

# Salt of the earth

Silversea Cruises' new food-focused programme has been rolled out on latest ship *Silver Moon*. **Katie McGonagle** tucks in

**M**arios is a man of many talents. A moment ago, he was scooping out loaf after loaf of freshly baked, flour-dusted bread from the huge soot-stained Cycladic oven towering in the corner of his restaurant's white-stone courtyard.

Now, he turns his attention to pastry, taking a shapeless lump of dough and rolling it thinner and thinner, rotating it with a deft flick of the wrist and a spin of the rolling pin until the paper-thin pastry is ready to form the base of a traditional spanakopita.

Methodically, he piles layer upon layer of filo into the dish, generous glugs of olive oil and liberal handfuls of spinach and feta cheese, whetting our appetites as much as the explanation from his wife and fellow restaurant owner, Anna.

And a good thing too, because the feast of Greek cuisine that awaits is not for the faint-hearted. In no time at all, we take our seats at a tree-shaded table by the water's edge – inches out of reach of the approaching tide – on the sun-kissed southern tip of Paros, Greece.

While children paddle happily in the shallows, we dine out on a sumptuous series of dishes – fresh calamari, salty sardines, creamy aubergine dip and our trusty spanakopita among them – and raise a toast to our hosts, Anna and Marios, and the warm hospitality of the Thalassamou restaurant team.

I'd like to say this was a spontaneous, stumbled-upon secret of the Greek isles – and no doubt, hidden away at the end of a dusty track beyond the main tourist tavernas, it remains off the radar of most visitors. But to the team behind Silversea Cruises' new food and drink-focused programme, Salt, it's exactly the sort of find that makes the immersive onboard experiences come alive.

Indeed, we'd had a try at making our own spanakopita the day before in the well-equipped guest kitchen, and managed to serve up a perfectly edible attempt. But seeing it here, whipped up by a pro before our eyes, glinting waves to one side and sun-warmed stone to the other, the true flavour of the Greek islands really shines through. ➤

Marios, owner of Thalassamou restaurant, in Paros, Greece

PHOTO: Lucia Griggi

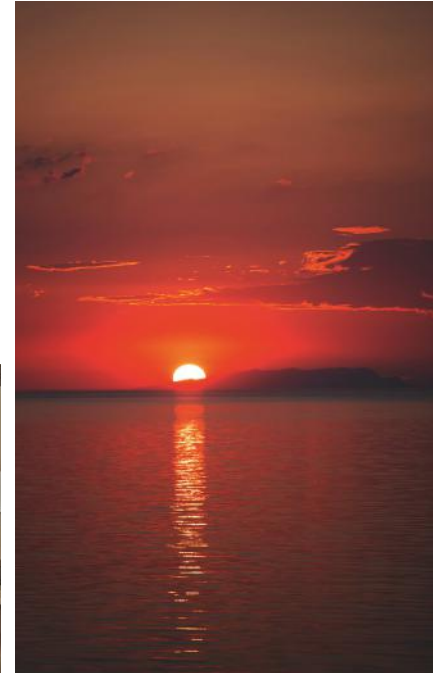
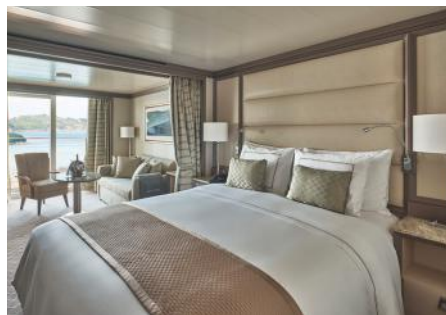
# DESTINATIONS

CRUISE | GREECE



FROM LEFT: Salt Kitchen, Salt Bar (bottom) and a Classic Veranda Suite, all *Silver Moon*; sunset in Paros

PICTURES: Matteo Imbriano; Lucia Grigg



## OVER THE MOON

The rollout of Salt has taken longer than planned as a result of the pandemic, but when *Silver Moon* finally began its maiden season this summer, it was the perfect opportunity to give guests their first taste of the programme. Salt takes culinary inspiration from the region in which the ship is sailing and brings it to life on board through three key elements.

First, there are cooking classes in the Salt Lab, a sleek professional-level kitchen where onboard chef David Bilsland and his team teach a different recipe each day, which ranged from moussaka and mezze to honey-soaked baklava on my Greek islands sailing.

But if you don't fancy doing the cooking, there's the Salt Kitchen restaurant, which is significantly bigger than on sister ship *Silver Muse* and can accommodate nearly 160 guests. The menu of local and regional specialities changes daily and is decorated with interesting artefacts from each region. And finally, there's the Salt Bar next door, where ingredients from the area make their way from the dinner table to the cocktail menu, deftly and imaginatively presented by bartender Carlos. The vibe is that of a swanky London club complete with dark-wood decor and an exclusive feel.

The culinary creativity doesn't end there, with a host of dining options available onboard the 596-passenger ship. These include classic fine-dining restaurant Atlantide, where even the simplest dishes are presented with artistic flair. Plus guests can sample French specialities in La Dame, exquisite Japanese cuisine in



## ADAM SACHS, food editor and director of Salt

"Salt is an acronym for Sea and Land Taste, which means that wherever the ship goes, we try to connect with what is happening in the food and wine scene, and bring some of the delicious things happening on land onto the ship.

"The Salt Lab is a test kitchen at sea, a place where you roll up your sleeves to do some cooking classes. We have visiting chefs and experts coming in to walk us through recipes that are based on where we are in the world. Next door, there's Salt Kitchen, which is a restaurant that changes its menus constantly, depending on where we are in the world. It's an ambitious – slightly insane – plan to have a restaurant that changes constantly as you travel across the world.

"Another piece of the operation is food and wine-focused custom-designed culinary experiences on shore. We're on the beautiful island of Paros, which is a good example of the kind of experience Salt can bring. You dive into the culture so it's not just a meal with a beautiful view – it's access to the people making that meal."

Kaiseki or relax with live jazz while enjoying small-plate tapas-style dishes in Silver Note.

That said, one of my favourite spots on board, the Arts Café, was less about food and more about the quirky, colourful decor and comfortable setting. It was the perfect spot to catch up on emails, curl up with a book or enjoy coffee and a light breakfast with a spectacular sea view.

With a generous guest to space ratio, no shortage of sun loungers by the pool and impeccable service throughout, *Silver Moon* has plenty going for it – and Salt is simply the icing on the cake.

**Book it:** A seven-night sailing on *Silver Moon* from Civitavecchia (Rome) to Barcelona starts at £3,510 based on an April 22 departure next year, including business-class flights and all-inclusive service onboard.

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