Sometimes there is nothing more refreshing than cracking open an ice cold beer on a hot sunny day. Beer serves as the perfect beach drink, lunch drink; well, really an anywhere drink! But if you've never tried one of our Caribbean beers, how will you know that you like it? Learn the taste of some island favorites before you buy it and your tastebuds will thank you!

As Carnival season approaches on Sint Maarten - residents and visitors tremble in anticipation of the day that Carnival Village officially opens. Fondly referred to as ‘the village’, this is the center-point of Carnival, where everything starts, happens and ends surrounding the most popular cultural celebration of our island.

This year Carnival Village opened on April 12 and will be closing on May 2. An array of concerts and events are planned to take place at the village during those 21 days. International shows such as One Love Reggae Concert, Noche Latina, Night of the Hit Makers, Caribbean Flag Fest, Bacchanal Sunday and Soulful Company are taking place featuring local, regional and international headliners.

The schedule also features popular local events. At these events, you are sure to truly get a taste of St. Maarten’s favorite music, artists, and vibe. Some of these events are the Calypso Competition, Soca Rumble, Culture Night, Jouvert, Village Cook-Up and more. The parades, including the ‘grand parade’, which as always – promises to be a dazzling event, also end at the Village...

Carnival Village: Drink, Eat, Fête!

By: Laura Bijnsdorp

A Night Out in Simpson Bay

The Simpson Bay strip is filled with restaurants, bars, and nightlife. Most of it is walking distance, and if you are staying in or around the The Atrium Beach Resort and Spa, it is a brisk five minute walk away from the fun. But where to start? Here are our top selections for a night out in Simpson Bay.

Start your night off at Rhythm and Booze, a wine and tapas bar that also has delicious cocktails. Head there for a pre-dinner cocktail, as their happy hour on week days...

What Does This Beer Taste Like?

Sometimes there is nothing more refreshing than cracking open an ice cold beer on a hot sunny day. Beer serves as the perfect beach drink, lunch drink; well, really an anywhere drink!

But if you’ve never tried one of our Caribbean beers, how will you know that you like it? Learn the taste of some island favorites before you buy it and your tastebuds will thank you!

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Stories for articles come to us in the unlikeliest of places, and while working on our fourth issue, Carnival season had launched which filled us with national pride. Based on that, we wanted to share a bit more of our island history in a series of articles for this issue.

You’ll find articles highlighting many topics such as Carnival Village, the history of some of our island treasures, and food delicacies that we hold near and dear to our hearts.

We had many articles in our previous issue that you might also find interesting. Please visit our website ST-MAARTEN.COM to read issues one through three.

Our Cat 5+ Cocktail Contest is still ongoing! Please read page 15 for participating locations.

We hope that you enjoy this issue.

Hilary Grant
Editor

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Publisher: Jan Thoelke
Email: j.thoelke@st-maarten.com

Editor: Hilary Grant
Email: h.grant@st-maarten.com

Advertising Sales: Roy van Zutphen
Email: roy@st-maarten.com

Graphic Design: Ros-Anne D. Sagnia
Email: t.artisthouse@gmail.com

Photography: Sarina Gito
Email: s.gito@st-maarten.com

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Email: distribution@st-maarten.com

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is a great deal: purchase two drinks and get a free tapas. Thursdays they feature Ladies Night, while Fridays is for the gents. There is plenty of room to dance once you get some liquid courage, or you can chill on the plethora of couches while sipping your beverage.

The dining choices in Simpson Bay are endless! Please refer to our restaurant listing page to pick the flavor of the evening. All of our listings are fully endorsed by us!

A very popular dining spot is Pineapple Pete, with nightly live music and an international menu. Or head to Topper’s Restaurant and Bar for dinner and karaoke! While they are known for their locally produced, award winning rhums, they also have a full menu that packs a punch of its own. We recommend pairing your meal with a drink featuring these tasty rhums; and purchase a bottle to go!

Topper’s is participating in our Cat 5+ Cocktail Contest, so while you are there, try it out and don’t forget to vote!

If karaoke is your thing, pick out your favorite song to sing, and enjoy the energetic atmosphere that Topper’s provides.

Also located in the Simpson Bay Yacht Club, Jimbo’s Rock and Blues Cafe. Serving up Caribbean Tex-Mex cuisine and Megaritas, you’ll have a rockin’ good time at this island favorite. Try their fajitas paired with a fresh margarita- yum!

Maybe you would like to partake in some gambling, so visit the brand new casino called Ultimate Sports to get in on the action.

Soggy Dollar is a must see. Where else is there a nightclub that borders the marina, with a spectacular view of yachts from around the globe?

In addition to the view, enjoy the fresh breeze from this open air club while you party the night away. Soggy is open late night, and gets its busiest around midnight. If possible, plan a visit for Tuesday, the day of the ultra popular Latin night, with live music and even dancing lessons are available.

Other nightclubs open late in Simpson Bay include Lotus and Jungle Club. And – if the mood allows – why not swing by Red Diamond later, an adult entertainment club and popular bar.

As you can see the possibilities are endless for enjoyable evening options in Simpson Bay. Have fun exploring!
Discover a Hidden Natural Pool
By: Laura Bijnsdorp

Craving getting active? Embark on a short hike to one of our island’s most beloved natural treasures. Back Bay Trail, Geneva Bay Hike, or ‘Devil’s Cupper’ – this adventure has a few names it is known by.

The highlight of this adventure is the ‘natural pool’, which has been formed by a barrier of cliffs and rocks. This means that on most days, the water inside the natural pool is calm, clear and perfect for a dip. Outside of the pool, you can relish at the view of the formidable, rough ocean, crashing against the surrounding protective boulders.

The trail that leads hikers past the natural pool stretches from Guana Bay to Point Blanche. The trail leads you along one of the lesser-developed areas on the island and provides the opportunity to see St. Maarten in its natural glory. The access point in Point Blanche is the most popular, as the hike is shorter, easier and safer.

The 30-minute hike starting from Point Blanche takes you along steep cliffs, various species of cacti, pelicans hunting for food, iguanas basking in the sun and an occasional startled goat. In the distance, you will also likely be able to spot our sister island, St. Barths.

Before starting your hike remember to wear proper closed toe shoes to protect yourself from prickly brush and loose rocks. Water and sunscreen are a must as well, as shade is scarce along the hike.

You might also want to bring your swimming gear, as a dip into the natural pool is the highlight of this trip. However, remember to jump and climb around the pool with caution as you can encounter a sea urchin or two hiding in the crevices of the rocks!

You can choose to walk back the same way or follow the trail all the way to Guana Bay, which is about another hour. Just remember that you will have to find a way back to your car.

Happy adventuring!

Directions Point Blanche Starting Point:
Once in Point Blanche, you have to drive to the end of Pelican Road. At the end of the road, you can park next to a basketball court. Cross this basketball court (on foot) to find the start of the trail. The easiest way to find your way is to grab your phone or computer whilst you are still at your hotel and search for ‘Natural Pool Sint Maarten’ on Google-maps. If electronics fail, most residents in Point Blanche know the way and will be happy to help you out!

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Do You Know St. Maarten?

Please enjoy the forth edition of our crossword puzzle. You will notice that all 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 not necessarily elsewhere.

For example, if we are asking for an island to the North, out of the point of view 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 to approach a local and ask! You might find they struggle as well. Or strike up an interesting conversation and learn a bit about our very unique region. This island is a melting pot of many cultures and languages; setting St. Maarten/St-Martin apart from other Caribbean islands. This is why we love it here.

Cheating? Find solution to the puzzle on Page 15

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<td>Cruise line named after celebrations</td>
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Cheating? Find solution to the puzzle on Page 15

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**Lagoonies: Food, Drink and Tales of the Sea**

For decades, Lagoonies Bar & Café has been the preferred hang-out and watering hole of the sailing community. Located right on the shore of Simpson Bay Lagoon at Lagoon Marina, it is a tiny bit off the beaten path for land based visitors, but definitely worth the extra minute of driving from Simpson Bay to Cole Bay.

Lagoonies is the unique chance for vacationers to rub shoulders with true adventurers and circumnavigating sailors. Located in the center of the island's yachting industry, this is where it is all happening for the cruising community; for the landlubber, Lagoonies offers access to the world of globe-trotting sailors. For the sailing enthusiast considering the cruising lifestyle, it might be a chance to listen to the tales the veterans must tell of hurricanes, broken masts and other mishaps (you’ll be sufficiently discouraged to attempt crossing oceans unprepared).

The open-air waterfront restaurant and lively bar offers a surprisingly refined dining experience at very reasonable prices. With a diverse menu, Lagoonies offers enticing choices such as salads, steaks, seafood, and mouthwatering burgers. With a full bar also available, Lagoonies has a fantastic Happy Hour featuring live music several days of the week.

---

**The Flamboyant Tree**

Judging by its name alone, you can imagine that the flowers covering the tree are vibrant, tropical colors and majestic in appearance. While it is on other islands, this extravagant tree is held close to our hearts on island.

The Flamboyant tree, also known as the Royal Poinciana, originated in Madagascar but found its way to the Caribbean.

Due to the red, orange and yellow blossoms the tree gets between June and September, this national symbol is also called the Flame Tree.

Seed pods on Flamboyant trees are long and slender, and when dry, the seeds inside rattle when the pods are shaken, making your very own island instrument.

We are proud to have the Flamboyant as the national tree of St. Maarten.
Carnival Village: Drink, Eat, Fête!

Continued from Page 1

But these happenings are not the main reason why most residents make the village their ‘home’ during Carnival. What really draws in the crowds from lunch until the early morning hours are the drinks and food!

Carnival Village is ‘walled off’ by over a hundred colorful wooden booths that each offers a unique blend of drinks, food, and personality. Barbequed ribs and chicken served with rice, potato salad or macaroni pie, are found at most booths.

If you take a closer look at the menu, you will find that many also offer dishes you might not be as familiar with such as Roti, Conch Soup, Crab Back and more. There are even rumors you can try ‘alligator sate’ this year!

Be warned! The drinks at the village are just as dangerous as they sound and taste. We dare you to try as many ‘specialty’ drinks as you can; Birth Control and Zero Visibility were some of the favorites last year. Try them all to find your personal favourite, but remember to assign a designated driver or call a taxi afterwards. Prices for drinks might vary from booth to both.

Carnival Village is located on Soualiga Road, just a short walk from Philipsburg.

More information on concerts, events and happenings during Carnival and at the village can be found on: www.sxm-carnival.com.
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Caribbean Beer: What Does This Beer Taste Like?

Continued from Page 1

Let’s start with a light beer that is the national beer of Trinidad and Tobago, Carib. Similar in taste to Corona, this beer has achieved the ideal balance between malt sweetness and hop bitterness. With a semi-dry finish, it pairs nicely with a slice of lime.

Next up, Presidente, a pilsner style beer from the Dominican Republic. It is known to be a clean, light bodied and crisp beer that is a tremendous thirst-quenching choice.

Wonder what Red Stripe, the national beer of Jamaica, tastes like? It’s also an American style lager. What is different about this beer is that in addition to the hop flavor and bitterness, there is a subtle butterscotch essence which leaves a nice, crisp finish.

Have you tried Amstel Bright? Developed in Curacao specifically for the Caribbean market, it also brewed on our fellow Dutch island. As far as ‘local’ beers go, this is the closest to crafted in St. Maarten/St-Martin beer you can get!

Then there is Desperado. It’s a tequila flavored, full bodied beer that, oddly enough, hails from France. While it is not produced in the Caribbean, it sure is a local favorite.

Speaking of flavored beers, we would be remiss to not mention Panache! While you can get it pre-bottled, Panache is mixing your favorite beer with SevenUp. This certainly is a beer with flair!

Last but certainly not least, Heineken. You’ve probably had this beer before back home, but it is a longtime island favorite that we consider to be THE beer of St. Maarten/St-Martin. Don’t be surprised if you order a Heineken and it is served to you in a smaller bottle. We like to think of it as delightful consideration that beer should be consumed frosty cold; so, while the fluid ounces are less, your beer will stay cold to the last drop!

No matter which beer you choose, we know you will be satisfied now that you know a little more about these local beer varieties. Enjoy your local beer tasting!

And if you don’t find any Caribbean beer to your liking: don't despair, all American and international brands are available as well.
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Making a Difference for World Day at Buccaneer Beach Bar

This Saturday April 21, Buccaneer Beach Bar will be participating in Earth Day! This special day is in support of World Earth Day, which is an annual global day where various events are held to demonstrate support of environmental protection.

Buccaneer Beach Bar is proudly planting trees, in addition to raising critical funds for the St. Maarten Nature Foundation and EPIC in support of their restoration efforts of our beautiful island. This is a terrific way to enjoy the nice weather and make a difference!

Palm trees will be provided and planted by Caribbean-Palms.com. Of course, this wouldn't be an island festivity without a little rum and live music. Buccaneer's will be doing an Earth Day Bacardi mojito special, with proceeds being donated to the St. Maarten Nature Foundation. Ronny Santana and Friends, as well as DJ Shef, will be performing live starting 3 PM.

So, if you want to participate or support the cause by drinking several mojitos, join Buccaneer Beach Bar in making a difference on our island in the name of Earth Day.
Johnny Cakes: A Must Try on Your Island Stay

By: Laura Bijnsdorp

Your stay on St. Maarten is not complete without trying one of the island’s staple snacks: ‘Johnny Cakes’. You should be able to spot these golden, fluffy, circular balls of fried-goodness at any restaurant on the island that deems themselves ‘local’.

Once these treats were known as “Journey Cakes”, as they were perfect to carry along on trips to work. Back in the day, when no cars zoomed around the island, a journey anywhere, could take a while! We aren’t sure why they are now popularly called ‘Johnny Cakes’, but our island accent is the likely culprit.

Its name might insinuate that it’s a sweet dessert. However, it is actually more comparable to bread. Johnny Cakes are made with just a few ingredients – mainly flour, baking powder, sugar, milk and butter. Each family has their own recipe and it is not an easy task getting them to share their secrets.

Our Johnny Cakes are usually made with white flour but there are many variations. These variations often use cornmeal as their main ingredient and can be found in other Caribbean islands, South America, the Atlantic Coast of North America and even Australia.

Breakfast, lunch or dinner; a true St. Maartener won’t say no to a good Johnny Cake at any time of the day. They’re tasty on their own, but can also be sliced through the middle and stuffed with cheese, egg, tuna, chicken, beef or best yet – salt fish.

When you talk to the older folks on our island, they will try to convince you that a baked Johnny Cake is the way to go. On the boardwalk, Connie’s might be the only spot on the island that still makes a batch of traditional Johnny Cakes that are baked over an open fire to allow for a special taste.

To the island’s younger generation, a Johnny Cake just isn’t a Johnny Cake unless it has been fried to crispy-perfection. Fried Johnny Cakes are easier to find – just keep a lookout while you’re exploring our island, or ask a friendly resident.

If you are on the island during our Carnival season you are in luck! You are sure to find an array of Johnny Cakes at the official Carnival Village, located just a short walk away from Philipsburg.

Enjoy your journey on our island, with a Johnny Cake in hand!
Ice Cream: Sin-tastic and Tasty Treat

In a recent issue, we wrote about the sins available on our island; we were not shy to touch on subjects from casino gambling to adult entertainment. But, to our dismay, we left out one major vice: ice cream!

This is a pretty drastic oversight; because with the Carousel in Simpson Bay, we have the ultimate temple of gelato right here in our midst.

A grand structure on the waterfront of the Simpson Bay lagoon is home to an original Venetian carousel, and coincidentally also to a highly professional gelato manufacturer and shop. Inside the beautiful building you'll find a wide selection of ever changing flavors.

Gio's Gelato is a strong contender for the best Italian gelato made on St. Maarten. The cafe recently moved from Maho Village to Puerto del Sol in Simpson Bay. Gio's offers happy hour deals between 4 PM and 6 PM, which makes the decision of where to go for Happy Hour even more difficult. Gelato or margaritas? You be the judge.

In Marigot we find another option for getting our icy treats. Yögart is located right next to the posh West Indies shopping mall on the French side and features frozen yogurt. True, this is a 'healthier' version of ice cream and gelato, but quite tasty and admittedly strangely addictive. Eight flavors are available at any given time.

Please consider trying Etna ice cream, the island's official local ice cream manufacturer for many decades. You'll find Etna in many supermarkets and gas stations. We like the fact that they maintain their own freezers, so that you always buy ice cream which has been properly stored at a cold temperature.

This leads to a word of caution about shopping for ice cream in our supermarkets and gas stations: before you spend your money on an expensive pint of Häagen-Dazs or Ben and Jerry's, make sure that the contents are rock hard. Too many of the freezers are poorly maintained and often have food handlers with no urgency to put new ice cream deliveries into a freezer. Good rule of thumb: if its soft, don't buy it! If it is frozen solid, make sure that there is no external ice on it. This indicates that the items have been previously thawed, collected condensation on the outside and then were re-frozen. What you will find inside is a crystallized mess of formerly delicious ice cream. Nothing a true connoisseur could enjoy!
The Category 5+ Hurricane Irma is now part of our history. We made it through and we don't mind if vicious Irma is remembered as a drink that causes a serious 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!)

First there was a big hurricane, the strongest ever measured. Our island was shaken up severely. And among the many bars we have here, hundreds of bottles of the fine liquors were smashed, leaving only a few intact. Our resident mixologists had to be truly creative during the first days after the hurricane to come up with some new cocktails with very limited resources.

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

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

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