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CHTA ANNOUNCES 2025 TASTE OF THE CARIBBEAN WINNERS
Culinary competition highlighted the best chefs and mixologists in the region



Team Bonaire named National Culinary Team of the Year

Barbados - (November 19, 2025) – The [Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association](#) (CHTA) is pleased to announce that **Bonaire** was named the **Caribbean National Culinary Team of the Year**. Considered the Caribbean's premier culinary and cultural competition, as well as food and beverage educational exchange, the event was held concurrently with the Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF), which took place in Barbados from November 16-18.

"Year after year, we've seen the progression of talent showcased by the extraordinary chefs and mixologists who compete in Taste. This year, each added their own dash of destination flavor and culinary creativity to the dishes and drinks they presented," said CHTA CEO Vanessa Ledesma. "We remain committed to encouraging and empowering culinary and hospitality professionals throughout the region to thrive. Taste of the Caribbean reflects the many professional growth opportunities and resources we aim to provide to our talented community."

This year's event featured 11 Caribbean destinations, going head-to-head in a friendly but fierce battle for culinary supremacy. Participating teams included Antigua & Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, Belize, Bonaire, Curaçao, Grenada, Puerto Rico, Saint Lucia, Turks & Caicos Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Winners of the following categories were also recognized:

Jake Kelkboom of Bonaire was crowned **Caribbean Chef of the Year**.



The **Caribbean Bartender of the Year** award went to **Alex Chandler of Barbados**, who also took home the **Most Creative Bartender** award.



Caribbean Pastry Chef of the Year went to **Elise Weerstand** of Bonaire.



Caribbean Junior Chef of the Year went to **Gabrielle Martin** of Turks & Caicos.



Other notable awards went to:

Best Use of Watermelon (Culinary), Presented by the National Watermelon Board
Gabrielle Martin, Turks & Caicos

Best Use of Watermelon (Beverage), Presented by the National Watermelon Board
Ninus Charlouis, St. Lucia

Best Use of Certified Angus Beef (Senior), Presented by Certified Angus Beef
Giovanni Lapid, Turks & Caicos

Best Use of Certified Angus Beef (Junior), Presented by Certified Angus Beef
Dejuan Toppin, Barbados

Andre Niederhauser Award for the Best Contemporary Caribbean Cuisine Dish
Jake Kelkboom, Bonaire

Tony Mack Spirit of the Competition
Dalundra Fulford, Turks & Caicos

Best Use of Angostura Bitters, Presented by Angostura
Frantjesko Leonora, Curacao

Best Non-Alcoholic Drink
Cristian Silva Aparicio, Bonaire

Best Rum Drink
Ninus Charlouis, St. Lucia

Best Mystery Bar Drink
Frantjesko Leonora, Curacao

Most Creative Bartender
Alex Chandler, Barbados

Josue Merced-Reyes Spirit of the Competition
Nino Moreno, Belize

Taste of the Caribbean's 2025 event sponsors included Wyndham Grand Barbados, Sam Lord's Castle All-Inclusive Resort & Spa. Additional partners include ABA Global Marketing, ACADO Barbados, Angostura, Certified Angus Beef, Interval International, Mastercard, National Watermelon Promotions Board, SilverwarePOS, The Anything Group and the U.S. Meat Export Federation, whose support continues to make this flagship event possible.

To access the full list of winners, click [here](#).

For more information on Taste of the Caribbean, visit www.CHTATaste.com

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About the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA)

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) is the leading organization representing the interests of the Caribbean hospitality and tourism industry for more than 60 years. With 32 National Hotel Associations as well as 1,000 diverse members spanning hotels, resorts, tourism providers, and allied partners across the region and beyond, CHTA serves as a powerful voice, resource, and connector for the Caribbean's most vital industry. Through ongoing advocacy, professional development, industry insights, and market intelligence, CHTA helps its members

thrive in today's competitive global marketplace. Organizations worldwide with interest in the Caribbean that want to increase their presence and connectivity in the Caribbean Hospitality and tourism industry are invited to join this dynamic community. To learn more about membership benefits and upcoming virtual and in-person events, please visit www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com.