

logo not found or type unknown

May's Kitchen to Host Free Thanksgiving Dinner for Up to 1,000 Residents at Emancipation Gardens

The Nov. 26 event will feature full holiday meals prepared by local chefs, live music, and onsite medical support, with priority for SNAP recipients affected by the recent federal shutdown. More than 20 businesses and organizations are part of the effort.

Community Center / **Published On November 26, 2025 08:18 AM /**

Staff Consortium **November 26, 2025**

Image not found or type unknown



ST. THOMAS — More than twenty local businesses, medical providers, and community organizations are joining May's Kitchen to host a free Thanksgiving community dinner on Wednesday, November 26, at Emancipation Gardens. The event, open from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., aims to serve between 500 and 1,000 residents, with priority seating for SNAP recipients who are still recovering from the financial strain of the recent federal government shutdown.

May Leader, founder of May's Kitchen, said the shutdown's impact extended far beyond the mainland. "The recent shutdown didn't just disrupt services on the mainland—it sent shockwaves through households right here in the Virgin Islands," Leader said. "Families who depend on SNAP benefits faced sudden gaps that created real hardship. While the shutdown has ended, many are still catching up financially. We wanted to do something tangible to ease that burden during the holiday season."

The initiative brings together chefs, health providers, small businesses, and nonprofits to deliver a full holiday meal and wellness support. Three chefs—Chef Benji of Blue11 and Indigo4, youth chef Alexandre of the British Virgin Islands, and Chef Cory Baker of Barefoot Buddha—have volunteered to prepare a full Thanksgiving dinner. The menu includes turkey, ham, salmon, stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie, along with vegetarian offerings such as lentil soup, vegetable lasagna, and tofu dishes.

Entertainment will be provided by The Elijah Braithwaite Project, offering live music throughout the evening.

Medical support will also be available onsite. The Virgin Islands Center for Integrative Medicine, the Chiropractic Health Center, and the St. Thomas East End Medical Center will participate. Dr. Richards of East End Medical Center said their involvement reflects a broader focus on community wellness. "Moments of connection and shared support are essential for mental health, especially during times of added stress," he said. "We believe caring for our community means supporting both physical and emotional wellbeing."

Sponsors include the Virgin Islands Center for Integrative Medicine, St. Thomas East End Medical Center, Viking Corporation, Tap & Still, Smith's Barbershop, Blue11, Indigo4, St. Thomas Social, Creative Marketing, Leader's Auto Repair, Antilles School, UVI Social Group, PriceSmart, Soul to Sole, VIPD, Government House, Lucky Jewelry, Artistic Jewelry, Barefoot Buddha, and others.

"This initiative is proof that even when national challenges spill over into our daily lives, we can still rise stronger together," Leader said.

The dinner is free and open to all, and organizers encourage SNAP recipients to bring their benefit cards to receive priority seating.