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amed after the island sunset, the award-winning Kimpton Seafire

Resort + Spa is an oasis of cool on Grand Cayman's famous Seven Mile Beach in West Bay. The open-air design, sumptuous rooms and gorgeous views reflect its intention to impress. But, the resort's restaurants also happen to be at the forefront of the island's dining scene in a country well-noted for its amazing food.

"From the initial opening [in November 2016], our intent was to create innovative and approachable, world-class food," says the resort's executive chef Massimo De Francesca. "We like to call it 'luxury without the attitude.'"

Born and raised in Toronto, De Francesca trained at George Brown College and honed his skills in Italy, Canada, the United States and the Caribbean, before joining the Kimpton family in 2008. He says his classic culinary style is heavily influenced by all the travelling he has done.

"I hit as many restaurants, food markets and shops as possible," he says. "I'm always thinking of new dishes and experimenting with new items to inspire my teams and challenge them to stay ahead of the curve."

Since coming to Cayman, De Francesca's style has also been

informed by his experiences with local vendors, farmers and fishermen, whom he credits for teaching him all about island ingredients and techniques—such as how to prepare *wahoo crudo*, an uncooked fish dish, and local stews.

These interactions have allowed him to offer authentic Cayman flavours: fresh and uncomplicated.

De Francesca is also grateful for the abundance of fresh seafood and island produce.

"Caymanian cuisine is all about fresh, flavour and family," he says. It is also multicultural, influenced by the more than 100 different nationalities represented on the islands. "There are many great restaurants to explore here—fine

dining, small beachside shacks and great vegan spots, too."

The same something-for-everyone perspective extends throughout the Seafire. Each of the resort's three restaurants has a distinct feel.

Ave is the main room, open and airy, delivering coastal Mediterranean dishes with a Caribbean flare, such as crispy octopus with a fennel salad and grilled swordfish with an eggplant purée.

In the middle of Ave, sits *Avecita*—a restaurant within a restaurant. It's a semi-private space with large communal tables seating 30 for dinner only, and serving wood-fired Spanish tapas-inspired dishes with Spanish wines. *Avecita* also features a 10-seat chef's tasting bar presenting a five-course meal every night. It is one of the most coveted reservations in town. Diners belly up to delicacies such as avocado with almonds and caviar, morel mushrooms with scallops, and wood-fired fish and steak.

Serving up elevated Mexican street-style food, *Coccoloba* is an open-air beachside restaurant, famous for its impeccably fresh ceviche, but just as renowned for its impressive view.

"It's the perfect place to have a late lunch, relax, and stay for the real show—the Cayman sunset," says De Francesca.

—Doug Wallace



### CHEF INSIDER

## MASSIMO DE FRANCESCA

The Grand Cayman chef is eating up island life at the Kimpton Seafire.

### CHEF DE FRANCESCA'S CAYMAN HOTSPOTS



#### SEAFOOD

"Heritage Kitchen is great for local fried fish and *escovitch*, [it is] a little rustic gem."



#### SPICE

"Singh's Roti Shop serves authentic West Indian food, including the best roti."



#### STEAK

"Named after our famous beach, Seven at The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman grills incredible steaks."