



THE SOMERSET
ON GRACE BAY

Executive Chef Lauren Callighen



Chef Lauren Callighen of [The Somerset on Grace Bay](#) is a young chef whose culinary vision is rooted in seagoing traditions.

Born and raised in the maritime city of St. John's, a seaport on the east coast of Canada's easternmost maritime province of Newfoundland, Chef Callighen traces her interest in all things culinary to being reared in this oceanfront town. The rich bounty of Canada's waters were at her doorstep while food and cooking took center stage in the Callighen household. As Chef Callighen puts it, "Everything that happened in the family happened at the kitchen table."

Callighen, whose grandfather was a cook on a merchant marine ship, began working professionally in a kitchen at age 15, as a prep cook at a local restaurant in St John's. It was clear to her that this was her career path, and therefore attended the culinary school at Algonquin College in Ottawa. Following that academic grounding, Callighen went on to work at Ottawa's premier catering company, Tulips and Maple, under Chef Tim Wasylo. She went on to cook with Executive Chef Kurt Videl of Le Café, in Ottawa for the Canadian Prime Minister's Gala in 2003.

In 2005, Callighen moved to Turks & Caicos, where she cooked at a local restaurant and then a resort, grounding herself in the Caribbean culture and delighted to be close to the sea. She joined the Somerset on Grace Bay in 2006 as part of the opening team working under Executive Chef Stephen McGarrie. Callighen quickly ascended to the top chef position, and now helms the kitchen, overseeing both the fine dining at O'Soleil and the casual dining at Lunasea.

In her vision of contemporary Turks & Caicos resort cuisine, Callighen takes the best of the Caribbean and marries it to her version of Mediterranean-style cooking. It's the reason behind such creations as a Caicos sweet corn and conch chowder, served with crème fraîche and laced with Caribbean rum. And it's led Callighen to create a roasted pumpkin and tamarind soup, with an oxtail dumpling and pumpkin seed oil.

The seagoing tradition that permeated her childhood informs her day-to-day life as a chef. That's no surprise, given that she grew up in one of Canada's great fishing communities. In the islands, she's quickly embraced the products of the Caribbean Sea around her, from rock lobster to grouper.

Her inventiveness and creativity have led Callighen to prepare curried grouper, and serve it with a Kaffir lime curry sauce with jasmine rice, mango chutney and naan bread. As for wahoo, she likes to grill it, and surround the fish with a coconut peanut sauce, a side of baby bok choy and a garnish of banana relish. With Caicos Bank red snapper, she makes a curried mango risotto and serves it with Mojo sauce and Thai basil.

Apart from the local harvest from the sea, Callighen makes an effort to find, use and support locally-grown organic produce. Much of what she uses comes from Island Fresh Produce, a hydroponic farm in Provo.

As for meat, while she prepares New York Steak and Peppercorn Angus Steak in a fairly traditional fashion, she allows herself some creativity with Australian rack of lamb, which she does with a Harissa barbecue sauce and serves with a guava glazed shallot and mashed potato duet. And the Karubuta pork tenderloin is given an all-spice rub and plated with a sweet potato puree, tamarind sauce and baby spinach.

"I like the Mediterranean style," Chef Callighen states. "I love fresh ingredients and I like using every part of them. I really enjoy the flavors, and the cooking tends to be light and fresh and summery. And that works very well with climate we have here in the Caribbean."

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The Somerset is located on the pristine beach at scenic Grace Bay, in the Providenciales of Turks & Caicos Islands, a brief hour and twenty minute flight from Miami and an easy three hour, non-stop flight from New York, with service from most other major U.S. and Canadian gateways. The resort's [O'Soleil](#) restaurant is one of the top tables in the Caribbean, serving the inspired, contemporary fare of Executive Chef Lauren, and a more casual menu at the LunAsea poolside restaurant. Open since June 2006, the 54 exceptionally large suites ranging from 1,353 to 5,327 square feet feature marble baths, gourmet kitchens and whimsically designed interiors by Keith Baltimore. Rates for The Somerset, start at \$600 in peak winter season and at \$350 during summer value season. The resort is a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World and has been providing guests with a five-star luxury experiences since its inception. For reservations and more information, visit www.thesomerset.com or call toll free 877.887.5722, or the local hotel number at 1-649-946-5900.

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