



• fine •
dining
FIJI STYLE

BY FIONA HARPER

Fiji's dining scene has improved in leaps and bounds, making it even more appealing as a tropical island getaway ...



There was a time when Fiji's food scene barely rated with travellers thanks to a poor reputation. Things have changed. Like a gangly teenager emerging from adolescence Fiji's dining has come of age as a fine dining destination. It helps that Tourism Fiji is developing a strategy that supports the development of the local dining scene. Fiji's rich multi-cultural diversity is what distinguishes the archipelago from other South Pacific destinations.

Here's our pick of Fijian restaurants excelling at their craft.

FLYING FISH, SHERATON FIJI RESORT, DENARAU ISLAND AND SHERATON RESORT FIJI, TOKORIKI

Renowned chef and restaurateur, Peter Kuruvita brings his signature brand, Flying Fish, to the Sheraton Resort & Spa, Tokoriki Island. After successfully establishing Flying Fish Restaurant & Bar in Sydney, he replicated this successful model launching Flying Fish at Sheraton Fiji Resort eight years later.

Located on the beach, Flying Fish Fiji features a menu that brings out the best in the delicious, abundant local Fijian produce. Rich, flavoursome seafood exudes freshness,

particularly when accompanied by a spicy Sri Lankan sambal or elegant curry paste. From lightly seasoned school prawns tickled with salt, pepper and paprika to miso-dressed local mahi mahi garnished with wasabi and black sesame, Flying Fish Fiji's signature fine dining style and unparalleled ingredients have kept visitors coming back and craving more for years.

Flying Fish Tokoriki is the long-awaited next step in the Flying Fish brand. With a similar menu of fresh Fijian seafood and the most delicious produce the islands have to offer. Kuruvati's new restaurant is headed by talented chef Kim Brennan. Brennan's enticing menu includes his signature dishes of Seared Yellow fin tuna, Sweet crackling pork and ruby grapefruit & black pepper caramel.

FIJIANA, LIKULIKU LAGOON RESORT

After taking over the reins from Brett Kryskow last year, New Zealand-born Executive Chef Ihaka Peri has enhanced Likuliku's appeal for those with discerning palates seeking the finest culinary experiences.

Peri is driven by a vision to provide fresh creative menus using the finest local and international produce. Devising epicurean island menus that reveal simplicity blended with a



PEAS IN A POD

Above clockwise from top: Flying Fish; A tantalising entree at Ahura at Likuliku; A mouthwatering dessert at Ahura; Nanuku Resort & Spa

Opening spread: Teppanyaki at Tokoriki

“Surrounded by water, Nuku restaurant and bar epitomises island style dining at the top of its game”

unique contemporary flair, Peri is often found foraging in the vegetable and herb garden he established to bring fresh flavours and character to his dishes. General Manager Steve Anstey agrees with Peri's direction, noting that the resort has seen an increase in guests he calls 'paradise foodies'.

KANAVATA, NANUKU RESORT & SPA

The traditionally styled Club House with its colonnade of hand carved traditional Fijian posts is the hub of Nanuku Resort & Spa. Executive Chef Walther Whippy knows a thing or two when it comes to tantalising guest palettes, having honed his skills at some of Fiji's finest five-star resorts. His style is a fabulous fusion of Fijian and international dishes combining the freshest local produce with imported delicacies. Favourites include local caught tuna sushi with wasabi served with eggplant tempura.

Don't feel like sharing your breakfast time with others? No matter, just ask your butler to whip up eggs benedict or buttermilk pancakes layered with ladyfinger bananas, cinnamon and Fiji honey (or anything else that takes your fancy) in your villa's own kitchen. Linger over coffee beside your private pool and you may not feel the need to venture

any further. Though perhaps a hamper filled with lobster and champagne might entice you to leave your villa's walls for a picnic on Nanuku Island.

Come dusk and pre-dinner drinks time, no self-respecting Nanuku sunset is complete without a legendary Nanuku caprioska chock full of local ingredients, served long and cool lagoon side.

QAMEA RESORT & SPA

With 40 hectares of lush tropical forest, landscaped gardens alongside a dreamy white sand beach, Qamea Resort lies in the shadows of dramatically jagged jungle-clad volcanic peaks. It's a drop-dead gorgeous setting that comes close to a South Pacific idyll. Despite, or perhaps because of, its remote location (Qamea lies off the north east coast of Taveuni Island), Qamea attracts high calibre chefs through its international 'Chef in Residence' training program. Every 18 months or so an international chef works a three-month stint, training Qamea's predominantly Fijian kitchen team under the command of Head Chef Laisa Loco Talemaisuva.

One of Qamea's most popular dishes is its signature version of Kokoda. With base ingredients comprising coconut cream,

limes, locally caught fish, subtle flavours are enhanced with the addition of chilli and green peppers. Supporting local growers and suppliers, pawpaw, pineapple, lime, banana, passionfruit, root vegetables and fish are sourced from nearby villagers wherever possible.

YASAWA ISLAND RESORT

Beach picnics are a specialty at Yasawa Island Resort & Spa. It's no surprise really given that Yasawa Island beaches make regular red carpet appearances on 'Best Beaches' lists across the globe.

Despite Yasawa's remote location, Yasawa is an island of plenty. Fresh produce is delivered daily, whether wild caught seafood from village fishermen or harvested from nearby farmers. Executive Chef Talala Tupou's contemporary cuisine highlights a changing menu that adapts to local supply utilising the freshest ingredients. Tupou promises a memorable culinary experience of extraordinary creations.

Whether dining in the open-sided restaurant with views across the sand to a watery horizon or on a private candlelit table for two on the beach beneath the star-filled sky, fine food amongst fine company sets the mood for romance. Or

you could not bother going out at all, arranging for Tupou's team to recreate your dinner choices, complete with complementary wines and champagne, in your own bure. But it's not all about the food as it turns out: Barman Manasa is a skilled Mixologist, wielding his cocktail shaker like an artist.

LALI SANDBAR RESTAURANT, CASTAWAY ISLAND

Executive Chef Lance Seeto has been castaway on Castaway Island for the past five years. Not that he's counting. Seeto is a bit of a celebrity in these parts, being credited with single-handedly igniting a culinary revolution across Fiji. His empathy and respect of native culture hails from a multicultural life incorporating his PNG birthplace, Australian Chinese heritage and a life well lived. He brings this global perspective into his kitchen.

At Lali Sandbar Seeto's 1808 Menu melds Chinese and Fijian cuisine, where food is considered as medicine for healthy living. Influenced by 'superfoods' sourced from organic farms throughout Fiji as well as whatever is in season in Castaway's own herb farm, superfoods are chosen for their high nutrient-dense and medicinal properties. The multitude of awards

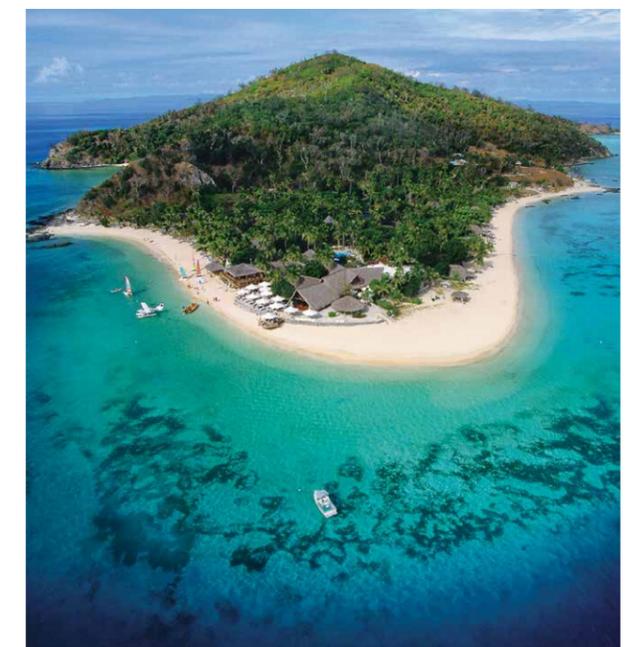
"It's all about kicking off your shoes, kicking back onto island time, and relaxing on one of the South Pacific's dreamiest coral atolls ..."



GARDEN OF EDEN

Clockwise from right: Likuliku; Castaway Island; Yasawa Island Resort

Opposite page: Poached eggs at Qamea Resort & Spa





“Expect highlights such as tiger prawns, smoked salmon, papaya and coconut mousse fiesta.”

Seeto has collected, as well as his standing as a sought after author and TV Chef, are proof that healthy food doesn't have to be boring. Think charred seawater and herb infused pork belly (infused for three days!) or spicy flame grilled beef rubbed with masala chai tea, green papaya salad, black onion jam, orange zest and toasted almonds.

CROSS RESTAURANT, RADISSON BLU

Located beachside amongst waterfalls and landscaped gardens on Denarau Island, award-winning (finalist in AON Fiji Excellence in Tourism: Best Restaurant 2012 & 2013 after winning in 2011) CROSS Restaurant is firmly established as one of Fiji's most talked about dining experiences. CROSS has emerged as an iconic Fiji restaurant, blending modern

contemporary and international cuisines with Fijian flavours, talent and inspiration. Minimalist styling allows the gorgeous ocean backdrop to take centre stage.

Expect highlights such as tiger prawns, smoked salmon, papaya and coconut mousse fiesta. Or braised duck and truffle gnocchi with Yarra Valley jus. Jewels of the Sea is CROSS' signature dish and is ideal for sharing with garlic grilled lobster, grilled prawns, smoked salmon, lemon wine poached crab, prawn and snipper claws, beer-battered mahi mahi, Singapore style clams and scallops accompanied with watercress salad and oven roasted potatoes. CROSS offers a distinctive and bold dining experience served up with cutting edge presentation and style. It's Fiji yes, but not as you know it.



AT ONE WITH THE SEA

Left: CROSS Restaurant, Radisson Blu

Opposite page: Nuku at Fiji Beach Resort & Spa

NUKU, FIJI BEACH RESORT & SPA

Surrounded by water, Nuku restaurant and bar epitomises island style dining at the top of its game. Executive Chef New Zealander Clinton Webber's style is influenced by years spent in Vietnam and Thailand. An innovative and ever-changing menu incorporates exceptional Fijian specialties such as Kokoda (pronounced ko-kon-da), which is fresh reef fish marinated in coconut cream, lemon, lime, chili and coriander. Other

specialities like BBQ king prawns served with harissa paste and roasted capsicum lean towards international flavours.

It's not usual to find Tapas style dining in Fiji. Unless you're poolside at Nuku on a Monday night for their 'Taste of Spain beneath the Frangipanis' feast. Seafood paella and traditional calasparra rice takes full advantage of an abundance of locally caught seafood. As do their Seafood on the Beach platters, an indulgent seafood feast served island style (which means you can ditch the cutlery and get your hands dirty).



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