



dateline: UVI

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Farmers Bring Fresh Foods to Local Restaurants

Fresh produce for restaurants and new customers for farmers, in a nutshell that is the outcome of a study on the link between agriculture and tourism in the Virgin Islands. Four years ago a University of Arkansas program funded a project referred to as the Agri Tourism Linkage. The University of the Virgin Islands helped facilitate the program through its Cooperative Extension Service's (CES) connection with the farming community.

The project was titled, "Trade, Tenure and Tourism in the U.S. Virgin Islands: Understanding the policy frameworks that will increase success for a sustainable and organic agriculture." Among the findings of the study was the willingness of the players in the hospitality and farming industries to work together.

"Hospitality people said they are interested in buying local produce and the farmers said 'yes,' they are interested in tapping into that market," said Stafford Crossman, assistant director of the CES's Agriculture and Natural Resources Program.

So far the results have been tasty. On St. Thomas, farmers brought their produce to Oceana Restaurant where chefs from across the island turned the fresh-off-the-farm items in to delicacies. On St. Croix chefs used the farmers' produce to create delicacies at their respective restaurants, then brought them to the UVI campus for participants to enjoy in an event they called the Farmer Chef



Theodora Lionel, a farmer and chef, prepares green banana salad at the a UVI Farm and Restaurant Partnership event held at Oceana Restaurant on St. Thomas.

Connection. Both activities took place in December.

Crossman said the idea of the luncheons is expected to continue and grow – gaining participation from more farmers and more restaurateurs. Bringing the players in both industries together has resulted in commitments on both ends. Farmers have agreed to produce the types of crops and animals that the restaurants need and restaurateurs have agreed to purchase the goods.

While these types of long-awaited partnerships are being heralded as a success, Crossman noted that one of the biggest challenges to overcome is the lack of a consistent supply. He said that farmers will have to keep their commitments, which may involve having a back-up plan in the event of unforeseeable

circumstances.

Crossman said one of the projects resulting from the venture will be a directory. The directory will list restaurants, hotels and other players in the tourism industry that have committed to purchasing local produce and the farmers who have crops and livestock to supply them.

"Each sector of each industry will be able to see what is available," Crossman said. The first issue of the directory will be in book format, and then it will eventually be placed on a website so that updates can be made regularly. Other activities will be scheduled periodically to keep everyone engaged, Crossman said.

Events Calendar

Dec. 22 - Jan. 5	Year End Recess - UVI Closed	STT/STX
Jan. 5	UVI Opens	STT/STX
Jan. 6	Three Kings Day - UVI Closed	STT/STX
Jan. 12	Spring Semester Begins	STT/STX
Jan. 17	Les Nubians	STT
Jan. 31	Playing Ring	STT

Happy Holidays
from **UVI's**
Public Relations
Office

Year End Round-Up

Woodturners Share their Craft



A woodturner prepares a piece of wood at the Annual Woodworkers Expo as two children look on. The expo was held in December at the UVI Sports and Fitness Center.

Ag Fair Attracts Hundreds



Top: A farmer displays his produce at the St. Thomas/St. John Agricultural Fair. The fair was held Nov. 22 and 23 at the UVI Reichhold Center grounds. Bottom: A young fair-goer pets a rabbit at the fair's petting zoo.



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Students Learn from the Leader



Jazz saxophonist Branford Marsalis instructs students at a music clinic at UVI. Marsalis performed in November at the Reichhold Center.

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