

St. Barth's Favorites

1997-98 season

This is a selected list of favorite restaurants and other places on the Isle de St. Barthélemy in the French West Indies compiled over the years by Mary and Ken Wright. We have been going to this beautiful island since at least 1983, and have stayed continuously at Hôtel Emeraude Plage. We love the people and the places of St. Barth's and have made lifelong friends there. We revise this listing every year (note the **'98 - rating** on the restaurants where we ate this year, or **'97 - rating** on the year before.). The +++ indicates our overall rating over the years. If you have specific questions you would like us to answer, call us at (610) 328-1187, or e-mail at kjwmlw@aol.com. Now, on to the restaurants!

LUNCH

+++++ **Lafayette Club**, Grand Cul de Sac, Tel: 27.62.51

Very Expensive: French cuisine: Lunch only: Open every day

For years people have raved about this place for lunch. Now we know why. A perfect setting with a pool, beach, and tables set under the trees at the waterside. Everything about the place is luxe, the food, the service and the ambiance, and we loved it. (**'97 - Superb** - Mary had the grilled lobster with creole rice and I had scallops with tomatoes and rice, and both were wonderful. Mary's lobster came with three excellent sauces - two were melted butter based and one an oil based sauce. wine and coffee came to 795FF (\$159). It was a lot to spend for lunch, but really an experience.)

+++ **Chez Francine**, rue Jeanne d'Arc, Gustavia, Tel:27.60.49

Our favorite lunch spot is gone. C'est la vie.

++ **Le Tamarin**, route de Saline, Tel:27.72.12

Moderate: Creole/french cuisine: Lunch always, dinner in season: Open every day

This was our first visit to this St. Barth's landmark located just before the Saline beach. It is a pretty setting; a large room open on all sides, surrounded by attractive plantings and populated with several noisy parrots. Wheelchair accessibility up a rocky path and several stairs is difficult. (**'98 - Fair/Good** - Mary had the Mickey Meal - a tasteless hamburger (no bun) with excellent french fries and a coke. My grilled fish plate was a very good tuna steak basted with a creole covering, superb mashed potatoes and creamed spinach, squash with red peppers, an apple fritter and three sauces for dipping; creole, onion/oil and tamarin sauce. We had three ice teas, and the total was \$57. With uneven service and squawking parrots right next to our table, we don't need to go back.)

++ **Chez Pompi**, Toiny, Tel:27.75.67

Moderate: French/creole cuisine: Lunch only: Closed Sunday

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Overlooking Petite Cul de Sac, owner-artisté fills his restaurant with paintings. One of the more simple spots on the island. His specialty is lobster salad and simple, country food. (**'97 - Good** - Even more paintings and less room to eat. We both had the fish - red snapper - with tomatoes, rice, green beans, & carrots. With a white wine and a diet coke the total was \$49.00.)

COCKTAILS/DINNER WITH A VIEW

+++++ **Carl Gustaf**, Rue de Normands, Tel:27.82.83

Expensive: Classic French cuisine: Lunch and Dinner: Open every day

A view to die for is just the beginning of this spectacular hotel/restaurant overlooking Gustavia harbor. The smiles when you arrive, help immediately at hand getting the wheelchair down the 5 steps, the top-of-the-line electronic piano player/singer doing the older classics, the beautiful ambiance and a chef from "Crillon" in Paris; all this awaits you at Carl Gustaf. Sure, you pay for it, but if you're careful, not as much as you might think. (**'98 - Superb** - We started with a Kir and a glass of Cabernet Sauvignon and they offered two small tartlets and cheese sticks that melt in your mouth. I then had a cold creme of tomato soup that had flavors of cucumber and pepper that was so good that Mary wished she had ordered it. Just prior to my appetizer, two lovely salmon tartar amuse bouche arrived, and with them a large basket of tiny rolls - 8 or 9 different kinds - each one more delicious than the next. There is butter on the table as well - not a normal event in a French restaurant - and it is kept at the perfect temperature by a small silver dome covering it. Nice. Following my appetizer, another amuse bouche arrived for each of us made up of two kinds of chocolate mousse or ice cream, white and dark. While it is customary to have a sorbet to clean your palate just prior to the main course, this was even better! Our main courses began with Mary's raviolis de langouste which she describes as two kinds of ravioli; one deep fried and crunchy and the remainder regular pasta raviolis filled with lobster and covered by a delicious lobster sauce. She loved it. My risotto de la mer was filled with tiny mussels and shrimp and had a wonderfully rich, mouth-filling taste that a really good chef can get with risotto. We ended with sharing a creme bruleé that was far too large for a single serving. So with three glasses of Sauvignon blanc and a bottle of water, the bill came to 640FF (about \$115). You can spend more, but you can't eat better.)

DINNER

+++++ **Le Sapotillier**, rue du Centenaire, Gustavia Harbor Tel:27.60.28

Very expensive: French cuisine: Dinner only: Closed Monday

Owners, Adam & Nicole Rajner run an excellent restaurant, sometimes one of the best! Reservations are not necessary, but are always a good idea. As Mary has

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said, through the last 13 years this has been the consistently best restaurant we have gone to on the island. Adam, the owner, and his staff are warm and welcoming, often treating us to a drink to start, and the food is magnificent. It is, however, a bit pricy. (**'98 - Superb** - We started with two small amuse bouche and then a shared snail/spinach lasagna, both were wonderful. Mary then had the sole meuniere with superb mashed potatoes, while I had lotte with mussels to die for. The beautiful plates included fresh veggies perfectly cooked by Adam's new chef from Beziers,

France. We shared a three-chocolate dessert and I had a coffee. A lovely bottle of Sancerre (150FF) and water brought the total to \$123 (675FF) per couple.)

+++++ **L'Orchidée**, at the Christopher Hotel (Sofitel) on Pointe Milou. Tel: 27.63.63
Moderately expensive: French cuisine: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner: Open every day

It sounded so nice that we decided to try the restaurant, L'Orchidée, and it was spectacular! A gorgeous setting right on the water, with a huge, lighted pool that the restaurant wraps around. (**'98 - Superb** - This really is a wonderful restaurant, and a great value-for-money for the last two years. We started with amuse bouche was feta cheese on tomato with an oil dressing. Delicious. Then my first course of a light and creamy crayfish bisque with quenelles that was superb. Mary had no starter, and her main dish was quick-fried salmon over sliced scalloped potatoes. She liked the potatoes best. The salmon was a bit dry, but with a good flavor. My blanc de dorade, mahi-mahi, was an excellent fish covered with a creole garnish of chopped tomatoes and spices. It was perfect. Small tastings of veggies surrounded the fish and added to both the presentation and the flavor. Dessert amuse bouche of tiny, delicious creme bruleés preceded our shared dessert of oeuf a la neige, served with a large dome of crystallized sugar was a spectacular end to a delicious meal. But it wasn't over. Wonderful tiny cookies and chocolates accompanied coffee. With a bottle of Muscadet (150FF) and water, the total was 570 FF (about \$95).

+++++ **L'Ocean**, Rue du Centenaire, Gustavia Tel: 29.89.79
Expensive, but worth it: French cuisine: They serve breakfast, lunch and dinner.

This new restaurant is harborside at the bottom of the harbor in Gustavia. The building is light and airy with vaulted ceilings, with beautiful large pieces of furniture from the far east - Thailand I believe - and lovely paintings. A long bar is to the left as you enter, and there is a room for parties on the side. The restaurant looks out over the harbor and has a "terrace sur le port" for drinks outside. You could dock a boat right at the terrace. The marble-topped tables are set with old lace placemats, heavy silver and pretty Parisian china and glass. The clientele leans toward older men with their gorgeous daughters, but that's not all bad! (**'98 - Superb**. We celebrated French Armistice Day with a Kir and a rum

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tonic and they served 6 small salmon mousse amuse bouche with the drinks. We then shared a smoked salmon marine that was truly exceptional. Mary had a grilled tuna steak that was really delicious, served with a plate full of perfectly prepared veggies. My duck was also wonderful. Fifteen small slices laid out like a fan and cooked a perfect pink - again with the plate of veggies. Perfect. A bottle of Muscadet (high at 160FF), a glass of red wine, water and a creme brulee came to a very fair 605FF (about \$110) (Upon looking at the bill, I don't think they charged us for the drinks before or the glass of red wine. A little gift? Perhaps. We'll have to go back.)

++++ **Maya's**, Public, on the beach. Tel:27.73.64
Expensive: Exotic cuisine: Dinner only: Closed Sunday

Randy & Maya change the menu every night. Wonderful new combinations and tastes, excellent service. View of the cruise ships. Everyone's favorite. Warm & friendly place. Reserve. (**'98 - Excellent** - Just as lovely as ever is this beautiful waterside restaurant. I started with a creole vegetable soup, calalou, that was excellent - not too spicy - but just right. Both Mary and I had a nice tuna brochette with peppers between and a rather spicy sauce served on the side. Veggies and rice completed the dish. Desserts were a chocolate gateau for Mary (I helped her eat it. Delicious!) and I had sorbet that was very nice. A bottle of Sauvignon blanc (95FF), one coffee and a bottle of water brought the total to 592FF (about \$105). (We went back a second time, and the food was even better than the first. We were guests of friends, so I don't know the prices.)

++++ **Cup's**, was Topolino's, 100 yards from Emeraude Plage, Tel: 27.70.92
Moderate: French cuisine: Lunch and Dinner: Open every day

You sit outdoors, under an open roof around an oval swimming pool. It is a very pretty setting. The owners, Arnaud and Mattias, are very nice young men; they were constantly stopping by to see that everything was OK. (**'98 - Excellent** - We went here the first night we were on the island, after a rather hectic situation trying to get on to our Windward Air flight in St. Martin. To celebrate we had two Kir's. Nice. I then began my meal again this year with lobster gaspacho that was again superb. Mary had St. Jacques provençal (scallops in a tomato sauce) that she said were very good. I had vivaneau - red snapper - with boiled potatoes and green beans that was excellent. We shared a superb marquis (rich, smooth chocolate pudding cake), and had a bottle of Entré Deux Mer white wine (95FF) and a bottle of water, for a total cost of 498FF (about \$95). (A second trip to Cups was equally good. We went with friends who had the vivaneau and broiled salmon and raved about both, while Mary had a wonderful creole shrimp and I had an entrecôte steak. Appetizers (3), desserts (2), bottles of wine (2), coffee (2) and water (2) brought the total to 519FF (about \$90) per couple.)

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++++ **Vincent Adam**, behind St. Jean Beach Tel:27.93.22
Expensive, excellent value: French cuisine: Lunch & dinner: Open every day

Ask to be on the ground level. Wonderful view and menu to match. Reservations suggested. (**'98 - Superb** - This year they have two menu's - regular @190FF and a langouste menu @ 220FF. We got one of each. Mary started with a potato blini stuffed with smoked salmon - spectacular! And I had their lobster gaspacho - very good, (but Cup's gaspacho was even better). Mary then had medallions of langouste with a spinach/carrot centerpiece and I had a wonderful vivaneau (red snapper fish) rolled in philo dough and fried, with the same vegetable centerpiece. Dessert included was a creme brulee for Mary and two sorbets for me. A bottle of Muscadet (120FF), coffees and water brought the bill to 600FF (about \$110). Here the Maitre d' and waitress can't do enough for you (he helped us in with the wheelchair and took care of the car) and they smile all the time, which makes for a wonderful evening.)

++++ **La Gaïac** (in Hotel Toiny) Anse de Toiny Tel:27.88.88
Expensive: French cuisine: Lunch & dinner: Closed Tuesday

We were "first nighters" here several years ago, and this place continues to be the "in" place for the well-heeled. Service is continental-slow, but the place is beautifully decorated, with attentive maitre d's and the food is quite good. What a view! Ask to be near the pool. Reservations. We understand that their Sunday brunch is to kill for! (**'98 - Good** - It is really hard for me to rate this beautiful restaurant only "good" this year. Their chef has been named one of the 10 best young chefs in France, the place is knock down beautiful, and the service is exquisite. That said, the food was just good, not excellent or superb as it has been in the past. Maybe Wednesday is the chef's night off! We started with amuse bouche of an egg and lobster mix on a piece of fried mille fois. Then a shared starter (that was huge) of a rather tasteless smoked salmon, beautifully served on a plate of greens, with a potato blini on the side. Mary's dinner was St.Jacques au sel; scallops on a bed of potato rice with salad on the side and covered with fried sesame pita bread. Mary rated it only fair. I had their duck, which arrived beautifully presented. The duck was really called cuisse de canard, or duck leg, and duck leg it was; only duck leg. Served with mashed potatoes, lardon and a small salad, it was very nice, but not exceptional. With bottle of Reisling (120FF), water and two coffees (served with 6 delicious cookies) came to 620FF (about \$115) per couple.)

++++ **La Gloriette**, Plage de Grand Cul de Sac, Tel:27.75.66
Moderate: French/creole cuisine: Lunch and Dinner: Open every day

Overlooking the quiet bay at Grand Cul de Sac, this unpretentious room is a real "find" for good cooking at a reasonable price. Owner Albert honed his skills at

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Flamboyant Restaurant and remains as friendly and welcoming as ever. The food quality is what you would expect to find at Carl Gustaf or Le Toiny with prices that are a fraction of theirs. (**'98 - Superb** - We started with a Kir and rum punch and they served a wonderful onion/shallot/pepper/olive oil dip with their excellent brown bread. Mary had a superb salmon tartar with tomato sauce and I had my first fish soup. I used to get it everywhere, but it seems out of favor now. The main course for both of us was a fruit de mer stew that again was spectacular. Desserts were included in the prix fixe meal at 170FF. A bottle of Muscadet (100FF), and water brought the total to 510FF (about \$90) per couple.)

++++ **La Marine**, rue Jeanne d'Arc, (at the Yacht Club) Tel:27.68.91/27.70.13
Inexpensive: French/Creole cuisine: Lunch & dinner: Open every day

On Thursday, fresh moules (mussels) arrive, flown in by Air France from Paris! This night is a specialty with locals, so make reservation days ahead. Always busy, informal, cheap and good. (**'98 - Good/Excellent** - We couldn't wait for the moules on Thursday night (this year they came on Friday), so after a small cocktail party at our apartment with the Carlier's, we went here for a light dinner. Mary had grilled salmon and I had a perfectly cooked entrecôte au poivre vert with boiled potatoes. We finished off our "light meal" with a shared order of profiterolles! A carafe of Sauvignon blanc (60FF) and a bottle of water brought the total to 345FF (about \$64.50). (We, of course, had to go back on Friday for moules/frites and they were even better than last year. With a bottle of Muscadet (105FF), a shared

profiterolles, one coffee and water came to 398FF (about \$70)(And we went back again the next week for moules @ 333FF (about \$60).

++++ **Wall House**, in Gustavia on the far side of the harbor, Tel:27.71.82
Inexpensive: French cuisine: Lunch & dinner: Open every day

This restaurant had let us down a few years ago, so we didn't go back for a while. With a new chef, things have picked up. Located across from the main part of Gustavia and right next door to the new Museum, they have a great spot for a restaurant. The Valery & Bosch dishware and good-sized wine glasses complement the attractiveness of the decor. (**'98 Good** - Again, we didn't need a full dinner following Monique's actual birthday party, so we had no appetizers. The restaurant was touted to us for having a new chef, from La Boule, in France. The amuse bouche were tiny toasted triangles stuffed with tuna and topped with diced red peppers. Very nice. Mary had salmon tartar that was OK, but not nearly as good as **Cup's**. I felt the same way about my sliced duck. It was OK, but not nearly as good as the almost identical plate at **L'Ocean**. Lord, we're getting picky! With a two glasses of wine, water and coffee (and four superb white chocolate/pistachio/coconut mints and 2 free rum/vanilla digestif) the total was 390FF (about \$70). The owner, Gerard, came by several times to talk and the

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wait staff couldn't do enough for you. Combined with lovely china and view, the experience was very, very nice.)

++++ **L'Iguane**, in Gustavia at Carré d'Or, Quai de la Republique, Tel:27.88.46
Moderate: Japanese cuisine - dinner: Lunch & dinner: Closed Sundays pre-season

Located in the patio surrounded by Polo, Versace, Hermes and Cartier, you sit under Italian market umbrellas lined with tiny strings of lights. With music and beautiful people constantly coming in and out, it is a fun night. ('98 - **Good/Excellent** - In the mood for some sushi, we again tried L'Iguane where they only serve sushi for dinner. Sushi is not Mary's favorite, but she does like california roll, so that, two white wines, and a vanilla sundae was her dinner. Mine was a lovely sushi wooden platter filled with 8 kinds of sushi and a california roll. Delicious. Two Sapporo beers, and the bill came to only 339FF (about \$60) per couple.)

+++ **Eddy's**, across the street from Le Sapotillier, new in '95
Inexpensive: Vietnamese/Thai/Creole cuisine: Dinner only: Closed Sunday

Lovely, open air (covered) Far Eastern-style room. Inexpensive, with good

Southeast Asian - influenced food. ('98 - **Fair/Good** - After snacks and 11/2 bottles of champagne at Carl Gustaf celebrating Monique Carlier's birthday we needed only a light meal, so we went to Eddy's new (last year) place. Mary and I both had roast pork medallions that were covered with vegetables. I thought they were good, but Mary didn't like them as much. There were the normal puréed veggies around the plate that were nice, but not special. Possibly the pre-dinner festivities took away our enthusiasm for the meal. The Carlier's enjoyed their

meals very much. Without appetizers or dessert, the price was right, though. Water and a bottle of Rosé for the four of us and our total for 2 was only 269FF (about \$50).

+++ **West Indies Café**, in El Sareno Beach Hotel in Grand Cul-de-Sac. Tel:27.64.80
Moderate: French cuisine: Dinner only: Open every day

New in '96 and one of our favorites then. It is a large, multilevel round wooden tent-like room overlooking the water. In '97 they completely changed their staff and concept - they now have live cabaret included in the price of the meal. Friends who went loved it, but we have not yet been to the new concept.

+++ **L'Escale**, rue Jeanne d'Arc, Tel:27.81.06
Moderate: Italian cuisine: Lunch & dinner: Open every day

A pretty, long-time pasta/pizza harborside restaurant which has as its specialty a

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woodfired oven that gives a unique taste to their food. A Thursday night lobster special looks like a good buy, but we haven't had it. Every meal starts with a complimentary glass of champagne and ends with a small rum/vanilla digestif, from an attentive and friendly staff. Nice. (**'98 - Fair/Good** - Our meal started with a shared small (bambino) pizza fruits de mer that was excellent. The wood flavor was very nice. Mary had a lobster salad that was unbelievably salty. She probably should have sent it back, but she was not hungry so she let it go. My filet mignon was a beautiful piece of meat (they say it is from Argentina) and the pan fried potatoes with it were very nice. A lovely bottle of Sancerre white wine (190FF) and water came to 569FF (about \$95) per couple.)

+++ **Côté Jardin**, rue Courbet, Gustavia, Tel:27.70.47
Inexpensive: Italian cuisine: Dinner only: Open every day

Informal, Italian food served outdoors under a canvas roof, behind La Sapotillier. Take bug spray, but friendly waiters and simple, good Italian food makes it nice.

++ **François Plantation**, Colombier Tel:27.78.82
Expensive: French cuisine: Dinner only: Closed Sunday

The last time we were there, many years ago, the menu was creative and the presentation was appealing. There was a comfortable cocktail area next to the open-air dining room. It is a relatively long drive, and it is always empty when we go there, so it leaves us a little "cold". Friends have had mixed reviews that seem to vary based on how they were treated by the woman maitre d'. It is not wheelchair accessible, so we haven't made the long drive recently.

++ **Eden Rock**, St.Jean Tel:27.72.94
Moderate (but somehow it seemed to not give good value. The appetizers cost as much as the entrees, 120-160FF, the wines were generally high, you got no salad nor veggies or anything with your main course, the water was a half bottle for 35FF, etc.) French cuisine: Open all day every day.

The new restaurant, built to be with the renovated Eden Rock Hotel, is located beachside, looking into the small part of St.Jean bay. A lovely view. Decor is nautical/English. Nice, but somewhat unusual. Service was friendly, but not very professional - the boys were all new to the island and seemed untrained. The **Yorkshire Bar** is open all day as part of the restaurant. (**'98 - Fair/Good** - They started us with an amuse bouche - philo cup with a tiny St.Jacques - that was superb. Mary had mahi- mahi en brochette that lay on top of a chopped pepper/rice/mushrooms coulis. It was way, way undercooked, possibly not cooked at all, and she didn't enjoy it. My 4-piece cTMte de veau was perfect, but nothing, nothing came with it - making for a very skimpy meal. We had two express coffees and with the coffee they served 6 tiny cookies that again were excellent. The St.Veran burgundy white wine (125FF) seemed to me slightly

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"brown" and I didn't enjoy it, but it wasn't so far gone to be sent back. With a wind blowing like 60 and service that was spotty, the experience was not the best - 460FF (about \$80). Friends of ours went here and had a great meal, so possibly the waiters fouled up our order. We'll try again next year.

OTHER PLACES

From our point-of-view, there is really only one place you should stay on St. Barth's, **Hôtel Emeraude Plage**, 27.64.78. Fax 27.83.08. It has bungalows right on St. Jean Beach - 2/3rds of a mile of beautiful white sand - and the price is right (600FF and up).

La Rotisserie Boulangerie in St. Jean Village is a great place to get morning croissants, danish, and salads, tarts and cooked whole chicken for lunch. They now offer a cooked dinner meal that changes each day. They looked great! Ask for the menu.

There is a store in the center of Gustavia (across from "Little Switzerland") called **LouLou's Marine**. They sell a great canvas beach bag with their name on it. Get the BIG one. Tres chic!

Petite Find: **Boutique** in Côté Jardin Restaurant just above Le Sapotillier. Worth a look and the climb.

Nice selection of T-shirts, bathing suits, etc. at **The Black Swan** in St. Jean Village and now in Gustavia. Nice people too!

St. Jean Coiffure 27.67.09 does good work on women's hair, as does the more pricy **Jacques Dessange** 27.88.87

Food shopping is great at **Match** (at the airport) and at **Unic Plus** (near the airport) open 8AM to 8PM. every day.

The best beaches are **Gouverneur** and **Salines**. Both are off the beaten path, and so they allow nude bathing. All beaches on St. Barth's are topless for those who want to, but it is not mandatory and Mary says she doesn't feel funny when she doesn't go topless.

Gumbs Car Rental has excellent prices and nice cars to rent. At the airport. In '98 we paid \$28/day for a small 4 door automatic Toyota, but we have rented from them for years and they give us a good discount (I think \$35 was the normal price.) (Tel: 27.75.32; Fax: 27.78.99)

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Windward Air (27.61.01) or **Air Guadeloupe** (27.61.90) are both good. We normally fly from St. Maarten, but have flown from San Juan as well. Don't fly Air St. Thomas! Not even if it is FREE!

To call any of these numbers from the States, dial 011- 590 and the number.