

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mango Melee 2015: Another Success

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ST. CROIX -- There are over 130 different types of mangoes on the island, according to Mango Melee 2015: Drought Edition organizers, many of them on display at the 19th annual event -- big and small, round and oval -- all looking delicious and ready to eat.

The event saw thousands of residents who made their way to the St. George Botanical Garden on Sunday, mainly to enjoy the variety of eatables ready for all who'd pay money, and to witness Mango Melee's main attraction: the mango-eating competition, where contestants gobble oversized mangoes in chase of cash prizes. There are two segments: children and adults, and the rules vary slightly for each.

But it's always been a sight to behold for oneself, especially the adults competition, where contestants are charged with eating around seven mangoes with one hand for a \$100 prize. Winning the adult competition this year was Hector Gordon, adding another gain to his already five victories. And for the children's challenge, Phi-Jah Merchant, last year's winner, triumphed over his competitors.

































But back to the food, because aside from the melee competitions, people mostly moved from one vendor to the next, munching on the variety offerings, including mango chutney, shrimp, chicken and beef shish kabobs, local drinks, pates, breadfruit juice, tamarind balls (there's the spicy and sweet specialty), gooseberry stew and more.

Gail Ann Joseph, who's volunteered for the St. George Botanical Garden for over eight years, said Sunday's event was as vibrant as they come.

"Large crowds, plenty variety of things to see and to eat, and to do as well," Joseph said. She added that her favorite part of the event has always been seeing the mangoe variety on display.

Christine Thomas, Botanical Garden's director of administration and development for just three months, said the event, while successful, took a lot of effort to organize. She also revealed that the organizing committees had less support this year because of multiple factors. Even so, Thomas said the committees did a great job in putting such an enormous event together, and she commended them for their tenacity and teamwork.

Thomas also revealed that this year saw an uptick in vendors, and credited to the change in date for the surge. Mango Melee is traditionally held during the weekend of July 4, but Botanical Garden's board made a last-minute decision to move the event to the weekend following the national holiday, citing competing events as the main reason for the change.

Other activities included the Mango Dis, Mango Dat food competition, which gave local chefs a chance to show off their culinary skills and win special prizes. And the always-popular Dunk Tank -- held for the benefit of St. George Botanical Garden -- saw local celebrities and political candidates getting soaked for the good cause.

There were performances from performances by King Derby & Calypso Inc., the We Deh Yah Cultural Dancers, and a special appearance by visiting African dance and music troupe the Taratibu Youth Association, as well as DJ Swain and DJ SuperFly on the turntables.