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USVI Culinary Team to Compete at Taste of the Caribbean After Seven-Year Hiatus

Award-winning Chef Kerish Robles, Pastry Chef Azamat Sabyrkulov, and Bartender Putrice Bush represent the territory in Miami, showcasing Virgin Islands flavors and creativity in a prestigious culinary competition running November 18-20

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Puerto Rican Tostones By. GETTY IMAGES

For the first time in seven years, the USVI will be fielding a team to compete in the annual Taste of the Caribbean culinary competition in Miami, Florida.

The competition runs from Monday until Wednesday, November 20. The culinary team, consisting of Chef Kerish Robles, Pastry Chef Azamat Sabyrkulov, and Bartender Putrice Bush,

will showcase the colors and flavors of Virgin Islands cuisine in a series of timed challenges “that test their ingenuity, presentation, showmanship, and more,” according to a statement from the USVI Hotel and Tourism Association, which has sponsored the territory's culinary team at Taste of the Caribbean competitions for 13 years.

This year, VIHTA President Lisa Hamilton says the territory will be represented by a team of “dedicated professionals who have evolved their expertise in numerous settings spanning the globe.” St. Thomian Chef Robles is an award-winning certified professional chef and culinary educator with over 20 years of experience. She is a certified vocational education teacher who is currently helping to develop the new culinary program for UVI CELL.

Pastry chef Sabyrkulov was born in Kazakhstan, but currently works at the Ritz-Carlton on St. Thomas, specializing in cake artistry and chocolate. He holds the 2016 first place award from the World Skills Kazakhstan Pastry Competition, so is no stranger to culinary excellence.

Meanwhile, Ms. Bush began her bartending career in Atlanta, Georgia before moving to The Buccaneer on St. Croix. Her passion lies in “connecting with people by offering memorable experiences through cocktails and conversation,” the VIHTA press release noted.

“We are delighted to see what this group of brilliant and creative individuals will cook up at the Taste of the Caribbean Competition” over the next three days,” said Ms. Hamilton.