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## Popular WTJX Fundraiser "A Taste Of Two Islands" Returns After Pandemic Hiatus

Virgin Islanders enjoy culinary delights and support public broadcasting at the 16th annual event

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A Taste of Two Islands is back on the territory's event calendar after a three-year, pandemic-induced hiatus. The Mark Marin Center at the Antilles School played host to throngs of Virgin Islanders who flocked to the Virgin Islands Public Broadcasting System (WTJX) event for the 16th year to enjoy delicious local cuisine and sip on a range of beverages — intoxicating and otherwise — made right here in the territory.

Contributors to Thursday's events included fine dining establishments such as Pesce, an Italian restaurant in American Yacht Harbor, as well as more casual eateries like The Pressure Spot, which serves up vegan cuisine at its premises on Norre Gade.

Consortium journalists caught up with The Pressure Spot team after patrons had cleaned out their inventory for the evening. Carol, a friend who had been pressed into service for the evening, said that the pumpkin butternut squash soup was a particular favorite. "Savory with a little sweet, folks love that," she noted. The lion's mane mushroom balls were met with some amount of skepticism, she said, "but once [people] started to eat it, they were like 'this is interesting' and they loved it."

All the businesses participating in A Taste of Two Islands incur considerable expenses in preparing and serving their offerings at no additional cost to ticketed patrons. According to Barbara LaRonde, co-owner of The Pressure Spot, the opportunity to market the business is only the second-most important consideration for her decision to participate.

"WTJX is number one, I love our public broadcasting station and I will do whatever I can to be able to help out," Ms. LaRonde said, explaining that the station has been a favorite since childhood. "The clean education, the knowledge that comes across, the local programs are like no other," she declared.

Tanya Marie Singh, CEO of WTJX, echoed Ms. LaRonde's sentiments as she spoke about the vital role the public broadcaster plays in the lives of Virgin Islanders. "What we give is local programming, national programming that focuses on education, information, the arts, and you just don't get that anywhere [else]," she declared. Ms. Singh highlighted the [recent broadcast](#) of the opera "Champion", which tells the fascinating story of St. Thomian professional boxer Emile Griffith. The opera debuted at the New York Metropolitan Theatre, "and of course Virgin Islanders weren't able to see it live, but they were able to see it with us, and it was brilliantly done," she noted. "And these are the programs that bring culture and history."

Ms. Singh, who noted that the event had to be shifted from its usual Veteran's Day slot on the calendar due to venue availability issues, was nevertheless gratified that after a years-long hiatus, there was such a large show of public support upon the return of A Taste of Two Islands.

Calvin White, commissioner of the Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation, was one of the judges for Thursday night's event. While reluctant to disclose which of the evening's dishes had secured the winning scores from the judges, he did share some of his thoughts about the cuisine on offer. "I had [a] top three...I loved the pumpkin soup, there was a goat water, there was a pea soup that was really good," he declared. "Then the shrimp and grits was really, really, good," Mr. White added.

Having attended previous iterations of A Taste of Two Islands, Mr. White said that he was gratified to see the event's return. "I think people were looking forward to it – a lot of familiar faces," he mused.

With the event slated to return to its original November date next year, the DSPR Commissioner encouraged more Virgin Islanders to come out in support in 2024. "I think we have a lot of great local chefs, and this is a place that really displays that. So it's great to come out and support our local people."