



Post Work



DIGBY STRIDIRON'S
WEST INDIAN RESTAURANT.
BRAATA, IS THE NEW HEART
OF CARIBBEAN COOKING.

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LOCATION PHOTOGRAPHY
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FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY
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LEFT: Laid-back vibes prevail in the courtyard of Braata. TOP: Peanuts are whipped with milk, spiced with mace and nutmeg, and spiked with rum to make a Peanut Punch Fraco. BELOW: Diamond Ritter, a friend of Digby Stridiron's, at Braata. OPPOSITE: Allspice, tamarind, and ginger season Stridiron's jerk chicken.

Throughout the Caribbean, you have to look hard to find restaurants serving the West Indian fare that islanders have eaten for centuries. It's often more pasta, less mofongo. On St. Croix, the largest of the U.S. Virgin Islands, chef Digby Stridiron, the modern poster boy of the Caribbean kitchen, is changing that. A native Crucian, the ultra-chill Stridiron asserts the glories of the region's foodways at his newly opened Braata. This intimate spot in Frederiksted, where soca music bounces in the breeze, champions the culinary influence of African slaves and the native Taino people through a menu rich with fish caught in nearby waters and produce grown on the island's many sloping fields. In this bright turquoise building not far from the shore in Frederiksted, you'll find a tamarind- and allspice-rich example of jerk chicken, saltfish with tostones, yuca escabeche, rum-topped peanut punch cocktails, and crab alcapurrias made with masa that eat like fried crab tamales. And its early success proves Stridiron's vision that the heart of the Caribbean is more than the sea and sun; it's right there on the plate.



FOOD STYLING: ANNA HAMPTON; PROP STYLING: HEATHER CHADDUCK HILLEGAS







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A room at The Fred, a boutique hotel in Frederiksted; tomato and fried okra salad, yuca escabeche, and saltfish and tostones at Braata; the Frederiksted waterfront as viewed from a balcony at The Fred. OPPOSITE: An aerial view of Kings Bay.



Good-vibes guide to St. Croix

EAT

Braata is Stridiron's homage to the native cuisine of St. Croix. Unwind in the courtyard over snacks like cassava fries with curry aioli, mains like mofongo (mashed plantains in a tomato-based sauce with conch, shrimp, and charred okra), and island desserts like red grout (guava tapioca with coconut sauce). (braatastx.com)

STAY

The Fred, a new 22-room boutique hotel on the Frederiksted waterfront, partly resides in the historic (circa 1790) Totten House. The modern, and at times cheeky, riff on Caribbean style gives a taste of barefoot luxe without an over-the-top price tag. (Rooms from \$171; sleepwithfred.com)

SWIM

At **Cane Bay beach**, on the island's northern shore, families set up grills along the sugary white sand fringe under a canopy of sea grape trees and coconut palms. There, they leisurely roast fresh cockles and put fire to Caribbean spiny lobster. After snorkeling in the turquoise waters, refuel at **Spratnet Beach Bar** (340-718-8485) on local specialties such as conch fritters.