Hit the food isles

If you think island cuisine is just another name for beach BBQs and frozen drinks, meet six gorgeous getaways where the food culture alone is worth the trip, by SABRA RAMMEN

THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

With more than 200 restaurants, several owned by noted chefs, this trio of islands is always a contender for best foodie bastion in the Caribbean. Adding to that list are the 100+ plus nationalities that make up the population and cook up melting pot magic.

MMM-MMM MUST-DO!

- **Tour and taste:** Blending snacking stops with a history lesson, Cayman Food Tours will set the stage for your stay. Among the many things you’ll sample: West Indian street food, spicy pepper jelly and mango rum cake (openfoodtours.com).

- **Hit a garden party:** At Plantation Organo Gardens, an Edensic domain that covers 400+ kinds of fruits, spices and veggie tour and score fresh produce or sign up for a chef-prepared Gardners to Gatherings dinner (plantationhouse.blogspot.com).

- **Shack up:** Make like a local and swing by a beach or roadside fish fry—just don’t get wrong at Captain Herman’s East Side Fish Fry (left)—for conch soup, cesuve, baked fish and fries. Another way of saying frillons in the Cayman Islands.

- **Where to stay:** Grand Cayman’s Shangri-La Marine Home is one of the island’s sweet breakfasts (from $125 per night; shanglela.com).

NANTUCKET, MA

Home to iconic cranberry bogs, farms that date back to the 1800s and perhaps the best lobster rolls you’ll ever eat, Nantucket is equal parts surf and turf. And recent initiatives to revive local agricultural roots are inspiring a whole new generation of farmers and chefs.

- **MMM-MMM MUST-DO:**
  - **Get bugged down:** Walk alongside the scarlet spectacles that is the Milestone Cranberry Bog, the island’s oldest continuously operating farm (natureconservation.org).
  - **Make a roll call:** Join the great debate over who makes the best local lobster roll. Start at Straight Wharf Fish Store (left), then try the chef’s version on brioche at Cru (crunantucket.com).
  - **Raise a glass:** Visit Cisco Brewers and its sister Nantucket Vineyard to taste Fish Shack Tracker Light Lager, White’s Tale Pale Ale and cranberry-infused wine (ciscobrewers.com).

- **Where to stay:** The Wayward comes with a major foodie bonus. The in-house restaurant’s Ocean to Table experience features oysters cultivated about 300 yards from where you devour them (from $225 per night; waywardnantucket.com).

MACKINAC ISLAND, MI

Lumgenerations of summer vacations to Lake Huron, between Michigan’s Upper and Lower Peninsulas, this island became popular in the 19th century, when feasting in grand Victorian hotels was the thing to do. While the tradition continues, there are now real foodie temptations. First, there’s the amazing local whitefish grilled on wood planks. And then the sweet stuff. With a credible claim to being America’s Fudge Capital, Mackinac has a dozen-plus fudgemakers who fill the air with the sweet scent.

- **MMM-MMM MUST-DO:**
  - **Go choco-loco:** Fudge is such a big draw here, tourists are known as “fudgies.” To become one yourself, head to Murchard’s, which opened in 1882, or another mainstay, Ryko’s (rykoconfections.com/riyko.com).
  - **Do a plank:** Dubbed “the pride of the Great Lakes,” local whitefish waters visitors, too. Try the house specialty at Cawthorne’s Village Inn (planked whitefish). That’s Mackinac for grilling the daily catch on a wooden plank (906-847-3353).
  - **Tea up:** Victorian architecture and autumn still abound (down to the horse-drawn carriages that replace cars here), and one favorite is the chamber music-accompanied afternoon tea at the Grand Hotel (grandhotel.com).

- **Where to stay:** Mission Point Resort serves great whitefish dishes, starting with an off-menu whitefish Benedict you have to try (from $399 per night; missionpoint.com).
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Tour and taste: Blending snacking stops with a history lesson, Cayman Food Tours will set the stage for your stay. Among the many things you'll sample: West Indian street food, spicy pepper jelly and night rum cake (caymanfoodtours.com).

Hit a garden party: At Plantation Organic Gardens, an Edenic escape that grows 400 kinds of fruits, spices and veggies, tour and score fresh produce or sign up for the annual Gardens to Gatherings dinner (plantationhouseblogspot.com).

Shuck up: Make like a local and swing by a beach or roadside fish fry—you can't go wrong at Capt. Herman East Side Fish Fry (wifi—why—for conch soup, cassava cake or fish and fritters) or another way of saying fritters in the Cayman islands.

Where to stay: Grand Cayman's Shangri-La B&B, home to one of the island's hottest smokehouses (from $125 per night; shangrilabandb.com).

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Get boggled down: Walk alongside the scarlet spectacle that is the Mistletoe Cranberry Bog, the island's oldest continually operating farm (nantucketconservation.org).

Make a roll call: Join the great debate over who makes the best local lobster roll. Start at Straight Wharf Fish Store, then try the chaffy version on broil at Cru (crunantucket.com).

Raise a glass: Visit Cisco Brewers and its sister Nantucket Vineyard to taste Sab Shack Tracker Light Lager, Whale's Tale Pale Ale and cranberry-infused wine (ciscobrewers.com).

Where to stay: The Wauwinet comes with a major foodie bonus. The in-house restaurant’s Ocean to Table experience features oysters culivated about 300 yards from where you shovell them (from $225 per night; wauwinet.com).

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Go choco-locos: Fudge is such a big draw here, tourists are known as "fudge-ers." To become one yourself, head to Munder's, which opened in 1887, or another mainstay, Ryba's (rpyba.com/fudge).

Do a plank: Billed as "the pride of the Great Lakes," "local whitefish" wins visitors, too. Try the house specialty at Mackinaw's Village Inn-planked whitefish. That's Mackinkee for grilling the daily catch on a wooden plank (906-447-3542).

Take up: Victorian architecture and customs still abound (down to the horse-drawn carriages that replace cars here), and one favorite is the chamber music—accompanied afternoon teas at the Grand Hotel (grandhotel.com).

Where to stay: Missing Point Resort serve great whitefish dishes, starting with an off-menu whitefish. Remember to try (from $169 per night; missingpoint.com).