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Frederiksted Bustles with Activity as Tart Wars 2024 Unites Community, Bringing Out Thousands

The inaugural Tart Wars saw an impressive turnout, with enthusiastic attendees of all ages engaging in friendly competition, enjoying diverse entertainment, and celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the Virgin Islands

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Ernice Gilbert **July 14, 2024**

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Scenes of Tart Wars 2024. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

With marketing so effective that it became a community-driven effort, Tart Wars — organized by those behind the popular Facebook page West Gyul — saw a turnout so great on Saturday that it rivaled the bustling streets of Frederiksted during Village nights of the Crucian Christmas Festival season.

People of all ages and backgrounds, including those who rarely attend such events, made their way to Frederiksted almost on impulse due to the highly effective marketing campaign. In the days leading up to the event, it seemed as if every Virgin Islander connected to Facebook, and even those from other Caribbean islands — as tart is a Caribbean-wide dessert — engaged in friendly banter about which tart flavor was the best: coconut, guava, or pineapple. This excitement spilled over to Fort Frederik, Buddhoe Park, and Midre Cummings Playground in Frederiksted, where thousands mingled, patronized vendors, and fervently defended their favorite tart.

Groups of individuals wearing shirts matching their tart alliance were seen everywhere. A variety of entertainment, from music to dance, painting, and more, kept the atmosphere energetic.



"Pon de River" competition during Tart Wars 2024 on Saturday, July 13 (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

Meanwhile, tart vendors — the main focus of the event — were selling out quickly as the overwhelming crowds lined up for their favorite dessert.

In the midst of all the action, events meant to determine the winner of Tart Wars 2024 were taking place. At Fort Frederik, two competitions that were part of the Tart Wars Colosseum Competition, Musical Chairs and Pon De River, were won by Team Pineapple, giving the team 100 percent of the points from this segment. Originally, there were five games planned, but due to time constraints, organizers cut it down to two. Team Coconut won the most popular contest by five balls. The contest saw individuals putting a ball into tall letters that spelled out TART (the first T was coconut, the A was guava, the R was pineapple, and the last T was guavaberry). Team Guava won the best-dressed segment.

Following these competitions, it was announced that a dance competition would determine the overall winner among the three tarts. However, despite many attempts from the event's host "Big Man Pas," who encouraged individuals from the audience at Buddhoe Park to participate in the dance for their respective teams, the effort was abandoned due to a lack of participation. Thereafter, organizers announced that to break the tie among the three tart flavors, the winner would be decided by a cheering contest. Coconut tart lovers had the loudest cheer, followed by guava, and then pineapple. Coconut tart was declared the winner over guava by a five-point margin, according to the organizers.



Painting at Tart Wars 2024 on Saturday, July 13 (Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

Winners of other categories included Vivian Mason and Ruby Roberts, who won the Best Guava Tart segment, Vicky Thompson, who won the Best Coconut Tart segment, and Natasha Williams-Modeste, who won the Best Pineapple Tart and Best Specialty Category with her Guavaberry Tart. The People's Choice category, sponsored by Liberty VI, was won by [Sweet Stuff Bakery](#).

Attendees expressed enthusiasm for future events, stating that they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. "I just want to say that overall this was an amazing experience. I'm just so happy that all Virgin Islanders came out to have a good time. Even though it was a 'war', everyone came together and we had an amazing time," said Florence Marsh-Ventura, who was extremely impressed by the turnout. "This will go down in history and I'm just so happy to be a part of this movement, the Tart Wars movement. Next year it's going to be great." Mrs. Marsh-Ventura, a coconut tart lover, described her favorite tart dessert as being "everything." She took a playful jab at guava and pineapple tart lovers who claim that coconut tarts are dry. "You have water and water is quenching. You also have coconut water. I've never heard about guava water and pineapple water," she chided.



Vendors at Tart Wars 2024 on July 13 (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

Nadia LeCointe-Robinson, a Virgin Islander living on the mainland, told the Consortium that she planned her vacation around Tart Wars 2024 so she could be present. A guava tart lover, Ms. LeCointe-Robinson said the good music, good weather, and a "delicious veggie patè" made her happy. "I would love for this to happen every year. I feel like this is the type of stuff we need; this is what preserves our culture," she said, adding that some of her friends didn't even know what tart was, "and I think that's crazy." "So I think this should happen every year and it was a good turnout for the first year for sure."

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