

The Virgin Islands Consortium

They Came For The Pork And Stayed For The Vibes At The 13th Annual Lechon Festival

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ST. CROIX -- The Armapavi Ballpark in Castle Coakley on the Hess Road across from the Limetree Bay man camp, came alive on Saturday for the 13th annual Lechon Festival, an event known best for its pork and Caribbean food, but one that has served to display the diversity of the U.S. Virgin Islands culture, and as the kickoff of the holiday season on St. Croix.

Hurricane Maria prevented the organizers of the event from hosting it in 2017, but according to Jose Nieves, president of the festival, the Lechon Festival's importance, and the determination of the group of individuals who put it on, brought the festival roaring back to life for the 13th year.

On site were people of all backgrounds sampling a variety of local dishes served by a number of vendors, while local and foreign bands kept the atmosphere alive. For Mr. Nieves, Saturday's results were a vindication of the Lechon Festival's importance, as well as a satisfying reward for the hard work that went into making it a reality. He also spoke of the festival's cultural value.

"The culture has to continue, and when I say culture I'm talking about us Crucians. The Lechon Festival was started by the Latin community, but the Latin community plays a big role in the culture of the Crucian community," Mr. Nieves said. "To me there's no separation. It's all one."

Mr. Nieves said it was difficult to organize the festival this year, as funds were scarce. However, a number of individuals along with sponsors made it possible, he said, while expressing a sense of gratitude.

Local dignitaries showed their support, too. Among them were Governor-elect Albert Bryan, Senator Sammuel Sanes, a longtime participant, and Senator Novelle Francis. Senator-elect Allison DeGazon also attended the festival.

Sponsors of the event included VI Lottery, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Senator Sammuel Sanes, Glass 2000, Epok Graphics, Island Services Group, Cruzan Environmental, Just Right Trucking, Edgar Bengoa, La Reine Chicken Shack, VI Waste Management Authority, Olympic Rent-A-Car, and Prince Taxi Services.