





Opposite page: At Parallel23, sushi grade, fresh fish is a big seller in the heat, with impressive plate presentations always a given. Above: At the Vix Bar and Grill in The Regent Village, alfresco dining is a great way to beat the heat.

Dining Through the Doldrums

The weather may be sultry, but fine dining in Provo never takes a break.

By Kate Parham

The fall season in the Turks & Caicos Islands is traditionally slow. Plain and simple. The heat and the threat of hurricanes keep tourists away and make residents sleepy. How can restaurants keep up? Unfortunately, some simply don't. Since many restaurants don't have air conditioning, some bow out and close during the months of September and October. But come November, things start picking

up again. "During the first week of November, the weather breaks and the oppressive heat and humidity lifts, hailing the beginning of delightfully warm days with cooler evenings, promised for the next six months," says Paul Newman, owner and executive chef at Coyaba, a gazebo-style restaurant offering fine, eclectic, contemporary Caribbean cuisine.

But what about those restaurants that brave the weather and remain open? “Typically the fall is when many locals like to dine out at some restaurants they would normally not go to, since it’s not as busy as it is during high season,” says Lauren Callighen, Executive Chef at O’Soleil (the globally-influenced restaurant within The Somerset resort), who attributes much of the restaurant’s fall success to the fully air-conditioned, indoor dining room that serves as a haven during inclement weather. “Since the island is so slow, there are fewer diners, so this can be a good time to receive some TLC! We use the downtime to do staff training and implement new service techniques to try to better ourselves for the upcoming season. Also, I like to try out new dishes this time of year, and our guests (along with staff) are the guinea pigs.” Just be sure to make reservations. “If our reservation book shows only a few diners, many staff are not called into work, and are given the evening off,” says Newman.

No matter what time of year it is at The Regent Palms, however, one thing always remains constant. “We’re in the business of selling memories,” says Jean S. Richer, food and beverage manager at Parallel23, the hotel’s signature restaurant offering tropical fusion cuisine. “From the way we present our business cards, to the hand shakes and plate presentation, there’s a standard in terms of service. There’s a uniqueness. We want people to feel like they were all alone in that restaurant last night. You can’t

quantify it, but that moment was just perfect. The music, the food. We’re good at creating those moments because we love them.”

What to eat

During the fall heat, most area restaurants create lighter dishes through their specials menus, like the Warm Shrimp and Calamari Salad with grapefruit, honey and chorizo at the Vix Bar and Grill, a Mediterranean restaurant located in the Regent Village.

At Coyaba, the chefs purchase in much smaller quantities, allowing for more creativity. These dishes accent



At Coyaba, seafood ceviches, like scallop and conch, are popular during the fall heat.



Although Paul Newman (at front), owner and executive chef at Coyaba, looks forward to the cooler temperatures in November, his kitchen concentration, inspiration and passion for haute cuisine don't take a break during the fall.

the regular menu with verbalized daily specials. “These usually reflect the chef’s inspiration from a last minute delivery,” says Newman. “Our favorites are the Organic Heirloom Tomato Salad with crispy paneer cheese and a basil pesto drizzle and Octopus Carpaccio with lemon, mango and lychee compote.” Seafood ceviches, like scallop and conch, are also popular, and fresh local fish, such as whole snapper, mahi mahi, wahoo and grouper, are always a good choice during the heat.

At Parallel23, sushi grade, fresh fish is a big seller in the heat. “The Parallel of Yellow Fin Tuna is great,” says Richer. “And our Nicoise Salad sells so well.”

“During the summer and fall months, we usually serve a lot more seafood and fish, especially lobster (once the season opens),” says Callighen, who finds inspiration in authentic places, like little local food shacks, where it’s all about flavor. “I normally try new lobster dishes, and every night offer two or three lobster specials. One of my favorite preparations is a West Indian Coconut Curry with lots of fresh vegetables, steamed pilaf with raisins and house-made Naan bread — it is a tasty way to enjoy lobster. Also, I think it is really nice grilled, with garlic butter and a squeeze of fresh lemon or lime.”

What to drink

While delicious food is important, it’s often the drinks that make these hot months most bearable. If you’re a fan of rum, try the Mojito at O’Soleil, mixed up by award-winning bartender Norwyn Guthrie. The secret to these famous cocktails are ginger and carrot juice additions, which are then muddled with mint and brown sugar, before being topped off with rum. Guthrie won First Place in the last Mojito contest at the annual Conch Festival with this concoction.

If you’re craving something non-alcoholic, head over to Parallel23 for some refreshing iced tea. “I love doing different flavors of teas, because they’re so light and filled with antioxidants,” says Richer. “There are really only two types of tea, Asian and Indian, and the rest are hybrids.” Richer loves White tea, for its pure form, fresh taste and high level of antioxidants. Some great options are the Mint and Meyer Lemon tea or the Pomegranate Blueberry White tea.

For something a bit more dangerous, try the fresh mango cocktails at Parallel23. “When it’s really hot, you want to refresh,” says Richer. “So it’s all about citrus.” Richer also recommends Sauvignon Blancs, Pinot Grigios and dry Reislings or Champagnes on the citrusy side. In the heat, people aren’t drinking as much for the taste or



TCI's Chef of the Year, Lauren Callighen, is known for pairing Caribbean flavors with artistic presentation at the O'Soleil restaurant, at The Somerset resort. She says guests during the fall season just may be lucky enough to try out her newest creations!

the brand, they want the effect, explains Richer, which is crisp and refreshing.

At Coyaba, they've identified "seasonal" summer wines to add to their already expansive wine list, which includes over 110 bottles. "These are usually light, bright, with interesting notes that complement our menu options, and are very well priced starting at \$35/ bottle," says Newman. "We also increase our offering of beers to include a wide range of Belgian beers, and popular fruit beers, Pilsners and strong golden Pale Ales."



Mediterranean-influenced salads, like this slow-roasted vine tomato and buffalo Mozzarella pair, keep Vix diners cool and satisfied.

Be entertained

If it's entertainment you're after, check out the Caribbean Nights beach party at O'Soleil on Tuesday nights. "We serve typical Caribbean food, including authentic Jerk Chicken cooked over coals in an old oil drum, just like in Kingston," says Callighen. "Plus we have our house DJ spinning great tunes, some classics, mixed in with some Reggae and Caribbean beats."

Parallel23 also offers up entertainment specials. "We do 100 to 200 covers any day of the week, and we're open seven days. The menu is so elaborate, you could eat with us every day of the week without having the same thing twice. So we use the entertainment to complement that menu, like reverse engineering. Not enticing people to come, per say, but giving kudos to return diners," says Richer. "We'll have musicians, beach BBQs, concerts and classic movies on the big screen at sunset." ❁

Kate Parham is a Dallas-based freelance food and travel writer with work appearing in USA Today, Real Simple, Modern Luxury and dozens more quality publications. This year, Kate made her first trip to the Turks & Caicos, but it certainly won't be her last.