

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**ANNUAL FOOD &  
BEVERAGE AWARDS CEREMONY**

**FEATURE ADDRESS**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RUPERT T. GRIFFITH**

**MINISTER OF TOURISM  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**Date: Monday February 27, 2012**

**Venue: Hyatt Regency Trinidad**

**Time: 10.00am**

- Mrs. Juliana Jodhan-Boodram, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism
- Mr. Rajiv Omah-Maharajh Shandilya, Chairman of the Board of the Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC) and the other TDC Directors present
- Mrs. Sandra Perkins, TDC's Chief Executive Officer and other members of the TDC Strategic Management Team
- Mr. Kevin Kenny, First Vice-President of the Trinidad and Tobago Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association (THRTA) and other members of the Association Executive
- Mrs. Debra Sardinha-Metivier, Competition Head Judge
- Participating Chefs and Bartenders, our special guests this morning
- Culinary Competition Sponsors
- Tourism Stakeholders

- Members of the Media
  - Ladies and Gentlemen
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It is indeed a pleasure to address you at this the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Food and Beverage Awards Ceremony at which we will announce the members of the 2012 National Culinary Team.

Organised by the Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association (THRTA), the chef and bartender winners of the Annual Food and Beverage Competition will compete against the finest in the Caribbean at the prestigious and keenly competitive **TASTE OF THE CARIBBEAN** culinary competition to be held in Miami in June this year.

Trinidad and Tobago has the singular honour to be the only country to have won the much coveted Caribbean Culinary Team of the Year an amazing and unprecedented five (5) times. We secured the Team of the Year achievement in 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009 and last year in 2011.

This is indeed a noteworthy achievement for our small twin island Republic in terms of the recognition afforded for our high level of excellence in culinary arts, professionalism, and technical skills.

**We are now recognised as a powerhouse of young and naturally skilled culinary professionals within the Caribbean.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In October last year we also had an enormously successful “**TASTE T&T**”.

This culinary festival saw attendance, over a two (2) day period, of some 10,000 persons and elicited tremendous positive publicity and news and video stories both locally and internationally especially in Mexico which had a two page colour spread on the event in one of its leading newspapers.

Taking all of this in consideration, we are feverishly planning the International Culinary Competition and Festival to be held later on this year in commemoration of our 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Celebration.

The Ministry of Tourism is positioning this culinary competition and festival to be yet another signature tourism event on the national calendar to attract tourists to our shores during a traditionally low visitation period on our islands.

We will be bringing chefs from all over the world and will be inviting citizens residing abroad for **Homecoming**.

I urge all of you to mark this event on your calendar and become involved in the planning of the first ever International Culinary Competition and Festival to be held in Trinidad and Tobago.

At this point, I wish to laud the organisers of the Annual Food and Beverage Competition and all those who contributed in any way in making it a success.

The Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association must be commended for its efforts since 1997 in developing professional and international standards within the local culinary niche.

The success of our many National Culinary Teams is really “the proof of the pudding”. With the support of the private and public sectors a cadre of bright and talented young culinary professionals has blossomed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Trinidad and Tobago has perhaps the richest and most exciting food culture in the Caribbean.

Our food is a delicious blend of mainly African and East Indian elements, with a few Chinese, French, Spanish, English, Portuguese, Syrian, Lebanese, and native Amerindian culinary traditions thrown in for good measure.

It is in this regard that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to developing a solid marketable and sustainable culinary tourism product.

We have noted that culinary tourism is presently a growth segment within the international tourism sector with the International Culinary Tourism Association stating that on average food travelers spend around US\$1,200.00 per trip with over one-third of that amount of their travel budget – approximately US\$425.00 – going towards food related activities.



Indeed, in the United Kingdom food tourism is estimated to be worth nearly US\$8billion each year.

Growth in this niche market is expected to be strong over the next 5-10 years especially with the increase in food channels and travel shows exploring exotic foods from all over the world.

I wish to congratulate the Trinidad twin brother and sister team of Tim and Winnette McIntosh for obtaining top honours this year at the very popular US Food Network show, “**CUPCAKE WARS**”.

This is further proof that Trinis can cook!

My Ministry would use whatever means is needed to increase awareness about the immense diversity and richness of our culinary tourism product within our local communities.

The Ministry of Tourism has always been ... and will always be ... a supporter of the Annual Food and Beverage Competition and the other culinary tourism initiatives of the THRTA.

I am happy to announce that the Ministry of Tourism will, once again, provide the training and personal development preparation to the 2012 Trinidad and Tobago Culinary Team to further hone their skills set and also with opportunities to interact with the Caribbean's best.

Moreover the TDC, the implementation agency of the Ministry of Tourism, will be the Overseas Sponsor of the Team; ensuring that our culinary professionals can **comfortably** compete ... and of course win.

I am really pleased with the overwhelming response to the 2012 Annual Food and Beverage Competition. It is my understanding that some 17 bartenders, 4 pastry chefs, 4 junior chefs and 14 chefs took part – more than ever within recent times.

I have also been told that throughout the competition the drinks executed were “eye openers” and the food dishes were produced with the finest of flavours, textures and tastes.

On competition days the participants all showed resilience and a desire to excel; sacrificing a lot of their time to attend the culinary clinics. I thus applaud our competitors for their exemplary attitude. Well done!

I would like to also congratulate all those around the competitors who have given them their utmost support. Do not be disheartened if you are not called to be a member of the National Culinary Team today. You are all winners in this competition.

I encourage all of you to continue to improve your techniques and play your part in government's thrust to promote the development of the culinary tourism niche as a means of diversifying our national economy.

Once again I say thank you for your participation and wish God's richest blessings on everyone.

I thank you.

February 24, 2011