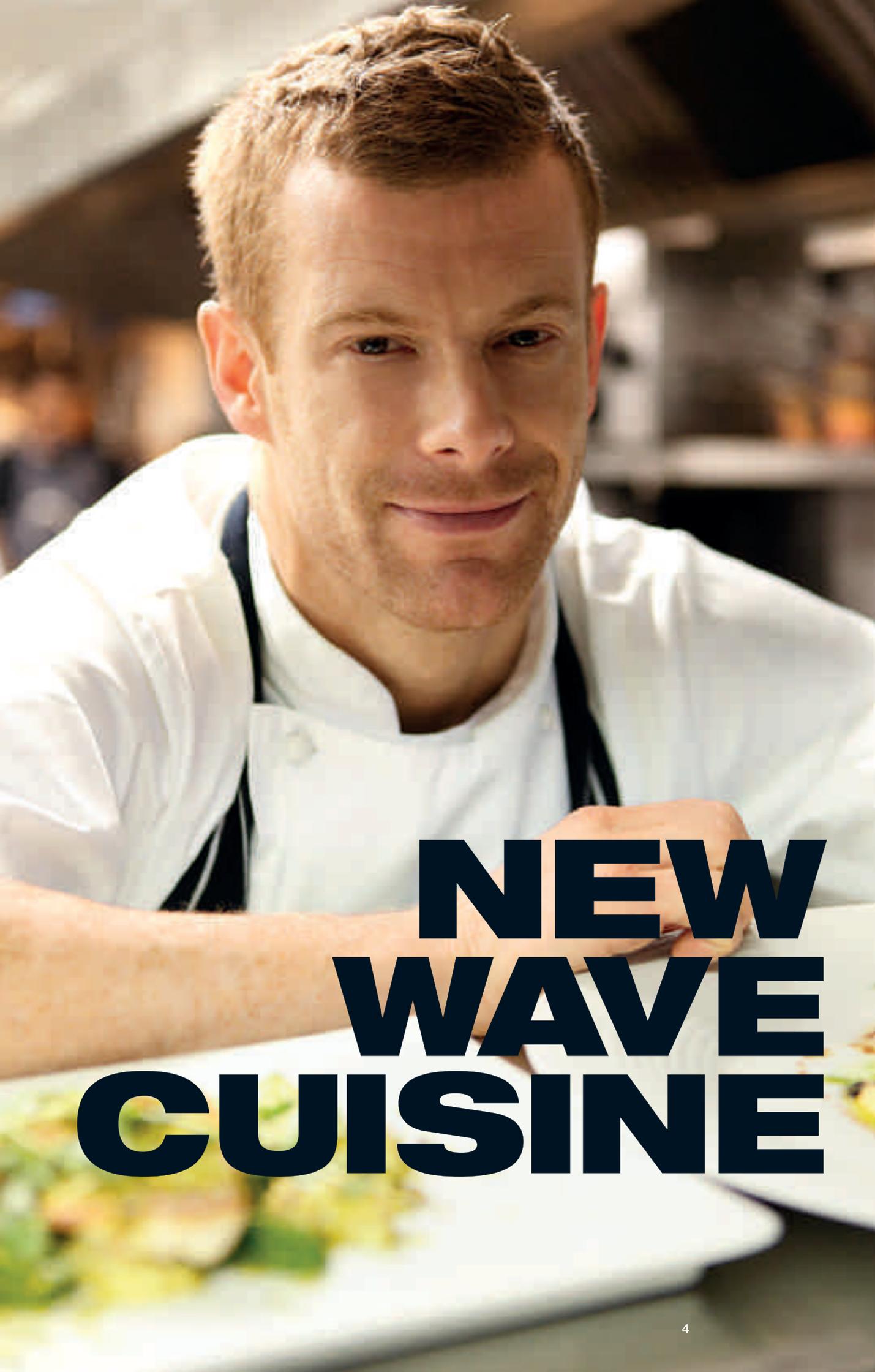



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NEW WAVE CUISINE



There are almost 70 three-Michelin-star restaurants in the world. It is a testament to the increasing demand for top quality cuisine across the globe. Yet alongside this demand for excellent and ever-inventive taste and technique is an emerging awareness of the relevance of that old maxim: you are what you eat.

Food has increasingly come under scrutiny, particularly those fine, indulgent meals we encounter in top restaurants – or

even on board a yacht. We are becoming ever more aware about our diet, making changes in our habits to improve health or reduce environmental concerns. This is reflected in the meals we choose to eat, and in response yacht chefs are becoming increasingly aware of the evolving requirements of their clients, whether it is for health, allergies or preference. Chartering a yacht represents the ultimate bespoke travel itinerary, with everything tailored to your tastes, so why should the food be any different?

Our culinary investigation starts in London. It is an unusual place to begin a tour of yachting's gastronomic treats, but Tom Aikens has not always been at anchor. Best known for his London restaurants: Tom's Kitchen, Tom Aikens Restaurant in Chelsea, and more recently a Tom's Kitchen in Somerset House, Aikens has also spent time at sea as a private chef on board yachts including the 62 metre *Feadship, Virginian*.

He has noticed a clear shift in diners' concerns: "Over the last few years, people have become much more aware of the benefits of eating seasonal and locally sourced produce, a trend which is also now reflected in the food being cooked and enjoyed on board yachts. Where rich and opulent dishes were once the norm, many of them boasting ingredients sourced with great difficulty, it is far more likely to find yacht chefs now creating much healthier menus using fresh produce sourced from port to port."

Most of the ingredients Aikens uses in his restaurants are organic, which reflects one of the changes in attitudes towards the provenance of our food. Charter guests are often interested in organic food on board, but Aikens remarks that it is much more difficult at sea due to the nature of shopping in port: a chef cannot always guarantee that produce is organic. However, one of the greatest joys for a yacht chef is local markets. "There are lots of small producers around, particularly in the south of France. If

you go to all of the markets you can be assured that produce has come from independent suppliers, and the quality is really, really good." After all 'organic' is not a byword for excellence, and in the end it is the latter that matters most.

Local food also means interesting ingredients to excite diners' taste buds. Fish, an obvious choice for a dinner eaten at sea, varies enormously. In the Caribbean, Aikens uses "locally caught fish like dolphin fish, barracuda and things caught by small-scale fishermen," whereas in the Mediterranean, there are more familiar species: "sole, red mullet, John Dory, sea bass, tuna, squid." On yachts such as the classic *Talitha*, guests can even catch their own dinner using fishing skiffs, which

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will be cooked up any way they like by chef Ali Kinross. It doesn't get much more local than that.

Location is crucial to the ingredients, but it does not have to dictate the dishes. Jean-Charles Ladreyt, chef on board *Odessa*, enjoys surprising guests with the same types of vegetables "one day Indian, another day Thai, the next French." Like Aikens, Ladreyt reflects the concerns of his clients in trying to source his ingredients as locally as possible, planning menus to coincide with the yacht's itinerary. "For example, if the charter starts in France and heads to Sardinia in the middle of the season, it is better to serve raw fish or sushi when we are in France as in Sardinia it is more difficult for me to acquire good fish, non-farmed and fresh enough to eat raw."



Like many yacht chefs, Ladreyt has an impressive CV behind him, working as a private chef for high profile clients, including Roger Federer, with various special diets and allergy requirements. His background includes stints in Japan and Thailand, and in a chocolate confiserie with a Maître Ouvrier from the Confrérie des Chocolatiers de France. As well as a leaning towards organic and local food, a major shift he has seen in charter clients' attitude towards the food on board is a greater awareness of healthy menus. "I think in the past people were only concerned by the freshness of a fish or a meat, now people are very concerned about the basic produce, they want less sugar, less fat, and have a preference for olive oil and healthy produce. It is no longer 'get a tomato to eat a tomato', but finding one with a real taste, close to the area where we are and as organic as possible." One of the main influences on his menus will be these preferences.

Ladreyt's favoured South-East Asian cuisine is naturally low in fat, but he can just as easily cook up an incredible Mediterranean menu using healthy ingredients and techniques. His suggestion for a three-course menu starts with an avocado tartar, tomatoes, apple, mesclun salad and herb dressing. To follow, a wild sea bass fillet steamed on a bamboo basket with vegetables in lemongrass, ginger and lime broth – Mediterranean ingredients given a tasty Asian twist. Dessert is equally interesting, combining mango cooked in caramel with almond crumble and a yoghurt sorbet: delicious yet healthy, high taste but low fat.

For Teleost chef Stuart Dunseath, dietary needs and requirements are never a problem and as long as he has the information from a client about their likes and

dislikes, he can create something delicious for everybody. It is hardly surprising – his background is in two- and three-star Michelin restaurants, including the Waterside Inn and Le Manoir Aux Quat' Saisons. On board, Dunseath too has noticed a shift in food awareness among Teleost charter clients: "I am seeing more interest in healthy, low-fat options and specialist food products, such as Wagyu beef."

Quality is the most important criterion for Dunseath when it comes to ingredients, although he will use organic wherever possible, and local when it meets his high standards. The key is having suppliers he knows and trusts across the globe, to guarantee the excellence that is expected on board, whether that is in a Michelin-style dinner or a barbecued Wagyu beef burger. His healthy menu starts with lobster salad accompanied by avocado and a mango dressing, followed by steamed, stuffed sea bass and finished with a prune and Armagnac soufflé. Sounds pretty indulgent, and once more the menu proves that taste and quality need never be sacrificed to create a healthy meal that caters for different dietary ideas.

Back at Tom Aikens Restaurant in London, we are about to see a third suggestion for a healthy menu: the same commitment to quality and low-fat ingredients, but entirely different dishes, demonstrating the versatility chefs still have when preparing health-conscious food itineraries. Aikens is serving a meal that could be enjoyed while cruising the western coast of Italy. As the three dishes are presented he explains his choices. To start: red mullet in a pistachio crust, courgette purée and pistachio risotto. The red mullet has been grilled rather than pan-fried, and the entire dish, although delicious, has hardly any fat. Red mullet is also easily found throughout the Mediterranean, making it a good choice for those



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concerned about sourcing their ingredients locally.

Next is lamb loin, deliciously pink and tender with a crunchy basil crumb. Surely meat like this cannot be that good for you? "We have cooked the lamb in a water bath rather than pan-frying it in butter. In the restaurant we tend to serve lamb with sheep's cheese, but here it has a simple warm salad garnish of tomatoes, black olives and basil." The accompanying potatoes do contain butter but Aikens suggests that a dairy-free artichoke purée would work equally well. Dessert looks simply divine. A white chocolate panacotta (low-fat cream, naturally) with poached red berries. Minimal sugar has been used in the berries and the ratio of fruit to panacotta is high.

If indeed we are what we eat, then after each of these meals we are a fusion of delicious, top-quality ingredients, expertly prepared and indulgently presented, yet – despite all of the above – surprisingly healthy.

