Images of the Carnival 50 Grand Parade

The Next Party: Cinco de Mayo

Celebrated as a Mexican holiday, what are the roots of Cinco de Mayo? And where is the party on St. Maarten?

Yoga on the Beach with a Surfer

By Sarina Alexander

They call it Hot Studio Yoga up north in Canada, but here, it's yoga on the beach, no extra heating needed.

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Letter From the Editor  
May 2nd, 2019

The event season of St. Maarten is coming to the conclusion with the end of the carnival on Tuesday, May 7th. If you are a visitor to our island, use the remaining days to visit the Carnival Village in Philipsburg. Explore the amazing selection of food stands and soak in the atmosphere.

Sometimes, the message expressed in an article is not entirely aligned with the personal opinion of me, the publisher. And this is healthy for a publication. This issue contains an article pointing out environmental issues during carnival, especially during Jouvert. Yes, there were tons of trash, but I feel that we should praise the efforts of clean-up crews even more. The grand parade on Tuesday was an impressive example of how both the participants were careful in properly disposing of their trash and how the official clean-up crews were meticulous in their work. I have to say that the streets were cleaner than they were before the parade.

Jan Thoelke
Publisher

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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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Carnival 50: the Parade

Continued from Page 1

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Have Camera, Will Travel
Chris Morvan meets photographer Alexandra Schaede

Every day, millions of photographs are added to the world’s collection, and we are bombarded with them in printed magazines and newspapers, on huge roadside billboards and online. And yet it is still possible to recognize the work of someone with a real talent.

The picture of Alexandra Schaede that accompanies this interview, for instance. She set it up, chose the location and the lens, set the controls and, since she was the subject, passed the camera to someone else to press the button. She supplied it to us in black and white because she considered that the most effective treatment of the image.

Born and raised in St Maarten, Alexandra is making her way in the world of professional photography. Now based in Spain, she travels extensively, and a couple of weeks ago she could be found in California, taking pictures at the BNP Paribas tennis tournament in Indian Wells. The tennis connection is significant because her original ambition was to play professionally. She was a big fan of Roger Federer and Ana Ivanovic and spent countless hours honing her skills and fitness before eventually deciding it wasn’t for her as a career.

After finishing high school at Learning Unlimited, she studied sports management in Amsterdam, but didn’t enjoy the business side of it and at that point photography presented itself as what she wanted to do, “I had always loved photography,” she says. “But I hadn’t seen it as something I would pursue.”

But pursue it she did, with a one-year intensive course in New York. With the help and blessing of a very supportive family, Alexandra was on her way.

“I got my first professional camera when I was 19,” she says. “My Dad had always had a good camera that I used to use, but now I had a professional Canon Mk 3 with three lenses.”

Photography being so reliant on equipment, at this point Alexandra talks a bit about why she uses Canon (“My dad had a Canon so I was used to them and I’m comfortable with them”), but concludes that although equipment is very important, “It’s the eye in the end.”

Having said that, she then drools over a 400mm 2.8 lens that is new to the market. For the recent tennis assignment she rented one for two weeks (they cost about $11,000 to buy) and it seems the quality she appreciates in it most is that it is comparatively lightweight, at four pounds rather than its predecessors’ eight pounds or more.

“That’s really important because you’re running around all day with two cameras. This was my third year at the BNP Paribas tournament. The first year I borrowed a 200mm lens from another photographer and then I bought one, but this year I really wanted to try this new one, and it’s amazing. The quality, the light, I got some beautiful shots of Federer, Nadal, I’m really excited about those…”

Sports photography is not all that interests this enthusiast, though. She is equally happy indoors.

“I love natural light,” she says, “but I also like controlled light, because you can be really creative with it.” Her website www.alexandraschaede.com backs this up, with some stunning shots in various styles. There is a practical aspect to consider, too: earning a living. In Spain Alexandra takes commercial assignments and portraits, and will do the occasional bit of wedding photography, purely to pay the rent and enable her to do the more appealing projects.

Her first published work was for the German magazine Sports Bild, who bought her pictures of Rafael Nadal and top women’s tennis player Angelique Kerber. She’s a young woman on the rise, establishing her reputation and making connections.
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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 Anguila.

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 18
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Bruno's Place for Traditional French Cuisine
A casual street bistro for meals to remember

Continued from Page 1

Here you have one of the hidden treasures of our island's culinary scene: A modest street-front eatery, unassuming and without any pretentious chicness. The food is traditional French, with Italian flavors and Creole recipes completing the changing daily menu.

Chef Bruno Giannini has the professional background to satisfy the palates of patrons in St-Martin's gourmet temples but decided to operate his own restaurant. Here, he says, he can give his focus to quality home cooking.

Bruno was born in France to Italian parents, and this explains why Italian dishes are always part of his offerings. How did he get to St-Martin?

"I was working at the time on the Mediterranean island of Corsica and the season was coming to a close," he explains. "I overheard a conversation of three sailboat skippers who planned to cross the Atlantic for the Caribbean and bragged about the party life of Saint Martin." Without much further research, Bruno was sold on the idea of relocating into a tropical climate and bought his one-way ticket a week later in October '92. As a chef formally trained in Burgundy, it was easy for him to find a job and he started right away at the renowned Alabama Restaurant in Grand Case.

When he opened Bruno's Place in 2017 at the Marigot waterfront, fear of a hurricane did not enter his thinking. "The simple outdoor restaurant under the landmark of the island's oldest tree was set in the most coveted hospitality location of the French-side capital. The site gained international fame with the '97 movie production 'Speed 2 - Cruise Control', an action thriller shot in the waters around St-Martin and with the spectacular scene of a cruise-ship crashing into the town center of Marigot - only a few meters away from where we find Bruno's Place today.

Hurricane Irma certainly had an impact on Bruno's progress, with the beautiful Tamarind tree uprooted and killed. This is why the restaurant is still a work in progress, and the consistent post-hurricane lack of available craftsmen is slowing down the redesigning of the property even further. The somewhat improvised appearance should not deter the visitor from enjoying lunch or dinner at Bruno's Place. During most of the day, service is organized by the energetic Roger Lutz, remembered by frequent visitors from his work at restaurants in Marina Royale. As an avid biker, Roger also operates the popular Harley Davidson tours around the island.

"For the next months, we will make an extra effort to offer very attractive lunch packages," says Roger. "This is our way to showcase Bruno's amazing talents and to build up a clientele for the dinner hours." Bruno's is stocked with a good selection of French wines and any standard long-drink can be ordered from the full bar.

The restaurant is located at 15 Boulevard de France in Marigot.

For dinner reservations, please call +1-721 581-7876 (Dutch side phone) or +590 690 88 38 45 (French side phone).
Continued from Page 1

Cinco de Drinko
Join the Party at Taco Macho

Break out the maracas and sombreros and get your liver ready: Cinco de Mayo is here! But wait, why is May 5th a holiday and why does it revolve around drinking?

Most people would say it is for Mexican Independence Day, but that would be incorrect. The country’s Independence Day is September 16, which is also a national holiday. May 5th commemorates an underdog victory over France in the Battle of Puebla in 1862. The victory was electrifying for the Mexican forces and their supporters. This was significant in Mexican history because the larger, better equipped French army with significant advantages was defeated, slowing the French advance on Mexico City.

However, the French forces retreated and regrouped, and the invasion continued after Napoleon III sent additional troops to Mexico. The French were eventually victorious, winning the Second Battle of Puebla on 17 May 1863 and pushing on to Mexico City.

But enough of Mexican history, how did a bloody war develop into a festivity revolving around drinking? Oddly enough, Cinco de Mayo isn’t widely celebrated in Mexico outside of Puebla. In the early 1960s, many Mexican-American activists, rooted in the country’s growing civil rights movement, used the day as a source of pride with more Mexican-Americans celebrating the holiday north of the border in the United States than in Mexico itself.

In 1989, a beer ad campaign was introduced around the same time by importers of beers like Modelo and Corona. And now, visit Corona’s website and you will see a featured ‘Countdown to Corona de Mayo’ in the hours leading up to May 5.

So, as you get ready to crack open an icy cold Corona to celebrate this (Mexican?) holiday, remember you are really celebrating Mexican heritage of Mexico defeating France at the Battle of Puebla.

Taco Macho is party central on May 5th

Traditionally, the best location to enjoy Cinco de Mayo on our island is Taco Macho, the Colombian eatery which also gives the nod to Mexican culinary treats. There will be live music and a BBQ with many of Mexico's favorite dishes. Taco Macho is located behind Sunset Beach Bar in Beacon Hill and next to the Dunes Casino. Drive through the gate and turn left to find the restaurant. There is ample parking available.
Emerald - May's Birthstone

Continued from Page 4

With spring in full swing, emerald is the perfect color depicting this time of year. As the birthstone for May, this gemstone has been adored for centuries.

The first known emerald mines date back to 3500 BC in Egypt. Cleopatra was known to have an obsession with emerald and had a vast collection of stunning emeralds that she wore and used in her royal adornments. In fact, the ‘Cleopatra Mines’ always gave her first pick of the findings to appease this stylish royal.

Variations of this rich green color intimate soothing, lush gardens. It is widely believed that emerald has the power to make its wearer more intelligent and quick-witted, and it was once believed to cure diseases like cholera and malaria.

The word ‘emerald’ comes from smaragdos, ancient Greek for a green gem. Roman author Pliny the Elder stated that the May birthstone had, “therapeutic properties that helped gem cutters. They have no better method of restoring their eyes than by looking at the emerald, its soft, green color comforting and removing their weariness and lassitude.” Science now proves this belief: The color green relieves stress and eye strain.

If you come across an emerald that looks perfectly flawless and is an extremely low price per carat cost; it is possible that what you are looking at is not emerald but a synthetic emerald or an imposter.

When it comes to care and cleaning; never ever ultrasonic or steam clean. This can damage the emerald by drying out the oils or resins used to fill the fractures crack the gemstone.

Colombia has been the source of the finest emeralds for more than half a century, and Colombian emeralds are the standard by which all others are measured. Zambia is another great commercial supply.

And then comes Zimbabwe, in the Sandawana Valley, which has become a well-known source of beautiful emeralds.

Emerald is almost always fracture filled, meaning that there are cracks that reach the surface of the gem and are routinely filled with oils or resins to make this lush gem more attractive. It is so routine, in fact, that Graduate Gemologists assume when they see an emerald that it has been fracture filled.
Sudoku Puzzles
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3 9
8 4 5
3 9 2
4 5 2 9
6 7 3
4 6 1 5
9

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9
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2 5 1 6
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Mind, Body, and Waves
Beach Yoga with a Surfer

By Sarina Alexander

Alexandra is a Canadian yoga instructor who decided to combine her previous calling as a surf instructor with her love affair with yoga in one location and call it home. It seems that the story of visitors falling in love after vacationing on St. Maarten/St-Martin is a common one.

Her personal journey to the island began about four years ago when she flew to St-Martin for a yoga retreat before becoming a yoga teacher a year later. Besides being in tune with herself, she enjoys being one with nature through outdoor walks and surfing. It was during a surf class in Le Galion that Alexandra met with the man that would have her ride a wave of emotions so big that it would carry her from Montreal right back to the shores of St-Martin.

Initially a hot studio yoga instructor at 37 degrees Celsius in Montreal, she truly enjoys giving classes on the beach as it enables her and her students to create a “connection with the elements.” “The wind, the smell of the water, the sensation of the sand under your feet and the sun on your skin” are some of the key factors that she says makes the experience one to remember. And though yoga can seem stressful for a beginner, she assures that her students have all loved their experience with her, as the focus is not on the perfection of the poses but the connection and enjoyment of the present moment.

Oh- and just to clarify... the word “hot” here wasn’t about the instructor, though she is quite attractive, but rather the type of yoga. Yoga is native to India and it’s hot climate, so Bikram or hot yoga, is practiced in studios at 27 to 37 degrees. Why would you do that to yourself? Well, to start, it’s said to be more beneficial for our bodies, muscles are more relaxed therefore making you more flexible. It also helps you detoxify your body by sweating and apparently, “as humans, we naturally gravitate toward the heat.” I mean, isn’t that what you’ve decided to visit Sint Maarten?

Do you want to experience this for yourself? Feel free to contact Alex via Facebook or email with the code: STMAMARITENWEEKLY

Offering services such as private and beach yoga classes, kayak yoga excursions to the neighboring uninhabited islet of Pinel, outdoor meditative walks at the Sentier des Froussards (trail from Anse Marcel to Petites Cayes), and stand up paddle yoga classes - “Of course I had to mix the surf with the yoga!” - Alexandra is very accommodating and really flexible. No, seriously... she’s really flexible (pun intended).

Certified Hatha Vinyasa teacher from the Canadian Yoga Alliance, Alexandra has been offering a variety of meditative services and power yoga classes on the island for the past two years through her company Idolem Beach Yoga in the touristic, yet peaceful area of Orient Bay.

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Jouvert- A Party That Leaves a Lasting Impression

By Leslie Hickerson

Every year Carnival is one of the most amazing celebrations on St. Maarten/Martin. The entire island comes together and this year as the 50th festival the party has already kicked off bigger than ever before.

The last two years have been hard ones; many families are still struggling to get back on their feet after loosing their homes, jobs, and even loved ones in Hurricane Irma. So this year’s events are a well-deserved time to let loose and try to celebrate where we are now.

One of the most anticipated events is the Jouvert (daybreak) Parade. Starting at 4am and finishing around noon the Jouvert Parade is a full on party that is attended by hundreds of people who spend the hours dancing and walking behind music trucks. Unfortunately another thing that happens every year is there is a huge amount of garbage left behind by partygoers.

This year many people were hoping that the event would be more sustainable and less harmful to our environment. After all the notices of the dump being on fire and plastic bans happening in countries throughout the world maybe the people of St. Maarten would take it upon themselves to keep our island clean and healthy. Sadly this was not the case.

Throughout the 2019 parade route it was very difficult to find waste bins to properly dispose of litter. Those who wanted to do the right thing were forced to carry empty bottles and cans until they could find a bin that was often already overflowing with garbage.

As the party went on the majority of the participants decided to just throw their garbage on the ground and let the oncoming crowd trample it. While street crews were following the route to clean up after the troop much of the garbage will be left behind to be blown into our waterways and side streets. If all partygoers and vendors would switch to reusable products a huge amount of waste could be kept off the street and out of the landfill.

“We were (happily) surprised to see that some of the venders were carrying reusable cups, decreasing the waste output during Jouvert. However, the amount of single-use plastic being used and littered is still enormous. Every year Carnival has a fantastic cleanup crew and we really appreciate their effort. Though, a lot of these single-use plastics end up in our environment as only the road is being cleaned after the parades and not the road sides, bushes, or waterways. As every year again it was proven that people litter their cups, straws, and food containers. The only way to fully protect our environment from these harmful single-use plastics is to enact an importation ban for Sint Maarten,” said SXM Nature Foundation Project Manager Melanie Meijer zu Schloettern.

This is a very common practice spreading throughout the world and with our poor waste management it is surprising that steps have not been taken to do the same here. Since this has not happened on SXM the responsibility is left to the consumer to make the right choice when it comes to purchasing and disposing of products. We can only hope that in the future these events will be able to be celebrated without having a negative side effect on our environment. Having a beautiful island as your home is a privilege and many people are squandering it.
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