

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Taste of St. Croix Cook-Off Names Chef Shawn Riley of Beach Side Café As 2017 Winner

Culinary / **Published On May 12, 2017 12:53 PM /**

Staff **May 12, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- Three chefs who live and work on the island of St. Croix competed in the Taste of St. Croix Cook-Off on May 8. Michael Matthew of Ridge to Reef Farm and Eat at Cane Bay, Sean Skerrette of Lyric Sails, and Shawn Riley of Beach Side Café each earned first place awards during the Taste of St. Croix event and competition held in April.

Monday's Cook-Off brought the chefs together to select a top winner. Mr. Riley won the fun, friendly competition and has earned the coveted spot on the USVI Culinary Team and will be joining the team for the Taste of the Caribbean, a culinary competition held in Miami, Florida.

The competition, held at [Ridge to Reef Farm](#) in the hills of the West End of St. Croix, offered the chefs a huge cornucopia of local products including beef, fish, greens, herbs, fruits and the first mangoes of the season and more. Mystery ingredients that chefs were required to incorporate into the dishes included white bread, local Surinam cherries, and bread nut.

Based on the rules of the National Association of Professional Chefs, each participant was judged on use of indigenous products, teamwork, taste, timeliness, portion sizes, sanitation and more. Each chef had 90 minutes to prepare an appetizer and an entrée. They had 10 minutes to write the recipe, 30 minutes to create and present the appetizer; 40 minutes to create and present the entree; and 10 minutes for clean-up. Volunteer judges included Jessica Cuyler of TV2, Angela Kim of the Squishy Monster, and Janet Simonsen of Steve Simonsen Photography.

Mr. Riley won first place with his brilliant approach to the competition. For an appetizer, he created a watermelon and spicy Asian green salad with roasted bread nut topped with a coconut and lime vinaigrette and herbed toast points. His winning entree was a spice-rubbed pan-seared Mahi over cinnamon dusted local pumpkin with sautéed spicy greens and tomato and Surinam cherry relish.

Mr. Riley completed his formal chef training at L'Academie de Cuisine in Bethesda, Maryland. Prior to moving to St. Croix, he was the executive chef at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse in Baltimore, Md.

*Feature Image: (L-R): Katherine Pugliese (Founder of Taste of St. Croix), Shawn Riley, Sean Skerrett, Michael Matthew, Nate Olive of Ridge to Reef Farm. (Credit: Steve Simonsen)*