You Want Me to Drink the Weed Whacker Tea?

By Sarina Alexander

Whether you were raised in the Caribbean or are of Caribbean descent, if there’s one thing you know about, it’s bush tea. As a child, you probably remember that unpleasant scent and the horrible taste of “thé amé”, bitter tea.

But, when you’re raised on an island with a culture that embraces bush tea and journey cakes, you also recall rosemary and lemongrass tea with a taste and aroma that sweetens your taste buds.

The Caribbean, filled with native plants and plants that have traveled with the former slaves, have been used over the years for more than just gardening purposes. Indeed, each fruit, root and leaf has medicinal properties that the indigenous and local people use for homemade remedies.

Lemongrass, which is said to induce sweat and cools down the body is often given to treat high fevers, but is also considered to treat coughs, colds and nasal congestion.

Locals rave over a fruit called guinep. During guinep season, you can find many young boys on the side of the road selling their harvests in clusters. Its leaves can be brewed to boost the immune system, treat high blood pressure, intestinal conditions such as stomach pain or peptic ulcers and its seeds are said to eradicate loose bowels (if you get our drift).

The sour sop is most famous on the island for its delicious juice; and tea made...

Falling in Love with Love Watersports

By Leslie Hickerson

For those of us that are lucky enough to live here, your days off can be filled with the things most people only get to try on their vacations.

Celebrating 50 Years of Carnival History

By Lazette Browne

As the island prepares to fete for Carnival 50, let's explore its humble beginnings and the transformation into the mega, month-long cultural extravaganza it is today.

Full Article on Page 15

Full Article on Page 20

Continued on Page 21
Letter From the Editor
March 22, 2019

Hello to our readers! Thank you for choosing our publication to study up on where to dine, shop, party and do while on St. Maarten/St-Martin.

After several weeks filled with massive events and parties, it is time to rest! Dutch side Carnival is just around the corner, so take the time now to experience the beautiful surroundings of the island. Go for a hike, take a dip in the warm tropical waters or perhaps go for an exhilarating boat tour.

This issue focuses on many happenings that have or will take place soon—some with very kind-hearted intentions. Of course, it wouldn’t be the Weekly Edition without a juicy story here and there or highlighting an activity to partake in. I hope you enjoy!

If you enjoyed our publication and would like to continue to read from home, please use the QR code to the right to access our digital publication on our website.

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.

Visit Us Online for
FREE Business Directory

What does the number on each advertisement stand for?

Please refer to the map on Pages 10/11. Regions of the island are marked with a number which corresponds to the number you see on ads.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Dutch Side

Ambulance: 912 or +1 721 542 2111
Hospital: 910 or +1 721 543-1111
Police: 911 or +1 721 542-2222
Fire Department: 919 or +1 721 545-4222

French Side

Ambulance: +590 (590) 52 00 52
Hospital: +590 (590) 52 26 29
Police: +590 (590) 87 88 33

Entire Island
24 Hour Emergency Pharmacy:
+1 721.581-6243

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Please email letters to the publisher’ to sxm@email.com
Getting into SXM Festival: Was I Supposed to Know a Secret Password?

By Leslie Hickerson

For the third time the SXM Festival was held on French St-Martin. This music festival has multiple events all around the island for dance, house and techno music lovers. For 2019, the organizers wanted to focus on island resident attendance, which has been a low percentage of the partygoers in the past. By offering lower rate tickets for those with St. Maarten/St-Martin IDs, the group wanted to entice locals living on the island to join those music lovers who fly here for the event.

While they did acknowledge that the ticket cost was out of reach for many of us that live and work on the island, where they fell flat was marketing this concept to the locals. Most people throughout the island did not know the details about the event. If they knew anything at all it was that there was some type of music festival happening in Happy Bay. The beach/pool parties, transportation to and from, even where and how to buy tickets all remained a mystery. Several locals toyed with the idea of joining either the festival or (for those that work weekends) the after parties.

When it came time to purchase tickets, the links were confusing and the website provided very little info about reduced local rates. For those that persevered and contacted festival support, the staff was helpful and quick to respond.

The first event of the week was a dinner Wednesday evening at Emilio’s that was described as press trip for ‘partners, sponsors, artists, promoters, and international press.’ As someone that didn’t know much about the event, I was eager to go to the event to learn about the schedule, how to get tickets, and what to expect. I was disappointed to find out the so-called press trip was more a cocktail hour for those who already knew the details. I decided that the cost was too high to only attend partial events (I had no idea about the local rate and worked over the weekend) so I would try again next year.

After hearing from some attendees about the set up of the festival on Happy Bay I wish I had pushed through and contacted the website support to get more details. All of those that attended have talked about the amazing job the staff did in putting together an incredible experience at the beach. Next year with some more effort in marketing to residents the event could have a huge amount of local attendees.
A Look Inside the SXM Festival Last Weekend

Photos Courtesy of SXM Festival

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Continued next page
A Look Inside the SXM Festival Last Weekend

Continued from previous page

Photos Courtesy of SXM Festival

We have our Nuit Leau dinner service every Wed to Thur from 6:30 pm until late in our relaxing tropical area by the pool. For reservations, email us at reservations@loteriefarm.com or call us at +590 696-678616

Here we also have our Fly Zone & Fly Zone Extreme where you go from treetop to treetop using a variety of obstacles like zip lines, log bridges, ladders, nets, tight ropes etc. If you are game for some active excitement, you have come to the right place. We are open from 9 am until 3:30 pm 7 days a week.

For you all in the service industry, we have our Indistree Monday with 50% off our regular and VIP cabanas. This offer does not include a discount for daybeds or cabanitas.

www.loteriefarm.com

C’EST DANS NOTRE NATURE
POOL PARTY

Every last Saturday of the month, noon to 8 pm

Every last Saturday of the month we have our famous, Treetop Pool Party here from noon until 6 pm. For cabana/cabanito and table reservations, please contact Samantha at sam@loteriefarm.com
Little Switzerland to Launch Breitling Premier Collection

By Hilary Grant, GIA Graduate Gemologist

Watch aficionados get ready- the Breitling Boutique at Little Switzerland in Philipsburg is launching the Premier Collection next week.

Breitling is a luxury Swiss timepiece brand that was founded in 1884. The company is known for their quality, craftsmanship and precision made chronometers for aviators. This well-known company was critical to the development of complications for chronograph timepieces. Breitling invented two independent push pieces and offered to the world in 1969 the first selfwinding chronograph.

Today, Breitling manufactures its own movements for their chronographs. This highly technical design and process allows them to guarantee their reliability- thus dubbing the brand as the “instruments for professionals.”

To ensure that their guarantee is unfailing and approved by the Swiss Official Chronometer Testing Institute, each movement must be fitted with a white working dial and a black seconds hand. The movements are then separately wound once a day using a machine that turns the crown according to a determined number of rotations.

Precision is measured by a robot that reads the position of the seconds hand. Each individually numbered movement is tested for the duration of fifteen consecutive days and nights.

The controls are performed in five positions and at three different temperatures (23° C, 38° C and 8° C). To earn the much-coveted title of an officially certified chronometer, the movement must meet seven extremely rigorous eliminator criteria. For example, the daily variation in rate of less than -4/+6 seconds; which means the timepiece is functioning to a 99.99% degree of accuracy.

Is this process necessary? Well, when you want to be one of the top timepiece brands in the world- yes. It is important to note that only five percent of the watches produced in Switzerland are chronometer-certified.

The Premier Collection was originally launched in the 1940s, highlighting the elegance of every day watches.

Now this compilation of sophisticated watches is being re-launched with a nod to the historic story of the name but with the attributes, performance and design that has come to be expected of the Breitling brand.

---

INVITATION
PREMIER LAUNCH
Breitling Boutique St. Maarten cordially invites you to discover the new Premier collection.
Be the first to view the Premier models with an exclusive day of shopping, champagne and gourmet chocolates.
We look forward to welcoming and introducing you to the new world of Breitling.
MARCH 27th to 30th, 2019
ADDRESS: BREITLING BOUTIQUE, 52 FRONT STREET, PHILIPSBURG, ST. MAARTEN
START: 10:00 A.M. | END: 4:00 P.M.
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Tzu Chi Foundation: Providing 150 Food Care Packages to Those in Need

Anytime the words “touching”, “blessing” and “impressive” are used to describe any event, our ears perk up and make us hungry for more information.

The St. Maarten Tzu Chi Foundation held a Gratitude and Blessing Ceremony at the Philipsburg Cultural and Community Center to give thanks as well as reflect on the work done in the community over the past year. It is also the time to educate those attending as well as the public at large about the environment and other pressing issues.

The event also serves as the occasion to present Tzu Chi Founder Master Cheng Yen’s appreciation Hong Boa (red envelope) to local volunteers and participants. The Hong Boa is a red envelope containing a gift usually given on special occasions.

This annual event took the opportunity to address an unspoken need in the community: food. The Foundation presented 150 food packages to pre-selected recipients, in an effort to help alleviate burdens on families in need in the community.

This year’s event was informative, educational and entertaining and included a performance from a group of Chinese students, a performance of the sign language song, “So I stand up,” an educational presentation on global warming from St. Dominic High’s International Baccalaureate (IB) students, a review of Tzu Chi’s post hurricane Irma efforts in the community in 2017 and 2018 and speeches and sharing from past recipients.

Smith said at the end of the program that it was very enlightening to see what Tzu Chi has been doing in St. Maarten over the past years and especially after Hurricane Irma. “You have reached out to those in need, you have assisted, provided the necessities that people needed and I know that St. Maarten is very grateful to you and I want to wish you well... for doing such excellent work. You are touching lives and you are making a difference in the lives of people and when you make a difference in the lives of people gradually you can make a difference in the whole world.”

Winston Flanders, whose home Tzu Chi volunteers cleaned and decluttered after hurricane Irma, expressed his gratitude to the foundation for their efforts during brief remarks at the event. “I appreciate all that they do for me,” Flanders said. “It was a wonderful experience. Even though I don’t know you, you still came out to help me clean up my home and I really appreciate it,” Flanders said adding that when he gets better he wants to return the favor by helping persons in need in his area of expertise – plumbing and electrician.
A group of St. Dominic High IB students depicted the effects of global warming on the environment through video and skit and showed the audience how they can play their part to stop the degradation by conserving water and electricity.

At the end of the event the students said they enjoyed working with the foundation for the project, noting that the work of the foundation is touching and loving. One student said she learnt a lot during the process and another said the experience opened her mind to see how humanity can work together to create a better world.

Saskia Anatdawoed, who was one of three persons to be certified as a Tzu Chi commissioner last year, said she has been a happy Tzu Chi volunteer for more than ten years. “I feel that being part of Tzu Chi has done something positive in my life for me. Tzu Chi is more than charity and it is bigger than humanity; it is a great culture and it is so much a part of my life that Tzu Chi is center of my calm,” she said. “It took me a long time to realize this. In life, you have to find yourself. You reach a point in Tzu Chi that it is not about keeping yourself together or on the ground, it is about the people around you. It is all things positive, not perfect, but good.”

She said being in Tzu Chi has allowed her to assist others, discover life and most of all, help people who are in need.

“In Tzu Chi, I don’t look at myself in a negative light, I look around and see the beauty that surrounds me. After Irma, I realized that many people needed help... I went to Taiwan in November 2018 to be certified.

Being certified does not mean I have reached the finish mark, it means that now is the real beginning. It is now that I will start to actively take on Tzu Chi’s mission; walk in dharma and learn to live according to Tzu Chi’s mission by working in the community.”

The program culminated with volunteers and attendees holding lit candles while singing and distributing the 150 prepared food packages.

Tzu Chi Commissioner Sandra Cheung gives her best regards to everyone who attended the event, performed, presented or in any way supported the annual affair and looks forward to working even more in the St. Maarten community in the coming year.
The Unique St. Maarten/St-Martin Crossword Puzzle
Find out if you are a truly knowledgeable about our region and its culture, history and geography

Careful! This week's crossword puzzle has a couple trick questions. 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 spent much time here. It also means: the answers are valid for St. Maarten/St-Martin and the neighboring islands. For example, if we ask for an island directly to the North of our location, it can only be Anguilla.

If we are using compound words in the answer, they do NOT have spaces!

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 the island. If you detect an error, drop us a line at SXM@EMAIL.COM.

Puzzle Solution on page 22
Find Shopping, Activities and Services Here

1. **The Art Box**
   - Gallery
   - More than a gallery
   - Open Monday to Saturday, 10am to 6pm
   - THE ART BOX GALLERY - HOME OF ZDENKA WEST INDIES
   - 8YA WELFARE ROAD | COLE BAY | C.1 721 588 5999
   - THEARTBOX.XXM@GMAIL.COM

2. **Adult Toy Box**
   - Toys for Big Kids
   - Three Palm Plaza - Welfare Road, Cole Bay
   - (1-721) 544 2412
   - www.AdultToyBox.info

3. **Simpson Bay Pharmacy**
   - Your #1 Drugstore for:
     - Prescription and over-the-counter medication
     - Beauty and personal care products
     - Marine medical kits and supplies
   - We are open 7 days a week:
     - Monday - Friday from 8:30am - 7:00pm
     - Saturday from 9:00am - 1:00pm
     - Sunday and public holidays: From 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
   - Simpson Bay Yacht Club, Welfare Road #68, Cole Bay | +1 721 544-3653 | shoppharmacy@gmail.com

4. **NoCo Art Studio**
   - Free entrance
   - Saturdays 5:00-8:00 PM
   - Join us for the art tour at Terres Basses, lot 39
   - INFO: (590) 0690 306465 | annko_ngblove.nl

5. **INcredible Fitness & More**
   - Rhine Road 146 - Cupecoy
   - CALL: +1 721 554 3616

6. **Topper’s Rhum Distillery Tours**
   - St. Maarten’s newest attraction
   - BOOK YOUR TOUR TODAY
   - +1 721 520-0008
   - TOPPERSRUMTOURS.COM

7. **Centre Commercial de Mont Vernon**
   - Open from Monday to Saturday 10AM - 6PM
   - (590) 590 27-7913
   - One by K
   - EXCLUSIVE DESSERT

8. **Your Full Service Optician!**
   - Promenade Mall
   - 44 Front Street
   - (Opposite of the Horizon View Hotel)
   - Call
   - +590 690 36 64 65
   - Email
   - eyelandoptic.sxm@gmail.com
   - Optical Store
   - PHILIPSBURG

9. **Jo Junie Tours**
   - Take an island tour to experience the magic of St. Maarten/St-Martin
   - Air-Conditioned Vans - Passionate Guides - Free Beverages - Free home made rum punch - Free hotel pick-up & Taxi Service
   - CALL: +1 721 527 4496
   - Email
   - jojunietours@gmail.com
   - SINT ROSE ARCADE
   - Shopping right in the heart of Philipsburg, St Maarten

10. **Teo’s**
    - Bistro
    - Best Snorkeling Spots
    - Deserted Islands
    - St Martin Anguilla St Barths
    - CALL: (590) 0690 48 49 33
    - www.caribbeanmarines.com
Visit the Island's Party and Dining Hot Spots

1. **RD Vous Lounge**
   - Casual Gourmet Bistro
   - Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner
   -_call_1 721 545-9378
   - PORTO CUPIDO AT THE MARINA
   - For Reservations call +1 721 545-9378

2. **Taco Macho**
   - 'Enjoy the best of Latin hospitality'
   - Mexican - Colombian Restaurant & Bar
   - Happy Hour: Beer $2 - Margarita $5
   - Located at the Allegria Resort - enter at security gate - free parking! Call 1 721 545-5390 for reservation

3. **St. Maarten's Best International Restaurant**
   - Topper's
   - Steak - Seafood - Pasta
   - +1 721 545-3500
   - SXMtoppers.com

4. **Snoopy's**
   - Bar and Restaurant at the Bridge to Snoopy Island
   - Great food, great Happy Hour, live entertainment!
   - Welfare Road, Simpson Bay, St. Maarten
   - Call for Reservation +1 721 580-4202

5. **The Boon**
   - 'Right on pristine Simpson Bay Beach!'
   - Casual Gourmet Bistro
   - Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner
   - (8 AM to 10 PM)
   - 117 Simpson Bay Road, Simpson Bay
   - Call +1 721 545-3070 for reservation

6. **mélange**
   - Steaks • Seafood • Grille
   - 'Only Tabletop BBQ Grill Restaurant'
   - Open 5.30 PM to late
   - At the Princess Casino in Port de Plaisance
   - Call +1 721 526-4049 for reservation
   - www.melangeSXM.com

7. **Orient Village Plantation Restaurant Bar & Lounge**
   - Opening Hours:
   - Tuesday - Sunday
   - Breakfast 8am - 10am
   - Lunch 12pm - 3pm
   - Dinner 6pm - 9.30pm
   - Mondays CLOSED!

8. **Bistrot Caraïbes**
   - Grand Case San Martin
   - For Reservations Call +590 590 290 829 or +590 590 836 144

9. **Pollo's Hermans**
   - 66 Corner SXM Airport Road, Simpson Bay
   - Delivery: +1 721 556 0978
   - 10% OFF COUPON

10. **Wetzel's Pretzels**
    - N. Debrot Straat 4 (Across Post Office)
    - Philipsburg, St. Maarten
    - CALL +1 721 542-3100

11. **Thirsty Barons**
    - #65 AIRPORT ROAD SIMPSON BAY

12. **Buffalo Wings**
    - Captain's Conditions Apply
    - BUY ONE BURGER
    - GET ONE SAUCE FREE
Falling in Love with Love Watersports

By Leslie Hickerson

There are hundreds of activities to take part in on St. Maarten/St-Martin. For those of us that are lucky enough to live here, your days off can be filled with the things most people only get to try on their vacations. For me one thing I have always wanted to do in my free time was wakeboarding.

After several attempts with friends, and even professional companies on island, I hadn’t succeeded in anything other than being dragged around at the back of the boat unable to stand.

I decided maybe wakeboarding wasn’t for me. Then I met the crew at Love Watersports. They welcomed our group onto the boat with smiles and a relaxed manner. On board they were quick to ask what our experiences were and offered to help me try the sport out one more time.

The tips I received from Axelle Bissonetti and Quentin Sucheyre made an immediate and significant difference as I stood up straight away and was able to enjoy my time being pulled behind the boat and learning to steer and travel over the water. They truly wanted to help everyone enjoy the experience and were very patient with the beginners and gave time for the more advanced students to practice tricks.

Between their top-notch service, low cost rates, and excellent location in Grand Case; I have found a company that I will visit over and over again. After their total devastation in Hurricane Irma, it is fortunate that this company has remained loyal to the island and re-opened once again on St-Martin.

The Love Company originated in France as a restaurant and wedding dress boutique, before it came to the island opening a hotel on the French side. With the island hotel came the idea for a watersports company.

“Love Watersports was born, just under the Love Hotel, around five years ago. But then, you know the story, Irma in 2017. As the hotel was closed the watersports was too. Quentin worked there only one month before the hurricane as an employee, he decided to buy the company along with his friend Simon. We came back together in 2018 to run the business. We decided to re-open in Grand Case, as our main location, to remember that the Love Company’s heart is there,” said Bissonetti. Now the company operates as an affiliate of the TiWake Company.

Apparently, Quentin and Azelle see plenty of people that have tried to learn the same way I did- unsuccessfully.

“For sure you can ride behind your friend’s boat or a jet ski for some people. But the safety rules will not necessarily be respected. With an instructor, you will receive personal coaching, tailored lessons, a lot of tips for you to succeed, adapted speed and wake, and use quality equipment with a real watersports boat. We have very low rates so you can practice safely without spending too much money!”

The crew modifies their tips, driving, and location to best suit each guest on board, and are happy to work with beginner and advanced students. The most important thing for you to remember your first time is that you will fall, but they will tell you how to improve before you try again.

“Beginners will have to keep in mind that it’s an extreme sport (even if kids do wakeboard perfectly as well), so they need to be in good physical condition. Students also have to remember that they can fall off (that’s normal) but don’t give up. You don’t have to be afraid of this activity or being in the water, the instructor is always here for you. Everything is safe,” advises Bissonetti.

Part of the reason the company re-opened in Grand Case is that the setting is such a good one for the sport. The area is protected from wind most of the time and has very little seaweed. After your session you have lots of beach restaurants to choose from to relax and enjoy some well-calmed food and drinks.

For Bissonetti the most important factor for anyone trying the sport is to be safe, “Accidents can happen really fast with a non-professional. A professional will prevent from that, and, if something does happen, your instructor will know how to react. The safety rules, like operating more than 300 meters from the coasts (not to hit a swimmer or a turtle) don’t be close to the boats, never go in a part of the natural reserve. We have a defined area to enjoy the activity, which might not be the case with an ‘amateur’. But, no worries... Quentin will be as cool as your friends!”

To book your session with the crew contact Love Watersports at their Facebook page to make your reservation today!
This Saturday, March 23rd, Les Fruits de Mer invites everyone to their Amuseum Naturalis Volunteer Day, held on the French side above Le Galion beach. Volunteers of all ages can lend a hand from 9 AM – 12 PM and then enjoy lunch together right after.

Les Fruits de Mer is a non-profit association based in St. Martin whose core mission is to raise awareness about nature, culture, and sport. The organization carries out this mission through publications, an education program, and special public outreach events that entertain, inspire, and inform.

“All are welcome, and anyone can help,” said Les Fruits de Mer President Jenn Yerkes. “We’ll be working on the museum and gardens, and starting new seedlings to give away at our free plant stand. It’s always a lot of fun and a great chance to meet other people who love local heritage, plants and wildlife.”

Amuseum Naturalis at The Old House is a free museum of St-Martin’s nature and heritage, located at the historic Old House in French Quarter. Phase One of the Amuseum has been open since July 2018. It includes an exhibit hall, a botanic walk, several stunning viewpoints and gardens for bush tea and traditional crops.

“If you love plants, you’ll definitely want to come on Saturday,” said Amuseum curator Mark Yokoyama. “We gave away over 300 plants in the last few weeks, so we’ll be working to rebuild our stock of native trees and plants, and other plants traditionally grown on St. Martin. Be sure to save the seeds from the next sour sop or sugar apple you eat. We can also reuse your plastic yogurt containers as pots for seedlings.”

Amuseum Naturalis is an all-volunteer project. Over the last year, more than 200 volunteers spent over 4,000 hours working on the Amuseum. Since opening, the Amuseum has welcomed over 3,000 visitors, including over 1,500 local students.

The public is also invited to visit the Amuseum during regular opening hours, Tuesday to Saturday 9 AM – 12 PM. Admission is always free, and complimentary school and youth group visits are also offered.
Adventures in Sex and Dating in St. Maarten
A Regular Column by Leslie Hickerson

What happens on St. Maarten... gets told in this column.

Back in the good old days at a local piano bar there was an additional source for entertainment. Anyone could take their turn embarrassing themselves on a stripper pole, which after a few shots there was always a certain demographic just couldn’t refuse the lure of giving it a spin.

Katie was no exception and after several tequilas at the end of a long day in the sun, the alcohol convinced her to give it a whirl. Within two minutes of hopping up for her turn she had quite a bad fall straight on her head. Instead of pushing her to get checked for a concussion, the group at the bar decided more shots would be the cure and helped her self-medicate.

Apparently onlooker Gabriel decided that her clumsiness was endearing and that he should make a move. The same tequila that encouraged her to dance also told her the best course of action would be to escalate things with Gabriel to new levels right away.

About ten minutes and three shots after meeting each other, Gabriel and Katie locked themselves in the bathroom of the bar and got acquainted in the most personal way.

The lesson we can learn from this story is to not let your friends make decisions after consuming half a bottle of Patron. The bump on Katie’s head left more of an impression that Gabriel’s two minutes of passion.
Sudoku Puzzles

Try your skills on our Sudoku. Ranging from easy to difficult, giving you the opportunity to see if you are a puzzle master.

Need help or want to see if you got it correct? Find the Sudoku solutions on Page 22. Good Luck!

Easy

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M-Tech Offers More Than Just Electrical Supplies

A new kind of hardware store has been established with M-Tech at the bottom of Orange Grove Road in Cole Bay. We are presently in the months before hurricane season, and this is an excellent time to check sources for preparedness. And whoever is tired of the never-ending blackouts caused by GEBE, might be interested in investing in a generator.

Managing Director Rakesh Jethani explains, "Our store is well stocked with electrical items, such as any kind of cable. We carry a broad selection of solar powered and standard LED lights. And if you are looking for an auxiliary generator, we have great deals on the Pulsar brand."

Entering M-Tech, it is apparent that the inventory covers way more than only electrical items; all standard hardware is on the shelves, there are plumbing products, paint brushes, tools, even special deals on flat-panel TVs.

Jethani points at the Makita display, "We are an authorized distributor for this top brand of power tools.' There is a row of refrigerators, freezers, water heaters, air condition units, and other household appliances; these are well-selling items, and M-Tech plans to extend the line of products.

Managing Director: Rakesh Jethani

Rakesh Jethani explains the M-Tech philosophy, "The store will focus on standard hardware and appliance items. But if we find deals somewhere on the international market, we are not shy to offer them as well and pass the savings to our customers. Come to M-Tech for your standard hardware needs, but keep your eyes open for some unique sales we have."
Finding Tranquility in an Unexpected Place
By Sarina Alexander

Over time, we could hear whispers and loud declarations of anger proclaiming that St. Maarten/St-Maarten could no longer be dubbed, ‘The Friendly Island.’ Yet, when you ignore the naysayers, abstain from negative news and simply place yourself in a position of discovery and open-mindedness, you suddenly realize that SXM still has every reason to maintain its title of The Friendly Island, through one key element: tolerance. It’s no news to anyone that this land welcomes people from hundreds of different origins, backgrounds, social statuses, cultures, religions and beliefs.

But how amazing is it to see such an atypical scene as the one witnessed last night. An Asian fantasy jewelry street vendor organized an International Buddhist Festival at... wait for it... Marty’s- the Dutch bar in Simpson Bay. Not exactly what the attendees had in mind. Picturing more of a Zen, Feng shui setting with beautiful decor and the sound of rainforest and chirping birds; the loud laughter and Latin karaoke being performed next door was quite an unusual contrast.

First, eat, it’s mandatory. The fast-paced little lady encourages, and for some imposes, that you eat from the vegetable and vegan mock-meat based mini-buffet that was prepared by her care for our pleasure and for a lot of us, our discovery. Then, the women and men were asked to write their full names down on two distinctive papers so that, “Master could pray for us, when Buddha arrived”, though we were said to already be in the presence of the protective forces of the 28 Buddhas referred to in the Buddhavamsa.

Once everyone was done eating, we all headed up towards the beautifully set table, or in this case, altar. A big white jolly Buddha, placed among offerings such as oranges, a pineapple, candles and incense was nicely prepared before us for prayer and devotion. The men went first, learning what is said to be the passport to the after-life before proceeding to a series of prayers in Mandarin. We were simply asked to repeat, as best we could, what Master instructed; and during the brief recurring moments of prayers, we were instructed to ask whatever we truly desired.

After each group had finished their devotions, Master pronounced indistinguishable words (or is it simply that I don’t speak fluent Mandarin? – Ni hao!), did a cool hand motion with what appeared to be two long sticks to which she lit a flame (excuse my ignorance) before extinguishing it in a bowl of liquid. Then, she approached each person individually doing another cool hand motion around their faces, first with the right hand, then pressing on the center of their faces, between the two brows before reproducing the same hand lotion with the left hand.

With all due respect, I felt like I was in one of those anime films I enjoy watching so much. It was really pleasant to meet such different people who, for the vast majority who weren’t of Asian descent gather together to discover and practice this rite. We left satisfied and “protected by Buddha for eternity”. My sincere congratulations to the organizer of this small gathering and to the attendees that showed a great sign of interest, openness and kindness.
Celebrating 50 Years of Carnival History

Thousands of enthused island residents danced the night away behind giant flatbed rigs this past Saturday. The trucks carried music bands and DJs while slowly making their way through Simpson Bay, across the Causeway and looping back through Cole Bay to return to Kimsha Beach. This was the kick-off to the official St. Maarten Carnival season, and from now on we can enjoy a different event every weekend until the main carnival weeks begin on the twentieth of April. This year is special: the island celebrates it the golden anniversary of half a century of local festivities.

As the island prepares to fete for Carnival 50, let's take some time to look back at the history of carnival on our island, to explore its humble beginnings and the transformation into the mega, month-long cultural extravaganza it is today.

Caribbean carnival is rooted in the history of colonialism and the gaining of freedom. The tradition itself started in Catholic Europe and was exported by the French and Spanish to their new domains in the Caribbean. For the most part, settlers celebrated carnival as a series of balls, fancy dinners, concerts and hunting parties during the two weeks before Lent. The first festival with a parade took place in 1783 in Trinidad. The island was introduced to the tradition of the Fat Tuesday masquerade by French settlers. In 1883, with the signing of the Emancipation Bill, another layer of culture was added to the fabric of Carnival. The newly freed African population took to the streets and celebrated both their freedom and culture by dressing in costumes and headdresses made of feathers and dancing to music performed by the beating of drums or playing of the steel pan, an instrument made of old steel drums and born in Trinidad.

The three aspects of early Caribbean carnival of music, dancing, and costumes are to this day the focal point of celebrations on all the islands in the Antilles. Carnival soon journeyed beyond the borders of Trinidad and found itself replicated throughout the region, becoming a cherished tradition for all.

Carnival was introduced to Dutch Sint Maarten in the 1970s. There was a desire to combine and celebrate St. Martin's Day, Kingdom Day and the Dutch Queen's Birthday. There were parades with troupes and talent shows. The Oranje Committee was a group of government workers assembled to organize what they called ‘The Festivities’. In 1970, two members traveled to St. Thomas to observe the newly estab-

ished Carnival over there. Based on what they witnessed, the committee used the inspiration to set up a festival similar in nature. The first “Festivities” were held on St. Martin's Day of that same year. The site was next to where Philipsburg Utilities stands today and then moved to the lot now occupied by the Sundial School and Philipsburg Jubilee Library.

Early on, the need arose for the event to be moved to a new date as well. The French side of the island began hosting its own St- Martin’s daily activities. Interest in the Dutch-side version of the “Festivities” was low, as the French side celebrations were a distraction. A new date was chosen: April 30th, the Queen’s birthday. The timing appeared perfect as it came at the end of the tourism “high season” and Carnival for St. Thomas. It offered the opportunity to extend the season and attract revelers from St. Thomas at the same time. With the date change, the festival site was again moved, to Pond Island where it still stands today.

The committee had a budget of just 1,500 Guilders to work with, but luckily were supplemented by donations from the business community and free electricity from GEBE. Troupes and bands were bought in from Aruba, flown in on tickets donated by an airline. After the date change and move to Pond Island, the event blossomed.

Popular bands from neighboring islands were invited to play, and there was the introduction of a Calypso competition. In the mid-1980s funds run dry, and the future of Carnival was in question for a time until new organizers took over.

Fast forward to 2019, and we are proudly celebrating 50 years of Carnival. The history of the event may not have roots as deep as on other islands, and it may not be as big as the events in Trinidad, but it is something that we can all be proud of.

St. Maarten has managed to carve out a name for itself and its carnival in the region.

Out of humble beginnings, it turned into a month-long celebration as the leading cultural event of the island. This is reflected most aptly in the official Carnival slogan, “Come experience life”. The concerts, pageants, and parades are bigger, glitzier and more colorful than ever. The food is always delicious!

St. Maarten’s Carnival has proven to everyone that big things to come in small packages.

50 years in any tradition is a significant achievement, and the Islands Carnival governing body, SCDF (St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation) plans on making this the best carnival in local history: a glittering festival that will be talked about for years to come!
You Want Me to Drink the Weed Whacker Tea?

Continued from Page 1

from its leaves is believed locally to treat and prevent cancer. But be aware, recent studies from renowned cancer organizations such as the Cancer Treatment Centers of America and Cancer Research UK, state that there is not any "overwhelming evidence to support these claims."

Surprisingly enough, the sweet and succulent mangoes found in the Caribbean can be used for more than just a savory dessert. Packed with high levels of vitamin A, B and C, infusing the mango leaves in hot water is used locally to treat diabetes, balance the metabolism and prevent symptoms of hypertension.

We now observe a rise in popularity of the moringa plant around the world as natural superfood, but it has always been rooted within Caribbean beauty and medicinal customs. Indeed, this plant is known to have many health benefits such as it antibacterial and anti-fungal properties - which aids with urinary tract infections and digestive problems.

The high concentration of polyphenols in its leaves help protect the liver and its high content of vitamins E and C help support brain health. The Journal of Neurosciences in Rural Practice published a study called, "Effect of plant extracts on Alzheimer’s disease: An insight into therapeutic avenues", where Moringa has been tested as a treatment for Alzheimer’s disease, with what they cite to be positive preliminary results.

As a people with access to so many forms of free or accessible home medicinal ingredients, you would expect us to be among the healthiest people on the planet, right? Yet, the constant dissociation with ancestral knowledge and customs have converted personal gardens with cabinets of pharmaceutical drugs.

A study conducted in Sint Maarten by students of the American University of the Caribbean (AUC) entitled, “Exploring the use of bush teas on the island of St. Maarten”, highlighted that a variety of more than 55 types of bush teas are used locally. Tea has always been and continues to be a product of trade. And, as we have entered the era of health-consciousness, we observe innovative, award-winning tea companies like Caribbean Cure that align tradition with modern business to promote healthier lifestyles. In 2018, Caribbean Cure was "one of only two in the Region to be shortlisted for a SIAL Paris 2018 Product Innovation award".

I was curious as to what business-minded, innovative local would consider creating their own tea from locally found plants. There just might be something to ponder over here...

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