

The chefs of Anguilla are in a mild panic. The tom-toms of culinary distress have been heard 'round the entire island—all 39 square miles of it. Rowena Carty, the octogenarian creator of Rockfield Pepper Sauce, is about to retire, and as yet, she has not named an heir to her hot sauce realm.

Mrs. Carty's mini-empire is not only run out of her home, the peppers are grown in her backyard.

She started making pepper sauce for supplemental income during the Revolution, and in a few decades, her reputation had grown to the point where orders were coming in from all around the world, and international chefs would probably enter a bidding war to win her recipe.

"I have a buyer in New York," she says with a half-smile, when asked whether she might consider selling. "But I don't want to do that. I want a successor who is in my family. And it has to be the right successor."

Even down to the secretive smile that says, "Yes, I know how good my product is... and I know how bad you want it," Mrs. Carty epitomizes Anguilla's humble yet deliciously self-realized attitude toward cuisine. On this island, really amazing food is more than just a tourist lure. It's more than a point of local pride. It is part of the culture, identity and day-to-day life.

Funny to think that just a few decades ago, there was no fine cuisine on Anguilla. Back when the island was trying to distinguish itself from the myriad other beachy Caribbean destinations, local hoteliers, led by Leon and Nigel Roydon (owners of the legendary Malliouhana Hotel), decided that Anguilla would establish a "foodie" identity. To that end, the Malliouhana began to send its most promising chefs off to France to train in the culinary arts. Others followed suit... and as those European-trained epicures returned to the island, they gradually dispersed from the hotels to their own ventures. Thus, every mom-and-pop café and roadside food stand is probably owned by a Paris-trained chef, with a menu as likely to feature lobster salad and Pinot Grigio as fried fish and rum.

Local success story Dale Carty (possibly a relative of

Los chefs de Anguilla Tambores de angustia alrededor de los 101 1 genaria creadora de Ro jubilarse y, hasta ahora reino de su salsa pican



Every mom-and-pop café and roadside food stand is probably owned by a Paris-trained chef.

isla, la fabulosa comida más que un motivo de c la identidad y de la vic que hace solamente un altos vuelos en Anguilla, ba tratando de diferer turísticos del Caribe, lo Leon y Nigel Roydon Hotel), decidieron que tidad gastronómica. (comenzó a enviar a sus entrenarse en artes cul da que esos maestros fueron dejando los hot

Rowena's, but it's hard to tell on an island where everyone seems to share the same 10 surnames) explains all of this over a breakfast of Johnny cakes, salt fish, fried plantain and bush tea at Tasty's Café, the restaurant he left Malliouhana to open. His restaurant is homey and comfortable, with linoleum floors, island murals and a small bar in the back. (Every Anguilla restaurant has a bar in the back. Even the food trucks have 'em.) Sunshine streams in the open windows of Tasty's, and the traffic zooms by outside, occasionally drowning out conversation. The food is surprisingly light and zinging with flavor, enticing you to clean your plate even if you sincerely believe that you're not really hungry. After hearing the history and tasting the results of Anguilla's singular culinary renaissance, it's only natural to want to explore a few more kitchens. And though some—such as Mrs. Carty's Hallowed Former Home of Hot Sauce—are not open to the public, most are.

Pop by Hungry's midmorning (located, rather reassuringly, in the same building as the local Health Authority), and you'll see owner Irad Gumbs and his staff hard at work, filling up the Hungry's Food Van for its daily run to the office complex across the road. Gumbs specializes in soups, and prepares seven on weekdays and eight on weekends; whelk, conch and goat are three favorite varieties. Everything is fixed in-house, fresh.



Poi
la c
Par
ens
La
de
hal
do
Joh
no
ise
am
isle
ran
can
del
cua
ra
sin
De
do
sim
ma
de
lo

As if to underscore the point, while Gumbs is explaining this to me, a man unties a burlap sack and pulls out several enormous live lobsters that are apparently headed for the soup pot.

There's a misconception that Anguilla is an organic island, or that most of the food is island-grown. This is not the case. While luxury resort CuisinArt does have a hydroponic and organic farm that supplies its kitchens, most foodstuffs on the island are imported. Even CuisinArt relies on nearby suppliers for exotic vegetables and all meats.

However, there is one area where this island is more than

Dese una vuelta a para tranquilidad está la autoridad Gumbs y a su petri neta, Hungry's for complejo de ofici sopas, y prepara t los fines de semar de caracol, cobi Como para recalca todo esto, un hom



capable of providing for itself: the seafood. Offshore waters teem with snapper, lobster, triggerfish and a particular kind of crayfish that locals swear you can't find anywhere else. Fishermen depart from Cove Bay, Island Harbour and Sandy Ground every day before 5 a.m. and return at midday, where they briskly clean the fish and dispatch them to avid restaurants around the island.

At 70-odd years of age, fisherman Edwin "Ed" Carty (see earlier note on family connections) has already handed down many of the daily responsibilities of his operation to the next generation. However, even if he's not hands-on hauling the catch out of his boat and cleaning it, he still can be found puttering around his boat or playing on the shore with his baby grandson. Ed has a quintessential Old Man and the Sea style: weathered skin, tangled hair, gnarled hands. His grandson has a cherub face and a gold chain straight out of a Jay-Z video—fruits of the recent tourism boom.

Over at Georgiana's Arts & Crafts shop (near Tripie K Car

aseguran que no b Los pescadores sa Ground todos los regresan a mediod do y despacharlo. A los sesenta y ta (ver la acrotación ya ha pasado mu su negocio a la sig no participe activi cado de su barco por ahí o jugando estilo típico de E dado, manos calic radeña al cuello c reciente boom tur En la tienda 'Geor Car Rental' en Th hechas por Berric



© david jamper photography / Alamy

Rental in The Valley), you can purchase local products made by Bernice Fahie-Richardson. At the Pyramids you can buy—and taste—outstanding island rum and premium tequilas by Patrón. Though you can't take 'em with you, the island's punches and grogs are deceptively yummy and so strong. The ginger-based Duneshine at Dune Palace (owned by local reggae star Bankie Banx) is lit one-punch knockout. Meanwhile, the lunch menu

