

there were sliced bananas from trees in the valley. They had that luscious true-banana taste and texture that comes only from fruit that has ripened in the sun. We ended with coconut ice cream made from coconuts that had once hung on the hundreds of palms leading out to the sea.

We never found reclusive spots like these on our original visit to Bequia, some ten years before, when we'd sailed through on a chartered boat. Traveling by boat may be the best way to get an overview of the Grenadines, but so much of each island goes undiscovered. There's a distinct regret that comes with pulling up anchor and sailing away from a harbor you've arrived in just the night before. After Bequia, the place for which we'd felt the greatest ache upon departure was Petit St. Vincent, a private island resort whose four green hills and three white-sand beaches are dotted with stone villas. It seemed to promise all the comfort and quiet we were not getting on the boat. We had always wanted to go back.

A mail boat runs three times a week from the northern Grenadines to the southern islands that include Petit (pronounced "petty") St. Vincent. We liked the idea of moving down through the chain on this slow working boat and had planned our trip around its sporadic sailings. But when it

came time to leave, the mail boat was in dry dock awaiting treatment for the affliction that takes hold of its engine during holidays. Inquiries about its repair were met with an existential shrug. Luckily, we had the cash to hire a powerful motorboat that could plow down to PSV (as everyone calls the island) in two hours flat. What was lost in romance would be compensated for by the kind of brutal efficiency you rarely encounter in these islands. It was just as well. A storm was rolling in. We needed to outrun it.

As we churned through ocean swells, we passed Pigeon Island, Isle à Quatre, and Mustique, known for the royalty and rock stars who vacation there. Then we made our way into the southern Grenadines: Mayreau, Union, and the Tobago Cays. They looked like islands you'd imagine from a children's story, green and humpy, a pirate's treasure map sprung to life.

We'd daydreamed that our idyll on PSV would take place under a hot, blue sky. But as we were handed into the care of two capable PSV staff members, the swollen black clouds that had been gathering all morning unleashed their heavy rain. We were shepherded into a Mini Moke and driven along the beach, splashing into the island's well-groomed interior,

APPLESAUCE SPICE CAKE

Adapted from Fernando's Hideaway

SERVES 8 TO 10

Active time: 40 min Start to finish: 1½ hr

Cloves, ginger, and turbinado sugar make this a cake you'll adore. Plus, try the frosting on a variety of baked goods for a taste of the tropics all year.

For cake

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup turbinado sugar such as Sugar in the Raw
- 1 stick (½ cup) unsalted butter, softened
- 2 teaspoons light rum
- 1 large egg
- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon unsweetened applesauce

For icing

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup turbinado sugar
- 6 tablespoons canned evaporated milk
- 1 teaspoon light rum
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup confectioners sugar

Special equipment: a 10-inch springform pan (25 cm)

Make cake:

- ▶ Place oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 350°F. Butter pan and set aside.
- ▶ Whisk together flour, baking soda, spices, and salt in a bowl.
- ▶ Beat together sugar, butter, and rum with an electric mixer at medium-high speed until combined well, then add egg and beat until pale and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes with a stand mixer or 5 to 6 minutes with a handheld. Reduce speed to low and add dry ingredients, mixing until combined well. Add applesauce and mix until combined well.
- ▶ Spread batter evenly in springform pan and bake until a wooden pick or skewer comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes.
- ▶ Cool cake in pan on a rack 10 minutes, then remove side of pan and cool completely.

Make icing:

- ▶ Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a 1½- to 2-quart heavy saucepan, then add sugar and evaporated milk and simmer, stirring constantly until sugar is dissolved, about 4 minutes.
- ▶ Remove from heat and whisk in rum, vanilla, salt, and remaining tablespoon butter, then whisk in confectioners sugar 1 tablespoon at a time. Cool to warm, about 20 minutes, then spread over cooled cake.

PAPAYA LIME FOOL

Adapted from Petit St. Vincent Resort

SERVES 8

Active time: 30 min Start to finish: 1½ hr

The sweetness of a ripe papaya brings a Caribbean taste to a classic English dessert.

- 1 large (2½- to 3-lb) firm-ripe papaya (preferably Caribbean or Mexican), peeled, seeded, and coarsely chopped (2 cups)
- 5 to 8 tablespoons vanilla granulated sugar (see cooks' note, below)
- 2 to 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1¼ cups chilled heavy cream

▶ Mash papaya flesh with a fork until smooth or pulse in a food processor until coarsely puréed. Add 5 tablespoons sugar and 2 tablespoons lime juice and stir or pulse to combine. Add more sugar and lime juice to taste (papayas vary in sweetness and acidity). ▶ Beat cream in a large bowl until it holds soft peaks, then fold in papaya mixture gently but thoroughly. ▶ Divide among 8 (6-ounce) glasses and chill at least 1 hour to allow flavors to develop.

Cooks' note:

To make vanilla granulated sugar, combine sugar and 1 vanilla bean, halved lengthwise and chopped, in an airtight container and let stand, covered, at least 24 hours. Sift before using.