

The Virgin Islands Consortium

CTEC-Trained Chef A Big Hit At La Reine Chicken Shack, Ponders University, Apprenticeship Options

Education / **Published On June 18, 2015 07:33 PM /**

Staff **June 18, 2015**



ST. CROIX -- Zacharie Adams, an 18-year-old former Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC) culinary arts student is pondering his academic future when he graduates from the St. Croix Educational Complex on Thursday, June 18, 2015. His concern is selecting the right path to fulfill his dream to become a world class chef, while maintaining his interest in sports.

That's according to a press release the Virgin Islands Department of Education issued on Thursday ahead of Adams' graduation from the premier high school.

Mr. Adams many options has dwindled to two after long, painstaking brainstorming.

"I have been accepted to Johnson and Wales in Denver, Colorado where there is an excellent soccer program, and as a soccer player and enthusiast I am considering this option," he said during a break at the popular La Reine Chicken Shack where he is assistant (sous) chef. "However," he continued, "I am also guaranteed an apprenticeship position at the top-notch Delicatessen in Soho, New York City, where I will be able to increase my culinary skills while earning an income."

Whatever path to success he chooses, Mr. Adams is already making a name for himself at La Reine Chicken Shack where he goes to work after school. Zack, as he is called at the Chicken Shack, prepares the dinner menu Tuesdays to Saturdays, and prep on Mondays. As assistant chef, he helps out the head cook and friend Oswald "Ozzie" James with the dinner menu while assisting with the non-stop orders for rotisserie chicken (about 400 whole chickens a day) and other local delicacies that makes the open-ai red restaurant a local favorite.

"As an assistant cook, I prep everything for the dinner menu," Zack said. "I also check inventory and cook on the line."

Zack Adams honed his cooking skills at an early age. "I was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico and moved to St. Croix about two-weeks after birth, but returned to Puerto Rico during school breaks where I learned to cook Hispanic meals from my grandmother," he said proudly.

CTEC's Culinary Arts Instructor Anton W. Doos III upon affirming that Adams was an excellent culinary arts student at the St. Croix Educational Complex added, "He's got his head in the right place. He will go far."

According to Chef Doos, Zack Adams participated in several community events such as the Taste of St. Croix at Divi Carina Bay and Out To Lunch at St. George's Botanical Garden, where CTEC's culinary arts students prepared lunch for paying customers.

La Reine Chicken Shack co-owner, Angel Diaz said Zack Adams has been working at the establishment for about a year. "He is a great assistant chef, working along with (head) chef Ozzie; they complement each other." Diaz said.

Mr. Diaz added that Mr. Adams was recruited to work at La Reine Chicken Shack after an encounter at a local event. "I was impressed by his culinary skills and his demeanor so I begged him to join us," Diaz said. "He is a good guy and very motivated and we strongly encourage him to pursue his training in the culinary arts."

From this point on, Zack, a 2015 St. Croix Educational Complex graduate with culinary arts training and experience to his name has to tackle whether he will be matriculating at a university and become a soccer star in the interim, or participate in an apprenticeship program at a world class restaurant while earning an income.

Before committing to his studies sometime in August, however, Zack plans to visit his father's birthplace of Dominica and his mother's homeland of Puerto Rico to learn more traditional, Caribbean dishes.

Feature Image: *La Reine Chicken Shack* Assistant Chef Zacharie “Zack” Adams relaxes during a break outside the chicken rotisserie recently.

Image Credit: The Virgin Islands Department of Education.

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