Food Festival](#). Here's a taste of our epicurean adventure.

First stop: Cocktail hour at [Anacaona restaurant](#) at the Grace Bay Club. 

The restaurant's 90-foot "infinity bar" is the centerpiece for the event's kickoff, where arriving guests don shimmering beads and feathery masks. Chef Wolfgang von Wieser's hors d'oeuvres, like lionfish pizzas with fennel, orange, and black pepper ricotta, set the tone for the exotic flavors to come. Suddenly, the thumping of drums and shriek of whistles signal an arriving Junkanoo—a festive street parade that leads guests to the next territory.

Second stop: Starter course at [Coyaba restaurant](#)

Guests follow the Junkanoo just down the road from the Grace Bay Club to this greenery-lined dining room, dressed up with elegant white pin lights. Chef Paul Newman's appetizer waits under an inverted martini glass: a roasted beet and tomato terrine, accompanied by a shot of pumpkin soup, a goat cheese quenelle, mixed fritters, and a papaya brulee. The guests are then lured onto a luxury bus with the perfect bait—champagne—to head to the next stop.



Third stop: Fish course at [The Regent Palms](#)

Diners follow the tones of a jazzy vocalist into the beautifully lit courtyard of the Regent Palms resort. Guests line long white tables radiating from a trickling fountain as chef Ingo Moller of the resort's Parallel23 serves poached sea bass in tomato broth with chorizo-topped couscous on a plate dotted with yellow pepper and saffron sauce, a dish as delicious as picturesque. Then back to safari bus to the next camp.

Fourth stop: Meat course at [Seven Stars](#)

Foaming champagne cocktails and crystal ball chandeliers greet now-buzzy grazers at the Seven Stars Resort. One-named chef Josu, who hails from Bilbao, Spain, caters to the carnivorous, with venison loin, oxtail, and foie gras cannelloni, and a little langoustine to add surf to all that turf. Strong, creamy dessert shots see diners off, while priming the palate for a sweet finale.

Last stop: Dessert at the [Gansevoort](#)

The white-washed outdoor lounge is the backdrop for chef Matthew Doerner's farewell course from the on-site restaurant Stelle: *dulce de leche* parfait with spiced huckleberry compote, citrus shorbread crumb, and crystallized Thai ginger in edible chocolate coffee cups.

After such an evening of exotic flavor stalking, it was back on the bus. Destination: bed. Only the true party animals migrated to the local bars for more hunting...



Plan Ahead

The Third Annual [Caribbean Food and Wine Festival](#) in Turks and Caicos, will be held October 31-November 2, 2013. In addition to the Gourmet Safari, the festival features dinners prepared by celebrity chefs (Arizona's Beau Macmillan was on site this year); pairing seminars with renowned winemakers, like [La Sirena's](#) Heidi Barrett and [Terlato Wine Group's](#) John Terlato; and a Street Food Festival, complete with cook-off competitions.

Four Fish to Try in Turks

The pristine waters of Turks & Caicos are abundant with fabulously fresh fish. Here are four favorites to feast on:

Conch: The world's only conch farm lies in the waters of Providenciales. Millions of conch are bred here, and while it's hard to see past the beautiful, collectible shells, the real loveliness lies within the meat inside.



Where to eat it: You'll see conch meat on nearly every menu on the island, but [Da Conch Shack](#) provides the best setting: right on the beach, where diners eat at picnic benches with their toes in

the sand, or browse the beachfront vendors for souvenirs while their meal is prepared. This is the place to try "cracked conch," lightly-floured, deep-fried strips of conch, or the exquisitely fresh conch ceviche with onions, peppers, and tomato drizzled with lime.

Lobster: August 1 through April 1 is spiny lobster season. The clawless Caribbean variety is tender, sweet, and loaded with meat so flavorful it tastes great when simply naked.

Where to eat it: Chef Wolfgang von Wieser kicks off the season at Grace Bay Club's Anacaona with a lush "lobster, lobster" tasting menu, including lobster spring rolls, lobster bisque, spaghetti with lobster Bolognese, and of course, grilled lobster tails.

Grouper: Red grouper is the most common variety of grouper in the surrounding waters. Its meat is thick, white, lean, and pleasantly sweet.

Where to eat it: Coyaba's pan filet of grouper with basil pesto and crispy goat cheese is one of the island's most original takes on the fish.

Snapper: You're most likely to find red, yellowtail, and pot snapper on a menu in Providenciales. The white, mild fish has a slightly sweet flavor.

Where to eat it: Chef Eric Vernice offers a light and flavorful slow roasted snapper with curried root vegetable broth at [The Beach House](#).

All photos courtesy of Hernan F. Rodriguez

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