

“RANJI” – THE FISHERMAN OF TANGALLE



During the early hours of morning and as the rest of the world sleeps, few men courageously set out to start another day's work out at sea. They say that the early bird catches the worm, and it is true that an early start is required to get the best catch of the day. The fisherman of Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort, or “Ranji” as he is more affectionately known, has been a popular figure in the area for over 30 years, supplying the freshest catch of the day to our chefs, who in turn create exquisite dishes for our guests.

Ranji started his relationship with the sea at a young age, when he used to help his brothers, fishermen by trade, set up their boats every day. He was also part of groups that helped haul in heavy seafood-laden boats as they came back to shore after a successful trip out in the deep blue unknown. His weather-beaten and sun-tanned face crinkles up as he recounts tales of befriending dolphins and spotting whales along the way, with a special affection to the magical, spotted whale shark who likes to scratch itself on the bottom of boats out at sea.

Years ago, the only light they had on board was a match-lit torch, but today, the lighthouse helps Ranji find the perfect spot, to set up and cast his 300 fishing hooks, to catch mullet, his preferred fish.

“The sea is a beautiful gamble, to fully grasp it, you might need patience, resilience, and luck,” explains Ranji, “You need to respect it and play by her rules, she's unpredictable in the end.” The ancient art of fishing is being quickly wiped out by the modern era of trawlers, sucking the sea dry of fish, corals and other sea-life, creating long term damage to the environment and bio-diversity. Ranji's type of fishing is sustainable as the daily catch amounts to only about 50kg on a good day. He also catches seasonal fish, respecting sustainability rules and best practices, having also followed a HACCP course in food safety while putting back smaller fish who deserve more time in the sea. He recounts rituals sacred to the fishing community, which includes cooking a big pot of rice, mung beans, coconut jaggery and cane sugar, which they take handfuls, tap their boats and make wishes for good fortune at sea. They then sit and eat this meal as a community and share it with everyone who joins the ceremony.

Mullet, red snapper, grouper and barracuda frequent in January through to April while silver trevally, bluefin trevally, yellowfin tuna, skip jack tuna and wahoo fish frequent from April to September. All fish types are available from September to January and our resort present its menus according to the catch of the day. Sourcing from local fishermen like Ranji not only supports the local community, but makes a big impact on the freshness of the produce.

Ranji adds that he is well versed in Arabic, having worked in the Saudi Arabia for some years. He also used to dive close to the resort's beach area for lobsters in his younger days, loves singing and has even been contracted for parties and events in the village. He is a definitely a colourful character and a great addition to our unique stories.

Meet Ranji and discover our daily Catch of the Day experience between 10.30 am – 11.00 am when you hear the bell being rung beachside. Or choose your main course from Ranji's daily catch, brought by boat through our mangroves, that complements the freshly picked produce from our garden when you book our Harvest Table by Anantara lunch experience served in a treehouse against our organic paddy field.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY.