



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 13, 2026

**Culinary Competition Takes Center Plate @ 2026 USVI
Charter Yacht Show – November 14-17 – IGY's Yacht Haven
Grande, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands**

St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. Two-thirds of leisure travelers say food and beverages matter more to their travel experience than five years ago, according to the World Food Travel Association's 2026 Food Travel Monitor. That makes great cuisine a key ingredient in a memorable charter—and puts the Culinary Competition in the spotlight at the 2026 USVI Charter Yacht Show, hosted by the Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association (VIPCA), November 14 to 17 at IGY's Yacht Haven Grande, St. Thomas. USVI celebrity chef and Olympic boxer Julius Jackson returns to help coordinate the November 15 'Basket & Butcher' competition, sponsored by The Market St. Thomas, Moe's Fresh Market, St. John Meats, Caribbean Foodservice, and Island Harvest. Mystery ingredients, premium proteins, and a new way to watch are just a taste of what's ahead at this year's Show.



Photo: Chef Julius Jackson (L) and Joe Mindolo (R), owner of St. John Meats, at the 2025 USVI Charter Yacht Show Culinary Competition. Credit: Mango Media

"Outstanding hospitality, including exceptional food and beverages, is one of the reasons the Virgin Islands continue to be one of the world's premier crewed yacht charter destinations," says Lu Lawson, who, with husband Allen, are former charter crew, chef and captain, and who now owns Turquoise Tides Yacht Charters, based in Antlers, Oklahoma. "One of the biggest advantages of a crewed charter is having every menu customized to guests' preferences. From fresh lobster and locally caught mahi-mahi to sunset cocktails and special dietary needs accommodated, exceptional food becomes part of the experience guests remember, talk about, and share, which ultimately leads to repeat charters and referrals."

Crewed charter yachts can register now (www.usviyachtshow.org/register/). IGY Yacht Haven Grande, St. Thomas, is offering a discounted berthing rate of \$1.85 per foot per day from November 9 to 18 for any participating yachts that register and pay in full for the show by August 31, 2026. The rate is \$2.15 per foot per day after August 31, 2026.

Brokers can also register at usviyachtshow.org/register/. For brokers, registration is free for VIPCA members and offers additional annual benefits, including a listing in the online directory (members.vipca.org/) and support of VIPCA's year-round work.

Chefs Register Now for 'Basket & Butcher' Culinary Competition

Chefs – Register now to secure one of just 15 spots in this year's Culinary Competition: www.usviyachtshow.org/culinary-competition. Each registered chef will receive one (1) mystery basket full of premium ingredients sponsored by Caribbean Food Service and Island Harvest, and one (1) butcher-cut of luxury protein, which may include Wagyu Skirt Steak, Ground Wagyu Beef, Boneless Skinless Chicken Thighs, Airline Chicken Breast, Berkshire Bone-In Chop, or Pork Belly, sponsored by St. John Meats. Baskets and protein will be delivered to each vessel the morning before the competition, Saturday, November 14, starting at 8 a.m.

"We offer some of the highest-quality protein options available for chefs committed to serving only the best to their guests, including premium organic, antibiotic- and hormone-free beef, chicken and pork," says Joe Midolo, owner of St. John Meat. "We're proud to support the talented chefs competing this year and can't wait to see what they create."

Additional main ingredients for each dish must be sourced from The Market St. Thomas or one of four Moe's Fresh Markets on St. Thomas.

"Our gourmet stores are thoughtfully curated to meet the high standards of luxury yacht chefs, offering an exceptional selection of premium ingredients, specialty products, and the freshest produce," says Khalid Hamed, manager at Moe's Fresh Markets. "With new gourmet offerings and seasonal favorites continually being added, we provide the quality, variety, and reliability chefs need to craft world-class onboard dining experiences throughout the yachting season."

Chefs will be required to prepare three plates of two courses, choosing any combination of appetizer, entrée, or dessert. The one who best balances flavor, presentation, and innovation will earn the title of 'Basket & Butcher' Champion.

"'Basket & Butcher' is all about celebrating creativity, adaptability, and true culinary skill," says Chef Jackson. "The mystery basket challenges chefs to think on their feet, while the protein choice gives them room to showcase their unique style. That balance is where great cooking happens. I'm excited to see how each chef transforms surprise ingredients into something memorable. I encourage every participant to embrace the challenge, trust their instincts, and have fun with the process. Can't wait to see the creativity, passion, and innovation everyone brings to the kitchen," says Chef Jackson.

New this year, the entire competition will be broadcast live on Facebook, with a watch party hosted in the Broker WiFi Lounge, giving brokers a front-row seat to all the culinary action.

Sneak Peek @ Yachts on Show

A boutique fleet of power and sail, multihulls and monohulls is expected to show, including the 2025-built, 60-foot Heysea catamaran, *Atlas*.



Photo: The stunning 2025-built, 60-foot Heysea catamaran, Atlas. Courtesy of Authentic Yacht Charters.

"As a newer yacht brand in the Caribbean charter market, the USVI Charter Yacht Show is an invaluable opportunity to introduce *Atlas* and Heysea Yachts to a large number of charter brokers in one place," says

Lynn Norris, founder and principal of Authentic Yacht Charters, a yacht management and charter firm headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Designed for up to 12 guests, *Atlas* features a 58 kWh lithium-ion battery bank for generator-free overnight air conditioning, teak flooring, and expansive lounging areas. Its spacious galley offers a large island workspace, more than 1,100 liters of refrigerated and freezer storage, and electric induction cooking.

"Today's guests aren't simply looking for exceptional meals—they're looking for creativity, beautiful presentation, locally inspired cuisine, and memorable dining experiences," says Norris.

Captain Chrisjan Kotze and Chef Cleona Kotze will crew *Atlas* for the 2026-2027 Caribbean season.

Strong Sponsor Support

Sponsors of the 2026 USVI Charter Yacht Show include the USVI Department of Tourism; Yacht Haven Grande, St. Thomas; IGY Marinas; Brown & Brown (formerly Risk Strategies); Maho Crew; CYBA; Julius Jackson, LLC; The Market St. Thomas and Moe's Fresh Markets; St. John Meats; Island Harvest; and Caribbean Food Service.

For more information about the USVI Charter Yacht Show, visit usviyachtshow.org.
For details about VIPCA and its programs, visit www.VIPCA.org, Email:
info@vipca.org, or call (340) 642-0656.

About VIPCA

The Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association (VIPCA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, supporting, and growing the charter yacht and marine industry in the U.S. Virgin Islands. VIPCA advocates for the sustainable growth of the sector, working closely with local businesses, the government, and the community to ensure a thriving maritime economy.

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