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All the Ingredients for Success: USVI Culinary Team Aims for Gold at 2026 Taste of the Caribbean

ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS (September 29, 2026) – The U.S. Virgin Islands Culinary Team has all the ingredients for success as the team prepares to compete at the Taste of the Caribbean culinary event in Barbados Nov. 16-19, hosted by the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA). Executive Chef Jamal Miranda, Pastry Chef Erika Dupree Cline and Bartender Joshua Jno-Pierre represent three of the most talented and inspired culinary and beverage artists in the industry. The USVI Hotel & Tourism Association (USVIHTA) is honored to have this exceptional trio representing the territory.

For 15 years, USVIHTA has sponsored the USVI Culinary Team, a group of professionally trained chefs who represent our islands at the annual Taste of the Caribbean competition. The team will compete against other Caribbean nations in a variety of timed challenges that test their ingenuity, presentation, showmanship and more. The Taste of the Caribbean website describes the event as “the region’s premier culinary competition, food and beverage educational exchange and Caribbean cultural showcase.”

"It's our pleasure to introduce the new USVI Culinary Team, who enter this competition with a fresh perspective and sharp skills," said USVIHTA President Lisa Hamilton. "These three talented individuals were meticulously selected to represent the U.S. Virgin Islands, and we are thrilled to see the passion and flavor they bring to the table."

All of the team members have already proven their ability to thrive under pressure during various competitions on a local, regional and world stage, excelling under strict time limits and surprise ingredients. We are elated to rekindle our partnership with Taste of St. Croix, where two team members previously competed, as we continue to identify and elevate the territory's top culinary talent.

"We are very happy to reconnect with the USVI Hotel & Tourism Association to partner with the USVI Culinary Team as they embark on all 2026 initiatives and beyond. Our relationship with

USVIHTA began almost 20 years ago, and we are very pleased with this partnership,” said Taste of St. Croix Organizer Collin Hodge.

Introducing the USVI Culinary Team:

Executive Chef Jamal Miranda joins the USVI Culinary Team after winning first place at the 2026 Taste of St. Croix Chef Cook-Off. He won People’s Choice and first-place awards for appetizer and presentation during prior competitions. Miranda is known for turning Virgin Islands ingredients and traditions into polished, competition-level dishes. His work reflects a passion for Caribbean cuisine, seafood, creative presentation and sharing the flavors and culture of St. Croix with guests from around the world.

Miranda is a St. Croix-born chef, restaurateur and caterer whose culinary journey began at an early age, working in the restaurant industry as a teenager before pursuing formal culinary training. Over the years, he has built experience in restaurant operations, private dining, catering and high-volume hospitality. Today, he is the chef and owner of WOKAME Island Sushi Bar & Restaurant in Christiansted, St. Croix, where his cooking brings together Caribbean flavors, fresh local seafood, sushi and creative contemporary cuisine.

“I am truly honored and excited to have the opportunity to represent the U.S. Virgin Islands at Taste of the Caribbean,” said Miranda. “I’m looking forward to standing alongside an amazing team, showcasing the flavors, creativity, culture and heart of the Virgin Islands on the Caribbean stage. I’m ready to give it my all, make our islands proud and show everyone what VI culinary talent is all about. Barbados, we’re coming – and I can’t wait!”

Pastry Chef Erika Dupree Cline joins the team with decades of professional experience spanning luxury hotels and resorts, restaurants, pastry kitchens, bean-to-bar chocolate production, television, nonprofit leadership, culinary education, international events, specialty coffee, entrepreneurship and mentorship. From Detroit to Florida, Atlanta, Nassau, Tortola, Paris and now St. Croix, her work reflects a lifelong commitment to creating memorable culinary experiences while opening doors for others. In 2010, Dupree Cline competed on Top Chef: Just Desserts, where she won three competitions and received recognition for her creativity. She has participated in numerous pastry competitions, stacking up countless accolades and a wealth of experience on the competitive culinary stage.

Today, through Bleu Chocolát Workshop, Dupree Cline continues to build upon that legacy - creating beautiful handcrafted chocolates, educating chocolate lovers and future culinary professionals, supporting the Virgin Islands hospitality community through wholesale production, and sharing the flavors, culture and spirit of St. Croix with the world.

Bartender and Mixologist Joshua Jno-Pierre was born and raised in St. Thomas. He began in the hospitality industry as a teenager, working his way up from food runner to server, bartender and bar manager. Jno-Pierre later moved to Boston, where he spent eight years continuing to grow both personally and professionally, gaining experience as the general manager of a hotel, managing a café bar, bartending on boats and expanding his experience in different industries before eventually making his way back home to the Virgin Islands.

Today, Jno-Pierre runs Behind the Bar and Beyond™, which brings together the two aspects of his passion. The “Bar” represents his love for hospitality, bartending, creating cocktails and developing better service professionals. The “Beyond” represents the person behind the profession. As a Certified Positive Mindset Coach, Jno-Pierre believes that great hospitality starts with mindset, how we treat people and how we show up for ourselves and others. That philosophy is also at the heart of his IRIE Approach to Customer Service: Impact, Respect, Inspire, Elevate.

“I love being creative behind the bar, but at the end of the day, I’m a people person first. I’m excited to bring my creativity, experience, mindset and Virgin Islands culture to Taste of the Caribbean and represent home on that stage,” said Jno-Pierre.

The team could not compete without the support of generous sponsors. Sponsors assist the team with travel and accommodation expenses, team jackets, fundraising events, student apprentice training and competition supplies. Thank you to the following for sponsorship: Platinum - USVI Department of Tourism; Gold - Cruzan Rum; Bronze - The Buccaneer Beach & Golf Resort, Marriott’s Frenchman’s Cove and The Westin Beach Resort & Spa at Frenchman’s Reef.

The Taste of the Caribbean event, hosted by CHTA, will be held in conjunction with the Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum. Tourism and hospitality professionals along with public and private industry partners will gather to immerse themselves in Caribbean culture while attending meetings on trending and relevant topics.

About USVIHTA: The U.S. Virgin Islands Hotel & Tourism Association is a not-for-profit corporation, which serves as the unifying organization for hotels, guest houses, inns, condominiums, campgrounds and other tourism related business in the St. Thomas-St. John district of the United States Virgin Islands.

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