

Issue:
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Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman

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Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman

Yes, the Cayman Islands have all you could want in a Caribbean Island getaway. There's the diving, snorkeling, fantastic fishing and marine life (don't miss a chance to see the friendly giant string rays about 20 minutes off shore). There's also the famous Seven Mile Beach to take in the endless tropical blue horizon.

But, if you are looking to really get away from the real world, relax, eat well, have fun and try not to have to think about very much at all, then once you have landed at the Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman, there's no reason to go anywhere else at all.

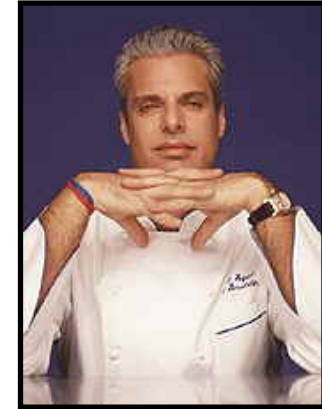
Stretched out across the Fili D'oro Italian linens, my head on the softest king size goose down pillow, I can already feel myself unwinding five minutes after arrival. Across the room, my balcony overlooks the two ocean front pools and outdoor Jacuzzi and a sweeping expanse of the Seven Mile Beach.

The property sits on 144 acres, so even if you don't want to spend every moment hanging out in your room or by the beautiful pool, you still don't have to leave the property to entertain yourself.

Nick Bollettier designed the tennis center and Greg Norman put his stamp on Blue Tip, the nine-hole on site golf course.



But, that's all too much activity for me. My activity of choice was a visit to Silver Rain, an absolutely



Superstar chef Eric Ripert talks to LuxuryWeb from his Cayman's restaurant Blue.

LW: You've been sort of reluctant to expand, why did you decide on Grand Cayman?

Eric Ripert: We have been approached by many companies and many places but the fact that it was Ritz Carlton to us meant there was an assurance of quality. It's very important to be connected to the right company because we have built a reputation and we are not going to go with a company that doesn't understand what it is to serve quality food in a good environment

LW: So is the menu mostly fish dishes?

ER: Yes. In New York its 90% fish and seafood. Here it's about 70%

LW: Really? Why is that?

ER: Because some people stay at the hotel and don't really eat fish and they want to have the experience of Blue. Sometimes there will be four couples who come to spend the weekend and one of them doesn't eat seafood, so it's nice to provide something so they can be together in the same restaurant... and we know how to cook meat too!

LW: But the quality of the fish must be amazing here?

ER: The quality we get in New York is beautiful and here it's beautiful as well. But here we have created connections with local fishermen, and some of them deliver through the back entrance and some of them bring the boat right up to the



gorgeous La Prairie Spa. To get inside, you have to walk through a long hallway of indoor waterfalls. Signature Silver Rain fragrances fill the air. Lots of glass walls, seductive lighting, and lots of flowing white curtains create an atmosphere of almost instant stress relief. How can you help but feel good, when the surroundings are so lovely?

I chose the Mineral Rain body treatment (90 minutes/ \$270). Citrus scented oils are applied followed by a gentle buffing. An energizing mask follows with cool stones applied to the body to give you energy according to my therapist. Warm stones are also applied to the back for relaxation. But the best part was sweet smelling oils applied to my feet and massaged gently. Never underestimate the power of a foot massage! You never understand the strain you put on your feet and hands until someone offers a little TLC.

I would gladly not move for the next eight hours, but hunger beckons and I know the hotel has plenty to offer.

As anyone who has ever had the privilege of enjoying a meal at New York's Le Bernadin knows, Eric Ripert is one of, if not the world's best chef. Instead of expanding his brand to Las Vegas like many other celebrity chefs, Ripert has chosen the Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman as his first restaurant venture outside of Manhattan.



Blue, his upscale dining restaurant, is centered around dark wood walls and ceilings. And, while the atmosphere is attractive, it's really the food that draws crowds here. Ripert doesn't disappoint, especially when it comes to a wide variety of



spectacular seafood dishes. The AAA Five Diamond Award winner also carries over 350 selections in their wine cellar.

There are also six other restaurants here including Ripert's Periwinkle, a more casual outdoor spot overlooking the golf course.

One of my favorite experiences at the Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman was the chance to meet Jean-Michel Cousteau, son of the famed Jacques Cousteau.

Jean-Michel has brought his Ambassadors of the Environment program to the property. There's a sort of clubhouse where young children and big kids (like me) can learn all about the ocean and how we can protect it. But it's not just a classroom experience. The well-trained team takes participants to explore beaches and on dives

restaurant and come here with fish that was an hour ago in the water and that's unbelievable

LW: Where did you develop your love of cooking from?

ER: In the kitchen of my mother. I was always in the kitchen with her. I was playing really, rather than cooking but I had a passion for food. It was an obsession with good food from when I was like four or five years old, and then when I was a bit older and my parents would ask me what I wanted for a gift like for a birthday or graduation. It was always to go to a famous restaurant to celebrate.

LW: Did you ever dream you would have this career?

ER: No never! I wanted to open a good restaurant with good food but its like if you want to be a singer and think I want to be famous. You will never be famous. If you want to be a chef because you want to be famous, it won't happen. You have to want to be a chef because you like the craft.

LW: What's the most common mistake people make when they cook seafood at home?

ER: Overcooking. I would say first not buying the freshest ingredients and then overcooking it. It's really not that difficult. Maybe you also need to buy a cookbook by Eric Ripert—only joking.

LW: Do you consider what you do an art?

ER: Yes definitely. It's a craft obviously, but also an art.

LW: How do you get inspired?

ER: Inspiration is something very difficult to pinpoint where it's coming from. I travel a lot and I eat a lot and I kind of record everything in my mind...when I taste something I like or see a good combination I keep it in my mind and I kind of store it and let it mature and it comes out later.

LW: Is there a direction that you think food is going in?

ER: I think the next trend is to really serve better ingredients and I think organic food; we have just seen the start of organic food and sustainable menus. I think it is becoming very big and will spread everywhere. There is no comparison between a carrot and an organic carrot when it comes to flavor and at the same time it makes me feel good to know that there is no chemical or pesticide in my food.

LW: What do you think about farm raised fish?

ER: That has been an issue because there is a lot of pollution and the fish doesn't necessarily taste good because of the cheap diets they give them. So in some ways I have never been a fan of farm raised, but now we are starting to see some farms that are organic and they are feeding the fish what they are supposed to eat and it's sustainable and that's a big deal.

LW: What foods can't you live without?

ER: Dark chocolate, black truffles, caviar, and Greek yogurt.

LW: What do you do on the Caymans when you aren't cooking?

ER: I go to the beach or I go on a boat snorkeling. This afternoon I am going to Sting Ray City (a spot in the ocean

so they can get an up-close-and-personal view of the world they are being encouraged to help save.

“Our goal has always been to give young people, and in some formats their teachers and families, an experience they could never have in a traditional classroom,” Cousteau tells LuxuryWeb. “We also wanted to create a thread of continuity from what is learned in nature about sustainability, stewardship and the collaborative associations created at camp back to life at home. We sought to reach both the head and the heart with a scientifically rigorous program that inspires and motivates individuals to choose a life that is gentler on the planet.”



nearby where stingrays congregate). It’s amazing. They come and they hug you. It almost breaks your heart. In New York I cook skate, and I see them here and it’s unbelievable when they come around you with their wings and give you a hug. It’s fantastic. So we have no skate on the menu here!

Who knew a peaceful and relaxing getaway could also change my worldview?

The Ritz-Carlton is known for its attention to service and there are nearly 1000 employees here to meet every need. If you are looking for a more permanent getaway location, you may want to check out The Reserve while you are here. The residential suites offer professionally equipped chef’s kitchens, butler service, private entrances and elevators and pre-arrival grocery shopping. You’ll never want to leave or lift a finger again.

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