



The vibrant Weligama stretch at night twinkling with lights

The twinkling lights on the beach caught our attention as we arrived in Weligama. Fresh fish and seafood were laid out in make-shift stalls on the main road, drawing those passing by. Flavoursome grills and BBQ were being prepared to order and we were there to join in the excitement.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe

Photographs Menaka Aravinda and Vishwathan Tharmakulasingham



Manjula Chrishantha, Owner of Fish Point, Weligama

In the darkness of the night, the fire torches and the strings of lights created a surreal feel on the beach. Guests were dining in a relaxed atmosphere. We approached Fish Point, which was the busiest on that day.

Diners would first select the seafood or fish that they would like to have from the stall on the road, which is hard to miss with their bright lamps. Prawns, jumbo prawns, cuttlefish, types of mullet, red snapper and tuna, to name just a few, were available for selection. Once the fish or seafood item is decided upon, it is weighed and the price is determined accordingly. The guest can decide the method in which the fish or seafood is prepared; grill, BBQ, spicy, fried or anyway you wish. All dishes are accompanied by rice, but if anything else is required such as chips or salad, the menu has a great choice.

We watched as orders of fish, prawns and cuttlefish came in. The action happened in the make-shift kitchen, where Manjula Chrishantha and his team prepared the dishes with

spices and flavours that tantalise your taste buds. The most popular method of preparation is grill. Garlic, ginger and other spices sizzled in the pan and once heated the fish or seafood is added. Steam and flames would rise with the air infused with aromas.

Manjula sells fish for his livelihood, during the tourist season, many would come to his stall and would be interested in the seafood and fish on offer. However, they would not have a place to prepare the food. As such Manjula, seven years ago, decided to start this endeavour of providing the guest the opportunity to select the fish/seafood item they require, prepare and then serve on the beach. Gradually others too started, thus making the Weligama beach, a stretch of twinkling lights.

The sand is dug to form a shallow rectangular shaped trough. Then coconut shells are lit until it becomes charcoal but still glowing with heat.

The seafood and fish on sale are fresh daily catch. In Weligama, fish are brought in twice daily, morning and evening. And, thus Manjula is able to select the best for his make-shift restaurant. The height of the tourist season to the South is November to April. With lesser numbers also seen in May.



"This is what we will have", the selected fish is weighed and taken to be prepared according to the guest's preference

Plates and plates of steaming hot spicy dishes emerged from the kitchen at the road side to the seating area on the beach where families, couples and friends sat and enjoyed the cuisine of the island.

BBQ of course is done in a unique way. To enhance the experience, the BBQ is prepared next to the diner's table itself. First, the sand is dug to form a shallow rectangular shaped trough. Then coconut shells are lit until it becomes charcoal but still glowing with heat, and then a steel frame is placed on top of which the foil wrapped fish is placed and cooked.



Fish Point with a set up to relish in delicious BBQ on the beach

Prior to wrapping the fish in foil, it is cleaned and cut. Then, the fish is marinated in garlic, ginger, pepper, salt, soya sauce and lime. The fully flavoured fish is then wrapped and placed on the BBQ grill.

The ambers glow red and the sizzling sounds are heard. The rolling waves come near, but not close. It was indeed an experience to sit and watch as the fish cooked on the beach. If one wishes, they could have prawns, cuttlefish and veggies prepared in the same manner.

The barbequed meal was ready and steaming hot, with a dollop of spicy aromatic sauce and rice we satiated our hunger pangs and enjoyed a night on the beach of Weligama.

Weligama Barbequed

