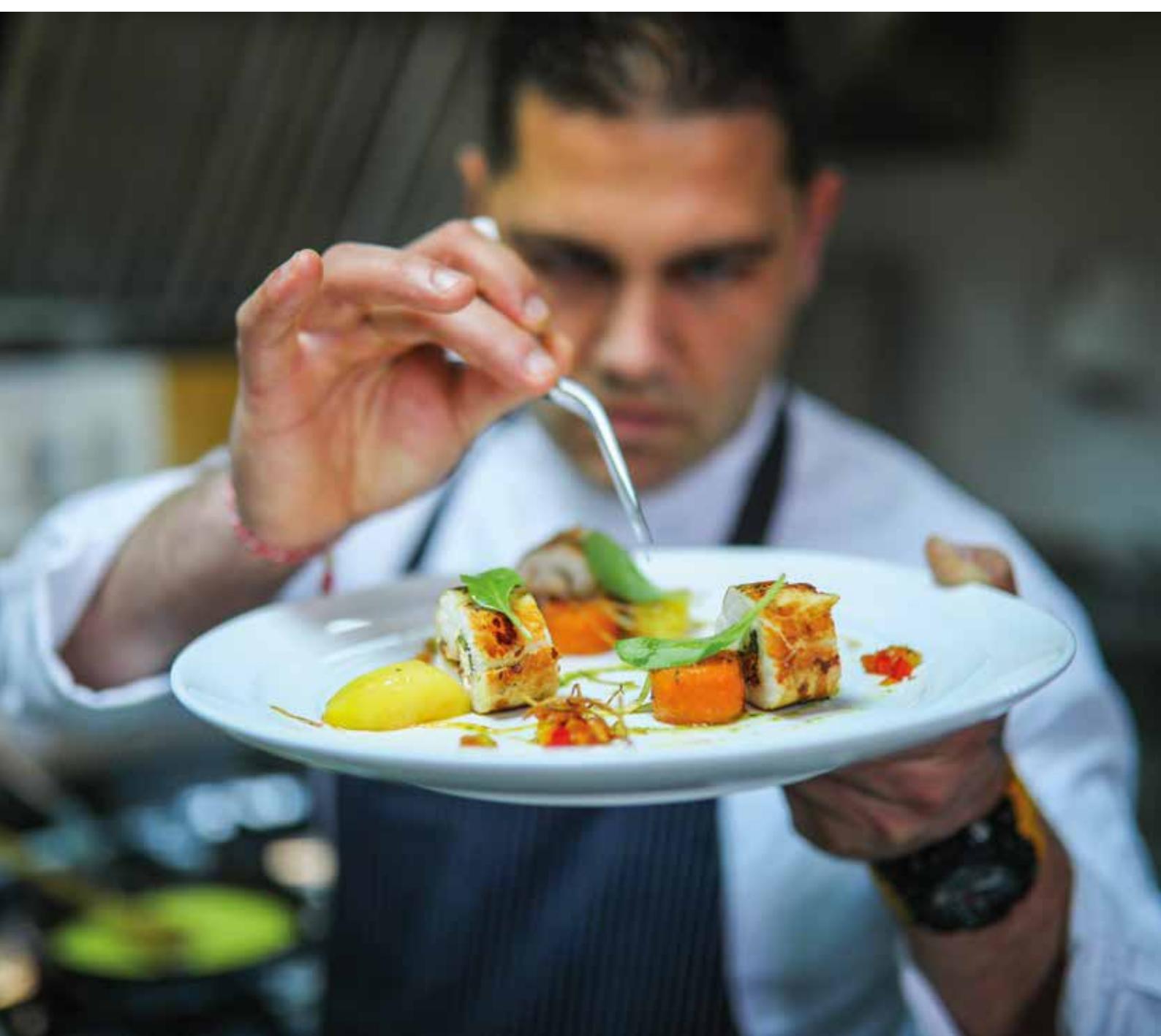


Health at the golf resort

Golf resorts may have the game at their heart, but an increasing number are also developing initiatives that focus on more than tee time. Bronwen Hiller examines what resorts are dishing up in 2021.



Lighthouse Golf and Spa Resort focuses on fresh, local ingredients.



PGA Catalunya was the first resort in Catalonia to attain golf's international eco-label.

The pandemic has accelerated the existing trend towards lifestyle changes and healthier eating habits. The provenance of the food we eat has become increasingly important over the past decade. People are demanding more transparency around what they eat – they want real food, with real flavour. Wine producers were the first to heed the call and many other sectors, like coffee and chocolate producers, followed.

What does this have to do with golf? As part of the move to sustainability and concern for the environment, many golf resorts have been undertaking developments that will be in greater demand in the future. The social and environmental responsibility adopted by European Tour Destinations venues, for example, has placed them in an enviable position, with the ability to respond to new demands for a healthier lifestyle. Understanding the importance of ensuring the sustainability of the natural environment and supporting the local community has been a cornerstone of their development.

Golf by its very nature is a sport that connects players with the natural environment, but it can be much more than that, as evidenced by properties such as PGA Catalunya in Spain. Originally, the land the property occupies was set aside for the construction of an F1 Grand Prix track, but instead, from its inception, the resort near Barcelona has demonstrated its commitment to maintaining and enhancing the environment.

In 2013, it was the first resort in Catalonia to attain golf's international eco-label. It continued its development as a showpiece for sustainability. Projects such as welcoming a million new honeybees, a programme managed by the in-house biologist, not only supported saving the endangered endemic black bee but also resulted in the production of house-made honey. The bees feed on the resort's organic gardens and the surrounding Natural Park and produce an amber-coloured honey that tastes of the region. The honey is used in all of the resort's restaurants and was launched at the Pure Food Market.

Striving to have minimum impact from the golf courses and real-estate development has involved transplanting hundreds of trees to promote the natural balance. And then there's the vineyard, which re-establishes the old Catalan tradition of family wine production for their own consumption. The approach of carefully treating new vines with only 100% natural products has yielded high-quality fruit. The resort now offers its own Camí Ral rosé, red and white wines, all produced from the vineyard harvest.

Verdura Resort in Sicily capitalises on its location, with 230 hectares of Mediterranean coastline and countryside. Cooking classes that promote Sicilian cuisine are on offer, with a focus on classic dishes and culinary traditions. Chocolate, homemade pasta, pizza, Sicilian caponata and Sicilian pastry are taught at the Culinary School. The masterclass concentrates on some of Verdura's most





Top: Verdura Resort offers cooking classes that promote Sicilian cuisine.
Above: Fresh fish and seafood features on the menus at Lighthouse Golf and Spa Resort.

popular dishes. The dishes are made using the freshest local ingredients – greens are hand-picked from the resort's own vegetable garden and oranges and olives are collected from the groves.

A focus on local ingredients is intrinsic to the offerings at so many of European Tour Destinations venues. At Lighthouse Golf and Spa resort in Bulgaria, the restaurants serve up daily specials including Black Sea fish enhanced by fresh bio vegetables and herbs from their own herb garden.

Terre Blanche in France uses the seasonal produce of its Provencal countryside location. With its own bakery and the best local ingredients, from Moulin de Callas olive oil to goats' cheese produced by the Monteiro family, the restaurants pay homage to southern French cuisine. As part of the commitment to a sustainable approach, Terre Blanche has set up beehives near the main preserved natural areas. The honey produced is free from chemical pollution and can be sampled in the restaurants. The bees are also used as a way of raising environmental awareness among younger people. Discovery workshops are organised every year at the Kids' Club to teach children about the role of bees and the honey-making process. There is also a herb garden in the heart of the resort that offers around



Terre Blanche produces its own honey, free from chemical pollution.



Quinta do Lago has developed 2,300 square metres of farmland to support the mission of sustainability.

15 herbs, which are used by the restaurant chefs. Accepting seasonal constraints is the first step towards a sustainable and environmentally responsible approach.

In Portugal, Quinta do Lago literally translates to “farm on the lake”, so it’s not surprising that 2,300 square metres of farmland has been developed to support the mission of sustainability and enhance the quality of life in the resort. Embracing the location in the Algarve with the Atlantic on its doorstep, Quinta do Lago makes the most of a ready supply of local wild-caught fish and 40 different products are provided by the resort’s restaurants.

Organic farming principles are applied on the Q Farm and the supply of freshly harvested herbs and vegetables has resulted in some interesting developments in the cuisine on offer in the restaurants. Recognising that diet is a lifestyle choice, a greater range of plant-based options have appeared on the menus. Almost half the lunch bowls offered at Pure café are vegan or vegetarian.

These initiatives all point in one direction: an increasing emphasis on sustainability, provenance and health. It’s clear to see these resorts are making a mark on the map that extends well beyond a game of golf. ■



Left and right: Organic farming principles are applied on the Q Farm at Quinta do Lago.

For more information about these venues, see www.europeantourdestinations.com