

The Gleaner
Hospitality Jamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2019



History of Jamaican rum 4 | Aidonia, Sanchez to headline Jamaica Rum Festival 6



JAMAICA RUM FESTIVAL

MARCH 9-10, 2019



Jamaica Rum Festival boosts tourism's gastronomy offerings



A server carries food during the rum festival launch.

THE INAUGURAL Jamaica Rum Festival is being positioned as an additional attraction that improves the lure of Jamaica as a preferred destination for the growing number of visitors who travel to enjoy food and drink in a large gastronomy tourism market.

Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett says food and drink is a major passion point for Jamaica, and tourists enthusiastic about rum and the pairing of food and spirits will be attracted to the rum festival and to the destination.

“Visitors come for the experience which is unique and which seeks to fulfil their passions,” the tourism minister said.

He pointed out that some 88 per cent of travellers visit various destinations for food experiences.



Kamal Powell (left), marketing manager – Caribbean, J. Wray and Nephew, and Marsha Lumley, marketing manager, Tru-Juice, at the recent Jamaica Rum Festival launch, CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

“We have a variety of food and beverage and such delectable, strong enough to pull the world to us because, of course, our cuisine is a confluence of cultures and ethnicities, the melding of the different strains that have become the ‘out of many, one’,” Minister Bartlett told participants at the recent launch of the Jamaica Rum Festival.

Meanwhile, Director of Tourism Donovan White said Jamaica offers a diverse product that ticks the bucket list of world travellers. “Our culture, especially our food and music, are just a few of the things which have attracted millions of visitors to our shores. We continue to produce some of the finest spirits in the world and the Jamaica Rum Festival is an excellent idea and a deliberate inclusion in the island’s gastronomy portfolio,” he told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

He said gastronomy is a major strategy for marketing destination Jamaica. “The Jamaica Rum Festival adds to the list of events that will pull visitors to the island. Our spirits are among the best in the world and our rums are



JAMAICA RUM FESTIVAL

MARCH 9-10, 2019



History of Jamaican rum

WITH THE arrival of the Spaniards in the Caribbean came a variety of crops, including sugar cane.

Sugar cane in the late 15th century was a rare commodity craved by affluent Europeans and regarded as a 'delicious extravagance', so much so that it is said that then reigning Queen Isabella of Castile gifted her daughters a small box laden with sugar as a Christmas gift.

Sugar cane, then the only source of the delectably sweet crystals, could not survive in Europe but thrived in the hot and humid climate of the Caribbean.

It was therefore not a surprise when in 1655, the British, who captured Jamaica from the Spaniards, hastily formed sugar plantations to compete with sugar imports from the East Indian Trading Company in the European markets.

DISCOVERY OF RUM

The sugar industry was a fruitful one, fuelling colonialism through the 17th and 18th centuries. It was while harvesting sugar cane that slaves in the Caribbean discovered a happy byproduct of molasses. They found it could be fermented to produce a very rough, yet potent substance for drinking. Thus, rum was born.

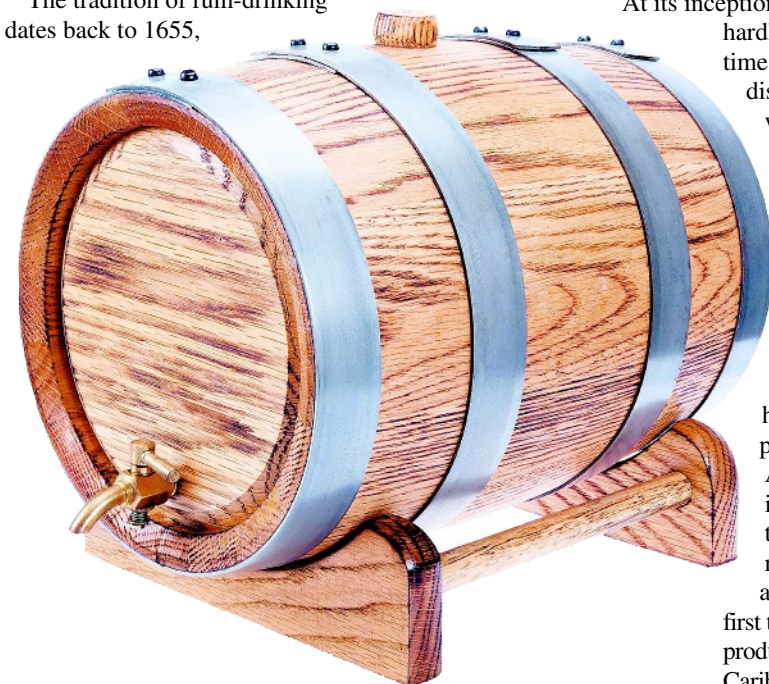
The tradition of rum-drinking dates back to 1655,



when sailors of the British Royal Navy were served a daily ration of Jamaican rum. This ration was issued as a daily tot, consisting of 71 millilitres of 95 per cent ABV rum, which was diluted one to four and served as a watered-down version called a grog. This rum ration was served twice daily, once between 11 a.m. and 12 noon, and again between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. This tradition was discontinued (to the regret of sailors) on July 30, 1970.

REFINEMENT OF JAMAICAN RUMS

At its inception, rum was hardly palatable. Over time, however, local distilleries found ways to smooth out the taste; add body, flavours and spice; and turn a happy accident into a welcome treasure. The first refined Jamaican rum, as history tells it, was produced at the Appleton Estate in 1749, making it the second-oldest rum in the world and arguably the first to be commercially produced in the Caribbean.



Workers removing overgrown weed from a sugar cane field.

In 1893, there were approximately 148 distilleries scattered across the island. This number decreased to 25 by 1948 and today, there are six distilleries operating on the island (Appleton Estate, Clarendon Distilleries, Hampden Estate, Long Pond Distilleries, New Yarmouth Estates and Worthy Park Distilleries). Notwithstanding this drop, and as a result of technological advancements, the volume of rum produced in Jamaica has grown. Today, Jamaica boasts the widest variety of rums in the world, with blends sold in more than 70 countries.

Over its nearly 300 years of existence, Jamaica has carved its place as the world's purveyor of continental and heavy rums, renowned for the variety and consistency of the product. Jamaica has, for centuries, created its own idiosyncratic profile in the world of rum and holds a strong appeal for rum connoisseurs, bartenders and mixologists alike. The allure of Jamaican rums is to be found in its authenticity, heritage and tradition, creating a product filled with heart, soul and intrigue – a true representation of a centuries-long history.



A 17th-century sugar cane mill.

JAMAICA RUM FESTIVAL

MARCH 9-10, 2019



Rum industry must be protected – *partners*

THE REGISTRATION of Jamaica Rum as a geographical indicator (GI) since December 2016 is considered a major move to protect the local industry.

Chairman of the Spirits Pool Association Limited Evon Brown says the move is the latest of several developments over the years to protect the Jamaican product. He points out that over the years, the Jamaican rum industry has faced many challenges, a major one being the purveying of foreign rums on the global stage purporting inaccurately to be Jamaican.

“As the market expanded, there were more and more people getting involved in the rum business and masquerading their products and Jamaican rum when they were not. There were several cases of so-called ‘Jamaican rum’ being sold all over Europe, and there was not a drop of Jamaican rum in it,” Brown said.

“We are not going to allow any watering down of the authentic Jamaican rum brand,” the chairman of the 87-year-old organisation told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

He said Jamaican rum producers will be using the tool of GI to promote Jamaica rums in the exclusive and lucrative global rum market.

The Spirits Pool was created on March 10, 1932, as an umbrella for 34 Jamaican rum producers at the time who were eager to stem the declining fortunes of the rum industry. The organisation now represents the six rum distilleries still operating in Jamaica. They are J. Wray & Nephew Limited’s Appleton Estate, located in St Elizabeth and New Yarmouth Estate in Clarendon; Clarendon Distillers Limited at Monymusk and Long Pond Distillers in Trelawny, both owned by National Rums of Jamaica Limited; Hampden Distillers in Trelawny,



Chairman of Spirits Pool Association Limited Evon Brown (left) and senior strategist and advisor to the Minister of Tourism Delano Seiveright. **CONTRIBUTED**

operated by Everglades Farm; and Worthy Park Estate in St Catherine.

The 87th anniversary of the Spirits Pool this year will coincide with the second day of the inaugural Jamaica Rum Festival being held at Hope Gardens in St Andrew, on March 9 and 10.

Brown believes that the event

will go a long way in further promoting and protecting the Jamaican rum industry. “We have a great future ahead of us in terms of increasing our market share. We have to move quickly using our logos, and so on, to differentiate our rums from all others,” he says.

The protection of Jamaica’s

iconic brands through GI is also considered important by the executive director of the Tourism Enhancement Fund, Dr Carey Wallace. “We are blessed because we have so many other brands apart from the sun, sea, and sand. We have reggae, rum, our food. Of all

the medicinal plants in the world, 53 per cent of them are to be found in Jamaica,” he notes.

President of JAMPRO Diane Edwards concurs that Jamaican rum is at the top of its class globally and is deserving of special protection such as GI affords. JAMPRO is a partner in the staging of the rum festival. The Jamaica Rum Festival, Edwards believes, is an event whose time has come. “In an increasingly crowded global marketplace with a plethora of brands, the Jamaica Rum Festival is an ideal platform to showcase Jamaica’s unique place in the world of rum and to make its rightful claim as one of the top premium rum brands,” she told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

“Jamaica is rum country. Our history, culture, and interactions are interlaced with rum. With the second oldest recorded history of rum production, 1749, Jamaica has an enviable name in the global marketplace as the home of rum,” the JAMPRO head points out.

“Without a doubt, Jamaica is the best rum destination in the world,” she declares.

Meanwhile, marketing manager at Hampden Estates Christelle Harris underscores that GI protection must be celebrated and built on. “I’m excited for the opportunity to be able to be on display alongside other Jamaica Rums, celebrating our newly acquired GI as we collectively articulate to our audience the true diversity of rum, beginning right here at home. I hope that the education and exposure will heighten our home crowd’s interest in the category of rums, showing them that all Jamaica rums are superb, diverse products,” Harris told the tourism trade publication.

janet.silvera@gleanerjm.com



JAMAICA RUM FESTIVAL

MARCH 9-10, 2019



Aidonia, Sanchez to headline Jamaica Rum Festival

THE INAUGURAL staging of the Jamaica Rum Festival, scheduled for March 9 to March 10 at Hope Gardens in Kingston, promises to showcase the best that the island has to offer in the culturally beloved categories of rum, food, and music.

Leading the charge of curating the Jamaica Rum Festival's entertainment offerings is legendary producer and songwriter Mikie Bennett. Bringing the experience of the Rum Festival together, some of Jamaica's finest musicians will be on show, spanning varying genres, with a headlining act set to be performed on each day.

Bringing the energy to a close on March 9 is dancehall artiste Aidonia. He has had his fair share of live performances over the span of his career, with his magnetic

delivery of popular hit singles over a decade. The deejay, who has been dominating with hit songs such as **Yeah Yeah, VVS**, and **Big Baller** over the past year, will serve as a fitting end to the first day of the festival.

Day Two of the Jamaica Rum Festival will conclude with a thrilling soul-driven performance from lover's rock sensation Sanchez, who is a stalwart of Jamaica's beloved reggae music. Being no stranger to the stage, Sanchez is expected to deliver a rousing performance in his signature smooth sound. Sanchez, who claims over 30 years of experience in the music industry, is among the local artistes who have maintained a presence throughout the changing entertainment landscape having emerged during the 1980s'

dancehall movement.

He is expected to deliver from his repertoire of many hits, which have earned him his spot as one of Jamaica's leading heavyweights in music. **Brown Eye Girl** and the timeless **Lonely Won't Leave Me Alone** are among the staple favourites that are expected to move the audience.

Interspersed between the headlining acts, a number of artistes are rostered to perform, spawning the genres of mento, reggae, and dancehall for a true immersive experience in Jamaica's musical heritage.

Sevana, Pluto Shervington, Dean Fraser and Friends, Ikaya, Jesse Royal, Wayne Marshall, and Agent Sasco are also scheduled to deliver world-class performances.

A live mento band, interpretive pieces from Dance Expression,



Aidonia

and instrumentals from the Synt Orchestra are also rostered for



Sanchez

entertainment over the course of the two days.

JWN deepens community gastronomy investments

MARKET LEADER in the Jamaican spirits business, J. Wray and Nephew Limited (JWN) is committed to deepening its investments in helping to build out the gastronomy aspects of the Jamaican culture involving the art of pairing good food with great drinks.

This is evidenced by the nearly one billion dollars it has invested in its flagship Appleton Estate tour in Siloah, St Elizabeth, including new rum, sugar cane and molasses-tasting and dining facilities there, as well as the company's upgrading of the popular 'Border' fish and bammy stop at Scott's Cove on the St Elizabeth and Westmoreland border.

The investment of US\$7.2 million at Appleton and J\$15 million at Scott's Cove over the past two years, totals approximately J\$963.6 million.

Chairman of JWN Clement 'Jimmy' Lawrence said the investments represent only part of the overall investment in communities which the company, that has been involved in the rum business for the past 270 years, is



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (left) converses with Chairman of J. Wray and Nephew Clement 'Jimmy' Lawrence. CONTRIBUTED

proud to be making.

"You can see from what we have done in Holland with the Holland Basic School and in the community of Appleton, that it is a

full gamut of support that our company does. Scott's Cove is one element of a number of things that we have done in various communities across Jamaica in support of communities that assist us and participate in our endeavours as a spirits-producing company," Lawrence told **Hospitality Jamaica** in an interview.

He said the collaboration of the excellent brands within the JWN portfolio with communities across Jamaica makes for an even stronger impact. "We feel a strong sense of community and responsibility, so wherever there is an opportunity to organise and to bring more structure to impact communities positively, we do so," the JWN chairman added.

He noted that these investments are purpose-driven and that it is not so much about the value of the investment, but moreso the impact the investments have on communities. "We are very proud about that, just as we are proud of our brands," he said.

The Joy Spence Appleton Estate Rum Experience was reopened in November 2017

after a major redevelopment. The upgrade includes the renovation of the existing property and surrounding landscape, and the addition of modern tasting rooms to support education about rums.

At the opening, Bob Kunze-Concewitz, group chief executive officer of the Campari Group – the owners of JWN – said the redevelopment represents a "win-win partnership" for all involved and described the investment as "money well spent". He added that the upgrade was an important development in the future of the Appleton Estate brand. "It will become the showcase for Jamaican excellence and craftsmanship, and I think it will also become a big beacon for tourists and locals alike," he noted.

Scott's Cove was upgraded under a memorandum of understanding involving JWN and the St Elizabeth and Westmoreland municipal corporations. The project involved the construction of vending stalls branded with JWN's trademark 'Charley's JB Rum' artwork, the refurbishing and branding of a bar, and the rehabilitation of the restroom facility at the location.

JAMAICA RUM FESTIVAL

MARCH 9-10, 2019



A guide to rum tasting

How to responsibly enjoy the Jamaica Rum Festival

Brought to You by Kia

1. Don't drink and drive. If you are going to drink, appoint a designated driver.
2. Have a full meal before consuming alcohol.
3. Pace yourself and have water between drinks.
4. Know your limit and plan ahead.
5. Avoid mixing drugs and alcohol.

THE FOOD VILLAGE, PRESENTED BY CB FOODS

The Jamaica Rum Festival is a showcase of the best of Jamaica in the culturally beloved categories of rum, music and food. Leading the charge is CB Foods, curating all things delectable, savoury, sweet and downright mouth-watering, at the Jamaica Rum Festival.

Look out for beloved Jamaican CB brands Copperwood Pork, Homegrown (Corn), and

Bonafide Burgers. Any festival involving food would not be complete without the Bad Dawg cart and pan chicken prepared by past PAN winners. Pescatarian and vegetarian offerings will also be available through CB Foods' culinary partners, so there will be something delicious for everyone to enjoy.

JAMAICAN CREATIONS

POWERED BY THE TOURISM ENHANCEMENT FUND

Explore authentic Jamaican

arts & craft at the Jamaica Rum Festival through our exhibitors:

- Studio969
- Morgan's Creek
- Bleu Creations Candles and More
- E.C.'s Koconutz Ltd
- Chrissy's Coils
- Papflor by Rashida Beckford
- One One Cocoa
- Laura Alexis Candles
- The Likkle Bamboo Hut
- Creole
- Kande's Delights
- Tortuga Caribbean Rum Cake Jamaica Ltd
- Kabreco Designs

- Cyrendipity
- Fruit Blossoms
- BAUGHaus Design Studio
- Sanaa's Bliss
- Holistic Paradiss
- Purplejade
- Street Food Saturdays
- The Jamaica Biscuit Company
- J. Bullock & Sons Ltd
- Thr3 Sistaz
- Yard Life
- Likkle Tea





JAMAICA RUM FESTIVAL

MARCH 9-10, 2019



In the *spirit* of the rum



A member of the Charles Town Mar... sprinkling rum on to stage during Saturday's Jamaica Blue Mountains... in St Andrew.



A drink of rum, or the lack thereof, can be the beginning or end of a long friendship.

At the centre of this photo there is a man raising a bottle of rum to his head. He was at the wake to honour the life of a departed Kumina queen. PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

PAUL H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE STORY of Jamaica rum started on slavery-day plantations when our African ancestors, under the whip, would produce it for export to Europe. For their personal and domestic use, it was limited. A sniff here and a taste there would suffice.

Slavery has long been abolished, but there is no end in sight for the bond that has been forged between people's palates and the tantalising Jamaican rum. And outside of the political, commercial, and gastronomic sides of the rum story, it's one that's fraught with anecdotes of the power and lure of the liquor that is made from processed sugar cane juice.

Rum is an integral part of our



A bottle of rum or two are a staple at the altar of indigenous rituals in Jamaica.

cultural and social fabric, more popular than ackee and salt fish.

There is hardly a secular event in this country where the scent and

taste of rum are not present. It is 'food' for some people's soul, something to imbibe the very first thing in the morning, and even late at night, the bewitching hours, when some drinkers believe they are witches and sing in a slurred voice, "I believe I can fly."

The rum bar is as staple as a church on the Jamaica social landscape, and there are more rum bars per square mile than there are churches. In those rum bars, there is a lot of rum talk, some with sense, and most of it total nonsense. Gossip and rumours are rum's companions, and under the influence of the 'whites', every man and woman thinks he or she is bright and has the right to speak his or her mind.

Many a 'friendship' has been forged over rum because there is always a man or woman who will buy everybody a drink. And the rum is sometimes the cause of 'war' between 'friends' because someone

JAMAICA RUM FESTIVAL

MARCH 9-10, 2019



Drummers and Dancers performing at last year's Coffee Festival at Newcastle

refuses to buy back one. Mean-spirited they are.

In the spirit of confession, the man has tossed, turned, and twirled many a man. Now, totally not in control of his subconscious, he spews out his secrets, and those of others, telling tales that were long buried in the dark recesses of his brain. As he talks, slurring his words, his bill is padded and pockets raided.

The rum is the lure of the 'dead and the grave digging, the wake, and the burial. It is the spirit of the place, the spirit that puts people in touch with the 'spirits'. It's about the pouring of libation, the springing and the drinking, appeasing and pleasing the dearly departed, giving them a taste of what they once had.

In Jamaica, rum is essential for the living and the dead. Jamaica is a rum country. Are you tipsy yet?



Senior blender Devon Morrison,

Rum experts to lead seminars at the Jamaica Rum Festival

THE JAMAICA Rum Festival will feature heavyweights in the spirits industry leading three seminars daily at the festival, educating patrons on the versatility and superiority of Jamaican rums. The festival will take place on March 9 and March 10 at the Hope Botanical Gardens in Kingston.

The revered Joy Spence, master blender for the range of Appleton Estate Jamaica Rums, will present a seminar titled 'Inside the Bottle'. Taking participants through the rum-making process, 'Inside the Bottle' will impart knowledge on the varieties of sugar cane and molasses and how these influence the final flavour profile of rum.

Rum enthusiasts will also be educated on the differences between pot-still and column-still distillation methodologies and will taste the distinctions of unaged and aged rums. Participants in this tasting exercise will then get hands on by pulling together all they have learnt to create their very own rum blends.

Spence's protégé, David Morrison, will then build on the well-established European tradition of matching food with wine when he takes patrons on an epicurean journey through rum. The journey will match the flavours, weight, and texture of



Global Rum Ambassador Ian Burrell

the selected food items and to the Appleton Estate portfolio of rums to bring about a harmonious experience. Partnering with CB Foods, Chillin' Serengeti, and Macau, Morrison, senior blender, will identify the ideal cocktails and rum blends to be enjoyed with a three-course meal.

Completing the trio is the globally recognised Rum Ambassador Ian Burrell, who will present on how Jamaican rums have influenced the global cocktail culture. Those who attend this seminar will be treated to classic Jamaican cocktails made by the hands of the master himself, featuring rums from Monymusk Plantation, Hampden Estate, Appleton Estate, Wray and Nephew White Overproof plus and



Master blender, Joy Spence

Charley's JB Overproof.

Visitors to the inaugural staging of the Jamaica Rum Festival will undoubtedly leave with a wealth of information and a new appreciation of the rich heritage of Jamaican rums. As rum continues to carve its path in the spirits industry, Jamaicans will better understand how and why our rums are unlike any in the world. Rum that originated in the Caribbean represents the history, soul, stories, and complexity of all people of Caribbean descent.

The seminars are free of cost, with limited seating. Persons must sign up to attend the seminars, which will each be offered during one segment on Saturday and on Sunday.

RUM PRODUCTION: Juicing the wheels of change

IN THE past, sugar cane has been grown to make sugar while its byproduct, molasses, has been salvaged to make rum. Rum producers have added flavours and spices to their molasses to create a signature brand identity over the years, but what they all have in common is the need for molasses.

This has always been the case. Like the song says, "you can't have one without the other", the problem is that Jamaican sugar cane farmers cannot produce enough molasses to feed the demand for rum.

At the moment, 50 per cent of the molasses used to create Jamaican rum is imported from elsewhere. Rum producers have struggled with these limitations for years until one of them decided to create their own solution.

National Rums recently began growing sugar cane for the purpose of making rum – not sugar, just rum. If successful, this alternative action might be the game changer Jamaica needs to rejuvenate its sugar cane industry by further adding to the employment pool for local farmers and agricultural workers.

Rum is already distilled successfully from sugar cane juice in the French-speaking Caribbean as well as in Brazil. Their national clear rum, Cachaça, used to make the popular Brazilian cocktail caipirinhas, is a prime example of what distilling cane juice can do.

If National Rums' experiment is successful, they will begin to secure more land for local farmers to grow sugar cane for the sole purpose of rum production, alleviating Jamaica's dependence on molasses and opening the Jamaican rum market to exciting new possibilities.

With the Ministry of Agriculture firmly behind them, National Rums have all the encouragement they need to solve Jamaica's molasses problems and keep our favourite spirit in high demand the world-over.



Chef Colin Hylton (left) and his team serves whipped sweet-potato mousse with candied ginger, coconut crema and black sesame seed tuile.

Jamaica brings island flare to Food Network

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board partnered with the Tourism Enhancement Fund to unleash the flavours of Jamaica at the 2019 Food Network and Cooking Channel South Beach Wine and Food Festival. Making its festival debut, **Taste Jamaica**, hosted by Caribbean cuisine chefs Cindy Hutson and Delius Shirley, gathered some of the best Jamaican chefs to dish up a delectable culinary experience at the historic National Hotel on Friday, February 22.

The event brought together more than a dozen chefs, restaurants and vendors from across the island and the United States to highlight Jamaica's elevated gastronomy. The evening's menu paid homage to the classic flavours of the island while introducing new takes on its traditional cuisine and flavour profiles beyond the famed jerk-style dishes. Participating chef's included Colin Hylton, culinary and lifestyle consultant (Kingston); Gariel Ferguson of The Rib Kage Grill (Kingston); Jonhoi Reid of Zest at the Cliff (Negril); Andre Fowles, two-time Food Network 'Chopped' champion and 'Everything Food'; Ryan Cross of Golden Krust (New York); Karl Gordon of Donna's Caribbean Restaurant (Miami); Noam Yemini of Naomi's Garden Restaurant & Lounge (Miami); Anson Chin and Alfred Kong of Jamaica Kitchen (Miami); Tally Wallen of Chef Tally World Famous Jerk (Miami); Patrick Simpson with Walkerswood; Matthew MacDonald of National Hotel (Miami); and Wilkinson 'Ken' Sejour of Chef Creole (Miami).

The Food Network and Cooking Channel South Beach Wine and Food Festival is produced by Florida International University and Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits, with the support of the Miami Beach Visitors and Convention Authority and the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs. All proceeds from the festival benefit the students of the Florida International University Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Negril Seven Mile Beach wins 2019 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Award for Beaches

Ranks #5 Best Beach in the Caribbean and #10 in the World

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board is celebrating that Negril's Seven Mile Beach has been recognised as a winner in the 2019 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards for Beaches, ranking fifth out of 25 for the Best Beach in the Caribbean and 10th out of 25 in the world. TripAdvisor recognised 352 beaches around the world. Winners were determined based on the quantity and quality of traveller reviews and ratings for beaches on TripAdvisor, gathered over a 12-month period.

"We're so pleased that Negril's Seven Mile Beach has been recognised by TripAdvisor's travel community as

one of the top beaches in the world," said Donovan White, Jamaica's director of tourism. "These accolades are a testament to Jamaica's appeal as a sought-after destination in the Caribbean and in the world. Our gratitude goes to our loyal guests for their continued positive feedback."

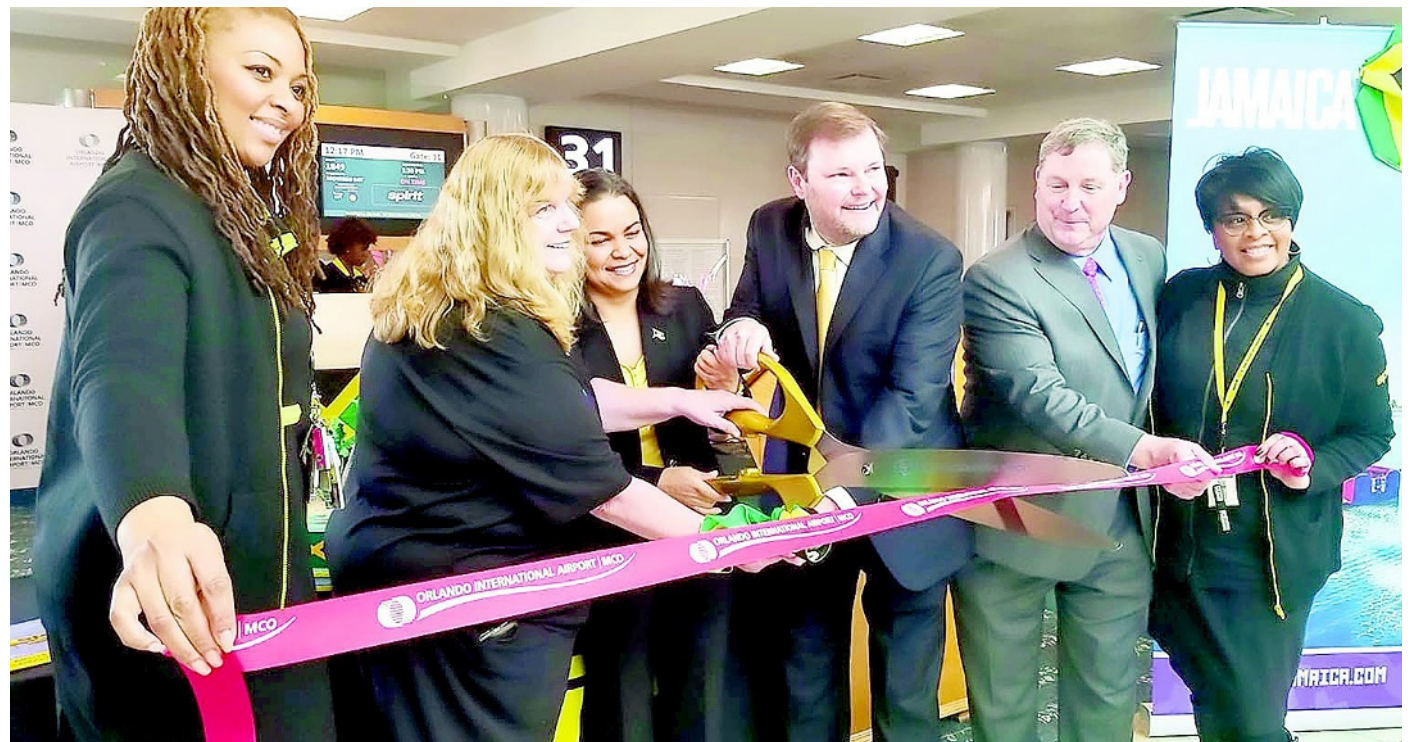
"Congratulations to Negril's Seven Mile Beach for being named a Travelers' Choice beaches winner this year. Our Traveler's Choice Awards are even more special than other editorially selected awards because these winners are determined through review data by our global community," said Desirée Fish, vice-president

of global communications for TripAdvisor.

"From beautiful crystalline waters and golden sand to stunning rugged coastlines where you can spot exotic wildlife, this list has something for everyone," Fish added.

To see TripAdvisor traveller reviews and opinions of Negril's Seven Mile Beach, go to <https://www.tripadvisor.com/TravelersChoice-Beaches-Top-g147237>.

For the complete list of Travelers' Choice Award-winning beaches for 2019, visit: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/TravelersChoice-Beaches>.



On Thursday, February 28, Spirit Airlines began offering service from Orlando International Airport to Sangster International Airport. Prior to the inaugural flight, stakeholders participated in a ribbon-cutting activity to celebrate the event. Spirit Airlines flight attendants on the left and far right cut the ribbon with (from second left) Kerry Thompson, general manager, Orlando International Airport, Spirit Airlines; Francine Carter-Henry, manager, tour operators and airlines, Jamaica Tourist Board; John Kirby, vice-president, network planning, Spirit Airlines; and Phil Brown, CEO, Greater Orlando Aviation Authority. **CONTRIBUTED**

THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

A manifesto for Caribbean tourism



David Jessop

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

BEYOND POLITICS, I am not sure the last time I read a Caribbean manifesto.

Today, the widely held view is that there is no longer a place for detailed, well-argued declaration that sets out the intentions or requirements of the socially marginalised or an industry. The sense is that social media has occupied the space of protest and demand, reducing ideas to a few words that seek an emotional response.

This is wrong, especially when it comes to making the case for tourism. Today, the Caribbean is dominated by services and specifically, the hospitality industry. It requires all policymakers within the region and beyond to be able to understand the industry, its needs, and what it requires if it is to grow and be developmental.

Recent exchanges of views with senior industry executives make clear that for multiple reasons, the industry's voice is not being heard either in the region or externally among those involved in Caribbean development.

Their comments suggest that this is the moment for those in tourism who care about the industry's



DAVID JESSOP

future to be disruptive, to step into the sectoral policy vacuum that has existed since the big commodity-led battles over trade and development, market access, and transition out of preference were fought and largely won.

Regrettably, in many parts of the region, one would scarcely know that tourism exists when it comes to political decision-making other than in relation to taxation. Instead, the voice of the domestically owned and run part of the industry seems to go largely unheard and, in some cases, seems to matter little.

To change this, a better understanding is needed among Caribbean politicians, academics,

the media, development agencies, and international financial institutions, of tourism as an economic driver, its structural role and its requirements.

One way to achieve this could be to create a short manifesto by convening a working group with open-minded academics at The University of the West Indies (UWI) to draft an accessible document, setting out in a straightforward manner the challenges and needs of the industry.

For such a document to move policy, it should be able to attract media attention, be promoted in a sustained manner, and seek the formal endorsement of others, including tourism ministers and member nations of regional institutions that determine Caribbean development policy. It should also be actively promoted at multilateral institutions, including the European Commission, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and with governments able to influence regional political thinking.

Those who believe such an approach would have no value should consider recent events in Europe, where a simple 44-point

Tourism Manifesto for Growth and Jobs, signed by 45 industry stakeholders, has been produced: <https://www.tourismmanifesto.eu/the-manifesto>

This document makes clear the urgent need for a genuine recognition by the European Union of the importance of tourism. It stresses that a holistic European approach is needed to formulate effective tourism policies, taking into account the multiple impacts of the sector as well as the wide spectrum of stakeholders involved in, or affected by, tourism. It endorses a proposal of the European Parliament to allocate €300m (US\$341m) for sustainable tourism as a part of Europe's 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, and seeks an integrated European tourism policy.

It already has the support of the European Parliament's president, Antonio Tajani, and there are indications that the policy framework it provides could, in time, become integrated into all-EU thinking and central to a better understanding of an industry that forms a vital part of the European economy.

Any such Caribbean tourism manifesto should be equally short and be a wake-up call, couched in

direct language. It should make, in a regional context, many of the same points the European manifesto makes about the industry's contribution to growth, employment, foreign exchange earnings, and taxation. It ought, also, to set out tourism's requirements in relation to competitiveness, the impact of disruptive technologies, digitisation and artificial intelligence, and indicate to governments clearly what is required in relation to good governance, promotional activity, training, transport, education, and sustainability.

Ideally – which is why the UWI should be engaged in the process – such manifesto statements need to be supported by a separate, readable analysis substantiating and demonstrating the role the industry plays in creating regional economic stability and growth.

A manifesto for Caribbean tourism should be unifying and able to demonstrate the challenges the industry faces, regionally and internationally, if it is to continue to prosper. Its counterparts in Europe have shown the way. The industry in the Caribbean should now consider doing the same.

High grades for coffee festival



A section of the bumper crowd that turned out at the second annual Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee Festival, held at the Jamaica Defence Force's parade grounds at Newcastle in St Andrew on Saturday, March 2.

PAUL H. WILLIAMS

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE SECOND annual Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee Festival, which was held at the Jamaica Defence Force's parade grounds at Newcastle in St Andrew on Saturday, March 2, was a 'smashing success'. The event was staged by the Ministry of Tourism and key stakeholders.

Yes, it rained a few times on the parade, but the sun was not going to be outdone. Whenever the rain clouds passed, it came out in all its glory, brightening up the hillsides and valley so that people could mill around, instead of standing at attention under tents during the downpours.

And since it was a coffee fest, the coffee, from the red berries on a tree to cups of the much-loved brew, was all over the place, replacing the soldiers on their property for at least a few hours. It was a day when the culinary creativity of some people was also on show as they demonstrated how versatile the use of coffee can be.

In a message published prior to the event, Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett said, among other things, "Coffee has the potential to become a commodity that can change communities through linkages with tourism. While Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee is our value proposition, we must work together



Paradise Child's coffee skin scrubs.

to build a sustainable coffee sector with a multiplier effect that creates more jobs, businesses and revenue for rural communities and beyond."

Addressing the gathering of people from all sectors of the Jamaican society, Minister Bartlett spilled the beans on the versatility of coffee,



Reggae veteran Freddie McGregor reaches out to a female patron at the second annual Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee Festival.



Coffee at different stages of readiness.



The Charles Town Maroon Drummers and Dancers in a spirited performance during the second staging of the Jamaica Blue Mountains Coffee Festival on Saturday, March 2 at Newcastle in St Andrew.

and intimated that the coffee festival might be held in other places, such as Mandeville, Montego Bay and Westmoreland.

He said, “We are looking at how we can move these coffee festivals across the island and have a number of them in a given financial year so that we can begin to market to the world a product which is called Coffee Festival, not just Blue Mountains ... bringing coffee

aficionados of the world to Jamaica annually to experience the glories of our coffee product.”

Minister Bartlett was also upbeat over the tourist arrival figures since the start of the year. He said 900,000 tourists have arrived between January and February, and that a record one million will arrive at the end of March. He said this was as a result of the creation of new experiences, such as the coffee festival.

Creativity contributes to repeat arrivals, Minister Bartlett argued. And it is not just about activities and events, but ones that are attractive to the rest of the world, and that was perhaps the idea behind the Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee Festival.

And though it was a coffee fest, cocoa and chocolate had no intention of being ignored. It, too, was there in its sweet and varied forms, and hopefully, someday, it will have its own festival. A variety of non-coffee products were also on sale, and available for sampling.

The vibe continued throughout the day, as master of ceremonies Empress Golding, “high on coffee”, could not be contained, nor could be the Charles Town Maroon Drummers and Dancers, who gave a spirited performance during the first heavy downpour of rain.

Musically, new kid of the block Sevana put down a well-received set, but it was Freddie McGregor, whose familiar voice sailed over hills and valleys, who ended the show on a high. And yes, there was a ‘commotion’, as patrons clamoured to see him up close.

The ladies could not get enough of the reggae veteran. They swooned as he reeled off hit after hit, going closer to the stage and holding on to his hand. He was like



Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett is sandwiched by Jennifer Griffiths, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, and Nicola Madden-Greig, chair of the Tourism Linkages Gastronomy Network.



From the tree to the cup. Jameel Fearon holding a cup of coffee at the coffee festival held at Newcastle, St Andrew on Saturday, March 2.



Kenroy Hord, production manager at Jamaica Standard Products (Island Blue), demonstrates the process of coffee roasting during the second annual Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee Festival.

black coffee warming their hearts as the cool mountain breeze descended at twilight. The captain of the ship ended with a ska number,

sending people into a dancing frenzy, and to their homes, pulling the curtains down on a day when coffee was king.



AROUND JA WITH PAUL H

Rio Grande, Oh!

The Rio Grande with two peaks of the Blue Mountains in the distance.

GINGERLY, I stepped on to the craft of bamboo, expecting it to go down a little under my weight, but it did not budge. I was very excited.

I was about to embark upon fulfilling one of my dreams. Up to

that point, I could not figure out why it had not become a reality before then.

It has to do with a most mesmerising sight which I have seen pictures of, heard stories about, saw in turmoil once, and

it was scary. And then in 2015, during the severe drought, it looked like it was on the verge of disappearing forever. But forever never came. Now, I was on it, lifejacket and all, ready to cruise away. Captain Clement Thaxter



Captain Clement Thaxter has been rafting on the Rio Grande since he was 18.

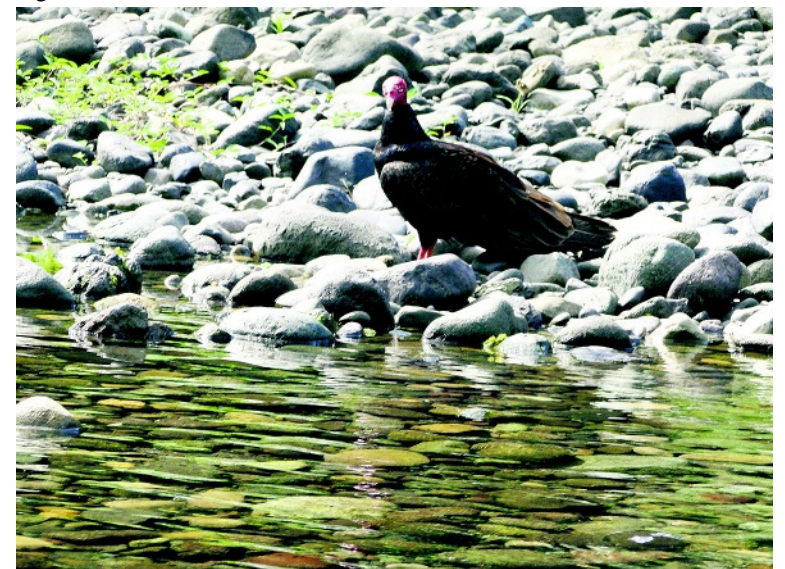
was in charge.

He pushed off and the life that I live was now floating over green-looking water. 'Blue draws', tamarind and star fruit juices were also on board to soothe my parching throat, should there be a need.

Right away I knew I was going to need a pair of eyes at the back of my head to see the vistas I was moving away from. There were various scenes of nature all around, the river and the rocks included, views of the mountains and



Easy as Sunday morning. Sheenia Thaxter and her son, Amri, being taken for a ride down the Rio Grande in Portland.



A John Crow about to take a bath in the Rio Grande in Portland.



People going through Lovers' Lane on the Rio Grande in Portland.

interlocking spurs, sights of trees swaying and dancing in the wind.

Not far from the start, people on another raft pointed to the Blue Mountains in the distance. Not wanting to capsize the raft, I put the camera over my head, pointed the lens towards the view, and snapped away. And at the end of the day, there they were, two Blue Mountain peaks framed by green interlocking spurs.

Farther down, my sight was blessed! I never dreamed the day I would see John Crows bathing. But there were two, still wet, at the side of the river. They flew away as we

neared them, but a third one landed, stayed, and posed for the camera. I remembered the song, "*Dranko say him nah wuk pan Sunday*", and then I knew why. That is the day when him bade.

When we reached the 'beach', we anchored and went on to dry land. The place was empty, except for a raft captain, a slim black man, and a white fat woman. As we milled around, one of us jumped into the water. I envied him. No bathing in cargo pants for me.

Soon, the fat woman went into the river. She pleaded with the slim youth to join her. He eventually



Tourists arriving at the 'beach' along the Rio Grande in Portland.

did. She met him halfway and flung her arms around his neck, held on to him tightly, and closed her eyes in ecstasy. Her pale face glowed under the parching midday sun. A foretaste of glory divine it was.

It was for me, too. I felt as if I were in heaven, looking around for angels with black wings. For the tranquility of the place was nothing but heavenly.

Then, there is 'Lovers Lane'. It really has a romantic aura about it, running between a huge rock,

partially submerged, and the right bank of the river, which is actually a high mountainside.

And the reflection of the days when my ancestors were under subjugation came when we saw many remnants of a stone wall that apparently collapsed after all those years. We stopped for a while to take it all in.

While we were resting by a rock, I got the urge to sing the folk song, "*Rafting down the Rio Grande wid me mi uncle Benji, oh.*" I do not

know the lyrics, but I sang the first line over and over, and Maroghini, the master drummer, could not help himself. The bamboos were now his drums. What a moment it was, perhaps never to come again.

The sight that boldly said the trip was over was the remains of an old metal bridge stretching across the river where it meets St Margaret's Bay. That was where the raft rested, the end of my journey down the Rio Grande, the great river of Portland.



The old metal bridge at St Margaret's Bay stretching over the mouth of the Rio Grande.



From left: Fred Lounsberry, CEO, Nassau Paradise Island Promotion Board; Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association President Carlton Russell; Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) CEO Frank Comito; CHTA First Vice-President Karen Whitt; Bahamas Minister of Tourism and Aviation Dionisio DA guilar; and Graeme Davis, president, Baha Mar, at a recent press conference.

Bahamas to host Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2020

CARIBBEAN TRAVEL Marketplace, the Caribbean's marquee tourism marketing event, will take place in The Bahamas at Baha Mar, the country's newest integrated resort destination, in early 2020.

Speaking to reporters in The Bahamas recently, Frank Comito, CEO and director general of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), officially announced that the 38th edition of Caribbean Travel Marketplace will be held in the islands of The Bahamas at Baha Mar's Performing Arts and Convention Centre from January 21-23, 2020.

The event will be held in collaboration with the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and the Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), with the support of the Nassau Paradise Island Promotion Board and Baha Mar.

Produced by CHTA, Caribbean Travel Marketplace brings together hotel and destination representatives; wholesalers and tour operators; online travel agencies; meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) planners; and members of the media for several days of appointment-based business meetings, allowing for attendees to maximise their stay with an array of slotted business-generating opportunities. CHTA will continue to target emerging markets, building on its success in bringing 64 new buyer companies, including 18 new Chinese buyers, to its

2019 gathering.

Comito announced that after the highly successful 37th gathering in Montego Bay, Jamaica, last month, the association looks forward to returning to The Bahamas to promote tourism business. "We are thrilled to return to The Bahamas and in particular, for this opportunity to showcase to the world's travel industry the incredible destination of Baha Mar, and all the rich and diverse offerings of The Bahamas and the Caribbean. We have a long and successful history producing this event in The Bahamas, and we believe that 2020 will be another exceptional year," said Comito, who was at the helm of the Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association for over 10 years.

Joining CHTA in announcing the 2020 venue, Bahamas Minister of Tourism and Aviation Dionisio D'Aguilar commented: "We are delighted to once again host Caribbean Travel Marketplace. CHTA holds a special place in our heart here in The Bahamas, and we cannot wait to showcase the wonderful strides that we have made across our islands expanding and improving our product, as well as the guest experience. We look forward to sharing with the world the uniqueness of our people, our history, culture, food and music ... all which will be integrated into the Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2020 experience."

BHTA President Carlton Russell echoed the minister's sentiments, adding: "The

Bahamas, like many of its counterparts in the Caribbean, is in the midst of a renaissance of its tourism product. With the emergence of new and upgraded hotels and experiences, additional airlift, and upgraded infrastructure, we look forward to once again hosting Caribbean Travel Marketplace and welcoming our regional and global travel partners."

"We are honoured to welcome Caribbean Travel Marketplace to Baha Mar," said Graeme Davis, president of Baha Mar. "The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association has been instrumental in growing tourism to our islands, and we look forward to showcasing the contemporary glamour and allure of The Bahamas to CHTA members and businesses, influencing global travel to this iconic part of the world."

As home to three global hotel operators, Grand Hyatt, SLS, and Rosewood, as well as more than 40 restaurants and lounges, the largest casino in the Caribbean, over 200,000 square feet of meeting space, more than 2,000 luxurious rooms, multiple pools, a pristine stretch of beach, the 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Royal Blue Golf Course, the Caribbean's first and only flagship ESPA spa, and over 30 luxury retail outlets, Baha Mar is poised to offer a breathtaking experience for Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2020, as well as an array of dynamic activities and amenities for attendees.

IATA launches Diversity & Inclusion Awards

THE INTERNATIONAL Air Transport Association (IATA) announced the launch of the IATA Diversity & Inclusion Awards to recognise and encourage industry excellence.

Three categories of leadership in gender diversity and inclusion will be awarded.

- **Inspirational Role Model Award:** Will be presented to a female (30-plus) who holds a senior position within the industry and who has had a significant impact on the aviation agenda through her strong contribution to business delivery, as well as her ongoing support of the gender diversity agenda. Open to all female participants in the aviation industry.
- **High Flyer Award:** Designed to recognise one of aviation's under-30 female contributors who has started to develop her career, and thought leadership in the industry through her inspirational work. Open to all under-30 female participants in the aviation industry.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Team Award:** Designed to recognise an airline that has seen a tangible change in their diversity as a result of the work it has been doing in diversity and inclusion. Open to all IATA member airlines.

Nominations for the awards were opened 26 February 26, 2019 and will close on March 31, 2019.

They will be judged by an international and independent panel of experts. The first of these annual awards will be presented at IATA's 75th annual general meeting at the World Air Transport Summit to be held in Seoul, South Korea, June 1-3, 2019.

"Aviation is the business of freedom. The essence of aviation is building a global community by connecting people, businesses and cultures across great distances. Ten million people work in the aviation industry to make this happen. It is important that this workforce reflects the amazing diversity and inclusion that it fosters in our society. By launching these awards, we want to recognise and celebrate the great work that is being done to take the industry into the future," said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's director general and CEO.

Qatar Airways has generously committed to sponsoring these awards. Each category comes with \$25,000 in prize money, payable to the awardee or their nominated charity working on diversity and inclusion projects.

"Aviation thrives with diversity and provides great employment opportunities to talented people in every corner of our planet. But there is much room to improve. For example, gender balance is by far not equal. In sponsoring these awards, we are committing to do better ourselves, to building awareness and to inspiring change," said HE Akbar Al Baker, Qatar Airways group chief executive and chair of the IATA board of governors (2018-2019).