Delicious DUBROVNIK

Dubrovnik's food scene is pivoting from tourist traps to a genuine taste of Croatia.

YVONNE GORDON tucks in

The large fish sizzles and simmers on the heat of the grill; a simple rack set over charcoal. It's heavenly at Seona restaurant and they're doing it as a large, whole fish, or braised. The restaurant's tiny stone terrace overlooks a small beach, where three red bricks set on the sand — abandoned while their occupants have lunch here. Beside the beach, a stone jetty leads into the clear blue and green Mediterranean water where the fish are about to eat what caught this morning.

We're on the island of Kološipan in the Adriatic Sea, the sun is strong but the water is still cool, the sea breeze fresh and invigorating. There is a fisherman tidying up a fishing net on his small blue wooden fishing boat, we find a man working on the deck...

Marko Prizmic when he retired as a chef in 2014, started by Kod Marka (+385 20 758007), started by himself and his wife Vina Mihanovina who has (shopped/sharmanovina), before ending up with coffee and cake at Pupica patiornic (pupica aubergine). In Dubrovnik, I eat everything from black risotto to mussels, clams, scampi, cuttlefish and squid. I visit the market where the chef plans the day’s ingredients. I eat in restaurants outside town with tables so near the sea, the warm Mediterranean water practically laps onto the stone jetty, a very peaceful and most unlikely place that I discover some of the city’s best food — an octopus burger at Barba (Bokranja 2), a tiny seafood street food place on a sliver of a street.

Here, owner Miho Obradović explains his restaurant’s name: A Barba is a fisherman, he says — “the person who knows good fish, good olive oil and good weather”. Miho’s grandfather Ivan was a fisherman and was dried in the Bura northern wind. His father is head of the fish market and Miho (32) himself studied marine biology, so he knows his fish. Everything on the menu, from the tuna paté to the marinated shrimp, is bursting with flavour. There’s a calamari burger and a shrimp burger, but the octopus burger is the number one. Other restaurants said he was crazy when he did this. Two years ago, Miho says — but the following year, he sold nearly 30,000 octopus burgers and now they all think it was a great idea.

Dubrovnik has every type of cuisine for every budget — I can eat there for a small fortune or a small snack. There is some really good seafood tradition into the future.