

ISLAND *Inspired*

Tantalise your taste buds as you savour the home-grown flavours of one of Cayman Airways' most exotic Gateway destinations: Jamaica.

BY LEISHA WONG AND JANEEN JOHNSON

Your senses will be set *on fire*



AS YOU TAKE IN JAMAICA'S FAMOUS FLAVOURS. Fragrant aromas draw from the island's melting pot of cultures and indigenous seasonings and define a diverse and delectable culinary culture. Drawing on bounty from the land, these flavours capture the true and authentic Jamaican experience. The best part: You can easily depart to Montego Bay and Kingston via Cayman Airways.

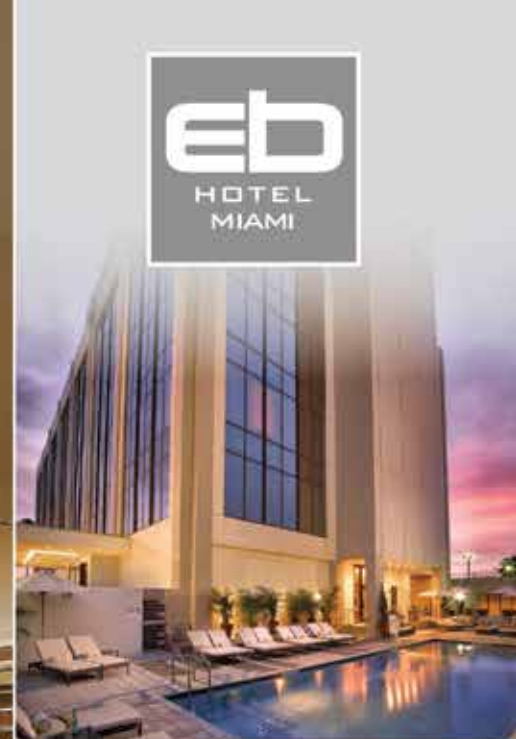
ROOTED IN HISTORY

With roots that tie the island's most well-known cooking approaches to the earth (albeit in very different ways), jerk and ital speak to two different sides of Jamaican culture. Jerk is as synonymous with Jamaica as our sun-drenched beaches and reggae music. It is a time-honoured cooking tradition passed down from Jamaica's earliest ancestors, a group of slaves that escaped to the Blue Mountains. Known as the Maroons, they merged West African cooking techniques and local ingredients, cooking in underground pits to conceal the fire and deliver meat full of fiery flavour. Ital preaches that food should be natural, pure and from the earth. It is a practice born from Rastafarianism and follows the tenets that your diet should increase "Liverty," or life energy in your body. A primarily vegetarian, sometimes vegan and sometimes raw diet, it is inspired by a holistically organic approach to food production and can even dictate the type of cooking utensils used.

HOMEGROWN BOUNTY

Jamaican soil is potent! From the ginger to the coffee beans, bananas to peppers, homegrown produce in Jamaica is infused with a richness that is undeniably Jamaican. Travel across the island and you'll discover hundreds of farms. Local farms such as Stush in the Bush, Food Basket Farm (and EITS Café), and Island Outpost's Pantrepant Farm offer hands-on tours of their organic farms. For a delicious farm-to-table dining experience, Stush in the Bush and Pantrepant offer imaginative and innovative modern menus that showcase the land's bounty. "Love and affection are the first two ingredients in everything we do, in every product we make, in every meal we prepare, in every person we touch," says Lisa Binns from Stush in the Bush. Their 15-acre farm complete with farm-to-table dining experience is located in the hills of St. Ann near Ocho Rios.

From top: J. Kevin Foltz; Courtesy of Stush in the Bush



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“No farm, no food,” says Chef Alecia. That’s the tagline of Zimbali Retreats — a Canaan Mountain retreat comprised of a farm, cooking studio and guest cottages — and the common theme of their popular food tour. Guests can sip wine as Alecia meticulously plates a fresh coconut papaya salad and Chef Eli serves up lentil and red peas samosas. The majority of the ingredients used at Zimbali’s Mountain Cooking Studio are sourced from their farm. From pumpkins to eggplants, the farm seems to have everything — including an apiary. The Zimbali experience was envisioned by Mark and Alecia Swainbank. They’re part of a growing number of entrepreneurs helping to propel Jamaica as a major culinary destination.

BLUE MOUNTAIN CULINARY TRAIL

Located high in Kingston’s UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Blue Mountain Culinary Trail is the result of a partnership between the Jamaica Gastronomy Network and a group of entrepreneurs in the coffee farming region. With 15 participating eateries and attractions on board, there are plenty of options to design an epicurean adventure. One highlight is Belcour Lodge.

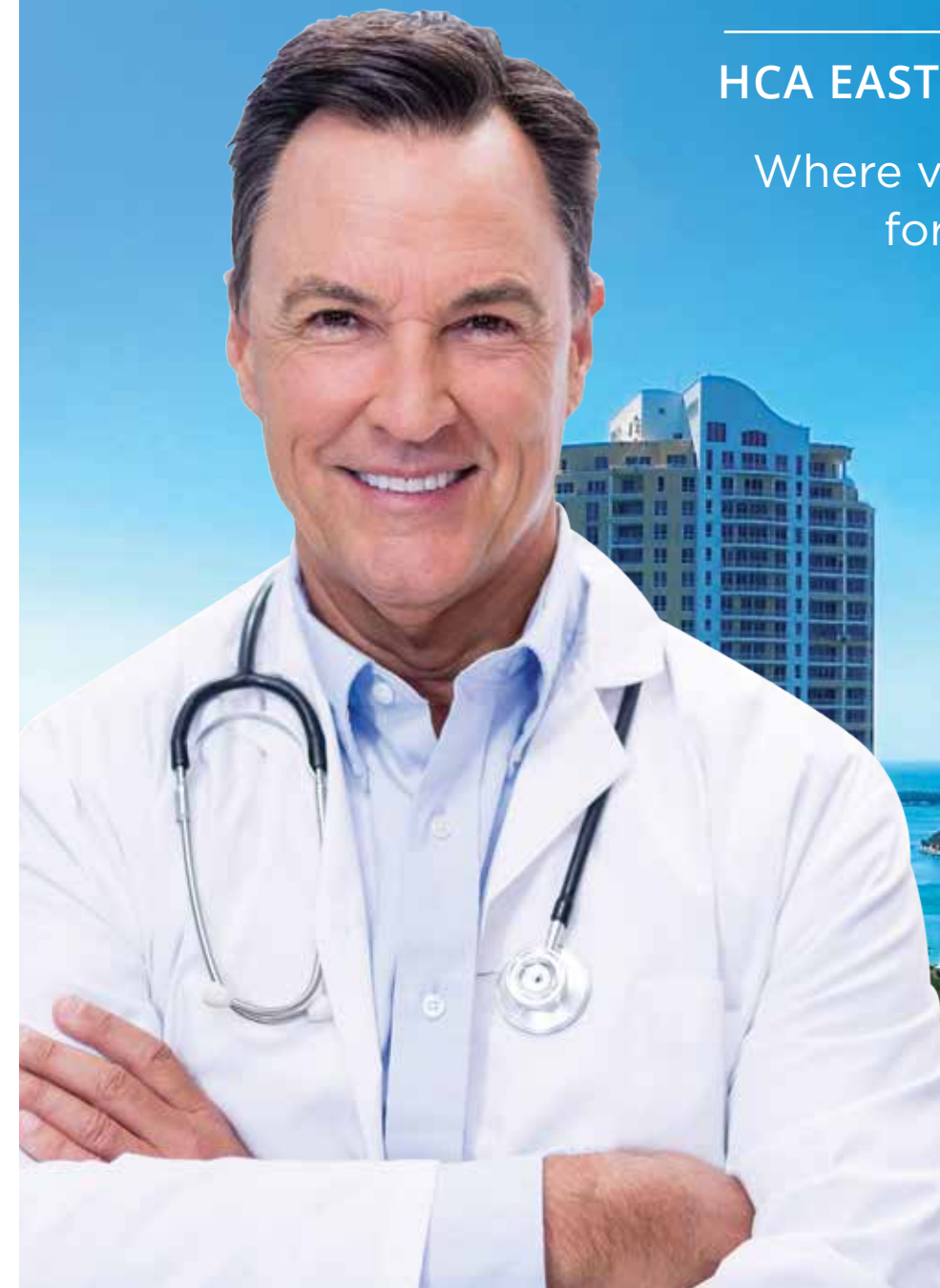
Belcour Lodge, a former 18th-century coffee estate, sits in a valley at the foothills of the Blue Mountains. The well-fruited property is home to Belcour Preserves, a line of gourmet condiments. Products incorporate the variety of fruits on the land and a multiflora honey sourced from the on-site apiary. Belcour is the private residence of Robin and Michael Lumsden. The couple hosts guests for breakfast, a delectable spread of fruits, salmon cakes, guacamole, pineapple salsa and ackee prepared with a coffee rub.

Courtesy of Stush in the Bush (2)

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Robin's passion for organic cuisine is evident in her entrepreneurial pursuits. Her Belcour Cookbook is an extraordinary collection of multicultural Jamaican recipes with snapshots of her family history. The genuine hospitality of the Lumsdens combined with their farm-to-fork lifestyle is at the core of the Belcour experience. Culinary tours are arranged by appointment.

GASTRONOMY CENTRE

As part of ongoing initiatives of the Jamaica Gastronomy Network, Devon House in Kingston has been appointed Jamaica's first Gastronomy Centre. The 19th-century landmark, most famous for ice cream, houses a collection of boutique eateries. Try classic Jamaican cuisine like Braised Ox Tail at the Grog Shoppe or Italian-style pizzas at La Pizzeria. Savour fine wines and Mediterranean flavours at Opa Restaurant and Reggae Mill Bar. Satisfy your sweet tooth with handmade treats from Chocolate Dreams or the Devon House Bakery. The ice cream parlour has relocated to a new and larger space, creating an even sweeter experience. Future plans for the Gastronomy Centre include food tastings, a farmers market and a self-service kitchen. Jamaica's star continues to rise as a choice destination for gastronomy.



From left: Courtesy of Zimbali Retreats; J. Kevin Foltz

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