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Coming in Hot: Crucian Coconut Festival Returns With 70 Vendors, Art Exhibit, Fashion Show and More

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Children participate in the Coconut Jelly Scoop Competition on Sun. Dec. 4th 2022. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Decembers on St. Croix have traditionally been packed with events, but this year feels special as many activities return for the first time after three years.

Among the affairs was the Coconut Festival, which returned over the weekend boasting about 70 vendors, several activities and more.

The annual event, [last held in 2019](#), is organized by the St. Croix Farmers (SCFA) in Action, Inc.

The Coconut Festival kicked off Saturday with curated exhibits of agriculture, commerce, fine arts, horticulture, crafts, fashion, and food. Other attractions included the Coconut Jelly Scoop Competition, horseback riding, petting zoo, face painting, and an aquaponic tour. Along with the main event, the festival also hosted an art exhibit on Friday night and a fashion show Saturday night.

Malcom Edwards, current vice president of SCFA was pleased with the turnout. "We are making the Coconut Festival bigger and better each year," he said. "This year for the first time we are having it for two days, Saturday and Sunday. Last year was Covid so there were a lot of changes that occurred between the first three years and now. We made sure to space the vendors out so that the public would not feel congested. Overall, the event is focused on coconuts but it is also about coming out and enjoying time with your family."

Atiba Rivera, former vice president of SCFA recounted the early years of the festival. "Six years ago the team sat down and discussed different needs on the island. A member brought up the idea of countless coconuts on island and the importance of it, especially in nutrition. The president at the time, Tahemah Edwards and I spoke and agreed that there should be an event that would educate the public about the coconuts. Weeks later, the Coconut Festival was born," he said.

"The coconut is a Caribbean identifier and is woven into the fabric of Virgin Islands culture. The festival is an ode to farmers who work hard daily to preserve the historical and agricultural legacy of the coconut and other indigenous flora of the Virgin Islands," Mr. Rivera added.

For Shemona "Mona" Cascen of Tafari Table, the Coconut Festival is an event she looks forward to annually. "This is actually my fourth year participating and I make vegan food to include fried cauliflower, rice, peas balls, tofu, and other vegetarian cuisines," she said. "This year I looked forward to seeing people gathering and having a good time."

Francheska Amparo of Sunrise Creations: A Natural Beginning, gladly participated. "We are a new business which started in July. All local products include soaps, body butter, lip gloss, and body scrubs. This is our first year participating in the Coconut Festival and it has been going great so far. We will be back next year," she said.

Art Exhibit

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From left to right: Rhoda Rojas and Priscilla Fatal. (Credit: V.I. Consortium)

The art exhibit, which took place on Friday night was organized by well-known St. Croix artist Lucien Downes. "I was approached to curate the exhibit and I really wanted to have something that would encompass the entire community. I love that people are coming, observing, having fun and enjoying the ambience of this amazing art show," he said.

Another artist at the exhibit, Elwin Joseph, gained interest in art from a young age. His display art at the event depicted Cuba, a country in which Mr. Joseph is most fascinated. "When I first visited Cuba in 2018, I just fell in love with the people, the place and the historical architecture," he said. "When I first heard about Cuba... it's not a good thing to just hear things but rather experience it for yourself. When I first went there, I loved the people and the place. This is my second painting of Cuba and I plan to do many more. Art means everything to me, I've been doing it all my life."

Culture was depicted on most art displays to include the popular Fire Burn. Artist Alexis Ambrose Camarena has been drawing since age six and started painting at nineteen. "I've always been

drawn to Renaissance Art and oil painting has been my medium for a very long time. The island of St. Croix has been a part of who I am; I grew up and was raised here on Mahogany Road and the Crucian Fire Burn struck me from a very early age. I've always wanted to draw and paint it. It took me three years but I finally did it," he said.

The fashion show on Saturday night was curated by Mr. Downes in collaboration with UpperClass OG. Brands that were represented included Agape, Tambran, Havitowah, Apparel and More, Couver, Purpl October, and Laced Legacy.

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