

## Westin St. Maarten Appoints New Executive Chef

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Westin St. Maarten Dawn Beach Resort and Spa is honored to announce the appointment of John Bakker as the property's new executive chef. In his new position, the seasoned chef plans to further establish the Westin's reputation as the hub of dining on Dutch St. Maarten and the entire island -- the bona fide "Culinary Capital of the Caribbean" -- at the crest of high season.

Overseeing the cuisine at Westin St. Maarten's five food and beverage outlets and a staff of thirty-five culinary professionals, Bakker lends his leadership and litany of five-star international experiences just in time to launch the newly minted AAA Four Diamond Aura steakhouse. Formerly housing a sophisticated take on the various culinary traditions that make up Caribbean dining, Aura has recently taken a new direction. Under Chef Bakker the restaurant will focus on filling a niche on the island for classic steakhouse fare while delivering specialties that continue to give a sense of place to this gastronomic outpost.

"I feel very lucky to be bringing my passion for international cuisine and varied experiences in the kitchen to a property that has already experienced a great level of success and recognition for both the hotel and restaurant. With Aura's new concept in place, I can't think of a more exciting time to lead this team and develop a specialty that has yet to be mastered on an island known around the world for its excellent dining," says Bakker on his arrival at the Westin St. Maarten.

"We worked with John at the Westin Casuarina Grand Cayman, where he was part of the Cayman Islands National Culinary Team and winner of the Chef of the Year Competition; we were well-aware of his talents. We're pleased to be working with him again to bring more recognition to the stellar cuisine and service that we provide to our guests," says Marcus Repp, regional food and beverage director for Columbia Sussex, owner of Westin St. Maarten and Westin Grand Cayman.

In addition to his time in Grand Cayman, Bakker has cooked his way through various chef posts throughout Europe, the United States and his native Canada, most notably working as the Sous Chef at Maine's 5 Diamond, 5 Star landmark The White Barn Inn under Chef Jonathan Cartwright.

Bakker received his degree in Culinary Management from George Brown College in Toronto and later enhanced his qualification by earning a Modern Apprenticeship and Bachelor's Degree in Hospitality Management from Scottish Qualification's Authority in 2005. Other career distinctions include being chosen to the Cayman Islands National Culinary Team and winning the Cayman Islands Chef of the Year Competition in 2007 and 2008, respectively, during his tenure at Westin Casuarina Grand Cayman.

Open nightly from 6 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., Aura features an intimate atmosphere punctuated with dark woods and warm comforting tones and offers both indoor and outdoor, ocean front seating. For more information or to make a reservation at Aura, call (599) 543 6700 or <http://aurastmaarten.com/>.

### About the Westin St. Maarten Resort & Spa

Situated along the south-eastern shore of St. Maarten, the 317-room Westin St. Maarten Dawn Beach Resort & Spa reflects the relaxed elegance and beauty of the Caribbean surrounded by endless miles of sparkling blue water, acres of tropical foliage and sprawling white beaches. The Westin is one of the largest upscale resorts in the Netherlands-governed province with its exquisite guestrooms (140 ocean front; 39 ocean view and 138 resort or island view), 99 luxury condominiums and six suites (including three Presidential Oceanfront Suites and three Parlor Suites), a full-service European-style Hibiscus spa, fitness room, on-site casino, nearly 20,000 square feet of flexible function space, several retail shops, the largest infinity pool on the island and endless water sports activities, creating a haven of relaxation and recreation. Guests have the choice of five oceanfront restaurants, including a classic steakhouse, poolside café, lobby and pool bar and room service to satisfy any appetite. Whether to relax and rejuvenate all day or play into the night the Westin St. Maarten Dawn Beach Resort & Spa provides a blissful escape and true Caribbean holiday experience like no other. For more information please call 011-(599)-543-6700 or visit [www.westin.com/stmaarten](http://www.westin.com/stmaarten).

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