

## **Mid-Ocean News**

Reporter: Heather Wood

Answers provided by Michelle Halpin

### **1. How did Gourmet Getaway start? What was the initial idea behind it?**

**A:** in 1997, the Minister of Tourism invited author and historian Jessica Harris to come down to the Island and do a presentation to the local industry on Cultural Tourism and the importance of the food aspect to cultural tourism. Graham Redford, Managing Director of Total Marketing & Communications Limited, was invited to participate and one of the ideas that he had was to create a local “food” festival to highlight the many cultural influences that Bermuda cuisine has.

### **2. Do you think the popularity of the Food Network made it more feasible as an event?**

**A:** Absolutely as the numbers of “home foodies” increases, people are always trying to learn more.

### **3. Who are some of the celebrity chefs that have come?**

**A:** Over the past six years, our lineup of chefs have included celebrities such as: Bobby Flay, Anthony Bourdain, Michael Lamonco, Dave Lieberman, Sara Moulton, Katy Sparks, Ming Tsai, Aaron Sanchez, Susur Lee, Tom Valenti, Tom Colicchio, Pino Maffeo, Todd English, Jean Louis Gerin, Jeff Tenner, Alexander Smalls and so many more. We are extremely fortunate to present Rahman ‘Rock’ Harper as this year’s event host”. ‘Rock’, is perhaps best known as the winner of the ever-popular FOX TV series, Hell’s Kitchen, produced by Gordon Ramsay. ‘Rock’ will be joined by **Chef Todd Winer**, Executive Chef of The Metropolitan Club (Boston); **Chef Jeff Tunks**, owner and head chef of TenPenh, DC Coast, Acadiana, and Ceiba (Washington, DC); **Chef Jason Wilson**, owner and executive chef of Crush (Seattle) and **Chef Matthew Gennuso**, owner and executive chef of Chez Pascal (NY); **Chef Jon Ashton**, resident chef of ‘Daily Buzz’ (Florida) will be the leading the Kids Village; as well as some of Bermuda’s finest local chefs.

### **4. How difficult is it to get chefs from overseas to come here?**

**A:** Not very difficult – even though all of the celebrity chefs nowadays have extremely busy schedules, as long as they are contacted with enough lead time, they are usually delighted to participate – Bermuda still has a lot of appeal!

### **5. Do local chefs consider it a real challenge? Is it a genuine competition for them?**

**A:** I believe the local chefs equally consider it a challenge and prestigious to enter and win one of our various competitions. It is very important to us is to highlight some of Bermuda’s talented local chefs by incorporating them into each event. Our lineup of local chefs this year will be: John Pritchard from Café Coco (Symphony of Flavors, Grillin & Chillin and Chef & Winemaker Dinner), Shaker Estephane from Newport Room (Grillin & Chillin), Rick Bartram from Seahorse Grill (Grillin & Chillin), Derek Myers from Barracuda Grill (Demo at the Viking® Village), Baba Tan from Blu Bar & Grill (Chef & Winemaker Dinner), Thomasz Tabor from Seahorse Grill (Chef & Winemaker Dinner), Clifford Crawford from Waterlot Inn (Chef & Winemaker Dinner), Timothy

Palmer from Bacci (Organic Brunch), and Nick Sauter Fairmont Southampton's Garde Manger Sous, previously from Newport Room (Organic Brunch). In addition to these chefs we have many other competing in the various competitions island wide including the Escoffier Cup, Ice Sculpting, Vegetable Carving, Cake Decorating, Fish Chowder Challenge, Iron Team Challenge and the People's Choice Challenge. The prizes for the various competitions range from engraved All-Clad frying pans, trip to New York City, to all expense paid trips to Napa Valley all courtesy of the competitions sponsor(s).

**6. How big a draw is it locally?**

**A:** The festival is growing each year and in order to keep up with the demand we are continuously adding more new events and elements to keep it fresh and exciting. For example we have added new competitions to the Viking Village (Fairmont Southampton) such as ice sculpting, vegetable carving and cake decorating. We have also added two new events this year, starting with the Taste Bermuda event which will be held at the Bacardi Limited on Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup> and will showcase local restaurants, allowing them to promote their menus/dishes as well as offering Bacardi specialty drinks. Another new event is the Symphony of Flavours which will be held at Café Coco at the Coco Reef Resort allowing attendees to entice their senses with the aphrodisiac menu, sip on specialty wines, and listen to the soulfully soothing sounds of Bermuda's own Wendell "Shine" Hayward. All of our overseas chefs will be present at each event to mingle with the attendees.

**7. Is it sometimes difficult to find all the ingredients the chefs request?**

**A:** We have not run into problems as of yet as we provide the chefs with a list of local products available during the time of year and whatever is not available locally at the time Butterfield & Vallis have been outstanding in sourcing the ingredients.

**8. As far as organizing, when do you start? Three months before? As soon as event ends?**

**A:** We start as soon as the event ends giving us a lead time of 12 months. The first thing we do is contact chefs and secure the dates with them. This can be done up to 2-3 years in advance.

**9. There's always a lot of attention on the chefs, what about the winemakers? Are they generally from smaller vineyards? Are their wines always available for sale locally?**

**A:** The winemakers are equally as important. Winemakers are showcased at our Chef & Winemaker Dinners (to be held at Waterlot Inn, Blu, Seahorse Grill and Café Coco this year) where overseas chef pairs with a local chef to create an exquisite meal paired with tantalizing wines. Overseas wine experts have matched these amazing meals with some of their best vintages and will be on hand to discuss the food and wine pairings.

There will also be six wineries offering tastings as well as wine seminars conducted by the winemakers themselves at the Viking Village (Fairmont Southampton) on Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Also wines are featured at all events. Wines are from both small and large vineyards. Yes, the wines are available for sale locally, primarily at Gosling's.

**10. Noticed the Viking Village is now at the Princess. Any particular reason for the change in location?**

**A:** We have moved the event earlier in the year to offer a fun-filled event for locals in the spring and to attract more tourists to the island during the offseason. Due to the risk of weather at this time of year we decided to move the event indoors at Fairmont Southampton.

**11. Tell me about the Kids' Village. When did that start? What's the idea behind it?**

**A:** In 2006 we had the first Kids Village, sponsored by Butterfield & Vallis. This year professional chef Jon Ashton has organized an interactive, fun, and educational program for parents and their children. Kids will enjoy activities such as a coloring station, kite making by local Andre Burgess, as well as food preparation (traditional ice cream making, smoothies, macaroni & cheese & chicken nuggets). Jon will also be offering informative sessions and cooking activities for parents and children encouraging healthy cooking together. Parents can leave their children at the "Kids Village" while they visit the Viking Village and sample wines, taste different food products and watch live demos and competitions. There is plenty to do to keep young chefs occupied and at the end of the day they get to take home their apron or eggs as a keepsake.

**12. Organic farming – is the concept well received here? Is the farm tour/meal a big draw?**

**A:** Yes! Organics is quickly becoming the latest food trend for a healthier lifestyle. Tom & Nancy Wadson have designed and operate the only organic farm in Bermuda that has become a model of sustainable agriculture not just here but in North America as well. Right next-door, visionary Warren Brown Jr. experiments with hydroponics, harvesting vine ripened specialty tomatoes, cucumbers and more! Tom Wadson is offering hourly tours (7:00am, 8:00am and 9:00am) prior to each brunch on Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> to show attendees first hand the benefits of organic food. The Sunday Organic Brunch is a sellout every year, so due to popular demand we have added a second brunch on Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup>.

**13. How much do you liaise with local supermarkets/importers in menu planning?**

**A:** We try and liaise with all of the relevant suppliers but especially with local farmers and fishermen in that we need to know what produce, fish etc will be available at that particular time of the year. Wherever possible we want all of the chefs (both local and international) to feature local products.

**14. Re the Bermuda Culinary Development Fund: Are there many young Bermudians interested in becoming chefs? Do you think this event helps highlight that opportunity?**

**A:** Whilst we don't have exact numbers, we believe that the number of young Bermudians who are interested in the culinary industry as a career is limited. Absolutely we think this events highlights the opportunities within the Industry and this has always been one of the main reasons behind the event

**15. The Iron Chef challenge, how do you determine who participates in that?**

**A:** This is our first year incorporating the Iron Team Challenge into the festival. The invites are sent to all members of the Chef's Association of Bermuda. The invites include the guidelines and rules which are based on the ACF (American Culinary Federation) guidelines for live competitions. We have received a great response for this event this year and as a result will be having a qualifier the week prior to find the two teams of three that will go to the finals at the Viking Village at Fairmont Southampton on Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup> from 4:00pm – 4:45pm.

**16. How is the Total Group involved? Mainly as a marketing agent or are you the creative force behind it all.**

**A:** Total Marketing & Communications Limited (TMC) is a member company of The Total Group. TMC conceptualized the event, formerly known as the Bermuda Culinary Arts Festival, and has been the Event Promoter and Producer since inception.

For tickets please visit [www.boxoffice.bm](http://www.boxoffice.bm).

For more information visit [www.bermuagourmetgetaway.bm](http://www.bermuagourmetgetaway.bm)

“This is an amazing opportunity for all Bermudians to come out and support this home-grown event, taste some delicious food prepared by both Bermuda's and the world's best chefs and sample the largest selection of wines ever presented in one location in Bermuda.”

Taste the Experience!