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## CULINARY

With more than 90 nationalities on island, Aruba is at the epicenter of a cultural melting pot, offering Amerindian, Latin and European influences found in every aspect of life, from language and island events to flavor-rich cuisine. Foodies enjoy a mouthwatering assortment of culinary flavors from fresh seafood, Caribbean and vegetarian dishes to exotic churrascaria creations and vibrant Italian, Mexican and Creole, found at more than 200 on-island restaurants ranging from local dining spots to world-class international establishments.

### Signature Drinks & Dishes

#### Aruba Ariba

Found on many cocktail menus on the island, this tropical concoction features *coecoei*, a local liquor made according to a centuries-old recipe. Invented at the Aruba Caribbean Hotel's Bali Bar in the early 1960s, bartenders create this fruity drink with coecoei, vodka, rum, crème de banana, a splash of grenadine, and fruit juice poured over ice, gently stirred together and topped off with a splash of Grand Marnier.

#### Balashi Beer

Aruba's national beer, Balashi is produced in a fully-automated brewery on island. The beer is a deep golden color and easy on the foam; it has a soft bitterness, an aroma of fresh hops and a short aftertaste.

#### Sea Grape Wine

Produced on a small scale and seldom served, sea grape wine is Aruba's locally produced light-bodied sweet white wine, deriving from the sea grape. The island's low-lying sea grape trees produce a surprisingly sweet, rich purple grape known as *druif* used in creating a unique Aruban wine. Available for purchase in select stores, local winemakers like Vincente Kock harvest the sea grape twice a year (June/July and November/December), producing no more than 400 bottles a year. Kock's vintage, under the label *Vino Vince* can be found at local craft shows and at select hotels.

#### Spirits

*Ponche Crema* is a rich and smooth eggnog-like beverage is especially popular during the Christmas holiday season. Homemade by many Aruban families, and also bottled and sold to the public by our local Playa Liquor & Bottling Company, the sweet beverage combines egg yolks, cream, rum, and a variety of spices. *Coecoei* is a local liqueur was first produced centuries past by the Amerindians of Aruba. It has a distinctive red color, derived from one of its prime ingredients – the sap from kukwisa or agave plant, which is mixed with rum and cane sugar. Coecoei is often used today in

may island cocktails, including the Aruba Sunswet which also contains Ponche Crema. Palmera Rum was first produced in 1965, used in many potent island cocktails. The company also produces dozens of other products with their own labels, including whisky, mixers, gin, vodka and brandy.

### **Bolo**

Several versions of *bolo* (cake) are especially popular in Aruba, with many served on special occasions such as birthdays, national holidays, religious holidays, and other celebrations. The most traditional cakes include bread pudding (*pan bolo*), cashew cake (*bolo di cashupete*), chocolate torte (*bolo di chuculati*), eggnog cake (*bolo ponche crema*) and prune cake (*bolo di pruim*).

### **Bolo Preto**

These cakes can be purchased at bakeries all over the Island. *Bolo preto* (black cake) is traditionally given to guests at Aruban weddings as a memento of the special occasion. The signature ingredient of *bolo preto* is a rich mixture of prunes, currants, raisins, dates and figs, steeped for at least two days and up to one week in a strong potion of cognac, port wine and cherry cordial. This sweet elixir, decoratively wrapped in individual pieces, gives a distinct richness packed into each bite-sized morsel.

### **Cos Dushi**

Homemade confections, collectively known as *cos dushi*, easily satisfy the local sweet tooth. *Cocada*, a fudge-like candy made with sugar and coconut, is a popular treat alongside two other candies, *tentalaria* and *panseicu*, both made with sugar and nuts. Two favorite cookies are the koeki lerchi, a very simple sugar cookie baked to a crunch, and the macaroon, a coconut-infused cookie with a cake-like texture. Other sweet delights include *quesillo*, Aruba's own take on caramel flan, and tamarind balls, which are small globes of tamarind pulp rolled in granulated sugar for that perfect balance of sweet and sour. All of these treats are ubiquitously found on the Island – at supermarkets, pharmacies, gas stations and even hardware stores.

### **Pastechi**

Aruba's national snack, it is a deep-fried half-moon pastry with a savory filling of chicken, chop suey, tuna, beef, cheese or ham. Pastechis are sold island-wide at grocery stores, convenience stores and snack bars.

### **Ayaca**

During the Christmas season, Aruban families and friends gather to make *ayacas*, a traditional holiday treat adopted from South America. Although no two families use the exact same recipe, *ayacas* are generally made by smearing plantain or banana leaves with a cornmeal dough; adding a mixture of chicken, pork or ham, along with a potpourri of spices, prunes, raisins, olives, pickles, cashews, piccalilli and pearl onions; and folding the assemblages into neat little packets to be boiled for an hour.

## **Pica di Papaya**

Pica di papaya, light orange in color, is a hot sauce made with locally grown green papayas. These sauces are all-natural and contain no preservatives – and have won national acclaim and are found in most homes and restaurants all over Aruba.

## **Fish Creole**

*Pisca hasa crioyo* (fish creole) is a traditional Aruban creole dish still prepared in many homes and restaurants on the Island. The dish is deliciously simple: pan-fried slices of fresh fish fillet served in a basic sauce of onion, tomato, bell pepper and garlic.

## **Funchi**

Aruba's version of polenta is a thick, cornmeal mixture traditionally served alongside rich stews and fish platters. *Funchi* can also be cooled, cut into flat slices and fried to a light golden brown for a crunchy variation.

## **Keri Keri**

Drier types of firm, white-flesh fish, such as barracuda or shark, are ideally suited for making one of Aruba's popular seafood dishes, *keri keri*. A fish fillet is boiled in salted water, removed and shredded, and then sauteed in butter with tomato, onion, celery, bell pepper, fresh basil, black pepper, and annato spice to create a tasty, satisfying meal.

## **Keshi Yena**

This Aruban dish, which translates to “stuffed cheese,” is traditionally made by filling the left-over rind of an Edam or Gouda cheese wheel with spiced meat, onion, tomato, green pepper, olives, capers, raisins and piccalilli; covering the wheel with its original cap; and then baking the stuffed wheel in the oven until hot and bubbly. Some cooks choose to conveniently line a casserole dish with slices of cheese instead of using the scooped cheese shell. The dish commonly comes in chicken, beef or seafood varieties.

## **Pan Bati**

Like funchi, pan bati serves as the perfect accompaniment to stews, soups, and fish dishes. Made from cornflour and cooked in a casuela – a traditional clay baking dish originally from Spain – pan bati lies somewhere between a flatbread and a pancake. Compared to an American pancake, it is denser and less sweet.

## **Sopi**

Several soups are especially popular with the locals. *Sopi yambo* is Antillean gumbo made with pureed okra for a thick, smooth consistency. *Sopi mondongo* is a traditional combination of tripe, spices, a medley of vegetables, and West Indian pumpkin, or *calabas*. *Sopi oester* is the local oyster soup, with each restaurant and household claiming rights to the best recipe on the Island. *Sopi cabrito* is a bouillon-based soup made with goat meat, garlic, tomato, celery, bell pepper, and vermicelli.

## **Stoba**

The classic Aruban recipes for beef stew (*carni stoba*) and goat stew (*cabrito stoba*) each feature meat, potato, onion, garlic, and chili pepper in a tomato-based gravy. Conch stew (*calco stoba*) is made from the meat of conch shellfish, onion, bell pepper, and a white-wine vinegar stock. Two popular side dishes, *funchi* and *pan bati*, are usually served with these stews for a well-rounded meal.

## **Local Dining Spots**

### **Gostoso**

Gostoso is a popular local restaurant that serves a blend of Portuguese and Arubian cuisine guaranteed to delight even the most discriminating palate. With our cozy atmosphere, impeccable service, quality food and reasonable prices, Gostoso will soon become a favorite. The menu includes appetizers of beef carpaccio, bacalau (salty cod fish), conch, and creole “sushi roll”, as well as entrees of fresh catch of the day, fish kebabs, New York Black Angus rib-eye and striploin, filet mignon and tenderloin. There is also a large selection of pasta, chicken, and Arubian stewed dishes.

### **Marina Pirata**

Tucked along the southern shore in Savaneta, Marina Pirata is a haven for locals seeking fresh seafood dishes. The quaint restaurant is located directly on the water with outdoor seating, allowing couples and families to gaze at both the perfect sunset and marine life swimming a few feet away.

### **Papiamento**

One of the island’s longest standing and most beloved restaurants, Papiamento is a 175-year-old authentic Aruban manor house situated in lush tropical gardens, where guests may enjoy local cuisine in a romantic indoor or outdoor setting. The restaurant boasts a fully-stocked wine cellar, transformed from a store room and cheese factory, featuring 200 labels and 1800 bottles of international vintages ranging from \$22 to \$200 each. Famous Owner and Chef Eduardo Ellis invites visitors to tour the mansion and wine vault before or after their flavor-rich dinner.

### **Pinchos Grill & Bar**

Enticing visitors with its outdoor, chic living room style setting, Pinchos Grill & Bar is situated above the water on the pier at Surfside Marina, offering one of the best sunset views in Aruba. Dinner guests relax with a tropical cocktail as they enjoy a mix of contemporary tunes over a romantic and intimate candlelight meal. Among the most famous dishes are the Dark Rum Infused Blue Cheese Tenderloin or Pan Seared Caribbean Grouper with an Apricot & Ginger Sauce.

### **Queen’s Restaurant**

Relatively new to the Palm Beach Plaza, Queen’s Restaurant has quickly become a hot spot for the island’s popular local dishes. Gouda-glazed chicken Keshi Yena, Funchi and Cabrito Stoba (goat stew) are among the most authentic menu items, guaranteed to satisfy any palette when paired with the signature Aruba Ariba cocktail.

## **The Old Fisherman**

A local treasure in the heart of Oranjestad, The Old Fisherman invites lunch and dinner guests to discover sumptuous home-style fresh seafood in casual, comfortable surroundings. Diners flock to the restaurant for an authentic Aruban meal including the freshest catch of the day, lobster tail and jumbo shrimp.

## **Gasparito**

The traditional warmth of the Aruban people is expressed through food, culture and art at Gasparito Restaurant, housed in a 120-year-old authentic *cunucu* (countryside) home. At the entrance is a well that once supplied water to the area. Diners are surrounded by an ongoing exposition of local art. Crioyo lovers will enjoy local fare such as goat stew (*stoba di bestia chiquito*), Aruban combo of chicken and fish specialties, and *keshi yena*, melted Dutch cheese filled with spiced seafood or chicken (a traditional recipe from generations past. There are also plenty of lobster, shrimp, beef, chicken and fresh Caribbean catch selections in a variety of preparations. All dishes are accompanied by *funchi* (polenta), *pan bati* (Aruban corn bread), and plantain.

## **Zeerover's**

Located in the sleepy fishing town of Savaneta, Zeerover's is a fisherman's wharf promising heavy local fare. Locals line up at the window to buy fresh caught fish or order the deep fried catch of the day – barracuda, mahi mahi, shrimp and more – tossed in a big plastic bowl with homemade fries, plantains and pan bati. Those who choose to stay awhile on the waterside deck enjoy fresh breezes, fish fry aromas and a cold Balashi beer, as they crank up the jukebox to hear vibrant Caribbean calypso beats and watch fisherman cart their catch by the net full.

## **International and Ethnic Restaurants**

### **Amazonia Churrascaria**

Festive Brazil comes to life at Amazonia where guests enjoy more than 16 cuts of rodizio charcoal-grilled beef, poultry, lamb, pork and house specialty, garlic picanha, carved tableside by trained gauchos. Side dishes include Brazilian cheese bread, garlic mashed potatoes, fried yucca, fried plantains, and grilled pineapple. The authentic meal also includes Brazilian side dishes and sauces, as well as a 40-item abundant fresh and gourmet salad and soup bar, perfect for vegetarians. Guest have the option to sip on a traditional Brazilian cocktail, *caipirinha*, while dining al fresco on the terrace overlooking lush gardens or in the trendy dining room adorned with colorful local art.

### **Carte Blanche**

Carte Blanche is the restaurant for 'foodies' who want an exquisite five-course fine dining experience. Chef Dennis van Daatselaar caters to only 16 patrons each evening at a low riding oval-shaped bar in comfortable lounge chairs where everyone can interact with the chef himself. The menu is created daily with the freshest ingredients available from the island, then paired with daring wine and cocktail mixology methods. Carte Blanche is located at the Bucuti Beach Resort in its Caribbean garden with a spectacular view over the turquoise ocean.

### **Chalet Suisse**

Chalet Suisse is known for its impeccable service, elegant décor and consistently excellent cuisine. The finest meats including Certified Black Angus cuts including porterhouse, filet mignon and rib steaks are flown in regularly from the best meat markets in New York. The Provini veal chops are of unsurpassed quality. Seafood platters made with fresh, locally caught lobster, shrimp, red snapper and grouper are a delight. The signature Chilean sea bass and mouthwatering rack of lamb are complemented by the impressive wine cellar stocked with a fine and varied selection of international wines and champagnes.

### **French Steakhouse**

The French Steakhouse, an island tradition, proudly presents an all-new menu offering the finest steaks from South America in an all-new trendy and cozy ambiance. The experience begins with Caribbean seafood cocktail with marinated shrimp, scallops, mussels and grilled salmon. Pan-seared mahi-mahi with tropical fruit salsa and Caribbean stuffed shrimp with crabmeat and bacon are new seafood additions, while the famous signature 12 oz beef tenderloin *churrasco* is served with crispy fried onions, sautéed mushrooms and *chimichurri* sauce. For dessert, the homemade *apfel struedel* is not to be missed.

### **Gianni's Ristorante Italiano**

Proudly owned and operated by the Ferrara family, an Italian restaurant dynasty for decades, Gianni's Ristorante Italiano combines attentive service with a comprehensive menu, fine wines, and the freshest ingredients to provide an excellent dining experience. Gianni's authentic Italian specialties range from salads, soups, and antipasti to entrees of seafood, ossobuco, steaks, scampi and chicken, delicious creamy desserts and after-dinner aperitifs. House specialties include Fresh-caught whole red snapper and Spaghetti al formaggio parmigiano, prepared in a cheese wheel and flamed with whisky at your table. Delightful outdoor seating is available under the white canopies or the charming Italian trattoria inside.

### **Hostaria da' Vittorio**

Master Chef/Owner Vittorio Muscariello is already well-known for having worked for more than eleven years as Executive Chef in the best authentic and original Italian restaurants on Aruba (Valentino's - 1988-1994 and La Trattoria El Faro Blanco 1994-1999). He presents unique and incomparable originality and quality in his authentic Italian specialties such as *Risotto alla Pescatore*, *Linguine dello Scoglio*, *Branzino al Sole*, *Sogliola alla Mugnaia*, *Ossobucco di Vitello*, and *Nodino di Vitello alla Parmigiana*, attentively served at this new, rustically-elegant restaurant. The crispy brick-oven pizzas are perfect for a light bite. Seating is available in the comfortable dining rooms of this recreated Italian villa or at the open-air patio.

### **Le Petit Café**

Romancing the stone at Le Petit Café is a one-of-a-kind experience. Rediscover this ancient culinary method of cooking on a hot stone. Meats, fish and seafood are prepared to your perfect degree of doneness without fat or oils on semirais stones. Experience the unforgettable aromas and flavors of tender Argentinean steaks, select poultry, freshly caught fish, Caribbean lobster and shrimp, all cooked on the stone, as well as a selection of plated dishes. The dining experience transports each guest to the village of Roncengo in the province of Trento, Italy, where this type of cooking originated. Dine inside or on the plaza terrace overlooking the excitement of Palm Beach.

### **Madame Janette**

Madame Janette's outdoor local atmosphere is an award-winning international restaurant. The combined worldwide experience of the owners gives their dishes an original flavor with a touch of Caribbean. Seating is available both in the tropical gardens and in the romantic open-air dining area. Mouthwatering gourmet dishes are prepared with the freshest international ingredients. Specials include lobster ravioli, Black Angus beef carpaccio, duck breast, Chilean sea bass, and "The Old Butcher Steak", the best tenderloin cut around. Long-time favorites are the Vienna-style pork schnitzel, Argentine prime steaks, and almond-crusting grouper.

### **Papillon**

Papillon's menu takes inspiration from the Frenchman Henri Charrière, one of the world's most famous prisoners, and his arduous journey to freedom. The décor inside the restaurant and on the spacious outside terrace nods to the 13 years Charrière spent in prison. Here, classic French fare is dusted with daring Caribbean flair, taking guests on a remarkable culinary journey.

### **Sunset Grille**

Sunset Grille affords an elegant and intimate dining experience. Enjoy USDA Certified Prime beef, amazingly fresh seafood and refreshing spa cuisine. Sunset Grille has been recipient of the AAA Four-Diamond Award, was named Caribbean Travel & Life magazine's "Best Restaurant in the Caribbean" and has won the Wine Spectator "Award of Excellence". With porterhouse, filet mignon, chateaubriand and NY prime sirloin steaks; hearty entrées of veal chop and rack of lamb, abundant seafood selection of grilled swordfish, local red snapper, Chilean sea bass, roasted black cod and rock lobster tail, there is something for every taste.

### **Tango Argentine Grill**

Located in Arawak Gardens in the high-rise hotel district, Tango Argentine Grill is famous for 20 juicy cuts of mouthwatering steaks joined by hearty side dishes topped with traditional Argentine Chimichurri Herb Sauce. This first-class Parilla's succulent steaks and magnificent bottles of red wine are complemented by a hot nightlife with live music and a sizzling ambiance.

## **Ventanas del Mar**

Masters of award-winning cuisine, the culinary team artfully prepares a wide range of international masterpieces sprinkled with Caribbean flavors. Enjoy breakfast, lunch, dinner or Sunday brunch in indoor comfort or bask in cool Caribbean breezes on the poolside terrace – both boast spectacular views of the lush golf course by the sea, the historic California Lighthouse and the dramatic northwest coast of the island. Ventanas del Mar offers an exquisite, upscale dining experience.

## **White Modern Cuisine**

Dedicated to culinary innovation, Chef Urvin Croes meticulously couples modern cooking techniques with the use of fresh organic local products at White Modern Cuisine, which opened in Palm Beach Plaza in February 2012. The chic restaurant features a stylish all-white dining room and an airy terrace lounge and presents an a la carte menu, with changing three, five, and eight-course tasting menus and special cocktails or wines to accompany each dish. Famous menu items include maple glazed duck breast with local pickled cucumbers garnished with peanut butter powder, pan-fried sea bass with minestrone risotto and the Aruban Summer Salad consisting of 30 items served with an array of local flowers and vegetables.

## **Windows on Aruba**

Boasting a magnificent view over the Divi Links Golf Course and azure Caribbean waters beyond, this outstanding restaurant built in the round offers comfortable seating, elegant décor, an open kitchen and a fully stocked floor-to-ceiling wine cabinet. From dressed salads, club sandwiches and soups, to lunch and dinner entrées such as grouper and lobster, seabass and risotto, duck and couscous, tenderloin and port, ostrich and parmesan, veal rib eye and mushrooms, and chateaubriand, the master chef never disappoints.

## **Seafood**

### **Aqua Grill**

Excitingly prepared in the open-view kitchen of Aruba's premier seafood restaurant, fresh local catches join delicacies from waters abroad, including live Maine lobster, Norwegian salmon, sashimi tuna, and Alaskan king crab, along with a selection of non-seafood dishes. Complementing the menu is the island's largest raw bar and a generous wine list. Aqua Grill's award-winning chef offers a menu of classic and contemporary dishes. The fresh seafood is prepared in a variety of regional styles, melding local island charm with the traditions of New England, the spices of Jamaica, the zesty flavors of Italy, the mystique of Indonesia, and beyond.

## **Buccaneer**

The 5000-gallon saltwater aquarium in this charming culinary cavern has been an island attraction for more than three decades. Feast on fresh Caribbean catch in one of the cozy booths surrounded by tropical splendor and nautical décor, including an authentic pirate ship bar. Sea treasures are plentiful, especially the creative seafood and international dishes prepared with a European touch and irresistible secret flavorings that continue to lure guests back again and again.



## **Driftwood**

Since 1986, Driftwood has specialized in fresh seafood from the Caribbean Sea and has become the favorite spot for Aruban-style seafood dishes. Fresh fish is caught daily by the owner himself. Located in the heart of downtown Oranjestad, guests enjoy the freshest fish, biggest shrimp, or the most succulent Caribbean lobster amid the rustic ambience of the natural driftwood dining room. The menu includes a large variety of typically Aruban delicacies including our three-star fish soup and our mouthwatering filet of fish served with a mild Aruban Creole sauce.

## **Hadicurari**

For a fresh approach to seafood, enjoy today's catch caught by local fishermen daily at Hadicurari Pier. Enjoy indoor and outdoor seaside dining in this charming, shaded restaurant located next to Aruba Marriott's Surf Club which features an extensive menu of fresh caught seafood and steak and other splendid dishes prepared with an international flair by experienced chef and his professional culinary team. Take in enviable sea views and romantic sunsets from any seat in this stylish and comfortable restaurant.

## **Bars**

### **Charlie's Bar and Restaurant**

Amongst a time-earned bouquet of multi-cultural influences, Charlie's Bar and Restaurant offers a chilled and relaxed, retro Caribbean vibe. Visitors walk through the maze of hanging photographs, awards, plaques, paintings, souvenirs and trinkets and order an Aruba Ariba from the late Charlie's grandson, Charlito, now owner and operator of one of the "Top Ten Bars of the Caribbean." Dating back to 1941, Charlie's Bar and Restaurant was the place to see and be seen during San Nicolas' industrial boom with the refinery and harbor trade. Featuring an international menu with everything from jumbo shrimp to fine tenderloin steaks and fresh local seafood, there is something for everyone at Charlie's.

## **Downtown Oranjestad**

Overlooking the ocean and Main Street in downtown Oranjestad, Local Store is a jumping place in Aruba for rooftop dancing and drinking. Across the way, Mojito's in Royal Plaza, is a sizzling spot for Latin dancing. The stunning views, booming music scene, ice-cold beer and hot menu items keep guests entertained all night. Café Chaos located across from the harbor is a fun spot popular with locals as well as tourists for decades. Sip a cocktail and enjoy the harbor view and live music at CILO, short for City Lounge; get on the dance floor at the hot Tropical Café; enjoy Cuban rhythms at Cuba's Cookin'; and live music on-stage at Café the Plaza - all located in the Renaissance Marketplace. Also notable downtown are Blue, the trendy lounge in the Crystal Casino, and the brand new Carpe Diem lounge located across the street.

### **Local Rum Shops**

As one of Aruba's oldest traditions, the local rum bars dot nearly every road on the island and play host to lawyers, fishermen and everyone in between. These quick in-and-out bars offer drinks and a rich atmosphere filled with years of history and culture. Local rum shops across the island include White Star, Essoville or Aruba Rum Shop located in San Nicolas, the Sunrise City, and, near the hotels, Fermin's Bar in Noord and Caribbean Store in Palm Beach.

### **MooMba Beach Bar & Restaurant**

Nestled under a gigantic palapa atop white sugary sands overlooking turquoise waters, MooMba Beach is as relaxing during the day as it is lively at night. Billowing, fresh island breezes combined with a myriad of tropical cocktails, cold Balashi beer and wine make this laid-back beach bar a true Caribbean paradise. MoomMba also holds the title of one of the World's 50 Best Beach Bars by CNN Travel.

### **Palm Beach Bars & Lounges**

The high-rise strip is an exciting mecca for night owls, peppered with an array of bars and lounges. Confessions Nightclub, Gusto, Sky Lounge in Paseo Herencia, South Beach Lounge, Soprano's Piano Bar in Arawak Garden, Senor Frogs in The Village Mall and the new Sand Beach Lounge in the Brickell Bay Beach Club are just a few of the jumping nightspots.