

years onward “this place is jammin’,” says Marzeta. Vera still toils behind the counter, now with her children and many staff who have been with her from the get-go. Here we sniff-test curry powders — the clove-y Jamaican versus the piquant Trinidadian — before tearing into the soft folds of *dhalpourie* roti, stuffed with chickpeas, potato, and pumpkin. For customizing the heat quotient is an array of condiments: dark tamarind sauce; a fierce yellow sauce; and *kuchela*, the green mango chutney that is a Trini staple. **Caybrew** lager proves the perfect mate.

A pause at Heroes Square allows us time to digest, both the food partaken and Marzeta’s tales of the icons clustered here. The tributes are decidedly toast-worthy, and we dive into **Tortuga Rum Company**, primed to sample Cayman Islands’ largest export.

Seems it’s not the tipple, though, that holds that distinction, but one stellar rum cake. Shortly after Cayman Airlines Captain Robert Hamaty launched Tortuga in 1984, wife Carlene heeded the urging of her fans and introduced her rum cake to the product line. The firm’s bakeries soon outstripped the distilleries. Not to say the rum isn’t fine: warm to the tongue and smooth on the throat, the Original Gold shirks the sweetness of lesser rums and proves best savoured straight up.

But there’s another unexpected treat in store. As Cayman shares a colonial history with adjacent Jamaica, so too do her denizens share a love of the patty. **Tastee Patties**, stuffed with meat or vegetables, are snapped up hot every morning from Tortuga’s storefront — save for those protected for our arrival. Tastee’s version is unusually flakey-crisp, and one we’re assured gave Marzeta great solace from “the London gloom” when she studied overseas.

The “*Ciao, Bella*”s that greet us as we enter **Casanova by the Sea** are antidote, too, for any vestigial gloom. Established by Tony Crescente in 1993 and populated with a bevy of *grazioso* waiters, Casanova was decimated by 2004’s Hurricane Ivan along with most of Grand Cayman. Tony is acclaimed for feeding islanders — sometimes *gratis* — from an inland location throughout the long rebuild, and the restaurant re-opened two years later to a packed house. Still a community favourite, Casanova serves up authentic Italian — like the Penne Contadina we savour, thick with chicken and mushrooms, and the fine tiramisu that follows. As elsewhere on our tour, it’s congenial food, prepared well, with inspired hands.

Doing what they love. 



CAYMAN FOOD TOURS



SERVES 4

## Rice and Beans

**Small Dried Red Kidney Beans** ½ cup

**Water** 4 cups

**Fresh Thyme Leaves**  
from 2 sprigs

**Coconut Milk** ½ cup

**Water** ½ cup

**Liquid From Beans**  
1 cup

**Onion** thinly sliced,  
¼ cup

**Salt** 1 tsp

**Freshly Ground Black Pepper** ¼ tsp

**Red Bell Pepper**  
chopped, 1 Tbs

**Long Grain White Rice** 1 cup

**Butter** 1 Tbs

**Scotch Bonnet** or  
**Habañero Pepper**  
1 (optional)

as necessary during cooking.<sup>1</sup>  
Remove from heat and reserve 1 cup of the liquid, discarding the remainder.

**2** **IN** a saucepan combine the beans, coconut milk, liquid from the beans and ½ cup water. Add the onion, salt, black pepper and bell pepper; bring to a boil and add the rice and butter.

**3** **FOR** a little heat, make a small slit in the scotch bonnet pepper and add to the pot; for flavour only, add the whole pepper without slitting.

**4** **REDUCE** the heat to low and cook until all liquid has been absorbed, about 25–30 minutes.

**5** **REMOVE** the scotch bonnet pepper and fluff the rice to mix in the onions and bell pepper (rice may still be a little wet but will dry as it cools).

**1** **BOIL** the beans in the water until soft (1 ½–2 hours), replenishing water

<sup>1</sup> *Alternate method: Cover beans in water and soak overnight. Discard the liquid, replace with 4 cups fresh water and cook until tender.*

*Recipe courtesy of Cayman Food Tours.*



“**A TASTE OF GEORGE TOWN**” is created and operated by Cayman Food Tours, launched by Marzeta Bodden in December 2013. [www.caymanfoodtours.com](http://www.caymanfoodtours.com) 



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