

# Dessert Island

**Vegetarian heaven in the Caribbean**

By Moira Nordholt



**[Redacted]**  
and Mark & Mary Hardy  
are pleased to announce the  
Grand Prize of the 2004  
VeggieAwards™ ...  
A one-week stay at  
The Lodge in beautiful  
Grenada! (So don't forget to  
send in your ballot)



I linger long over dessert—vegan mousse made from homemade tofu and organic island cocoa, aptly named “death-by-chocolate”—and I can’t help thinking to myself, “Why die now? Things are too damn good here on earth!”

**H**ere on this young volcanic island exploding with vitality, this lush equatorial isle where ripened fruits of every kind drop from trees, millions of tropical blooms scent the air, and rivers and waterfalls cascade down from the mountains and rainforests above, I could die happy. And here at The Lodge, in Grenada, the only exclusively vegetarian accommodation in the Caribbean, I could happily be convinced I have died and somehow entered a better version of heaven than I’ve ever imagined (or deserved).

The Lodge is the kind of place one would see in an episode of *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, where the likes of Paul McCartney, Richard Gere, and Pamela Anderson would stay when in the mood for secluded luxury and personalized gourmet vegetarian cuisine. But lucky for me (well, perhaps unlucky in the case of Richard Gere), these celebrities have not yet found this little gem, secretly tucked away like hidden treasure, and for the moment, I am the one who feels like a star.

I enter my suite, “the dragon room,” place my bag on the slate floor beside the emperor size four poster bed, throw open the shuttered doors, step out onto the private balcony, and gasp. Several slow-motion full-body spins later, I am stunned into jaw-dropping, eye-popping delirium; the only sentence I am able to muster, over and over, is: “Wow!”

A multi-dimensional canvas is spread to the west, north, and south, the low-lying sun casting muted watercolor hues of light over the greenest greens of the dense rolling hills and the bluest blues of the luminous Caribbean Sea. Far below, a cruise ship, like a glistening toy boat, rests anchored in the horseshoe-shaped harbor of the historic capital city of St. George’s.

It obviously gives The Lodge’s proprietors, Mary and Mark Hardy, great pleasure to watch their honored guests rub their disbelieving eyes at the impossibly beautiful vista, and drool over their organic vegan gastronomical delights. For the last three years, they have poured their blood, sweat, and tears into this slice of paradise they now call home, shaping a lifelong dream they are finally ready to share with others. They envision their clientele as like-minded



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travelers, who can appreciate the personal and global health benefits attainable by living in harmony with the land.

"It is an extreme privilege to be able to choose to be vegetarian," says Mary, pouring me a glass of organic vegan red wine. "Most people in the world eat what's put in front of them. They have no choice."

It's food for thought as I savor a bite of organic yam cake, seasoned with rosemary, finely chopped onions, garlic, and caraway seeds so fresh my spice-deprived tongue misinterprets the pleasantly strong pungent flavor as ginger. I gaze out at the dazzling evening sky from my seat on the veranda of this centuries-old 5000-square-foot plantation home perched like an eagle's nest atop the "Isle of Spice," and breathe in the densely fragrant air. This is not a meal to be taken for granted.

The appetizer has been crafted by Mark and beautifully presented in a rich, creamy (but dairy-free) caper sauce. The ingredients have come from their abundant gardens, which surround the

the moisture sinks back into the ground as the moon wanes."

Mary deflects my compliments toward her green thumb, and in turn raves about the accomplishments of their professional gardener, Niel, whom she calls "the man with the magic fork." He has transformed our almost 3 acres, putting in a large provisions garden, with vegetables like sweet corn, yams, dasheen, carrots, and pumpkins, and creating two orchards with a mixture of fruit trees, including grapefruit, avocado, sweet orange, cherry, Turkish fig, tangerine, golden apple, coconut, and five varieties of mangoes."

Since moving here from England, where they ran a vegetarian guesthouse for 10 years, Mary and Mark have planted over 200 trees, and their aim is to continue planting. "Our reasons are twofold," says Mary. "First, to enhance our own immediate environment and to harvest the fruits, and secondly, to at least endeavor to counter-balance some of the impact on the earth's environment made by the fossil fuels used by us, and



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house and produce an endless variety of organic fruits and vegetables, herbs and spices, for three seasons. Whatever they cannot grow, they obtain by exchange from friends who live in a slightly different growing zone.

Mary is a passionate gardener, sharing secrets and seedlings with her friends and neighbors. She has learned to plant and harvest in rhythm with the cycles of the moon. "We plant two days before and two days after the full moon, as we always have rain then," she says. "Before the full moon, plant seedlings that crop above the ground, like beans, lettuce, and tomatoes, since the moon draws the moisture up through the soil as it is itself rising. After full moon, plant seedlings that crop below ground, like yams, sweet potatoes, and carrots, since

by our guests, in getting to us."

Mary's comment brings my mind instantly back from its sensory adventure—induced by a luscious main course of homemade fettuccini with grilled garden eggplant and breadnuts—to the dinner table and our spirited conversation. Never before have I encountered such accountability and integrity in a business and its owners—and I once owned a vegetarian restaurant with high ideals.

Like Grenada itself, the house has a tumultuous history, dating back to the mid-1700s, and had been almost abandoned for several years previous to their moving in. It's been a work in progress and a labor of love, much of the renovation details done by Mark, with the help of skilled local contractors. They

### Destination Details

#### The Lodge

PO Box 3540

St. George's, Grenada, West Indies

**Web:** thelodgegrenada.com

**Email:** thelodge@caribsurf.com

**Phone:** 473-440-2330

The Lodge can accommodate up to 6 guests at a time.

replaced the roof, the plumbing, and the electrical system, constructed a gorgeous 25-meter non-chemical exercise pool, built a 40,000 gallon water tank with a German technology filter system to collect rain water from the roof (the purest, sweetest-tasting water I have ever sampled), and added several large balconies to capitalize on their stunning views.

Inside the house, Mark took all the wood work, including every floor and ceiling board, window frame, door, and rail, back to its original pitch pine, painstakingly removing each piece, one by one, stripping away almost 100 years of paint and varnish, then refinishing. Once all the numbered and coded pieces had been put back exactly in their original place, he gave them a lustrous coating of tung oil, extracted from the nuts of the tung tree, to waterproof and seal.

Mary and Mark set out to create a place where they could “give to others the vacation that we, as vegetarians, were never able to find.” They have created a masterpiece. The only explanation I can come up with for the tireless energy expenditure on the part of this dynamic duo is that they are truly living their dream. Time seems to stand still here at The Lodge, making space for divinely inspired creativity directly in proportion to the desires of the dreamers. For this night that seems to last forever, under the shooting stars of the clear Grenadian sky, I have the privilege of sharing in this dream.

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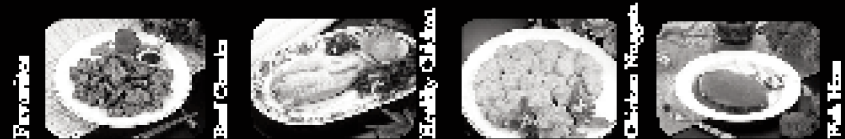
MOIRA NORDHOLT is a Toronto-based freelance writer. This is her first article for VegNews.



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