

Taste of Jersey

The island is quietly becoming a food lover's paradise, mixing local produce with international flavours. Yolanda Zappaterra reports

Séyiz les bienvenu! I've just landed at Jersey's airport, only 40 minutes after leaving Gatwick, and I'm greeted cheerily in something that clearly isn't English. Turns out it's the island's traditional language of Jèrriais, and while the warm "Welcome to Jersey" is unexpected, it's likely to be heard more in the future, as the island's schools reintroduce it to join the many other languages in this increasingly multinational and multicultural destination.

The island's location between England and France (it's just 14 miles off the coast of Brittany) has always ensured its unique feel of being both a bit British and a bit French. Street names and signs are in a mix of the languages and the cobbled Royal Square looks like it could be in provincial France. But 21st-century Jersey is adding more exotic ingredients to the mix, and nowhere is this more noticeable than in the cuisine.

On a Flavours of Jersey walking tour, St Helier's colourful Central Market, built in cast iron

with some very grand flourishes in 1882, feels like the culinary equivalent of a UN meeting: here is Korean stall Jeju, selling six shucked and gamished Jersey oysters for £9; nearby, the Vienna Bakery does everything from traditional Jersey cabbage loaf to French *galette des rois*.

Florian de Poray's food emporium Relish, with its 100-plus cheeses, Drappier champagnes and daily-changing delicious salads, beautifully encapsulates the culinary diversity Jersey enjoys. At Christmas, says Florian, his hampers fly off the shelves – often literally, as they're delivered to the private jets of locals heading off to exotic second, third or fourth homes for the holiday season.

At Fin and Feather, other Christmas staples are in evidence, and much of it is local, from Jersey rock oysters and lobsters to chancre crab and king scallops. And thanks to the mild climate, farmers and keen gardeners grow some very unexpected fare. At Molloy's Fruit & Veg. ➤

DESTINATIONS

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JERSEY FOOD EXPERIENCES

- A self-guided foodie cycling tour. Sample everything on two wheels, from fresh Jersey cheeses to locally brewed cider. tinyurl.com/jerseyfoodiecycling
- A seabed-themed walk, including strolling among the oyster and mussel beds in the Royal Bay of Grouville, or a Sea Foraging & Oyster Trail walk. jerseywalkadventures.co.uk
- Foraging for wild food, from medicinal plants to seaweeds. wildadventuresjersey.com
- Enjoy a tour and tasting at La Mare Wine Estate vineyard. lamarewineestate.com



Polly, an ex-chef who works alongside her friend Michelle, points out everything from locally grown tomatillos, lemons and cloudberry to traditional plum tomatoes and juicy gooseberries – the latter

FROM LEFT: Jersey oysters; Michelle (left) and Polly sell locally grown produce at Molloy's Fruit & Veg shop



“brought in for just a few days over summer by a lady whose garden is filled with them”.

Both women clearly love their work, even if, in the depths of winter when the cherub-heavy fountain freezes over, they have to come in with hot water bottles tucked down their jackets. “I love working with local growers,” says Polly, who came here from Manchester aged 18 and “just never went back”.

It's easy to see why, on an island where you're never more than 10 minutes away from the

sea, with gorgeous beaches of white-gold sand lapped by turquoise waters. And for food lovers, there's added appeal in that most of them feature a picture-perfect cafe from which to enjoy the expansive bays.

At Portelet Bay, the view from the terrace of the boho Portelet Bay Cafe is mesmerising, while on St Brelade's Bay, the Jersey Crab Shack's laidback ambience is positively Beach Boys West Coast. The island's surfers, however, head round the corner to their own west coast for the ➤

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ASK THE expert

“Jersey is a great destination for someone into good food and drink, because it has such a wide choice of restaurants, from casual beach cafes to fine-dining restaurants. Diners can enjoy amazing sea views from nearly all of them, while trying local treats such as fresh seafood and Jersey cream teas – and Jersey Royals, of course! As product manager responsible for the Channel Islands, I'd recommend two experiences to an agent putting together a Jersey package for a client interested in the island's produce and drinks – namely a visit to La Mare Wine Estate, and a local gin tasting at the Channel Islands Liquor Co (both can be arranged by Premier Holidays).”

Beverley Scarr, general manager, short-haul products at Premier Holidays

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LEFT: The Hungry Man, Rozel Bay

breakers of St Ouen's Bay, overlooked by diners at Le Braye Cafe and Mexican eatery El Tico, or at a picnic table outside Faulkner Fisheries, a converted Second World War German bunker that is famed for its summer barbecue and super-fresh oysters.

Not to be outdone, Rozel Bay has The Hungry Man, Plémont Bay the Plémont Beach Cafe, La

Greve de Lecq has Colleen's Café, Ouaisné Bay the Kismet Cabana... all are unique, and all serve food that's perfectly in keeping with the stunning settings. And, added to the numerous natural and heritage attractions across Jersey's coastline and picturesque countryside, they make for a properly pukka culinary holiday. **TW**

Where TO STAY

Royal Yacht Hotel: Positioned on St Helier's waterfront, the Royal Yacht Hotel is the perfect base. Restaurants such as the excellent Spanish Botana and the stylish Vinifera and Enoteca are close by. Rooms, all with balconies, are modern and well appointed, and the spa, pool, fitness centre and three restaurants are first-rate. theroyal yacht.com

BOOK IT

Cosmos offers a six-day Jersey Island Discovery tour with B&B accommodation at the four-star Pomme D'Or, transport, a guide, a southern coastline cruise and an afternoon tea and tasting at La Mare Wine Estate, from £764pp. cosmos.co.uk

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