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Incredible Food, Welcoming Service: 23-Year-Old Yudelka Acevedo is on a Mission to Transform Island Dining

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**Yudelka Acevedo at her business D'Yudi Bar & Restaurant on Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023.
By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM**

A 23-year old restauranter is living her hospitality dream, with a buzzy spot in Diamond — right across from Oriental Bank near Sunny Isle.

[D'Yudi Bar & Restaurant](#), a new venture that opened in April 2022, is owned by Yudelka Acevedo. It is a cozy, welcoming dine-in and takeout spot that has been turning heads lately because of the tasty offerings and friendly customer service.

Ms. Acevedo says her big goal is twofold: serving a wide range of hearty, delicious offerings in an environment where diners feel well-cared for. “My biggest hope is more to transform customer service in the Virgin Islands, just bring a higher expectation,” she told the Consortium when our journalist dropped by on Saturday.

The welcoming setting is a comfortable backdrop to the expansive menu. Ms. Acevedo describes it as “amazing local food - we start from the basics, like stew chicken or stew beef...we go all the way up to oxtail, bull foot soup. You can also get an amazing lobster, or steak — really cool stuff.”

The operation is a family affair, with her mother preparing local cuisine and her cousin handling the to-order dishes. A trained chef, he is responsible for the beautiful presentation of the food on the plate, Ms. Acevedo says. “He used to work in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic,” she noted. Working with family has been a positive experience for her. “It’s very close knit, which is why we work well.”



Owner of D'Yudi Bar & Restaurant, Yudelka Acevedo. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

But it's not just the flavors of the food that Ms. Acevedo thinks is the draw. She says the experience as a whole makes people want to return again and again.

"When you come and sit down, it's a whole experience. You get a pretty plate, the food is filling — you're probably going to have to take half of it with you, good service...it's not one of those places where you feel awkward or uncomfortable, or your server is mad because they have to bring you ice."

With a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from San Jose State University in California, concentrating in Hospitality, Tourism and Event Management, Ms. Acevedo spoke to Consortium journalists about the importance of bringing warmth and friendliness to customer service in the territory. She contrasted the stone-faced expressions of cashiers in a local K-Mart to the eagerness of the Starbucks baristas in her college town of San Jose, California.

Yudelka Marie Acevedo

Hospitality, Tourism and Event Management

Magna Cum Laude

"Always remember your roots they
are the foundation of your life and
the wings of your future."



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When she traveled back home for breaks is when the difference in attitudes really hit home, Ms. Acevedo said. “It [was] three planes to get here. Every single plane, there was a different mindset and attitude of people. Not knocking the Virgin Islands, but when I got on the last plane, I knew where I was going.”

Ms. Acevedo said that she wanted to set a standard for employees who work in D'Yudi Bar & Restaurant in hopes that it would have a ripple effect on the territory's service industry as a whole. “Hey, this is how I would like you to treat my customers, this is what I would expect. So that when they go on, or maybe even open their own businesses, that's the kind of service they give”, the young restauranter told Consortium journalists.

Ms. Acevedo also sees her current success as a beacon for the hopes of others her age. She says those who remember her from the St. Croix Central High School a few short years ago, or perhaps John H. Woodson Jr. High and Eulalie Rivera Elementary schools before that, might take heart at her ability to run her own business at their youthful age.



D'Yudi Bar & Restaurant is located across from Oriental Bank near Sunny Isle on St. Croix. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

“If you go for it, it can happen! Obviously it takes work,” Ms. Acevedo says. Part of that work is preparing for the right opportunity. The savvy businesswoman jumped at the chance to become a restauranter after learning that a friend of the family was selling up. Now, she is putting her skills, training and passion to work transforming her own little corner of 1AAA Diamond, Christiansted, the official address of the restaurant.

When she looks at the trajectory of her life thus far, the young entrepreneur is grateful. “I’m going to be real with you, I was a project baby - Mutual Homes, Watergut”, Ms. Acevedo said of her childhood years. “So it’s amazing to just even be here right now.”

D'Yudi Bar & Restaurant is open Mondays through Fridays from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and on Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The daily menu his [here](#). To place an order, call 340-713-5999.

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