

Have yourself a Caribbean Christmas, let your heart be light...

This year, I am either lucky or unlucky enough not to be cooking Christmas dinner for charter guests. My vessel has a clear Christmas day, and as such we shall be going for a morning laser race around the harbour, followed by a luncheon somewhere in that vicinity.

Despite Christmas being a relaxed affair for me on the cooking front, what I will be doing, is getting suitably festive and making sure my crew are well fed and merry in the run-up to Christmas, and in doing so, I'll be embracing all things Antiguan in the Caribbean.

We're getting rid of the bird



First things first, we're going to sack off the blasted turkey. Don't get me wrong, I don't mind turkey, but we don't want to be eating that mega bird for days. This is a sailing

yacht, we have one oven and one fridge, so a Jurassic sized bird just wouldn't be a desirable feature in our lives. Moreover, this is Antigua, an island surrounded by undeniably superb fish.

Secondly, we are going to embrace all local ingredients and put a totally tropical spin on things. Lilt all round! Just kidding. Christmas dinner with a Caribbean twist. Christmas is a special meal and as such, we are going to feast.

The aperitif



Image credit: harrietmansell.com

I'll get things going with my version of a Cold Press Hibiscus Jamaican made with cold infused hibiscus water left overnight in the fridge with a cinnamon stick in, then sweetened with sugar or sweetener of your choice, to taste (I personally don't like much sugar in it), burnt orange, lime juice and of course, rum. Garnish with some mint. I've made this with vodka and gin before and it's been just great.

This delicious bev can be served alongside some conch fritters with a ginger dipping sauce, the fritters being packed full of fresh ginger, chilli, coriander, lime, mint, spring onion and

seasoning.

The food



Image credit: marpewellness.com

For the main course, we are going to make a marinade for some Mahi Mahi – made from Jerk Spices, fresh minced ginger, garlic, chilli, onion, oil and seasoning. My secret ingredient here would be a touch of sweetness to aid caramelisation, either in the form of apple syrup and a touch of rum, or just a good splash of sweet wine. This will be cooked off in the oven at a high temp for a quick blast so that it is roasted and slightly caramelised on the outside but tender and just cooked on the inside.

Sides

Grilled Pineapple Relish with chilli, ginger, onions, coriander and mint.

Dasheen Puree topped with some Jerk Spiced Dasheen Crisps

Roasted Local Pumpkin Salad with Red Onions, Coriander and Wild Spinach

Cinnamon and local honey roasted sweet potato with toasted crushed pecans (in a thankful nod to America's thanksgiving counterpart)

Local Yellow and Green Courgettes, Green Papaya, Lime and Avocado Salad

Dessert is Rum Spiced Christmas Pudding and fresh fruit. Delicious.

Things to remember



Image credit: wanderable.com

Big time tips for being out here in Antigua – go to the market and see what they've got. The lovely ladies in the market will happily explain any unfamiliar ingredients and how to use them. Go visit the fish market. They will tenderise your conch (!) Talk to the locals. The taxi driver I use to go everywhere is called Sheppy and he is the best resource I have!

If anyone wants the recipes for any of this menu, comment below and I will write the recipes in reply.

Merry Christmas to all and happy cooking!