



*Anguilla*

WHERE ON EARTH

THIS PHOTO  
View from  
Hank's  
Beach  
Restaurant.

# Unplugged ANGUILLA

BEACH SHACKS, FOOD TRUCKS  
AND CASTAWAY CUISINE

*by* MICHELE PETERSON

...I take a sip of my *rose-hued* drink and decide it's time to throw technology aside...

**B**BLACKBERRY IN ONE hand and iPhone in the other, I'm standing on a dock waiting for a boat and completely baffled. My destination is Scilly Cay restaurant, located on a speck of sand off the coast of Anguilla, but my shuttle boat is nowhere to be seen. Without a signal on either of my mobile devices I have no idea how to get there.

A bartender waving from a nearby beach shack catches my attention, and the Bacardi logo and possibility of a public phone are enough to lure me over.

"You could stand on the dock and wave like an idiot," he says with a smile when I inquire about contacting the boat. "Or you could sit back, enjoy a rum punch and wait."

He pours a generous shot of dark rum into a plastic cup, tops it up with fruit juice and gestures to a chair under the leafy shade of a palm tree. I take a sip of my rose-hued drink and decide it's time to throw technology aside and enjoy Anguilla's unplugged side. For the next week I do just that.

### ISLAND CASTAWAY

Located in the British West Indies of the Caribbean, Anguilla is composed of 33 uncrowded beaches and offshore cays. When it comes to laid-back dining, there is no better place to begin than Scilly Cay off the northeast shore at Island Harbour. The restaurant is not much more than a picnic shelter in the sand, with calm sapphire waters on one side

and determined waves on the other. In between, owner Eudoxie Wallace presides over an open-air kitchen and bar.

"We've got no electricity," he explains as we walk to the water's edge. "So we've got to be creative when it comes to refrigeration."

I peer into the water and spot a trio of red speckled lobster swimming within a tidal pool. It serves as a natural aquarium that will keep them fresh until dinner. Back in the dining area, the menu — lobster, crayfish and pasta salad — matches the simplicity of the setting but my platter of seafood comes perfectly spiced and is paired with French bread as warm as the trade winds.

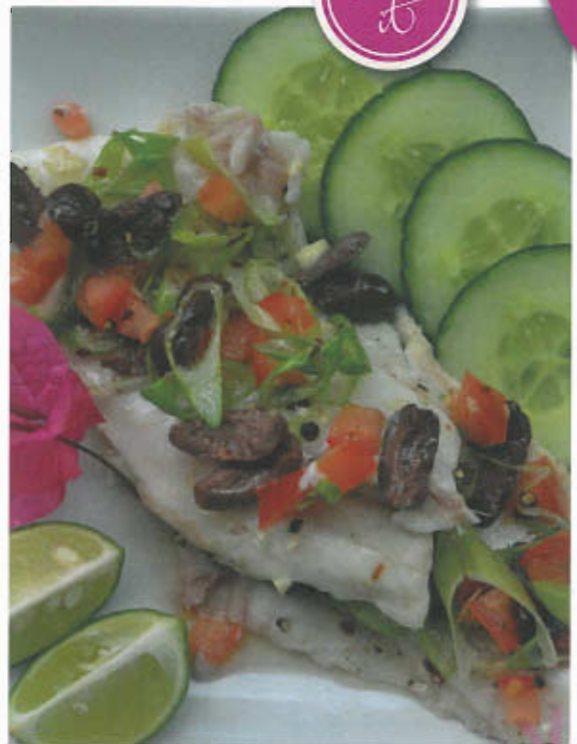
### BEACH BREAKFAST

The next morning, I do as the locals do and begin my morning with a breakfast swim at Shoal Bay. Regularly voted one of the world's top beaches by beach aficionados, it's a fringe of palm trees, cottony sand and blue waters. My unplugged dining choice is Hank's, a humble outdoor eatery overlooking the sea.

"Sorry for tracking in so much sand," I say, as my flip-flops leave a trail of white footprints across the freshly washed wood deck.

"Don't worry about it," says the waitress as she pours me a mug of fresh coffee. "It's part of life on the beach."

While breakfast is prepared, I work up an appetite with a swim. Geologically, Anguilla »



SERVES 1

### SMOKEY'S SPECIAL SNAPPER

A TASTY MEDITERRANEAN spin on snapper from Smokey's At The Cove.

**Red Snapper**<sup>1</sup> 1 x 8 oz fillet

**Garlic** chopped, 1 tsp

**Tomato** seeded and diced, 1 tsp

**Green Onion** chopped, 1 Tbs

**Black Olives** 5, pitted and quartered

**Olive Oil** ¼ cup

**Red Pepper Flakes** ¼ tsp

**Salt** and **Pepper** to taste

**1** SEASON snapper with salt, pepper and garlic.

**2** COMBINE remaining ingredients and spread on fish in an ovenproof pan.

**3** BAKE for 5-10 minutes at 375°F degrees.

<sup>1</sup> Or other white fish.





**Scilly Cay**  
www.scillycayanguilla.com

**Hank's Beach Bar**  
On the beach at Shoal Bay  
(East) off Bay View Road.

**Smokey's at the Cove**  
www.smokeysatthecove.com

**Dune Preserve**  
Beside CuisinArt Resort & Spa  
on Rendezvous Bay.

**Hungry's Lunch Truck**  
In The Valley near the Post  
Office and St. Gerard's Catholic  
Church next to Valley Bistro.

**Jazzy's**  
Located near the airport road.

**Jacala**  
On the beach road parallel to  
Mead's Bay.



*...Long before the food truck trend hit North America, mobile food*

is comprised of limestone created by the fossil remains of ancient sea animals and coral, so the ocean floor is a marvel of bleached white sand. The ocean view and a crispy wedge of potato pancake elevate my simple plate of fried eggs to a memorable event.

#### WILD VEGETATION

"You can't go wrong with Smokey's," says Glennis my driver. He's enthused over my choice for an evening meal and deftly navigates past Paradise Cove Resort along a winding road flanked by scrub brush, the low-lying vegetation of wild grape, beach morning glory and wild sage that's abundant on Anguilla.

Just when I think we're going to disappear into a beach dune, a plantation-style building miraculously appears at water's edge. It's Smokey's at The Cove, where Executive Chef Leonard "Smoke" Sharples serves up authentic

Anguillian cuisine in a casual restaurant overlooking spectacular Cove Bay.

I begin my meal with a basket of johnny cake, a cornmeal flatbread that's a staple in many parts of the Caribbean. The name is derived from 'journey cake' to reflect its origins as a food carried on long travels. On Anguilla there are as many variations as there are cooks, but the johnny cake at Smokey's comes deep fried to a golden brown and a fluffy, melt-in-your-mouth interior.

With stars in the unspoiled sky and torchlight tableside, I'm inspired to keep my dining simple. So a dish of fresh Mediterranean-style red snapper, nestled in black olives with liberal splashes of fragrant olive oil, is a perfect uncomplicated choice.

#### PARTY RAFT NIGHTLIFE

Nightfall on Anguilla doesn't mean casinos, neon nightclubs or theatrical

liquid nitrogen drinks. Instead, it's all about sand mashing (beach dancing), authentic live music and relaxed cocktails. There's no other spot that epitomizes this laid-back vibe as much as Dune Preserve. Owned by reggae musician Bankie Banx, the bar is a sprawling construction of driftwood, old boats and rope on Rendezvous Bay that feels more wooden raft than building.

Although the bar is known to draw big name musicians such as John Mayer, the Wailers and Jimmy Buffett, when I arrive something else is on tap.

"Tonight we're doing spoken word," says Bankie Banx, as he introduces performers who combine experimental poetry, theatre and radical politics in a free-wheeling exploration of politics, island life and love. I sit back on a sofa and sip a Duneshine, (the fermented ginger drink that's a house specialty) entranced by the

lapping of the waves and the flickering lights of the French island of St Martin across the bay. No neon needed.

#### STREET TRUCKS

Long before the food truck trend hit North America, mobile food vending was popular in Anguilla. It answered the call of locals looking for a quick traditional meal. Hungry's food truck is one of the most famous. Parked under the shade of a towering tamarind tree in The Valley, the business hub of Anguilla, the lime green mobile diner is doing a booming business when we arrive.

"Try some bull foot soup," encourages a local, who is spooning soup into his mouth with enthusiasm.

The menu features economical comfort food that hearkens back to the days of Creole home gardens filled with pigeon peas, root vegetables and corn. More of the island's rich West Indian legacy can be seen in goat

FROM LEFT  
Dune  
Preserve;  
Jazzy at her  
food truck;  
Hungry's  
food truck.



vending was popular in Anguilla...

and chicken dishes, domesticated animals that can survive on Anguilla's scrubby soil.

My culinary road trip continues with a quick stop at Jazzy's, a chartreuse food truck near the airport. Although Jazzy is best known for her pumpkin pancakes and curry chicken, she's got a personality as big as her smile. She's been doing a steady business at her roadside diner for nine years. When I ask to take a photo, she takes off her apron, steps out of the truck kitchen and strikes a provocative pose.


"Make sure you get my whole body in the shot," she says, her hot pink dress as bright as the neon truck she's so proud of.

### NO RESERVATIONS NEEDED

The next day, my culinary odyssey wraps up on Meads Bay on the western end of Anguilla. This stretch of pearl white beach is a magnet for celebrities, politicians and business moguls who are drawn to upscale restaurants such as Blanchard's, the Caribbean

culinary icon. For casual fare, it's worth trying Blanchard's Beach Shack or nearby Jacala where reservations are needed for evening dining, but a table is easily had at lunchtime.

Owned by Jacques Borderon and Alain Laurent, who first worked together at Malliouhana (once Anguilla's most prestigious hotel and scheduled to reopen under the Auberge brand in 2014), the menu is French-inspired and barefoot chic. I sample a refreshing chilled cucumber soup with spicy tomato sorbet accompanied by bread that tastes as though it came straight from a Parisian boulangerie.

Later, as I swim in the warm water alongside graceful sea fans, I decide that although Anguilla has a well-deserved reputation for upscale dining, the full taste of its Caribbean spirit can also be found in its most laid-back settings. It's a low tech/high flavour fusion that works. 



[www.ivisitanguilla.com](http://www.ivisitanguilla.com)

Cook



SERVES 2

## CUCUMBER SOUP WITH SPICY TOMATO SORBET

**MAKE THE SORBET** at least a day ahead of when you plan to serve this refreshing chilled soup.

### SORBET

**Water** 1 cup  
**Sugar** 185 g  
**Ripe Tomatoes** 4 large, roughly chopped  
**Tomato Paste** 1 Tbs  
**Tomato Ketchup** 4 Tbs  
**Shallot** 1, chopped  
**Sun-Dried Tomatoes** 3, roughly chopped  
**Scotch Bonnet or Habanero Pepper** ½  
**Olive Oil** for sautéing  
**Salt** to taste  
**Herbes de Provence** a small pinch

- 1** IN a small pan, combine the sugar and water and bring to a boil. Turn off the heat and allow the syrup to cool.
- 2** SAUTÉ the shallot in a little olive oil until just starting to colour. Add the tomatoes and sun-dried tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes.
- 3** ADD the remaining ingredients and cook for about 20 minutes, to

produce a rich tomato sauce.

- 4** ADD the syrup and stir until very well blended. Pour into a flat container and freeze for at least 24 hours.

### SOUP

**Cucumbers** 3, roughly chopped  
**Celery** ¼ stalk, roughly chopped  
**Shallot** 1 small, roughly chopped  
**Plain Yogurt** 3 Tbs  
**Olive Oil** 3 Tbs  
**Salt** to taste

- 5** COMBINE all the ingredients in a blender and blend very well. Salt to taste and reserve in the refrigerator.

### TO SERVE

- 6** POUR the soup into serving bowls. Scrape the tomato sorbet with a fork to form a granité, then place a scoop into each bowl of soup.