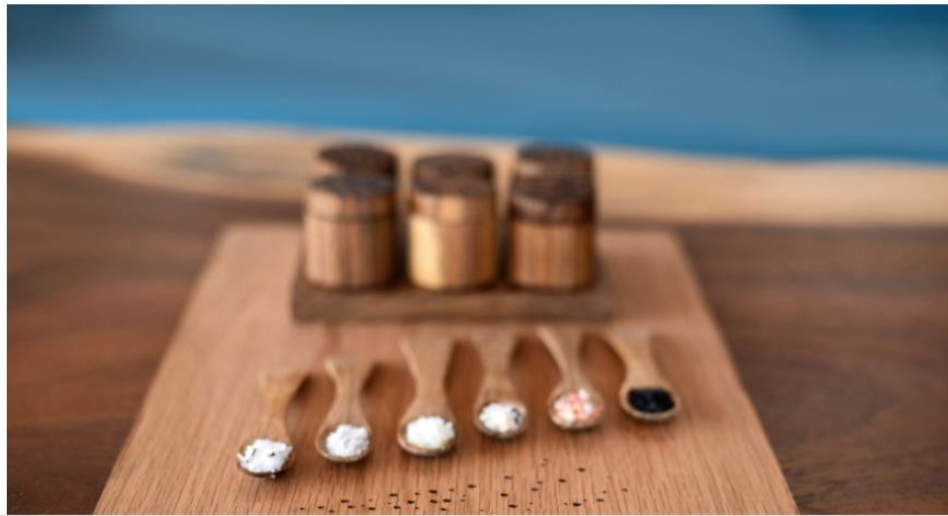


SEA FIRE SALT

Life is better with a pinch of the salty stuff

By Dorria Watt • 31 January 2020



Chef Donaldson Madubela of Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort in Mozambique has created a fine dining experience at restaurant Clube Naval called 'Sea Fire Salt'.



Listen to this article

6:20

'Salt is born of the purest parents: the sun and the sea.' – Pythagoras

Salt has a bit of a bad rep – but as Oscar Wilde put it: “Everything in moderation, even moderation.” The fact remains that throughout history, salt – or sodium chloride – has been an important element of life. It’s been the subject of many stories, fairy tales, folklore and idioms.

Salt was of high value over centuries, an important currency in ancient and medieval times, used to trade and barter. It is said that the power of salt created and destroyed empires.

Today, the negative impact of high- and long-term salt consumption on your health is heavily debated but there is no doubt that salt remains an integral part of our culinary lives.

In the words of Jay Rayner: “Salt is the difference between eating in technicolour and eating in black and white.”

South African-born Executive Chef at Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort in Mozambique, Chef Donaldson Madubela, understands the power of salt, so much so that he has created a fine dining experience at restaurant Clube Naval called “Sea Fire Salt”.

This interactive dinner includes a salt library. Six distinct salt flavours are presented in beautifully hand-carved wooden containers and diners are encouraged to taste them, as is, and then add to and experiment with the different courses. The library includes: Pink Himalayan; Black Himalayan; Citrus Himalayan; Truffle; Sea salt with local chilli and Furikaki.

The menu is served on shared platters with explanations provided about each salt variant... Observations and preferences differed between diners and much debate was had about the merits of the combinations. A word of warning, unless you are a truffle lover, use with caution and a dash of Wilde’s moderation – it can be a little overpowering.



Tempura prawns. Photo: Supplied

We started with a duck salad with sun-kissed tomato, cucumber and tom yam dressing; tempura prawns with pickled cucumber and wasabi dressing and Tuna tartare served with avocado and fresh herbs to start.

Grilled line fish and a rack of lamb with tomato barley risotto were two of the mains but the star of the show was the wagyu beef ribeye seared at the table on a pink Himalayan salt rock, served perfectly pink and juicy ... enhanced by a sprinkle of chilli salt.

Pear and ginger pudding, with a side of vanilla soil, rooibos ice cream and a pinch of salt, rounded off a gourmet experience.

Bazaruto Island, the largest of six archipelagos off the coast of Mozambique, is located in a National Park where sustainable fishing practices are observed by the locals who hold fishing quotas. For guests, it's catch and release. With this resource literally a few footsteps away, seafood has pride of place on the menu – but other dishes such as Peri-Peri Chicken remain firm favourites. Chef Donaldson blends cuisines and you get to enjoy a medley of specialities with Mediterranean, Italian, Portuguese, Asian, Brazilian and Arabic influences.

That doesn't mean French cuisine isn't a feature. During our "Dining by Design" experience on the beach, at a guest's request, we were served the perfect double-baked cheese soufflé which managed to maintain its rise despite the humidity, heat and distance from the kitchen. This was followed by a beautifully cooked tender fillet, but the pièce de résistance: The oozy gooey chocolate fondant.

If you enjoy cooking then taking the Spice Spoons cooking class is for you. Set between the vegetable garden and orchard and, decked out in a chef's hat and apron, under the expert guidance of Chef Donaldson you learn traditional Mozambique recipes, techniques and some valuable chef's tips.

We prepped crayfish and spatchcocked peri-peri chicken over the coals, made a chicken and mango curry, a seafood curry and a variety of delicious salads. When we finally sat down for lunch a chilled South African white wine took the edge off the tropical heat, as did the local beers. Replete, we headed back to our air-conditioned villas armed with a flash drive of recipes and a mind full of delicious memories.

Two more menus, this time for pillows and soap. Sweet dreams are made of these ... I tried a few options, my favourite, the all-natural fibres. My soap preference – ginger. I was concerned about wastage but soap remnants are recycled and used at a job creation project.

Besides wining and dining, the Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort has three distinctive restaurants that offer varied cuisine and experiences. Other activities are more "active" and include swimming (there are private pools), diving, snorkelling, big game fishing, horse riding, kayaking, waterskiing, wakeboarding

and sandboarding ... down some of the highest dunes.



A trip to Pansy Island is a must; this pristine small island – actually more of a large sandbank at low tide – is barren except for pansy shells and scuttling crabs. The contrast of the teal water and white sand is blinding but your eyes soon adjust as you recline on loungers under the portable gazebo and settle down to a stylishly served, picnic lunch. Peri-peri grilled prawns, line fish, beef sosaties, chicken kebabs, salad, delicious fresh fruit all washed down with ice-cold beer and wine.

Most of us dozed on our way back to the resort, woken by the shouts of our skipper pointing out dolphins playing in our wake and turtles surfacing for a breath of fresh air. Snorkelling on the two-mile reef is sublime – tepid water and colourful darting fish and coral – but is a stop best done before lunch.

On the final day, I took an early morning dip in the warm, salty aqua blue ocean and reflected on the marriage of sea, salt and sand and the impact these natural elements have on our lives, as well as the 3,000 locals who inhabit this 36km x 7km wide Island. Everyone seems joyful and happy, so perhaps the saying is true: Life is better with a pinch of salt. **DM**

From Vilanculos, it is either a 45-minute boat ride or a 15-minute flight to Bazaruto Island.

Dorria Watt was a guest of Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort.