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St. Barth: How Nikki Beach Seduces, Makes You Let Yourself Go.

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At 2:37pm on Sunday, July 24th, Nikki Beach St.Barth went critical.

It was Super Hero Party Day and Spiderman, Wonder Woman, and assorted other comic book characters emerged from the kitchen headed for a table of eight. The chief prop was a large-format bottle of Taittinger, sparkler stuck in the cork. But it wasn't a prop. Uncorked and poured, the Champagne unleashed a current that had been building since noon. The table of eight were suddenly dancing on the table.

There's always a mayhem match at Nikki Beach St. Barth, and this time the Taittinger lit the fuse. Over in the corner, a table turned into a disco cage and the bathing-suit wraps were quickly undone (and that, too, spread through the dining room). The table of 10 that had been chair-dancing for an hour—they were up and at it. Over there, a woman in a black, grommet-top bikini had one leg in the air at 45 degrees—and there was a man caressing it. A slightly pot-bellied guy wearing a Spider Man mask was bootie-bumping his slightly voluptuous companion. The music kept pace. “Dance, Dance, Dance” it urged, and then “Green Light, Green Light.”

It is one of the genius points of Nikki Beach St. Barth that it knows that we all have a tribal Id just itching to get out. Here you come in as a table and become, in the course of Sunday afternoon, part of a throbbing, a fertility-cult frenzy. You wear as little as possible, indulge in gaastronomic display (lobsters presented live tableside before immersion), drink copiously (large format bottles of rosé coursed through the dining room like fireflies), and finally, give way to sheer sexual display. Nikki Beach is the good bad angel on your shoulder, whispering ‘Permission granted.’

But it costs and that’s another genius point, knowing that people will pay heartily to cross into the land of being-bad-allowed.

The restaurant, in St. Jean, is a feet-in-the-sand place, like many others on this stretch of the island. There are two levels of tables and a row out on the beach. Some people even arrive via yacht or speed boat and land in a zodiac. The staff is on it, double-time. One zodiac no sooner touched shore than a burly staffer was digging a hole for a beach umbrella, unfurled by time the party sat down. Sushi arrayed on wooden boats sailed across the dining room, and the lunch flood was handled with seeming ease. (Though the bartender’s T-shirt was sweat-soaked by the time I left.)

What’s funny about Nikki Beach SB is that it has it’s own time zones. From 12 to 2, the restaurant is fairly calm, lunch is served and eaten, the music track is modest. Standard time. At 2pm, an announcer introduces the fashion show, and beauties with caramel-dip tans and in provocative bathing suits sashay through the dining room and continue to do for the next hour or so.

It's the start of Nikki Beach Time. The music-track back-beat picks up, people start to push it—a slightly chubby woman in a slightest-V-down-there bikini is chair-dancing and selfing, and a woman in a thong bikini (with a bootie that is more than up to it) is hoisted on a girlfriend's shoulders, hauled out to the beach, and thrown in the water. Two rugby-build guys at the bar start dancing in place, cannonball delts rippling, and then one feels the other's nipple with delicacy, as though he's tuning in a radio station. Over at one of those tables of eight, another large-format Taittinger arrives, with the first pour polishing the shaved head of one of the gyrators.