



## The creative cuisine of golf

BY AUGUSTO DURAND

As part of the many colors, peoples and flavors which characterize the Caribbean, Puerto Rico boasts a unique blend of superb golf courses and creative cuisines.

Among the many excellent restaurants surrounding the island's lush greens and fairways, the Westin Rio Mar, on the Río Grande coast at the foot of El Yunque wildlife reserve, boasts the magnificent 35,000-square-foot Río Mar Clubhouse as the centerpiece for one of Puerto Rico's most prestigious country clubs. On a landscaped knoll overlooking the courses, the stately facility provides every amenity and service expected of a premier golf resort.

"Our Iguana's Pub, facing the river course, serves sandwiches and tasty *criollo* dishes from 11 a.m. until 11 p.m. daily," said chef Jorge Cátala, whose own favorite dish, ordered by many of the club's members and returning guests is the *came frita con chicharrones* (deep fried pork and pork skin fritters).

Facing the beachside course, The Grille Room Restaurant serves delectable cuisine at lunch and dinner. Garnished by panoramic views of the courses, chef Cátala offers prime steaks and seafood dishes. "Our prime rib and fresh lobster are among the favorite dinner entrees often requested by our clientele," he said, having prepared his acclaimed dishes for famous golfers such as Chi Chi Rodríguez and Gregg Norman, among others.

Another one of the island's superbly appointed golf course restaurants is at the Coco Beach Golf & Country Club. In the Río Grande river basin at the foot of El Yunque, Coco Beach offers great food and spectacular views. Executive chef Víctor Cruz creates some of the finest meat and fish dishes in the Paradise Bay Grill. "Our variety of daily specials complements our unique menu with entrees such as whole Caribbean



Lobster, Buffalo Rib Eye Steak and Seared Potato Crusted Red Snapper," Cruz said. "The latter, which is one of my favorite Caribbean creative entrees, is served with a mango and avocado sauce."

Another favorite among guests and players after a day of superb golf is the Fillet Beef Margarine. The chef's own creation, the dish consists of a tenderloin steak stuffed with cheese and seared in Cabernet Sauvignon wine. "I have been honored with the presence at our restaurant of local and international personalities," said Cruz. These include PGA champion Tom Kite and celebrities Kevin Costner, Marc Anthony and Chayanne.

The Costa Caribe Restaurant at Costa Caribe Golf & Country Club in the southern city of Ponce is yet another favorite dining facility for avid golfers of the island. It offers scrumptious dining overlooking one of the island's most breathtaking views of the Caribbean Sea. On Fridays, chef Joachim Jesser prepares the *Noche De Piratas* (pirate nights) dinner, featuring a variety of delectable appetizers from the Pirates Bar, accompanied by a selection of fresh seafood, steaks and culinary entrees à la carte.

Located next to the Golf Shop, Sancho's Sushi Bar offers casual dining and cocktails in a comfortable setting for those looking to unwind and enjoy great sushi for dinner or after a round of golf. Featuring both local and international fare, chef Akiyoshi Kaneko serves up an enticing selection of delicious sushi dishes in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. ■