



# DOUX-DOUX, DAHLING

*Savoring the "sweet-sweet" desserts of the Caribbean.*

By Amy Seigel

**L**aden with fresh fruits and overflowing with character, the desserts you'll encounter in the Caribbean are as bold and varied as the islands' inhabitants. The region's desserts reflect both the diverse heritage of the Caribbean people and the agricultural history of the land they inhabit. From simple fruit sorbets and humble puddings to elaborate cakes and custards reserved for special holiday meals, Caribbean desserts are tasty and unpretentious, and are a "sweet-sweet" end to any meal.

In the Caribbean, sweetness is not just a matter of taste, but of cultural identity and historical significance. Thanks to the islands' starring role in the birth and development of the sugarcane industry, sayings like *doux-doux*—French Creole for "sweet-sweet"—are woven into the fabric of Caribbean conversation. Along with sweetness, of course, island desserts also provide a showplace for quintessentially Caribbean flavors, from tropical fruits to dark, spiced rum.

## A Sweet Melting Pot

From ingredient lists to cooking styles, Caribbean desserts are an eclectic mix of cultural and ethnic groups that eventually came to call these islands home. There are Spanish-style flans, French-inspired soufflés, decidedly English trifles, and West



African one-pot puddings. Each colonizing country, along with each group of imported slaves and immigrant workers, brought with them recipes and culinary traditions from their homeland. These familiar dishes were quickly adapted to island ingredients and cooking styles.

Plentiful, tropical fruits, exotic spices, and free-flowing Caribbean rum slipped into traditional recipes with delicious results. The classic Spanish flan, for example, was reborn as Puerto Rican *tembleque*, a light coconut custard that shakes like Jell-O when you give it a nudge. (Hence its name, loosely translated as "jiggling.") European mousse found new life in the Caribbean when it encountered the exploding sweetness of passion fruit, mango, and pineapple. And Caribbean Rum Cake, the sweet, dense, and decadent dessert especially popular in the islands around Christmas, evolved from traditional English plum pudding.

Ice cream, which appeared with the relatively recent arrival of refrigeration, is the latest and perhaps the most versatile sweet to settle in the Caribbean. From rich Rum Raisin and Coconut Cream to light sorbets made from the sweet juice of every variety of tropical fruit, frozen treats are now so ubiquitous in the islands that it's hard to imagine what the end to a hot, Caribbean day would have been like without them.

### Caribbean Cornucopia

Mango, papaya, passion fruit, coconut, pineapple—the flavors of these luscious fruits are as central to the islands as sea breezes. Lush, syrupy, and deeply tropical, these tastes are a defining element of Caribbean desserts. Whether taking center stage in a simple recipe like sliced bananas baked in butter, brown sugar, and rum, or playing a secondary role in something slightly more elaborate, sun-sweetened fruits are likely to feature in many island dessert recipes.

Although many tropical fruits, such as pineapple, soursop and starfruit, are native to the islands, others made their way to the western tropics from such far away places as India, Malaysia, Europe, and South America. Nourished by the warm weather, sunshine, and fertile volcanic soil, exotic fruits flourished in their new environment and soon became staples of the Caribbean diet.

### Cherimoya

A member of the custard apple family. Heart-shaped, with a custard-like inner fruit which tastes like a blend of mango, strawberry and pineapple.

### Soursop

Another member of the custard apple family. Known as



guanabana in the Spanish islands and corossol in the French—soursop has a spiky skin and soft white flesh and a flavor reminiscent of pineapple, fruit candy, and smooth cream.

### Star Apple (Starfruit)

The Star Apple, a purple or green fruit, has a moist, crunchy flesh that combines the flavors of citrus and grape, and when cut crossways, reveals a star-shaped pattern of pulp and seeds.

### Sapodilla

A fleshy, brown fruit with the flavor cinnamon and texture of apple and pear.

### Sugar Rush

Regardless of the sweetness of so many varieties of sun-ripened fruits, in this tropical paradise, sugar is king. And in the good company of ambrosial fruits and strong, dark rum, sugar is allowed to reign supreme, largely free from the Western stigmas of obesity, tooth decay, and hyperglycemia. But like so many fruits and vegetables we associate with the Caribbean, sugarcane is not native to the region—far from it. Introduced to the islands by Christopher Columbus on his second trip to the New World, the perennial grass actually hails from half way around the world in the South Pacific.

## SOURSOP COMPOTE WITH NATIVE CHERRY SORBET

With minor adjustments, courtesy of Noe Chaparro, Executive Chef, Hilton Santo Domingo

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the Soursop Compote:

- 1 1/3 cup fresh, seeded soursop meat
- 2/3 cup mango, cut in medium pieces
- 1 3/4 cup passion fruit juice
- 3 1/2 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 lemon
- 1/3 cup Rum Brugal (Dominican Republic brand of rum)

#### For the Sorbet:

- 4 cups fresh native cherry, seeded
- 1/2 cup natural yogurt
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup Rum Brugal

### PREPARATION

#### Sorbet

Place all ingredients in a blender and puree until the mixture reaches the consistency of soft cream. Pour into cups and freeze, or use a commercial ice cream maker. When the sorbet is frozen and ready, begin preparing the compote.

#### Compote

In a frying pan, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the soursop and mango and sauté, stirring regularly. Add the sugar, passion fruit juice and lemon rind, and let the mixture cook until the fruits are soft and tender. Add the rum and allow to cook for a couple more minutes. Remove from heat.

### Presentation

To serve, place the warm soursop compote alongside the sorbet. For a more dressy presentation, try serving this dessert in a cup made of sesame seed caramel (as in picture), drizzled with creamy caramel sauce, and adorned with sesame seed caramel, pieces of fruit and fresh mint leaf.



## CARIBBEAN CRISP

With minor adjustments, courtesy of the The Food & Beverages Team at the Hilton Kingston led by Mr. Olivier Lavoine, Director of Food & Beverages, Garfield Victor, Sous Chef and Richard Bonner, Pastry Chef.

### INGREDIENTS

#### Fruit Mixture

¾ cup diced pineapple  
¾ cup diced papaya  
½ cup diced june plum or mango  
¾ cup diced othahieti  
⅓ cup flaked coconut  
¾ cup diced banana  
5 teaspoons packed brown sugar  
2 teaspoons lime juice  
1 ½ tablespoons coconut milk  
1 ½ tablespoons unsalted butter  
3 ounces sweet pastry dough  
2 teaspoons honey  
2 ½ teaspoons grated ginger  
2 vanilla pods, scraped  
½ cup vanilla sauce  
1 ½ cups rum raisin ice cream  
4 tablesoons fresh mint

#### Pastry Dough

3 ⅔ cups flour  
1 ⅓ cups oats  
2 tablespoons baking powder  
16 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces  
1 cup sour cream  
⅔ cup maple syrup  
pinch of salt

#### PREPARATION AND SERVICE

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

To make the pastry dough, combine flour, oats, baking powder and salt in a bowl.

Cut in the butter until the mixture resembles the texture of coarse meal.

Stir together the sour cream and maple syrup and add to the dough, mixing until it just comes together. Chill in the refrigerator for 15 minutes.

While the dough is chilling, peel and dice all of the fruits.

In a large bowl, combine with the ginger, honey, cinnamon and sugar.

Once the dough is thoroughly chilled, lightly flour your work surface and roll the dough out to about an 1/8-inch thickness.

Place about 1 cup of the fruit mixture in a ramekin, cover with the pastry and bake in oven at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

#### SERVING SUGGESTION

Serve as presented, accompanied with vanilla sauce, rum raisin ice cream and garnished with mint.



Like so many other imported crops, sugarcane took easily to the rich Caribbean soil. But it was the intensive cultivation of sugarcane at the hands of forced laborers—African slaves brought to the islands for the specific purpose of tending this lucrative crop—that cemented sugar's place in the history of the Caribbean.

Despite its dark history, however, sugar became a celebrated element of Caribbean cuisine. In the hands of a Caribbean cook, this seemingly straightforward ingredient is transformed into all manner of edible delights. It is both the syrupy sweetener of rum punches and the slightly burnt and bitter seasoning and natural coloring agent of Jamaican black cakes and rice casseroles. And whether in an elaborate example of island haute cuisine, or mixed with fruit and sold, wrapped in paper, at a roadside stand, sugar will forever have a place of honor in the Caribbean islands.

#### Rum Royale

Sugar also influenced Caribbean history and cuisine by setting the stage for the production of another island icon: Rum. Not long after sugarcane cultivation came to the islands, the plantation slaves operating the sugar mills began to notice



something extraordinary. When mixed with water and left out in the sun, both molasses and cane juice eventually fermented into alcohol.

By the 1650s, these previously discarded by-products of the refining process were being distilled into spirits throughout the Caribbean.

In the English colonies the brew was known as “kill-devil” or “rumbullion” (an old English word meaning “uproar”), which shortened over time into our modern word, rum. And while early versions of the beverage were not known for their quality—but rather for the terrible hangover they delivered—improvements in the filtration and distillation and aging processes soon produced vastly superior results. Today, Caribbean rums are universally acknowledged as the best in the world with nearly every major island group producing its own distinct style.

Along with being enjoyed on its own or in a tropical cocktail, rum is a common ingredient in both sweet and savory Caribbean fare. Light rums are a wonderful accompaniment to the more delicate fruit desserts like sorbets, soufflés, and trifles. Dark rum, with its full-bodied flavor and deep color, can be found in most every form of Caribbean dessert from fruit flambés to puddings, cakes and ice creams.

## TEXTURES OF RED BERRIES WITH PASSIONFRUIT PUFF, COLD CHOCOLATE SOUP

(Serves 12)

### INGREDIENTS

For the textures:

14 ounces raspberry pulp  
3.5 ounces merlot  
9 ounces sugar  
9 ounces whipping cream  
4.5 ounces strawberry pulp  
2 ounces unflavored gelatin

### For the puff

7 ounces passionfruit juice  
2 ounces soy lecithin

### For the soup

2 ounces Venezuelan chocolate for melting  
3 ounces fresh thyme  
5 ounces cup cream

### PREPARATION

The fruit part of the recipe is divided into two steps to achieve the two textures.

First, heat the berry pulp, half the merlot and half the sugar in a saucepan.

Bring to a simmer, cover, remove from heat and infuse for ten minutes.

Do not allow to reach boiling point.

Dissolve half the gelatin in two ounces of water.

Mix the rest of the gelatin in the berry mixture until evenly distributed.

Pour into a 9-inch mold and refrigerate until it sets.

When the first mold is set, using a hand beater or food processor, whip the cream with the reserved sugar.

Heat the strawberry pulp and mix the remaining gelatin until evenly distributed.

Mix cream with strawberry pulp and gelatin until evenly distributed and spread over the berry mixture in the mold.

Refrigerate until ready to serve.

### For the puff

With a hand blender, beat the passionfruit juice and the soy lecithin until foamy.

### For the soup

In a double boiler, melt the chocolate and blend in the whipping cream and thyme. Infuse.

### TO SERVE

Pour the warm soup into a deep bowl, followed by the berry texture. Top with the puff.

## TEMBLEQUE

### INGREDIENTS

2 cups coconut milk  
½ cup cornstarch  
¾ cup sugar  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon vanilla flavoring  
Ground cinnamon (optional)

### PREPARATION

Over medium-high heat, heat the coconut milk, the sugar and the salt in a heavy-bottomed saucepan.

Dilute the cornstarch with some of the coconut milk and add to the saucepan.

Stir continuously until it boils, then simmer until the mixture has thickened.

Pour into a mold or single serving cups. Let it cool to room temperature before refrigerating—with plastic wrap pressed to the surface so a skin does not develop—for at least 2 hours.

Sprinkle with cinnamon before serving.

## JAMAICAN BLACK CAKE

### INGREDIENTS

2 cups mixed dried fruit (equal parts raisins, currants, prunes and dried cherries)  
1 cup Guinness stout  
¼ cup muscatel or fruit-flavored brandy  
½ to ¾ cup dark West Indian rum (preferably Appleton, Old Oak or Cockspur)

6 ounces butter  
½ cup sugar  
2 large or 3 medium eggs  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg  
2 tablespoons burnt-sugar coloring  
1 cup flour  
1 teaspoon baking powder

### PREPARATION

Place the dried fruit in a glass or ceramic bowl and cover with the Guinness stout, the muscatel or brandy and ¼ cup of the rum.

Cover and refrigerate for at least 3 days (and up to several weeks—the preferred method). Check the mixture every other day: if fruit has soaked up all the liquor, add another splash of rum or stout and stir.

When you're ready to bake, preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Grind the fruit mixture into a mushy pulp in a blender or food processor. Measure out 2 cups of the mixture and set aside.

In a mixing bowl, cream the butter and sugar.

Beat in the eggs one at a time.

Add the vanilla, nutmeg and burnt-sugar coloring; mix well.

In another bowl, sift together the flour and baking powder.

Add, alternately, the fruit mixture and the dry ingredients to the batter, mixing until just incorporated after each addition. Do not over-beat.

Pour the batter into a 9-by-1 ½ inch deep round pan and bake for 1 hour to 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.

While the cake is still warm, splash the remaining ¼ cup rum over the top. Let cool.

### SERVING SUGGESTION

The finished cake is quite moist, almost like an English plum pudding. It is at its best when served a day or two after baking, and it will last for two weeks or more if kept in the refrigerator and occasionally topped up with rum.

