

EAT YOUR GREENS

When it comes to choosing a golf destination, it's not just about the courses you play, but also the ones you eat. Alex Mead takes to the world's fairways to seek out the places that can successfully appease both the Ramsay and Rose in all of us



Clockwise from above left: Greek octopus; taking a putt on Costa Navarino's The Bay; rolling hills and olive trees at the course's 12th hole; unwind at the Nargile bar



Clockwise from above left: meat is on the menu at Flame; warm up with a pre-game swim; sea views set to soothe a losing score; dine alfresco in balmy Messinia



COSTA NAVARINO, MESSINIA, GREECE

Eat at: Flame Steak and Seafood

Costa Navarino is the pinnacle of Greek golf. It has two courses, ranked No.1 and No.2 in Greece: The Dunes and The Bay. Google 'Navarino Bay' and you'll find tales of a civil war naval battle in the 1800s; add the word 'golf' and the only battle is with your handicap. The Dunes opened back in 2010, its multi-levelled greens forcing you to be accurate on your approach shots. The Bay launched amid the olive groves and mountain canyons a year later, and two further courses are slated to double the golf offering of this luxury oasis on the west coast of the Peloponnese. With a resort of this magnitude, you need plentiful food options, and Costa Navarino has them – 20 to be precise. There's a steak

grill, an Italian, a Middle Eastern, a classic taverna and even an American-style diner, but if it's quality cuts and seafood you seek, then Flame in the clubhouse is ideal. Japanese Kobe, Australian Angus, American wagyu, Uruguayan Aberdeen Angus; côte de boeuf, tomahawk, T-bone, tenderloin, rib-eye, picanha – whether it's a breed or a cut, they've got it covered. Go for shanks of veal or lamb, Greek black chicken, Ibérico pork chop (served with sweet, spice-cured pork belly) or go all out on the surf-and-turf of Uruguayan rib-eye and half a lobster. It's not delicate, there aren't edible flowers; it's a Jospier grill doing its thing. Alongside views of The Dunes. Superb. costanavarino.com

Clockwise from top: getting in a round in Tuscany; an Argentario interior; one of the resort's terraces; the Dama Dama dining room; Portugal's Monte Rei clubhouse

ARGENTARIO, TUSCANY, ITALY

Eat at: Restaurant Dama Dama *Classic Mediterranean*

Tuscany and golf are made for each other. The climate, the landscape, the potential for spectacular 19th holes, it's all here. Argentario Golf Resort brings all of those elements together in the best possible fashion. Based on what was once an island but has now being linked back to the mainland with three causeways, all of the natural attributes you'd hope for from Tuscan golf reside here. What it gives in scenery, however, it takes from your scorecard. The dramatic change in gradient on the fairways, coupled with small and, at times, over-protected greens make it hard for anyone trying to record a good score to do so, but, as is

often the case in travellers' golf, the views make up for it. So, too, does what lies beyond the 18th hole. The resort's Dama Dama only heads to the best local producers for supplies, often not even needing to go that far as its own fruit and vegetable patch will suffice. If you only had their local extra virgin olive oil and crusty, homemade bread, you'd be happy. But chef Riccardo Cappelli has worked with Michelin-starred chefs throughout his career and knows how to get the best out of the region's seafood and meat, so you can't really go wrong with whatever you choose. argentariogolfresortspa.it



MONTE REI, ALGARVE, PORTUGAL

Eat at: Vistas *Seafood*

Monte Rei is consistently ranked the best golf course in Portugal, which is no small feat given the high concentration of quality courses in a comparatively small area. This is the Algarve, but a world away from Albufeira, even though it's just an hour east, and it's as secluded and serene as any course you're likely to play. The Atlantic Ocean laps at the sandy shores nearby, while the Serra do Caldeirão mountains give it a fitting backdrop – not that you need to look beyond the course for beauty. Jack Nicklaus is responsible for this 6,567m, par 72, and he didn't hold back on the water when he brought his 'signature' design to Portugal – it features on 11 of the 18 holes. The par-3 14th makes

the most of it, with the lake the only route to take. Similarly, the 18th is fiercely protected: water on two sides, unforgiving rough on another and only a narrow fairway route, and that half-covered with sand. Perhaps fittingly given the amount of time you'll have spent near water, the restaurant to head to afterwards specialises in seafood. The menu is pretty much a who's who of ocean dwellers: clams, crabs, cockles, barnacles, crab, hake, mackerel, scallops and John Dory are just some of the crustacea and fish the chef manages to squeeze into his £115 Flora and Fauna tasting menu. Whether indecisive or a work of genius, or both, it's spectacular eating. monte-rei.com