

Eating like a king on Prince Edward Island

BY NECEE REGIS

From the air, the crescent-shaped Prince Edward Island resembles an exuberant smile floating in the Gulf of St. Lawrence between the coastlines of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. On land, the verdant island is a riot of color in summer, with bright-green marsh grasses, red-sand beaches and swaths of purple lupines, orange lilies and wild pink roses. At about 174 miles from tip to tip, the island is renowned as a culinary destination, especially for its abundant shellfish — including Island Blue mussels, Malpeque oysters and Atlantic lobsters. There is a strong farm-to-table and sea-to-table community in which chefs know and work with farmers, growers and fishermen. Part of the joy of visiting is driving from one spectacular meal to another along the island's winding roads and getting glimpses of the sparkling blue sea.



BREAKFAST



JEFF EAGAR

In Charlottetown, the island's capital city, brick-lined streets lead up from the harbor to the historic city center, where Victorian-era buildings house restaurants, cafes and boutiques. Early risers might be disappointed with the 9 a.m. opening time of **Leonhard's Cafe & Restaurant** (leonhards.ca, 142 Great George St., Charlottetown, 902-367-3621) but for those with patience, it's worth the wait. The airy interior is reminiscent of a spiffed-up farmhouse with white walls and seats, warm wood floors and tables, comfy cushioned armchairs and an occasional chandelier. Breakfast is the usual fare — omelets, French toast and any-style eggs. What elevates the offerings into the don't-miss category is the quality of ingredients. Owner Axel Leonhard makes certain that everything served is made from scratch and free of additives and preservatives while using as many locally sourced ingredients as possible. Perfect crispy-on-the-outside, soft-on-the-inside French toast, made with multigrain bread, arrives with real maple syrup and add-ons of fresh fruit or melted Havarti and tomato (\$5 to \$7). The "gluten-friendly" Bavarian Breakfast (\$11) is an omelet made with potatoes, bacon and onions, served with a side salad with mustard dressing.



LUNCH



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Every summer, en route to the Canadian Oyster Shucking Championship in Tyne Valley, the best of the best Canadian shuckers gather for a pre-competition meal at family-run **Carr's Oyster Bar** (facebook.com/CarrsPEI, 32 Campbellton Rd., Stanley Bridge, 902-886-3355). And why not? On the outdoor deck, the scenery overlooking the Stanley River is bucolic; the plump, juicy oysters, farmed by Robert Carr, are harvested a stone's throw away; and the no-fuss pub grub and fresh seafood are prepared with care. The Carr family has been in the oyster business since the 1960s and opened the restaurant — helmed by Robert's wife, Phyllis — in 2000. Oysters on the half shell are a must, available in sizes small, large and George Carr Special (\$1.95, \$3 and \$4.60 apiece). Mussels, quahogs, bar clams, shrimp and oysters are prepared in a variety of ways including steamed, baked and fried. Wraps, burgers and seafood sandwiches are available, as are classic fish and chips, fish tacos and full entrees. Swoon-worthy lobster rolls contain an abundance of succulent PEI lobster meat served on a homemade toasted bun with choice of melted butter or housemade mayo on the side (\$14).



DINNER



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The best way to taste a wide variety of the island's culinary delights is to make a reservation at the FireWorks Feast, a multicourse extravaganza at the **Inn at Bay Fortune** (innatbayfortune.com/dining, 758 Route 310, Fortune Bridge, 888-687-3745). Located on 46 rolling green acres overlooking the bay on the island's eastern shore, the inn and its kitchen (once the summer home of the actress Colleen Dewhurst) are owned and operated by Michael Smith — a Canadian celebrity chef and cookbook author — and his family. With a menu that changes daily, the Feast lives up to its name. The prix-fixe experience (\$112 with gratuity) begins with a tour of the property's extensive organic farm, followed by an all-you-can-slurp Oyster Hour and appetizers such as piping-hot salmon pulled from the fragrant outdoor smokehouse. Showcasing ingredients from island farmers and fisherfolk, dinner is served family style at long tables in rooms adjacent to the open kitchen where chefs work their magic. An impressive 25-foot, brick-lined oven is where all the meats, daily seafood catches and vegetables are roasted over wood. The Inn is open May through October; the last FireWorks Feast of 2018 is Oct. 14.

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TRAVEL

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