



Sustainable Luxury

**An Interview with Stephane Zaharia,
Vice President and General Manager at
CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa - The Reef by
CuisinArt and Residences by CuisinArt**



*The view from the lobby of The Reef by CuisinArt (left);
Deluxe Beachfront Junior Suite at The Reef by CuisinArt (above)*

EDITORS' NOTE *Stephane Zaharia has held his current post since October 2005. Prior to this, he was Resort Manager, Carlisle Bay Antigua; Hotel Manager, Sanderson-Ian Schragger Hotel London; and Hotel Operations for Hyatt Hotels-North America-Caribbean. He received his bachelor's degree in Hotel Management from CMH-European Center of International Hotel Management.*



PROPERTY BRIEF *Located on Merrywing Bay on the Caribbean*

coast of Anguilla, The Reef by CuisinArt (thereof by cuisinart.com) is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, which selects only independently minded properties with one thing in common: excellence. The Reef is a contemporary beachfront oasis of luxury that features stunning accommodations, world-class dining, cutting-edge technology, and a plethora of activities including unique watersports, Aqua Cycling, tennis with hardcourt play, drone classes, outdoor movies, and more. Guests receive preferred rates and tee times at CuisinArt Golf Club, as well as access to the award-winning Venus Spa and all culinary outlets at CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa.

How do you view the current market in Anguilla and what differentiates it?

From the marketplace standpoint, Anguilla is continuously being considered an uber-luxury destination in the Caribbean. We are competing with islands like St. Bart's and other high-end destinations in the area.

The demand for high end is strong, and the clientele that is requesting destinations such as Anguilla are expecting an impeccable delivery of service and infrastructure in both new and preexisting properties.

Anguilla has always demonstrated that it has the opportunity to deliver such an experience, and that will continue in the future.

In terms of the property itself, we are seeing a great demand as well with the addition of The Reef, and we're going to continue to work hard to deliver on those expectations.

The Reef is referred to as the newest sustainable luxury destination on the island. How is the resort taking steps to increase its sustainable efforts?

The high-end clientele is very conscientious in terms of the environment and the quality of the

ingredients they're eating every day because this is the lifestyle they practice at home. Sustainability is an important factor in decision making when it comes to hotels.

We produce our own electricity here with reverse-osmosis water production that provides power throughout the full estate. The majority of the produce that is coming to our restaurant kitchens comes from our own hydroponic farm, which is another unique feature of our property. All the outside produce we're sourcing from

North America and Europe is also organic, fresh, and healthy.

Is your emphasis on wellness carried out around that experience

At our spa, we offer treatments that use products sourced from the hydroponic farm such as lavender, and if not from our farm then definitely from organic and very health-conscious sources.

We also provide unique wellness activities, including Aqua Cycling, yoga/meditation, and Pilates. We have partnered with Anguilla Watersports to bring glass-bottom kayaking, paddle boarding, and kite surfing to The Reef. These wellness activities are expected by the kind of clientele we attract.

Is there a consistent feel across the suites product or does it vary throughout the property?

Our accommodations follow a consistent design style across the board from top rooms to the run-of-the-house room category, and all guest rooms are especially gracious in size. This sense of space isn't always available at other properties. Our average room size is over 700 square feet.

With your emphasis on service, have you had to bring talent in or have you been able to recruit locally?

The high level of service offered at The Reef is something that started at CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa, which is the founding resort of the estate. Carrying that service over to The Reef is a key factor in our success.

We can build very nice properties, but if we do not support them with caring service and great experiences, we will not be able to maintain the high volume of business.

I still spend a lot of time on training our staff. Both properties are affiliated with luxury

hospitality organizations – CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa is a member of The Leading Hotels of the World and The Reef by CuisinArt is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. Being part of these affiliations require that we adhere to very specific standards of service to ensure we remain a member of those organizations.

We conduct on-the-floor training but are also able to conduct training during our closure because, due to Caribbean weather, we operate 10 months a year. We also send key members of the staff to other destinations to work and train, so they have exposure to different training and experiences than they would have in Anguilla. This is the only way for us to ensure the consistency of our level of service.

How do the two properties complement each other and do they compete for guests?

CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa has been in business for the past 17 years. It is an established brand that is admired and has become an industry model. Because of its design, architectural feel, and programming, CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa caters more to families and the 40 to 50-plus market.

The Reef by CuisinArt, based on its design, size, and wellness programming, caters more to an experiential demographic of the market that is looking for additional activities.

The Reef is great for groups and incentive markets because of the structure; it's not as spread out. It's also a great location for productions and photo shoots. We have been in business for just a few months and have already hosted two high-end photo shoots at The Reef, and there are more to come.

Is building awareness today more reliant on social media and sites like TripAdvisor or is traditional marketing still important?

It's a mix of both. There is a huge emphasis on new media, but we need to balance it – we cannot say the old way of doing things isn't working anymore because the base of social media has ties to traditional media.

There is definitely a strong interest in influencers and developing that side of new marketing opportunities, but we also still meet face-to-face with travel agents and tour operators. It's all relevant. ●