



**LAZY LOUNGER** A hammock's about all there is on the Moorings Village's secluded beach.

## Islamorada

The only noises you'll hear are the gulls cawing above you—and the flop of a fish as it hits the boat's deck

**EAT, FISH, SLEEP.** That's the mantra on this tiny key halfway between Miami and Key West, comprising just a few hotels and shops scattered on either side of Highway 1. Here, the real draw is the excellent fishing: Even fledgling anglers can catch something in Islamorada, which holds the title of sport-fishing capital of the world.

But that's for tomorrow. Right now, it's time for a toes-in-the-sand dinner at the **Morada Bay Beach Café**. Though locals gossip about duplicitous town restaurants that (horrors!) secretly ship their fish in from the Bahamas, this place definitely doesn't—the proof is in the superlative tuna tartare (81600 Overseas Hwy.; 305-664-0604; entrées from \$21). Sleep at the **Moorings Village**, a cluster of elegant Cape Cod-style cottages on one of the key's only true beaches, known simply as Moorings Beach (305-664-4708; doubles from \$300), or at **Casa Morada**, a serene B&B-like hotel helmed by three Ian Schrager alums (305-664-0044; doubles from \$299).

The next day will be action-packed, so be-



**THE SOUVENIR**

Roberta Freymann kurta from the shop at the Moorings (\$85).

FEBRUARY 2012 FLORIDA



**THE PLAYLIST**

After all that fishing, sun, and sand, you'll be craving a margarita . . . and a sound track of serene island tunes. Acoustic guitarist David Feder, who plays at the Morada Bay Beach Café, shares his ideal mellow-evening mix:

- "ONE LOVE" Bob Marley
- "IN THE SUMMERTIME" Mungo Jerry
- "TRYIN' TO REASON WITH HURRICANE SEASON" Jimmy Buffett
- "JAMAICA FAREWELL" Harry Belafonte
- "CHICKEN FRIED" Zac Brown
- "SAILING" Christopher Cross
- "INTO THE MYSTIC" Van Morrison
- "REDEMPTION SONG" Bob Marley
- "SUMMER BREEZE" Seals & Crofts
- "SOUTHERN CROSS" Crosby, Stills & Nash

gin with an indulgence: a fresh-from-the-oven cinnamon bun from **Bob's Bunz** (81620 Overseas Hwy.). Then pick up some beach wares from the Moorings' store, which is full of breezy cotton frocks and sun hats, and from two local boutiques—**Wild Lily** (81933 Overseas Hwy.; 305-517-9222) and **Blue** (82229 Overseas Hwy.; 305-517-9225)—both of which carry a sophisticated assortment of cover-ups. Stop into **World Wide Sportsman** if you're in need of serious fishing gear (81576 Overseas Hwy.; 305-664-4615).

Have a light lunch of peel-and-eat shrimp or stone crabs at Cheeca Lodge's oceanfront **Tiki Bar** (305-664-4651; entrées from \$13). At 3 P.M., you'll board a boat at the hotel's dock and take a two-hour snorkeling expedition to reefs teeming with rainbow fish and angelfish (305-517-4451; two-hour snorkeling cruise, \$50 per person). Then head to **Lazy Days** to watch the sun set and eat an early dinner of catch of the day prepared "Lazy style"—topped with scallions, tomatoes, and Key lime butter (79867 Overseas Hwy.; 305-664-5256; entrées from \$15). After that, you're in for the ultimate authentic fishing adventure: Get to



**IN A QUIET KEY** From left: Seared shellfish with tomato fumé at the Morada Bay Beach Café. The Moorings' beachfront rental villas are decorated with a mix of vintage and modern furniture. The buttery-leather chairs seem made for long reading days.

**Robbie's Marina** by 7:30 P.M. to board the *Capt. Michael*, an industrial barge that takes beer-bellied regulars out on evening excursions. Even beginners will return from the four-hour trip with a few sizable snappers—or mahimahi or grouper, depending on the season (877-664-8498; \$40 per person).

There's plenty to do at the resort for your sleepy last day. The Moorings has a good swimming beach and a tennis court, and Casa Morada offers kayaks, sunrise yoga classes, and courts for both bocce and tennis. Around noon, pick up sandwiches from the **Midway Café** (80499 Overseas Hwy.; 305-664-2622; sandwiches from \$8) and take them to **Anne's Beach**, the only sandy public stretch. You can sit at a covered wooden picnic table and watch shorebirds swooping down to the water for lunch; all you'll hear are their cries, the waves, and the rustling of the palms. □

**THE TASTEMAKER'S TIPS**

**HEIDE PRAVER,**  
Co-owner, Casa Morada

**HIGH DECIBEL** "I love the monthly Full Moon Parties at a restaurant called **Morada Bay Beach Café**, which is in an old Key West-style home with beautiful wraparound porches and an indoor-outdoor bar. Every one of their parties feels like a beachy Fat Tuesday bash, with a bonfire, people walking on stilts, and even fire breathers. It all ends with a fantastic fireworks show [81600 Overseas Hwy.; 305-664-0604; for party schedule, go to moradabay-restaurant.com]."

**LOW DECIBEL** "We're such a skinny island that if you stand in the middle of U.S. 1, you can see both the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. I like starting on the gulf side and boating out into what they call the Back Country, where you can see dolphins and sharks. You can rent a boat through **A1A Watersports** [305-664-8182; half-day rentals from \$249] or go out with a captain from **World Wide Sportsman** [305-394-7484; four-hour fishing trip, \$425 for two people]."