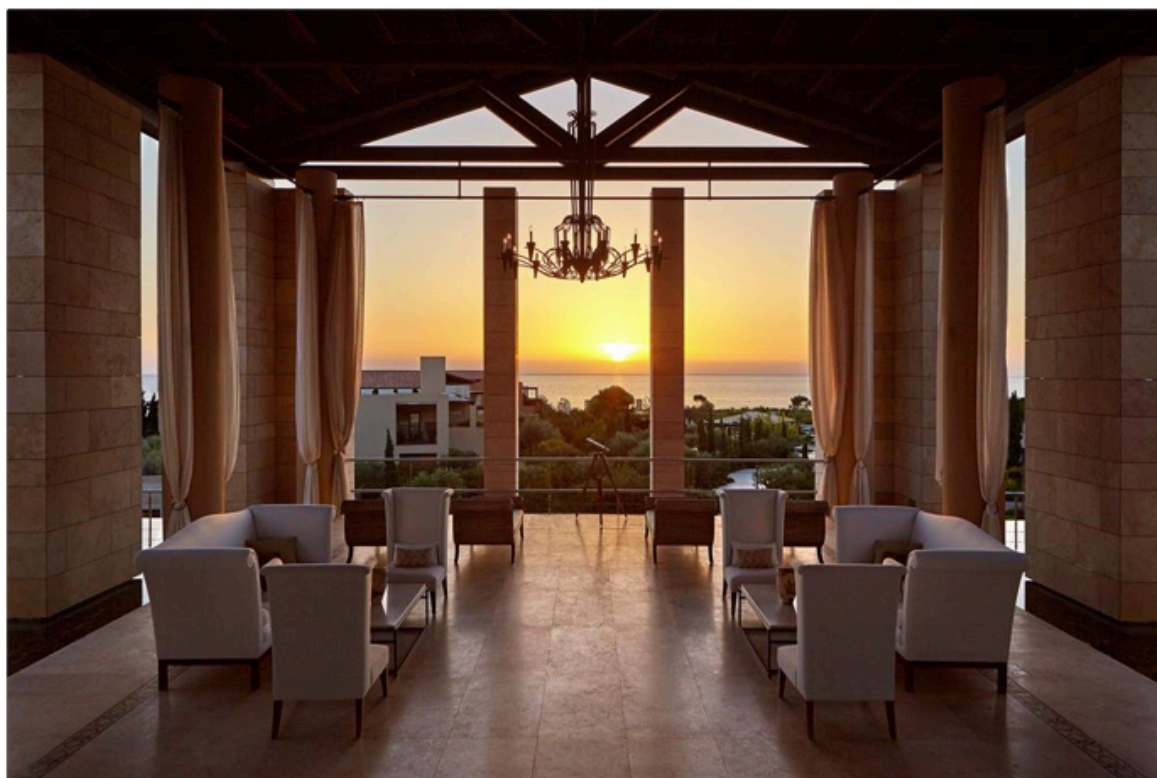


Costa Navarino
Square Meal
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Costa Navarino: Where to eat at the five-star Greek destination

There are 12 restaurants to choose from

Updated on 28 June 2019 • Written By **Eamonn Crowe**



Costa Navarino is a five-star destination in the Peloponnese region of Greece. Eamonn Crowe explores its vast culinary offering.

They say that first impressions are important, and it seems that Costa Navarino has taken note. As soon as you pull up to the open-air lobby of The Romanos (one of two hotels at available), you're immediately struck by its beauty. Boasting double-height ceilings, crisp white furnishings and an enviable view of the ocean, the lobby is an initial taste of the unparalleled luxury that is to follow.

When thinking about a five-star destination built in the heart of the Grecian countryside, sustainability isn't exactly the first thing that springs to mind. Costa Navarino is keen to assert its eco credentials though, both in terms of protecting the environment and being a viable business which benefits the local area. This isn't just mere bandwagon hopping though thanks to the popularity of David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg, sustainability has been at Costa Navarino's core since its inception.

Costa Navarino was founded by Vassilis C. Constantakopoulos, who is immortalised in statue form outside the retreat's clubhouse. Constantakopoulos wanted Costa Navarino to make the most of its surroundings, employing local people and using locally sourced produce in its stable of restaurants. Today, 70% of Costa Navarino's workforce live locally, while its own line of upmarket foodstuffs – think jars of sticky, golden honey and bottles of slick olive oil – are made with the help of small-batch producers in close proximity.

This commitment to fastidious sourcing and exceptional quality is also reflected in Costa Navarino's food and beverage offering. There are more than 12 restaurants to choose from, each with their own distinct identity. We were lucky enough to sample a range of them on our trip and we're already planning a return visit to tick off the rest.

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The Flame Restaurant at Costa Navarino



If you arrive at The Romanos in time to grab dinner, we'd recommend heading to The Flame before you retire to your room, which might even help you forget the pre-packaged delights of your airborne meal. The restaurant gets its name from its propensity for flame-grilled cooking – think steaks, burgers and surf 'n' turf. More sensible diners might want to lean towards the lighter likes of a Caesar salad, but those with larger appetites can opt for Flame's classic Angus burger instead.

Burgers are hardly the height of gourmet cuisine, but we're happy to report that Flame gets it right. Our chunky 300g beef patty was delicious, with the acidity of tomato and onion garnishes cutting through the hefty helping of carbs. A generous portion of golden and crisp skinny fries meanwhile, were the perfect accompaniment. Full of hearty options and with a grown-up vibe, Flame is best suited to adults-only dining, where conversation and wine are equally free-flowing.

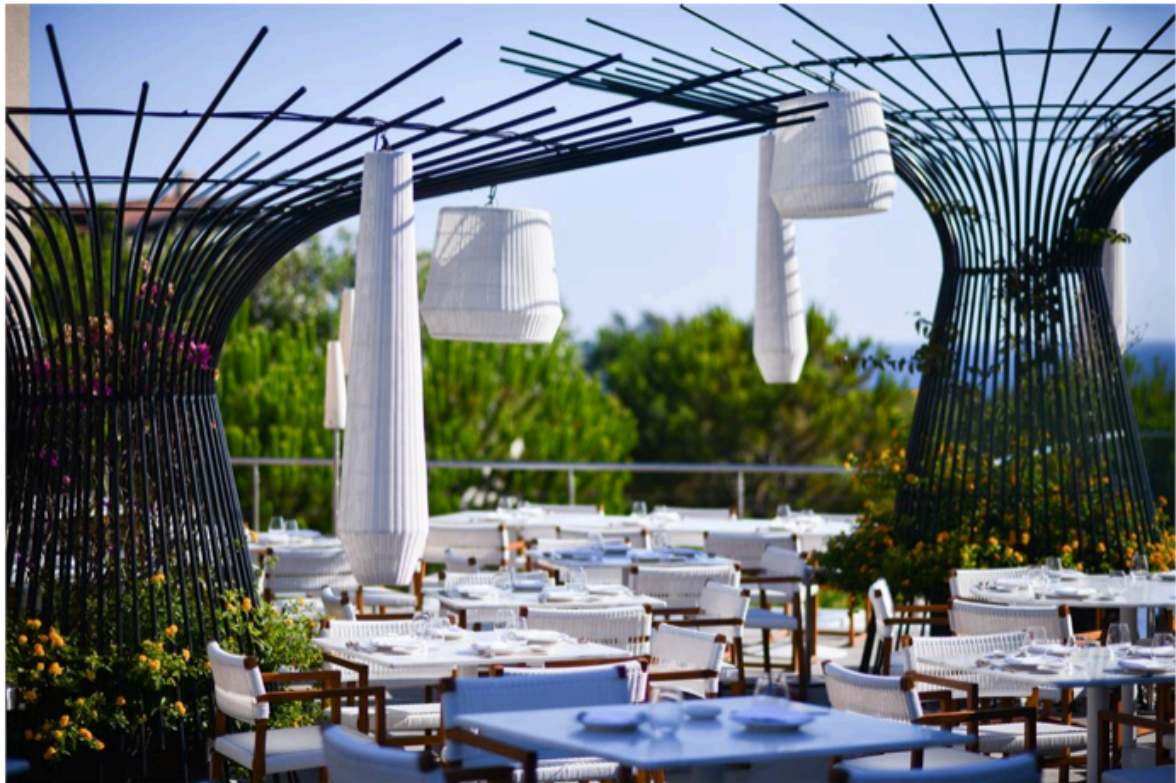
Barbouni Restaurant at Costa Navarino



Found on an elevated wooden platform along the beachfront, this fish-focused restaurant is a calming oasis, which blends into its golden surrounds thanks to a grid of natural wooden columns which uphold the structure, and a smattering of beech wood tables. The restaurant's most arresting feature is the mesh of beige fabric sheets which hangs from the ceiling, forming a canopy which sways in the wind and creates a stunning sense of motion, mimicking the rolling waves of the Ionian sea just a few feet away.

The blissful interiors don't take away from the food though – highlights from the lunch menu here include bundles of vine leaves stuffed with a tangy bout of tzatziki and fried sticks of kefalotyri cheese wrapped in a light batter coating, while the double hit of salt from fried sardines paired with anchovies is heaven for lovers of savoury foods. To finish up, a crumbly Mille-feuille secreted blobs of fluffy lemon mousse between its layers, and a lighter alternative of raspberry sorbet paired with slices of watermelon and pineapple was a medley of freshness. The perfect fuel for an afternoon spent lounging by the pool.

Onuki at Costa Navarino



Visiting a [Japanese](#) restaurant while holidaying in Greece may not seem like the most obvious choice, but it's one we'd implore you to make. Like several of the restaurants here, most of Onuki's seating is found outdoors, in a chic and oh-so-Japanese minimalist landscape, which features clean white furniture, colourful flowers wrapped around tree-like iron structures and hanging lanterns which sway in the wind above the ocean views.

We enjoyed a seemingly endless selection of dishes at Onuki, letting the chefs decide what they would serve to the table. From start to almost finish (we were too full to even attempt dessert), we were wowed: lobster salad saw large slabs of the seafood nestled in among fresh vegetables and pepped up with lashings of a luxe yuzu-truffle sauce, while springy parcels of gyoza stuffed with intensely meaty black Angus beef were irresistible. From the slightly larger plates, a flaky and buttery portion of black cod was smothered in a slightly bitter slick of pink grapefruit miso sauce, and a selection of sparkingly fresh sashimi, served in wooden boxes on a bed of crushed ice, was *almost* too pretty to eat.

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Pero at Costa Navarino



Hotel **breakfasts** are often disappointing, visions of pallid pastries that have long gone cold and far-from-fresh glasses of orange juice spring to mind. At Costa Navarino, breakfast consists of a mammoth buffet where you can cherry pick the dishes that you like, either hot or cold. You might have reservations at first, as so many hotel buffets are equally thoughtless as they are joyless. Here though, you'll be pleasantly surprised – mix and match sweet and savoury with childish abandon, pairing the likes of flaky croissants with sticks of grilled halloumi (no judgement here), while soaking up some morning rays.

You'll also be glad to know that the orange juice is fresh and made with locally grown fruit, while an unmissable quirk of breakfast at Pero is having a chat with the resident hawk and its handler. The bird is 'employed' by Costa Navarino to fend off any other animals that might try and knick your 8am pastry, and for that, we are eternally grateful.

Farm to Table experience at Costa Navarino



Although not technically a restaurant, the Farm to Table experience is a culinary excursion which is available to guests at Costa Navarino. As part of this experience, you will enjoy an al fresco lunch on the grounds, in the vegetable garden. The team will assemble a picnic table for you, while you'll also have a personal chef that will cook up a storm for you while you take in the awe-inspiring views around.

The experience was among the highlights of our trip, thanks to the freshness of the ingredients used. Particular highlights included the savoury parcels; resembling samosas, these were triangles of flaky filo pastry stuffed with spinach. Elsewhere, crumbly filo pastry tartlets were filled with diced tomatoes and cubes of Feta, while skewers of chicken souvlaki were so moreish that they encouraged caveman-style feasting. To finish up, we enjoyed a semolina cake which was given a welcome burst of freshness via wedges of satsuma and a smattering of raisins.

Armyra at Costa Navarino



Perhaps the most [romantic](#) restaurant in Costa Navarino's portfolio, Armyra is a low-lit affair, which comes complete with an alfresco terrace that overlooks The Romanos swimming pool. The restaurant specialises in fresh fish and seafood sourced from local fishermen, which arrives from the kitchen accented with herbs and vegetables grown in the area.

From the menu's 'raw' section, we enjoyed a vibrant and zingy helping of ceviche mixed in with unripe cherry tomatoes, coriander sauce and tobiko, while octopus was served carpaccio-style with a lightly spiced chilli jam. Later on came grilled sardines in a tomato and onion salad, while slices of freshly-baked bread were used to mop up an addictively salty fish roe dip. Keeping things simple, but executing dishes to a very high standard, Armyra is perfect for date night (just remember to bring your chewing gum after all that fish).

Funky Gourmet pop up at Costa Navarino (8 July to 17 August 2019)



This summer, Costa Navarino will welcome the much-feted Funky Gourmet restaurant from Athens to its new clubhouse for an exclusive two month pop up. Throughout July and August, the two Michelin-starred restaurant will take up residence at Costa Navarino's new Bay area, in the earth-sheltered clubhouse which forms part of its stunning new golf course. The Funky Gourmet team will showcase their uniquely playful blend of high-end gastronomy via a two-hour culinary experience, which will see guests served a degustation menu of avant-garde Messinian-Greek cuisine.

During our stay, we were lucky enough to travel to Funky Gourmet's current location in Athens, to preview the pop up experience. Upon arrival, we were greeted by one half of Funky Gourmet's husband-and-wife team, chef Georgianna Hiliadaki. Along with her partner Nikos Roussos, she launched Funky Gourmet 12 years ago. Today, she's still passionate as can be, her trademark corkscrew blonde curls bouncing around as she animatedly tells us about techniques used in the kitchen.

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When it comes to dinner, you go in totally blind – well, that's not exactly true. You are briefly provided with a menu at the start of your meal (it is then taken away and returned to you as a parting gift), but the descriptions of dishes are vague to say the least. That's the point of dining at Funky Gourmet though – nothing is as it first appears. Take the 'rib-eye', which appears to be a cube of raw meat served inside a hollowed-out bone. Upon consuming it though, you'll realise this is in fact a cube of watermelon which has been delicately etched with markings to give it the same look as meat.

This playing with perceptions stretches all the way to dessert, where a wedge of lemon actually reveals itself to be a white chocolate mould, topped with a web of caramelised sugar that's made to look like a lemon slice. Dessert was also home to perhaps the most theatrical moment of the evening (places like Funky Gourmet never serve just one pudding). We were presented with a pan filled with egg, milk and flour, which was then transformed into a high-end take on a milk pie in the flash of an eye thanks to some culinary trickery.
