Rebuilding Our Coral Reef
By: Leslie Hickerson

When you picture a Caribbean island like St. Maarten, right behind thoughts of pristine white beaches with ice cold drinks, are images of beautiful blue waters and the corals and creature found beneath them. Even if you have never been diving or snorkeling out to see our reef systems, you can envision the brightly colored sponges and sea fans slowly moving side-to-side with the surge of the ocean. On our island, if you are lucky enough to visit the Man of War Shoal Marine Park, you will find boulders and ridges filled with a huge variety of both coral and marine life. The Marine Park is one of the many responsibilities held by the St. Maarten Nature Foundation, who patrols, studies and protects the area.

In the last two years the Foundation has gone one step further in helping to protect our island’s reef system by taking on a new project to help it grow. Director Tadzio Bervoets and Project Officer Melanie Meijer Zu Schlochtern, head the Coral Reef Restoration Project that began in 2016. “Millions of people come here to see our beautiful reefs and corals. They are worth protecting,” says Schlochtern.

The process of helping new coral formations grow is beginning to be practiced in several places throughout the world. It is delicate, tedious and costly work that is affected not only by human interaction but also by the conditions of the ocean.

The two types of corals that the SXM Nature Foundation Team is currently replanting are Elk Horn and Stag Horn Corals. These two Acropora corals are very important species found in the ocean. They are key builders that support reef systems and also protect the area around them during storms from damage. In the last 20 years, the amount of these two corals has dropped worldwide over 80%, leaving the rest of the reef more vulnerable to damage.

Ladies and Gentlemen...Ali Montero
By: Chris Morvan

The life of a professional musician in the nightlife spots of a vacation island may seem like an idyllic one. All they do is get up in front of you and play and sing for a couple of hours, maybe have a few drinks while they are at it and soak up the adulation. But it is not as easy as that, and those who make a living at it do so through not just talent but sheer hard work...

Umami Found at Local Sushi Bars

Umami, the fifth basic category to taste. The others, salty, sour, bitter and sweet have nothing on this savory flavor profile. Many foods are rich in this flavor, including an admired favorite; sushi.

Although sushi has become a trendy, popular lunch and dinner option; this Japanese tradition dates back to 1336...

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Letter From the Editor
July 13, 2018

The summer is flying by! Hard to believe that it is mid-July already. In this issue, we took inspiration from several things including fish. Read our articles about the coral reef restoration project that is well underway, how picking seashells can damage the ecosystem and yes; even an article on where to eat the best fish of the raw variety.

We also are delighted and very honored to know that we will be sending the first island representative to compete in the prestigious Miss Teen International pageant in the United States! This is quite an accomplishment, and we hope to be sharing wonderful news on behalf of Shakaniyah Pompierr Arrindell, Miss Teen St. Maarten International, in our next issue. Good luck and rock the stage!

I’d like to thank you for taking the time to read and, hopefully, be entertained by the Weekend Edition.

Hilary Grant
Editor

Online Portal

For in-depth information about our island, consult ST-MAARTEN.COM - the official online portal. Please use the convenient QR codes with any smart phone to access individual pages directly.

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Ladies and Gentlemen...Ali Montero

Continued from Page 1

Take Ali Montero, for instance. You might have seen him at Taco Macho on a Friday night or Karakter on a Saturday night, because those are his regular gigs now, or occasionally the Soggy Dollar. As we all know, the nightlife scene was hit by Irma the same as everything else and even though the venues are being restored, there aren’t the visitors to fill them now.

But before Irma, at one time Montero was doing thirteen gigs a week. That’s a lot of throat muscle power and a lot of skin off the tips of a guitarist’s finger’s, and the number tells you it involved more than one gig a day. He might do a lunchtime session for cruise ship passengers in town, then a laidback early evening set somewhere else and a livelier gig later on.

Montero is Venezuelan. He came here because his home country was going down the drain, which tragically is still the case. He had a friend, a fellow Venezuelan, who was working here and encouraged him to give it a go.

“I thought ‘why not?’ I can always go home if it doesn’t work out.”

So, he made the move - along with his friend Alberto Acosta he put together a little band, K-Banna, and together they established themselves as leading exponents of Latin music on the island. The two now usually work separately, and it is Montero we are looking at today.

"Latin music is very popular here," he tells me, “I play a lot of fast stuff with my new band.” (They are known simply as Ali Montero and his band). When I press him for some artist names to give me an idea, he struggles to get started because his range is so broad, and when he does get going it is names and musical styles that mean nothing to a British rock and pop devotee.

That evening, though, I check him out at Taco Macho, where a decent crowd awaits him shortly after 8 PM for the solo set. This is predominantly American hits and mellow, slightly jazzy songs. For this he plays an acoustic guitar with a pickup, treating it like an electric, using electric guitar strings, which are lighter, easier to bend and lend themselves to playing lead, while the acoustic properties contribute to the smooth sound. He’s a fluent player and a very capable singer, and there is plenty of appreciation and applause from the American denizens of the front table, who have clearly seen him before.

In their honor, with the accompaniment of slick backing tracks, he does the George Benson instrumental, Breezin’, What a Difference a Day Makes (the Jamie Cullum version, he tells me) and a creditable vocal job on Me and Mrs. Jones. And then it’s on to the Latin material and later still, the atmosphere is cranked up in a way only that kind of stuff can do. Anybody who doesn’t want to dance by that point is obviously incapacitated by tequila.
Salted fish was wrapped in fermented rice as a way to have a shelf life of several months before the fish would spoil. In 1603 sushi took a form we are used to seeing today, nigiri, with fresh fish served atop a small mound of seasoned rice.

Western style sushi has an offering of tasty bites that you wouldn’t find in Japan: Dynamite roll, California roll, Philadelphia roll or really anything with cream cheese, avocado or imitation crab inside. While they may not be traditional dishes, they are very pleasing to the western palate and are offered at many sushi places on island. Perfecting the art of creating mouthwatering sushi is one that takes years to master, requiring an extensive knowledge of sea creatures, flavors and of course wielding the exceedingly sharp knife.

So, whether you are a newbie to the sushi scene or carry your own chopsticks with you, there are restaurants that will fit any sushi-loving disposition.

Wasabi Charlie’s, located in Simpson Bay next door to island mainstay Pineapple Pete, is the ideal spot for Western style sushi. Their menu boasts delicious options like sashimi (raw fish, no rice), nigiri (raw fish on a mound on a bite size mound of rice) as well as a plethora of rolls to choose from. The Spicy Mango roll, Pete’s roll, Red & White Dragon roll and Cherry Blossom roll will make your taste buds dance!

And for our non-raw fish eaters and vegetarians, do not fret. Wasabi Charlie’s provides an extensive menu of non-sushi items to choose from. This is an experience that the whole family will love; and is a great atmosphere to break first date jitters.

Looking for something a little more authentic with hints of western flavors? Alina Sushi & Sake Bar, also located in Simpson Bay next door to Jimbo’s Rock & Blues Café, is the place for you. Chef and owner Ken Lin’s impressive resume includes Japanese cuisine experience in Taipei, Tokyo, London and Moscow; just to name a few. His menu includes dishes that are authentic but not in the traditional sense, giving his own spin to each. The Spicy Edamame, Happy Dragon roll, Spider roll and Spicy Tuna roll are just some of the favorites. And if you want a truly unique experience, ask for Chef’s choice. Chef Ken will make you flavorsome, inspiring and one-of-a-kind dishes that may or may not be on the menu.

Other options in the Simpson Bay area include Ginger Sushi and Bamboo, which relocated from the Maho area. And if you’re wanting to visit French St-Martin, try Sao Asian Kitchen in Orient Bay.

For the calorie conscious, sushi can be a viable meal option. Just make sure to skip the rice and soy sauce as they can pack the calories into what would be an otherwise healthy meal. If you’re eating it as takeout, try using liquid aminos- a natural soy sauce alternative that gives you the flavor without the extra added sodium and calories!

No matter where you choose to dine, sushi is an interactive, fun and flavorful experience that is sure to make your evening a night to remember. Enjoy some sake, specialty cocktails or a bottle of wine and watch the sushi masters innovate and create!
ACROSS
5 You need it to make rum
7 Catamaran of Aqua Mania
10 National bird
12 Mario’s or Caraibe are what kind of restaurant?
16 End of hurricane season
17 You find it at the Carousel
19 Boat safari names after which horned land animal
20 Where was the treaty signed?
21 Card game at Hollywood Casino
23 Large French island to the South
24 Home of Carib Beer
25 European non-stop flight destination

DOWN
1 Used to preserve food before refrigeration
2 Airline servicing Saba
3 Airline from the USA
4 Hurricane 1999
5 Island named after an eel
8 Pirate
9 Comes in small green bottles
11 Continental country due South
13 Place to take perfume lessons
14 Restaurant on Kimsha Beach
15 Queen of Anguilla
18 Trinidad’s quiet sister island
22 Color of piano in bar

Please enjoy the fourteenth edition of our crossword puzzle. You will notice that all of the questions are rooted in the Caribbean hemisphere and might take a bit of research to answer if you haven't spend much time here. It also means the answers are valid for St. Maarten/St. Martin, but could also be for neighboring islands.

For example, if we are asking for an island to the North of our location, it can only be Anguilla.

If you try to solve the puzzle as a visitor to our island and you get stuck: don't be shy! Approach a local and ask! You might find they struggle to answer as well. Or strike up an interesting conversation and learn a bit about our very unique region.

Mistakes do happen, even though our puzzle is produced right here on island. If you detect a mistake, don't be shy and drop us a line! But, be aware that some of the questions are a bit tricky on purpose. Good luck!
"Take Only Photos, Leave Only Bubbles"

By: Leslie Hickerson

When you are on St. Maarten, long walks on the beach are no longer just a daydream. It is a beautiful start to your day or way to enjoy the evening sunset. While you stroll along the crashing waves you may stumble across shells that have washed up from the sea floor. These shells were once home to creatures below the surface. Hermit crabs, conchs and clams wear them while small fish shelter inside them. Many people scour the beach in the hopes of finding a perfectly intact spiral shell or piece of sea glass to take home as a souvenir.

Lots of people all over the world collect sand or shells from the beaches they visit and take them home as mementos. This seems like an innocent collection, after all what is one shell in comparison to the ocean? But each piece of the ocean makes a difference in the ecosystem. These practices combined with the amount of marine sand we use in manufacturing everyday products are having a huge affect on things like shore erosion, beach and ocean health, and diversity.

Shells found along the shore might one day return to the ocean floor or break down to become sand. Taking them home and displaying them in clear glass jars halts the natural cycle. Some people go one step further in collecting beach memories and will take living creatures such as Sea Stars (Star Fish) or Sea Urchins. Occasionally you will see groups of people sitting on the beach with piles of Sea Stars in front of them, or passing urchins back and forth. Taking these creatures out of the water while they are alive causes them to dry out and die. Even a short amount of time above the ocean’s surface will stress each one and have lasting affects. There is even a Marine Park Regulation that makes it illegal to remove living or dead objects from our protected areas.

To be safe, the best thing to do is to refrain from taking any natural shells found from the island, there are man made versions at most markets and in shops. Just make sure it is a replica rather than the real thing! You can also take photos easily to print and share. Both ways will keep the ocean stocked and give you souvenirs to help remember your trips!

There is a common phrase in the watersports world that goes, "take only photos and leave only bubbles." This points to the two most critical factors of people enjoying the seascape’s beauty. Everything found in nature has its place there and should be left to play its part. Equally important, we as visitors should leave no impact behind.

One simple thing beach-goers can do to ensure they are not negatively affecting the sandy shores they love so much is to be diligent when picking up garbage at the end of their day. There is nothing more desirable than a day spent on a sunny beach eating, drinking and enjoying yourself with friends and family.

But, when it is time to go, make sure everyone pitches in to collect any rubbish that was made throughout the day. In particular; plastics such as straws, cups and balloons must be collected, as they will not decompose on their own. It is better to substitute these products for biodegradable or reusable counterparts.
Miss Teen St. Maarten International Readies Herself for International Pageant

In just two short weeks, a new Miss Teen International will be crowned in the international pageant held in the United States. Thirty delegates from around the globe will be competing for the coveted crown and title, including St. Maarten’s very own Shakaniah Pompier Arrindell.

The Miss Teen International competition had selected St. Maarten to host a country pageant and crown a winner to compete in the 2018 pageant; however, during the planning phase of our island pageant, Irma destroyed the opportunity to hold a pageant this year. Despite the setback, the Executive Director Anna Rabbess-Richardson, elected Shakaniah as the first Miss Teen St. Maarten International. It was important to not allow Irma to take something else from our country, and Shakaniah will represent that strength in the face of adversity at the Miss Teen International pageant.

The Miss Teen International pageant is part of the International Pageant system, which holds competitions in three divisions: Teen (ages 13-18), Miss (ages 19-30) and Mrs. (ages 21-55) as well as a Pre-Teen competition. The organization prides itself as being an “organization with integrity, high ethical standards, and consistent application of its rules and regulations. It is our goal to provide ladies everywhere the opportunity to compete in a pageant system that maintains the highest of moral values.”

Shakaniah will travel to the United States to participate in a week of media appearances, rehearsals and her areas of competition. The scoring is as follows: 40% interview, 20% fitness wear, 20% fun fashion wear and 20% evening gown. The finals will take place on July 28th where the Top 10 delegates will be announced and re-compete in all areas of competition, culminating in the crowning of Miss Teen International 2018.

The International Pageants is a philanthropic organization, partnered with the American Heart Association’s Go Red For Women campaign; and requires every contestant to select a platform, or topic, that they will champion for the year if honored with the crown. Shakaniah is passionate about Alzheimer’s Awareness, as this disease has struck close to her heart with the diagnosis of her grandmother.

Our Miss Teen St. Maarten International will proudly speak on behalf of the St. Maarten Alzheimer’s Associations, and if chosen the International winner, will raise critical funds to build a youth wing in honor of her grandmother. She realizes the importance of teen awareness and education in this dreaded condition.

To follow her journey to the crown, visit the official St. Maarten International Pageants page on Facebook @SYMIntlPageants and the Miss Teen International website www.MissTeenInternational.us for their social media platforms which will be updated daily with photos and videos of contestants throughout the competition week.

We’d like to wish Shakaniah Pompier Arrindell, the first Miss Teen St. Maarten International, the best of luck as she takes on the competition! We are confident that she will represent our island well and bring home the crown to St. Maarten!
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Rebuilding Our Coral Reef

Continued from Page 1

These pieces then grow for 6 months. As they are removed from the large formation they are free to grow in new directions becoming a Mother Coral. Once they have reached a healthy size of 3 inches (7 cm), they are transplanted back onto the reef where they continue to grow out from their original snipping. This is a rare example of human interaction having a positive affect on nature and allowing these corals to grow more quickly than they would on their own.

In September 2016, the St. Maarten Nature Foundation started with their first batch of corals for the Coral Reef Restoration project. One year later when Hurricane Irma hit, the Foundation’s team had 355 pieces of healthy Staghorn and Elkhorn growing on their trees. After the storm, there were only twelve pieces left.

While this was a devastating hit to the Foundation’s work, they have restarted their program to collect flourishing pieces again. Unfortunately, due to their branch like formations, both Staghorn and Elkhorn corals were those most affected by the hurricane.

Pieces are ridged and break off easily in large sections and are affected by stress and sand cover. This loss of healthy corals to make new mother systems has had an impact on the team’s ability to replace lost coral portions.

As of July 2018, the team has collected and hung almost 80 new fragments for the project.

Luckily the backing of residents and local businesses has helped the Foundation support the project and raise critical funds for new coral trees to be part of the nursery.

The events that were held at Dingy Dock and Karakter Beach Bar, in partnership with CC1 Distribution, were hugely successful, due to the participation and donations from companies and individuals.

To help fund the Coral Reef Restoration project for St. Maarten you can donate to the St. Maarten Nature Foundation via their website or purchase a reusable cloth bag from The Scuba Shop or Ocean Explorers Dive Center. The bags encourage people to skip plastics when shopping. All proceeds go directly to funding the project.

You can also make a difference by avoiding dangerous chemicals when choosing sunblock to wear in the ocean.

“Sunscreens that contain the ingredient octinoxate are toxic to corals,” says Schlochtern.

You can find reef-safe sunscreens at local dive centers and at shops on the boardwalk!

Making simple changes like declining a plastic straw and taking reusable bags shopping make a huge impact for the ocean ecosystem. If you are interested in seeing St. Maarten’s Coral Reef first hand, book a snorkel or dive trip during your stay!
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July's Birthstone is Better Known as the King of Gems

Rutic, strength, power and determination are all words that are associated with the color red. So, it is no surprise that July’s birthstone, ruby, translates in Sanskrit (an ancient Indic language) to king of gems. The ruby is notated as the most historically significant gemstone, referenced in ancient writings such as the Bible, listing the previously listed attributes.

Rubies come from many areas in the world such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam and the most highly sought after ones come from Myanmar (formerly Burma).

These ‘Burmese rubies’ typically form in marble and because of the low iron content of marble, in addition to the high level of chromium, these extraordinary rubies have an intense cherry red color which you now know can be called ‘pigeon’s blood red’.

But, there is no reason to start searching your marble countertops and floors for hidden gems. Miners would have long removed any gem quality rubies prior to it hitting the market. So, best to purchase this lovely gemstone!

Burmese rubies will always be accompanied by an origin report from a gemological lab authenticating that they are from Myanmar. Otherwise, if you hear the term 'Burmese ruby', they might be referring to the color and not the origin—always ask!

Rubies can be found at jewelry retailers throughout Front Street. If it is your birthstone, 15th or 40th wedding anniversary or you just love rubies; time to shop!

All jewelers listed in ST-MAARTEN.COM Weekend Edition are vetted by us. Select a striking ruby in your favorite shade, and appreciate wearing the king of gems.

Ruby is part of the Corundum family; which includes sapphires. It is the most valuable of the family and can demand the highest price per carat of any colored gemstone. Rubies can range from an orangy red to a purplish red and the best color is pure red, often denoted as ‘pigeon’s blood red’. What causes the range of redness in the gem? Chromium! The more chromium present the higher the saturation of red.

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Cat 5+ Cocktail Contest: Drinks as Strong as Their Namesake

Nine months ago we had the largest hurricane to ever hit the Atlantic basin, Hurricane Irma. Our island was forever changed.

Who could blame the bartenders for naming their concoctions 'Category Five Plus'? Now we have too many Cat 5 drinks on the island and we need a contest to decide which one is the public favorite.

The Category 5+ Hurricane Irma is now part of our history. We made it through and we don't mind Irma being memorialized as a drink causing a horrific hangover.

Here is how it works:
Go on a bar crawl and visit the participating bars and restaurants from all around the island and order each different version of Category Five Plus. (Please make sure that you have a designated driver for the occasion!) Happy drinking!

To view a list of contestants and to vote, visit ST-MAARTEN.COM by using the QR code to the right:

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Crossword Puzzle Solution

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