

In Caribbean, West Indian style is way to eat

West Indian got fine food to eat. Spicy crab back, quinoa soup, Potato pudding, salt fish cake. Come fill your bellies, for goodness sake!

This rollicking calypso chorus, sung to the accompaniment of a linking steel drum, reveals in lilting accents just how fond Dutch Windward Islanders are of their local dishes.

Visitors can discover the savory joys of "spicy crab back," "christophened" and other Creole dishes in the many Caribbean restaurants that specialize in West Indian cuisine.

The aptly named "West Indian Tavern" boasts a unique creole of its own, blending local food with historic ambience. Housed in a handbuilt, cedar plank dwelling, the Tavern is one of St. Maarten's

travel

oldest and most popular establishments.

MEALS AT the West Indian Tavern unite the building's past with the West Indian present — offering a tantalizing menu that ranges from beef and poultry to a half-dozen recipes for lobster, including of course, Lobster Creole. The West Indian Tavern features entertainment nightly and is open daily from 5 p.m. to midnight.

St. Maarten's "Calypso Restaurant," located in the picturesque fishing village of Simpson Bay, whets diner's appetites with the savory aromas of such traditional West Indian dishes as crab backs,

baked red snapper and conch fritters. Most of the ingredients are locally harvested, either from the blue Caribbean or from the garden plots that dot the island.

One particularly intriguing specialty is stuffed christophene, a delicate squash cooked with local spices. Rice and pigeon peas, plantains (a banana-like fruit) and "Johnny Cakes" (a delicious local biscuit) are the traditional accompaniments to West Indian meals.

ALL OF them appear in copious servings at the Calypso Restaurant — open daily except Mondays from 11 a.m. to midnight.

"The Blue Wave" on St. Maarten's sister island of Saba is the domain of Chuck Maxwell who a few years ago was responsible for providing sumptuous meals for

For gourmet-travelers seeking a true island flavor, St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustatius offer culinary pleasures as heartwarming as a West Indian smile.

Queen Beatrix and her entourage during Her Majesty's visit to the tiny island.

Since then, Maxwell has opened his intimate restaurant in "The Bottom," Saba's miniscule capital, and seems to take as much pride in providing succulent local dishes to visitors as he does to royalty.

Since five-square-mile Saba has long been home port to some of the Caribbean's most accomplished fishermen, fresh-caught fish is staple on the Blue Wave menu.

"BLAFF," a local fish, poached and then marinated in lime and herbs invariably draws compliments from patrons.

The amusingly named "Goat Water Soup" which is in reality more of a hearty stew, is a rib-sticking favorite with Saba and visitors alike. Calaloo, a local green similar to collards, forms the base of another typical West Indian Soup. Spicy and served steaming hot, it serves as a splendid counterpoint to an icy mug of Dutch beer.

The atmosphere is welcoming at "The Blue Wave." There's always time for exchanging bits of gossip, for swapping tales of the Saba's early days, for friendly inquiries into the visitors' home towns.

WHEN YOUNG Anastacia Hook decided to open a restaurant on her native island of St. Eustatius, it was natural that she remembered the time-tested West Indian recipes she learned when she was helping her mother in the family kitchen. Today, several years later,

the "Stone Oven" is a popular gathering place for lovers of Creole cookery.

Fresh local ingredients form the basis of the dishes at "The Stone Oven" — lobsters caught that very morning in the waters off Gallows Bay, vegetables and herbs ripened on the warm Statia hillsides.

Chicken with a creamy peanut sauce is popular with guests and conch marinated in lime or turtle stewed in a simmering broth are also on the menu most nights. "Lokori," a curried combination of beans, rice, chicken or crabmeat with a tomato sauce, is a favorite. "The Stone Oven" is open daily from 8 a.m. until 11 p.m.

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For further information about the Netherlands Antilles Windward Islands, contact the St. Maarten, Saba, St. Eustatius Tourist Office, 1500 Broadway, New York, NY 10036; 212/840-6655.

County pay plan based on duties

A new salary administration package for 1,300 non-union employees has won approval from the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and praise from County Executive Daniel T. Murphy.

"The new salary package is a more modern and sophisticated method of evaluating salaries," Murphy said. "Similar plans are being used by private employers."

Purpose is to evaluate job responsibilities and duties. It will establish 15 grades for covered employees. Presently the county has more than 400 salary ranges.

Points will be awarded toward a salary grade based on education, experience required, supervisory responsibilities, problem solving and others. Pay increases will vary on the basis of whether the current maximum is above or below the recommended salary grade maximum.

Murphy said county commissioners who gave "extra effort" to work out the salary package are Joseph P. Calandro, R-Novl, James Doyon, D-Madison Heights, and Nancy McConnell, R-Bloomfield Hills.

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