

LODGING

FINEST PUNTA CANA RESORT & SPA

DOMINICAN  
REPUBLIC



*Dominican Republic*

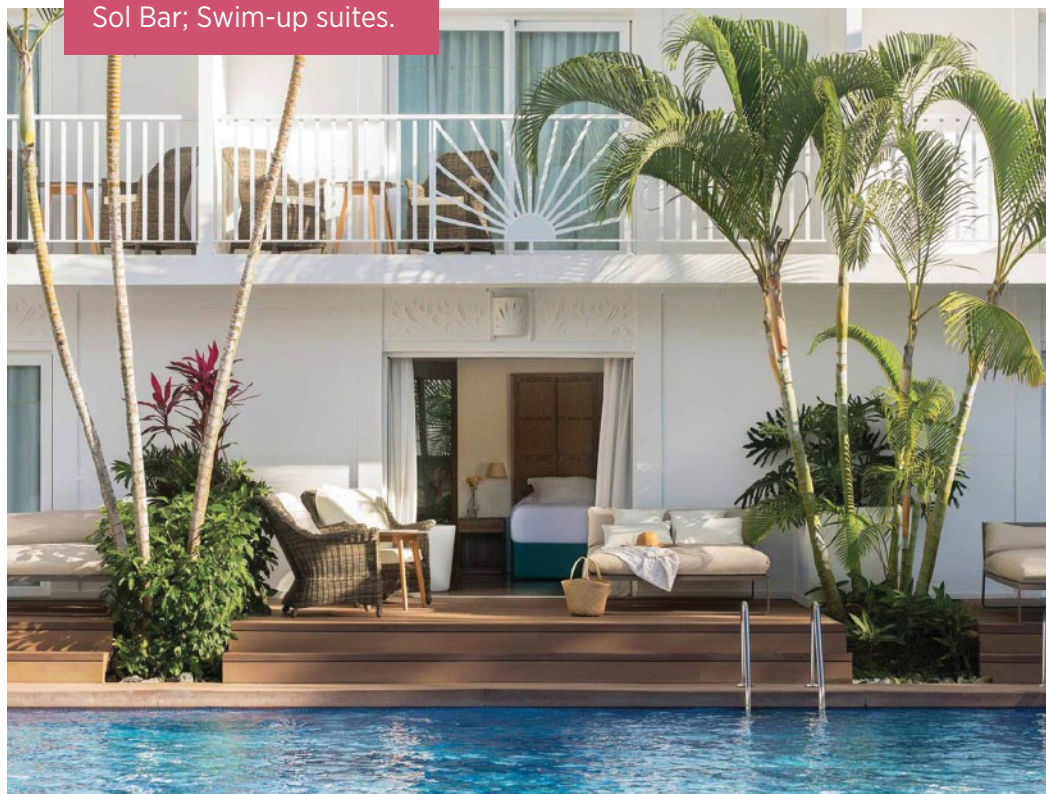
WHERE ON EARTH

# Finest Punta Cana Resort & Spa

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

*by* ELYSE GLICKMAN

PHOTOS THIS PAGE FROM LEFT  
Sol Bar; Swim-up suites.



**A**T SOME ALL-INCLUSIVE resorts, what you see is what you get. At Finest Punta Cana, however, the concept is refined in the form the adults-only Excellence Club, a semi-secluded resort-within-a-resort where what you specifically want out of your trip — especially with food and drink — is assured. While Finest Punta Cana has stellar amenities for families with young children, its over-18 Excellence Club offers quiet manicured public spaces, expanded top-shelf spirits in the in-room mini-bar, all-you-can-enjoy cocktails with premium spirits of choice, complimentary hydrotherapy sessions at The ONE Spa, and access to VIP lounges, private beach, pools and restaurants. The anchor restaurant for this exclusive area is Dommo, which adjoins the private check-in area for Excellence Club guests.

This is the third property for Mexico-based parent company Excellence Resorts, but it is a departure from its other resorts. The Excellence Punta Cana, celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, has a breezy old world Caribbean village charm and sister property Excellence El Carmen's decor and vivacious mood is punctuated with splashes of colour, modern art and contemporary furnishings. The architecture and suite decor at Finest Punta Cana is minimalist chic, and finished with an ocean and earth-toned Mid-Century sensibility. This yields a beautiful blank canvas for the guests to fill as they wish. While the backdrop for the 455-room resort is one of the most beautiful beaches in the Dominican Republic, the dining experience spans the globe.

As one should expect from any five star all-inclusive beach resort, fish and seafood offerings at Finest Punta Cana are fresh and inventive, whether they are ordered at a snack bar, in one of the fine dining eateries, or through room service.»



PHOTOS THIS PAGE FROM TOP  
The swimming pool complex; Excellence Club guests enjoy dedicated concierge services.



«Room service provides Excellence Club guests ample opportunities to enjoy elevated in-room appointments (in-room jacuzzis forged with luxe materials or private mini-pools and patios) as they dine on whatever they may have a craving for from the property's bars and restaurants. Better still, suites have a nifty cabinet feature allowing guests to stash used plates and cutlery away from insects and the elements while allowing housekeeping to discreetly access them for cleaning when passing through the outdoor walkways.

As the parent company is based in Mexico, guests can also expect there will be Mexican dishes available at the high end (Lizo Restaurant), *a/fresco* by the shore (Las Dunas Beach House), poolside (La Cocinita) and the Market Kitchen (buffet) which serves the entire resort. Healthy spins are also part of the menu during breakfast hours at Excellence Club guest-only Dommo and Gusto, along with fresh smoothies, an excellent green juice, and fruit plates — all made to order.

The resort's food and beverage concept is billed as "innovative curation," made up of spaces showcasing international flavours and sensory surroundings specific to a given cuisine. Although each restaurant occupies its own distinctive "world," vegetarian, vegan and modified versions of dishes are available, allowing every guest with a VIP package to get the full Finest/Excellence Club experience. The ultra-exclusive Dommo lives up to expectation by night with a dinner menu straddling creative contemporary and classic continental cuisine. The space is further enhanced by a craft cocktail lounge which opens late in the day for those thirsting something for something more nuanced than a pool drink (though chilled coconut water, with or without rum, served in its shell at the poolside bars hits the spot at midday). Golden Bar, below the main lobby, also satisfies craft cocktail aficionados with impeccably balanced and presented drinks.

Le Petit Plaisir is quintessential French chic with Art Deco-inspired decor, an evocative jazz soundtrack and beautifully executed fare — simple but on-point steaks, roasts and fish, rich and silky soups, decadent sauces, lush desserts and lots of butter when appropriate. Guests step into a New York steakhouse state of mind at Brass Steakhouse, with its hearty array of steaks, seafood and plenty of sides ranging from old school to creative, contemporary and healthy. Insieme Trattoria presents a Tuscan vibe with pasta, pizza and rustic-yet-classy traditional Italian dishes. One restaurant I would put on my own list for a future Finest visit is the Pan-Asian interactive concept Melting Pot. It »

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SERVES 6-10

## Dominican Patties

*A POPULAR local snack at Finest Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.*

### Dough

**All-Purpose Flour**  
3 cups

**Butter** 6 oz,  
softened

**Eggs** 2

**Water**  
½ cup

**Salt** 1 tsp

**Baking Powder**  
1 tsp

**1 MIX** the flour, salt, baking powder and butter with a fork.

**2 ADD** the eggs and mix to combine.

**3 ADD** the water and mix well until you can form a ball. Cover and let stand for 15 minutes.

### Filling

**Ground Beef**  
½ lb

**Salt** 1 tsp

**Oregano** ½ tsp

**Garlic Powder**  
2 tsp

**Vegetable Oil**  
2 tsp

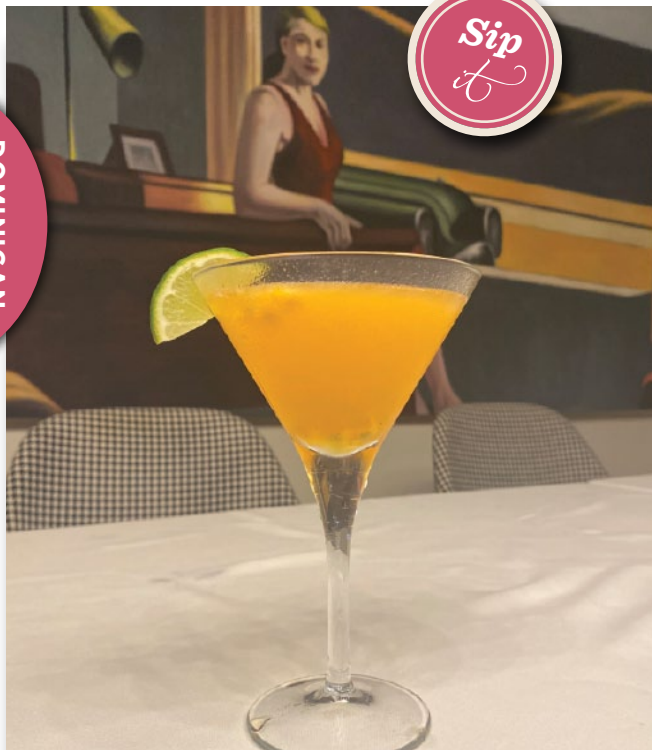
**Tomato Paste**  
2 Tbs

**Eggs** 3, hard  
boiled and  
chopped

**Raisins** to taste

**Vegetable Oil**  
for deep frying

- 1 SEASON** the ground beef with the salt, oregano and garlic powder.
- 2 HEAT** the oil in a skillet until shimmering and cook the beef until browned.
- 3 ADD** the tomato paste and cook down until thickened.
- 4 REMOVE** from the heat and stir in the raisins and chopped eggs.
- 5 ROLL** the dough out on a floured surface until ⅛ inch thick, then cut out circles about 6 inches in diameter.
- 6 FILL** half of each circle with the beef filling, making sure to leave ½ inch free around the edges.
- 7 MOISTEN** the edges of each circle, fold them to form a crescent, and pleat the edges to seal.
- 8 FRY** the patties in hot oil in a deep frying pan, until golden brown.



**SERVES 1**

## Whiskey Passionfruit Martini

**Whiskey** of choice,  
top shelf, 1 oz

**Passionfruit Puree**  
2 oz

**Rose Syrup** 1 oz

- 1 SHAKE** all ingredients with ice.
- 2 STRAIN** into a martini glass.
- 3 GARNISH** with a lemon wheel.

«features Teppanyaki and wok cooking on display and four interactive yakiniku tables where a group can select a Korean BBQ, Sukiyaki or Shabu-Shabu menu.

There are some places among the 18 dining venues where the influence of the Caribbean finds its way to the plate. The often fully booked Shoji begins on a foundation of a Japanese teppanyaki (show cooking on a large grilling table) and interior design, but adds the local charm of Dominican chefs and abundant use of fresh tropical fruit. At Duke's Lobster & Seafood, several of Finest's best bites are on the menu, including the chilled spicy octopus, shrimp and ocean fish ceviches and a light-as-air Key Lime Cake.

Although management will stress that Finest Punta Cana is devised as a customizable and international beach vacation experience rather than a dive into authentic Dominican culture, some local staples are available to sample. The pool-adjacent "La Playita" food truck offers treats such as the Dominican Patty, fried puff pastry filled with beef, egg, raisins and spices. Market Kitchen regularly




**PHOTOS THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM  
TOP LEFT** Flamingoes are a familiar sight at Finest Punta Cana; The luxurious Spa; Finest Punta Cana's private beach; Shrimp ceviche.





offers traditional Dominican *mangú* (green plantains, boiled and mashed with eggs, fried cheese, fried salami) as a plate, or with the components a la carte. Once a week, staples such as a *bandera dominicana* (“Dominican flag”) lunch plate with rice, red kidney beans and a meat stew), sancocho stew blending seven types of meat, *longaniza* sausage, *mofongo* (mashed fried plantain, garlic and pork rind served scooped like ice cream), fried local fish fillets, and tostones (twice-fried plantain slices) are on offer.

Throughout the resort, Dominican coffee flows freely. The Sweet Corner, an espresso bar/bakery/ice cream parlor hybrid, puts it to creative use for everything from simple hot and iced coffee drinks to elaborate frozen and ice-cream/milkshake concoctions. And then there’s Legends, for those who can’t be too far away from a game or want get out of the sun for a while with a cold craft beer and fun pub grub, from burgers to salads.

In other words, the biggest luxury Finest’s Excellence Club offers is choice, right down to a dedicated smartphone app that puts it all in front of you. 

[www.finestresorts.com/punta-cana](http://www.finestresorts.com/punta-cana)



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