



Exceptional Eats on St. John

Try each of these great,
different restaurants

Waterfront Bistro

By Andrea Miliam

St. John is well on its way to becoming a foodie heaven, with countless restaurants running the gamut from casual beach fare to elegant fine dining and everything in between. The Cruz Bay scene is packed with distinctive dining establishments and restaurateurs vying for the affections of visitors and locals alike. Three restaurants in particular, each with their own menu, style and vibe, dominate the Love City scene — Joe’s Rum Hut, Waterfront Bistro, and Vista Mare, all conveniently located just steps from the ferry dock at Wharfside Village.

If you’re looking for the best happy hour on island, you’ll find it at **Joe’s Rum Hut**. The casual beachfront setting plays host daily from 4 to 6 p.m. to young singles and families as they enjoy the best deal on St. John—\$3 you-call-its. Patron margarita? Just \$3. Creamy and refreshing lime in de coconut? Also \$3. Joe’s fresh drinks pair perfectly with a menu that rises above average beach bar-type fare with offerings like Caribbean lobster quesadillas and lobster rolls. The pizzas, including gluten free options, are also a big hit at Joe’s Rum Hut, and it’s the perfect place to catch the big game, thanks to wide-screen TVs located indoors and out.



Joe’s Rum Hut



Waterfront Bistro is ideal for your next private party!

Joe’s action spreads down onto the sandy white Cruz Bay beach, where there are chairs for relaxing and watching the hustle and bustle of the little island town. The restaurant’s fresh mojitos are ideal for sipping while playing games like Cornhole. Joe’s fun, relaxed atmosphere, delicious casual food, and refreshing ice-cold drinks attract a wide range of diners and drinkers. “We have boaters out of St. Thomas who pull up on the beach in front of the restaurant to join us,” says general manager Mike Hedy. “We also have a really nice set-up for wedding party meet-and-greets, with tiki torches accenting the beachfront setting.”

All visits to St. John should include an evening of fine dining, and the **Waterfront Bistro** is the perfect place to enjoy an upscale menu with casual ambience. Also located on the Cruz Bay waterfront in Wharfside Village, the Bistro’s romantic setting can accommodate parties up to 100. The ocean gently lapping at the shore provides the soundtrack, while an attentive waitstaff delivers exquisite French-influenced dishes to your custom butcher block table. A chef’s love of cooking is palatable; when a meal has been prepared with love and enthusiasm, you can see it in the presentation and taste it in the flavors. This is what you’ll find at Waterfront Bistro. “Our chef likes food, simply put,” says general manager Peter Bettinger. “He can’t stop cooking. He’s meticulous, and it’s evident in the plates.”

In addition to favorites like braised octopus tartine, seared yellow-fin tuna, and pan roasted Caribbean grouper fillet, the restaurant features nightly specials, often showcasing local fish caught in the waters off St. John that very day. “Our chef is so excited about the local fish that we get here,” says Peter. Vegetarian specials generally feature handmade gnocchi or ravioli, and many items on Waterfront Bistro’s menu are gluten free.

Not only does Waterfront Bistro turn out delicious lunches and dinners, they can throw one heck of a party. Working in conjunction with island wedding planners, the restaurant hosts numerous weddings every year. Their expansive floor plan and location on Cruz Bay beach make Waterfront Bistro the ideal place to celebrate a special milestone.

For dining with the ultimate view, head to **Vista Mare**, located upstairs at Wharfside Village. Lunch and dinner are served at this casual Italian venue with a sunset view looking out over Cruz Bay to St. Thomas that can’t be beat. Vista Mare’s chef, who was raised in a

Waterfront Bistro features exceptional cuisine, including octopus tartine (right) and grilled mahi mahi (below).



Sicilian family, turns out traditional Italian dishes. Many pastas are handmade and served in delicious presentations like the linguini monte mare, with a delicate seafood broth that perfectly flavors an abundance of shrimp and calamari. No Italian menu is complete without veal scaloppini, and Vista Mare’s is sublime with lightly breaded veal and fresh marinated tomato salad on the side. You might think that exquisite homemade Italian dishes paired with Vista Mare’s breathtaking view comes at a price, but the restaurant’s entrees are all reasonably under \$30. The restaurant offers fantastic specials during its 3 to 5 p.m. happy hour, when wines by the glass are just \$5.

The variety of choices, plus selections for young diners, as well as vegetarian and gluten free options, including pasta and pizza, make Joe’s Rum Hut, Waterfront Bistro and Vista Mare stand-out dining experiences at lunch, dinner and happy hour. And the stunning sunset view that melts in to a velvet night is the perfect backdrop to your evening out.



Vista Mare