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Love City Food Fair is First in Virgin Islands Since Covid-19 Pandemic; Up to 800 People Estimated to Have Attended

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Eventgoers at St. John's 2021 Food Fair at the Enighed Pond Parking Lot. By. KYLE MURPHY FOR VI CONSORTIUM

ST. JOHN — The Division of Festivals on Saturday hosted the “Love City Food Fair” on St. John, the first of its kind in the territory since Covid-19 led to the prohibition of large gatherings since March 2020. Vendors sold food, juices, jewelry and clothing that represented the territory during the event, which was held at the Enighed Pond Parking Lot.

Ian Turnbull, director of the Division of Festivals told the Consortium that adding the Food Fair to St. John's curtailed celebration this year was an example of how the Div. of Festivals tries “to push

the envelope and get back to a place of normalcy." He stressed that the event took a lot of planning.

Shikima Jones-Sprauve, St. John administrator, addressed the guidelines for the fair. She said mask-wearing was required to get in and masks had to remain on unless eating or drinking. In addition, there were multiple hand sanitizer stations and plenty of space for eventgoers to social distance.

"We worked hard with the Festival Committee, Department of Tourism, and also of course, the team with the Department of Health to make sure that this event kicks off today," she said

The Consortium asked Leona Smith, assistant director of Festivals on St. John, whether she felt people were abiding by the rules. "I think everyone is in compliance...people are really adhering to the rules and regulations," she said.

When speaking on the importance of hosting the fair on Emancipation Day, Mr. Turnbull stated, "We wanted a lot of cultural elements in it, where the locals are a part of it. We did that and I think it came out well." He estimated that between 500-800 people attended the event.

Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach spoke on Emancipation Day during a speech at the event. "Today is the 173rd anniversary of the emancipation of the enslaved African people in the Danish West Indies and our U.S. Virgin Islands, and we should always remember the struggles of our ancestors that brought us to this place. We should also remember that this small island of St. John was also the site of a revolution in 1733... it is an opportunity to reflect," he said.

In his remarks, celebrity chef Guy Mitchell said he was blown away by the quality of food that he tasted. "One thing after the next, the taste, the flavor, the families, the texture, the love and the hard work that is put into the products that I have tasted, I love everything," he said. "I can see why everyone is so happy here — because of the food."

Vendors the Consortium spoke with were extremely grateful and happy that the event took place.

There were performances throughout the day from Love City Pan Dragons, St. Thomas Majorettes, Dynamic Dancers and VerCtyle Band.

In Mr. Turnbull's closing remarks during a Consortium interview, the Div. of Festivals director highlighted the July 4th vaccinated concert on St. John, which is being headlined by the hottest act in Soca currently, Patrice Roberts. He also said Virgin Islanders should "look out for more events," and that St. Croix was next in line. "The plan is for us to be in a new normal, parade, Jouvert and everything," he said referring to St. Croix, echoing [a wide-ranging interview on St. Croix's upcoming festival season](#) the Consortium conducted with Dept. of Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte.

More information on Sunday's event can be found [here](#).

Mr. Turnbull thanked VI Lottery, Liberty Mobile, Banco Popular, the Virgin Islands Port Authority, Department of Health, Governor Albert Bryan, Mr. Roach, Mr. Boschulte and the "whole entire team" from both the Department of Tourism and Division of Festivals for the work that made the Food Fair on St. John possible.

