

Growing a sustainable paradise: Salt of Palmar's herb garden blooms with local flavour

By  Debbie Hathway

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“It’s small, but it’s very, very sweet.” Melanie Lebrasse might have been talking about Salt of Palmar, where she is assistant sales and marketing manager, but she was actually admiring a young papaya tree in their newly established herb garden.



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We met five years ago when the adults-only boutique hotel with 59 keys opened as a Lux Collective brand after an extensive renovation to this endearing property at the edge of Palmar Beach on the east coast of Mauritius.

Salt is Design Hotel's first member hotel in Mauritius, and it is all about meaningful travel that celebrates people, not just places. Its unforgettable look, created by artist Camille Walala and local architecture studio JFA, sets the tone for offering everything local, from the food to the “real Mauritius” experiences on and off-site.

Their storytelling is multilayered. Take that papaya tree for example. It's from GM Raj Reedoy's own garden, transplanted to sow the seeds for “a work of heart”, the beautiful herb garden flourishing in a previously unused space behind the Good Kitchen.



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“It’s all about visualisation,” he says, noting that its first harvest produced fruit sweeter than he had experienced at home.

The Lux Collective rewards staff for initiative, encouraging the sharing of new ideas and often implementing them with due credit. This is one of them; “collective wisdom” naturally motivates more commitment, dedication and passion for caring for their guests.

Salt staff with green fingers are Shiva Moonien, the executive sous chef who is a whiz at vegan cuisine, although he can “do anything”, and Vicky Bagiruth, who has looked after the garden and landscaping since the hotel opened in November 2018.



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The addition of the herb garden has added aesthetic and functional value to the outdoor space. It is a testament to his passion, creativity and dedication to his work, which goes beyond mere professional commitment.

“He is the kind of person who is always eager to help others embodying a spirit of generosity and kindness that enriches our hotel community,” says Lebrasse.

In just three months, with composting using kitchen waste and no pesticides, there is a long row of very healthy mint, Thai eggplant, green chilli, leaf lettuce, spring onion, parsley, celery, leek and thyme plants, as well as edible flowers for menu items and decoration and sugar cane for the cocktails.



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“All [the garden] needs is a little bit of care and some time,” says Chef Shiva, who also cultivates his own small garden at home.

“I have always liked fruits and have 10 to 12 kinds of fruit trees, including banana and papaya. As a child, we ate vegetarian meals three times a week – only fruits and vegetables.”

His interest in medicinal plants and farming is a family thing.

“After school or on weekends, when I had nothing to do at home, I used to cycle with my father to my grandfather’s farm and help him dig the soil. He had a lot of sweet potatoes and tapioca, and I used to compete with my cousin at harvest time to see who could find the biggest [specimens].”

Chef Shiva’s knowledge is reflected in the vegetarian and vegan menu, which is in demand. However, I can vouch for the fresh fish options too. Everything you eat or drink at Salt is fresh, local, and seasonal. The beauty of the à la carte menu is that there is minimal waste, really “what’s left on the plate”.

Reedoy adds, “People prefer eating fresh, quality food. One of the USPs at Salt is that everything is homemade, down to the croissants in the bakery that guests tell us are better than some of the French creations and the syrups in the cocktails.”

It’s so nourishing and served in just the right-sized portions that you somehow find yourself eating less while feeling absolutely satisfied on every level. The gluten-free bread tastes like more, and there are dairy alternatives for hot drinks.



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Add to this some early morning yoga in the pool or on the white sandy beach right in front of the hotel and a relaxing Salt treatment in the spa, and you'll have enjoyed some of the best Salt has to offer when you're awake.



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The good night's rest promised in the Carpe Diem king-size beds must be experienced to be believed. If you venture off the property to explore, I recommend a bicycle ride into Trou d'eau Douce, a nearby fishing village. For more must-sees, hidden gems and soulful experiences, simply ask the team to curate something to suit your wanderlust.



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Visit [Saltresorts.com](https://saltresorts.com) to find out more.

ABOUT DEBBIE HATHWAY

Debbie Hathway is an award-winning writer, with a special interest in luxury lifestyle (watches, jewellery, travel, property investment) and the arts.

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