

UCCI: PR Cayfest Caboose

Date: 5 March 2008

Words: 745

Future chefs showcase culinary arts

Some of Cayman's future chefs and culinary professionals will be showing what they can do this month on local television when eight hospitality students from the University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) take part in the Cayfest celebrations.

The culinary students will be demonstrating their fusion cooking skills for Cayfest Caboose on Daybreak (CITN) which will air during the festival. Students will take traditional Caymanian ingredients and turn them into a diverse modern menu. The mouthwatering array of unique dishes includes Conch Salad, Pumpkin Soup, Grilled Mahi served with Tropical Fruit Salsa, Curry Lobster, and Pineapple and Banana Mousse.

When Pedro Acosta, one of the programme directors on the UCCI's Hospitality Management course, was approached by the Cayman National Cultural Foundation to help co-ordinate a menu with his students for Cayfest he said that he jumped at the chance.

"This is a great opportunity for the young people to demonstrate their culinary arts and expertise," he said. "They have created and prepared all of the dishes themselves -- this is completely their show."

Dacosta explained that many of the students are seriously interested in culinary careers and right now a number of them are taking part in on-the-job-placements in some of Cayman's leading restaurants and hotels where they are putting the skills they are learning in UCCI's kitchens and dining labs into practice in the real world.

"Tourism is Cayman's second industry but we don't have as much local talent employed in the sector as we should and these young people will be the ones that change this for the future. They want to do something and this is an advantage for the industry as well as for the students. We need to encourage their enthusiasm and desire to do something to improve the hospitality sector and add to its growth."

With the fusion dishes that the students have chosen to showcase, they are taking the best of Cayman's traditional sea foods and blending the ingredients with the best of the international food scene, creating unique dishes which help illustrate the dynamics of Cayman's evolving culture, a key element of the Cayfest celebrations.

Cayfest is all about showcasing the development of Caymanian culture which holds on to the best of the past and embraces the excitement of the present. Food has always been a fundamental part of the local culture and it plays an important part in the festival celebrations. With many local chefs already pushing

culinary boundaries, cooking transforming into an art form, as well as raising the standard of cuisine across the islands restaurants, these young UCCI students are demonstrating that they are part of a promising national culinary future.

The students are taking the opportunity presented by Cayfest Caboose to show that they, too, want to elevate the standard of food on the islands and to create exciting dishes which represent modern Cayman. As culinary tourism becomes ever more fashionable, ensuring that Cayman's menus compete on the regional and international stage will, in turn, ensure that the country attracts more visitors, especially ones seeking an exciting food experience on their vacation.

With the UCCI's commitment to educate young people to meet the demands of the local work force, these young hospitality students are also demonstrating the diversity of talent that the college is nurturing and encouraging.

"These students have been given such a great opportunity to expose both their talents and their commitment to Cayman's culinary development," said Kathleen Celoria, Business Development Manager.

"As Mr. Dacosta noted, the local tourist industry wants more and more skilled young Caymanians and we are doing everything we can at UCCI to meet the sector's demands and give these young people the chance to develop their interest in the business and provide the tourism industry with its future talent."

Filming will take place on site at the UCCI during the week of 10–14 March when the students will be preparing the dishes and talking about their creations. The shows will be broadcast on CITN's Daybreak each morning for a week starting on Monday 7 April.

For more information, contact UCCI's hospitality team at 949-9580.

The University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) UCCI is an institution of higher learning that contributes to Caymanian society by advancing knowledge and developing creative graduates through our cultural, social, economic and environmental activities. UCCI offers a number of certificate programmes, associate and degree courses as well as graduate programmes and professional trainings. Visit www.ucci.edu.ky to learn more.