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Taste of St. Croix Dazzles with Elegant Flair, High Turnout, and Spread of Award-winning Dishes

Esteemed culinary event showcases the best of local and international dishes, drawing a large crowd to the east end

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Taste of St. Croix 2024 By. DEAR PRODUCTIONS

Between 600 and 700 people attended this year's Taste of St. Croix at the Divi Casino on St. Croix's east end, which founder Collin Hodge attributed to consistency in the brand. The mainstay culinary event, held Thursday, saw both newcomers and longtime participating restaurants winning big, with [Sugar Rush](#) being voted number one in three categories, including dessert, a category it tied with [Cultural Delights](#). The event's most prestigious category, the entree, went to [Turkey Legs on the Go](#).

First place for People's Choice went to Carambola Beach Resort, and [Jubilee by Yaadie](#) won first place in appetizer.

The event kept its expected elegant flair, a gourmet gala of sorts featuring a sophisticated atmosphere where guests, dressed in formal and semi-formal attire and sampled a variety of dishes prepared by professional chefs and notable restaurants.



Credit: DEAR PRODUCTIONS

Sugar Rush co-founder Melanie Johannes-Titre, speaking to the Consortium following the announcement, expressed excitement. "I feel amazing! I'm over the top but thankful," she said. Ms. Johannes-Titre, a first-time participant, said Taste of St. Croix has always been on the list of events to introduce her Sugar Rush offerings, "and this year I said I'm going to make it happen and just did it."

This year food was in abundance, and Mr. Hodge made known that the government of the Virgin Islands, through the Public Finance Authority, provided the organization with a \$25,000 donation which was used to give participating restaurants grants of \$500 and \$1,000, to help meet costs associated with the event. Mr. Hodge thanked the Office of the Governor, the PFA, the Dept. of Tourism and the many sponsors who helped in making the event possible.

The strong turnout, an abundance of food, music from Spectrum Band out of St. Thomas, along with several deejays throughout the night, kept the atmosphere vibrant. Mr. Hodge said the continuous success of the longstanding event has been a result maintaining the brand's elegant appeal. He credited the continuous success of the longstanding event to the consistency in what they do as an event and as an organization. "We try to support the community in a lot of ways and hopefully we can do more of what we used to prior to the pandemic, supporting the industry and supporting different groups throughout the community."

Camisha Lynch, a chef and culinary teacher at the St. Croix Central High School, won first place in local fare and first place in soup. A longtime Taste of St. Croix participant and former Divi Carina Bay Resort chef, took a break from the event and returned for the first time in six years on Thursday. Ms. Lynch said she was encouraged by her students and decided to participate.



Credit: DEAR PRODUCTIONS

"Cuisine is part of our culture, and it showcases several types of cultures because it's not just Crucian; we have so much culture here on the island," she said, speaking about the importance of Taste of St. Croix. "Culinary is part of life, you have to eat to survive, so it's just love for me, I love doing it."

Ms. Lynch reflected on the days when Taste of St. Croix was at the Divi Carina Bay Resort, which she longs to see return. Mr. Hodge recalled that the decision to change locations was a result of the 2017 storms, which destroyed the hotel. He thanked the Christiansted Retail & Restaurant Association and the merchants in Downtown Christiansted where the event was held successfully for two years.

"We were able to still produce the same high-level quality of an event for two years in a row in a different location. Here we are again on the east end in a different location, though still at Divi. But there are certain assets that you have to put in an event that people respect and will build value, and as a promoter I thank God I'm able to understand that. No matter what venue we go to, Taste will be Taste," he said.

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