



FALLING IN LOVE BY THE CARIBBEAN COOKING

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Falling in love by the CARIBBEAN cooking

Want to do Jamaica like a chef? Take a cue from NINA COMPTON, who recently tasted her way through the island's culinary traditions— getting to know some good old-fashioned jerk pits (and a few stellar resorts) in the process.

BEING FROM SAINT LUCIA, I'm naturally drawn to the water," says Nina Compton, chef-owner of Compère Lapin and Bywater American Bistro in New Orleans. The James Beard Award winner (and one of the culinary panelists of the World's Best Restaurants) takes any opportunity to go back to the Caribbean, whose ingredients and flavors inspire many of Compton's signature dishes, like jerk-chicken rice or coconut creamed corn.

On this trip to Jamaica—her first time to the island since working in the kitchen at Sandals resorts there almost two decades ago— she explored the culinary side of Negril. "Jamaica is a sensory overload of big, bright colors and amazing smells and tastes," she says. "People there have a real appreciation for food." She also sneaked in a few earlymorning dips.

"I love the white sand and water that's so cool and so clear. You can see for miles."

1 "Landing in Montego Bay was a homecoming for me. I enjoy driving the long road to Negril as the landscape changes from lush hills to flat, beautiful beaches. On my first day, I toured Skylark Negril Beach Resort, where I hosted a charity dinner for the Rockhouse Foundation, which supports local education initiatives. It's an ultra-chic new beachfront property."

2 "I went down to the local market to select fish, fruits, and vegetables for the menu. It was fun to see this eel up close, but I ended up taking a fisherman's recommendation and chose barracuda instead. I kept the dish simple, with a crudo preparation to showcase the fattiness and fullness of the fish."

3 "Whenever I'm in the Caribbean, I remember the dishes I grew up with, and the flavor combinations— like allspice and ginger— that I can use in my cooking now. Jerk is my favorite—I made an excursion to the jerk pit at Pepper's (peppers jerk center. com; entrées \$9–\$18), in Falmouth. Eating their chicken on the beach, paired with a cold Red Stripe, was the best part of my trip. When the chicken's fresh off the grill like that—I just can't explain it."

4 "I stayed at Skylark's sister property on the other side of town, at the Rockhouse. My room had a view of the ocean, so I woke up to these beautiful pink hues from the sun rising over the sea. Rockhouse has an organic garden where they get their fresh herbs and fruits. Seeing and smelling the gardens bursting with beautiful mangoes and avocados is the best."

Do you want to have a similar experience as NINA COMPTON? Let us know what you're thinking and we'll do the travel cooking for you

