

The Gleaner **Hospitality Jamaica**

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2016



The
JAMAICAN
experience
AT MELIA BRACO RESORT



PHOTOS BY
JANET SILVERA
PHOTOS

Steel pan
players at the
Independence
Day street
event at Melia
Braco Village.

Right: A stilt
walker
dressed to the
nines in the
Jamaican
colours.



Melia Braco dishes out the real J'can culture

Janet Silvera
Senior Gleaner Writer

WESTERN BUREAU:

FOCUSED ON creating unique experiences, Melia Braco Resort, Trelawny, delivered on its commitment to raising the bar in the tourism industry by setting new standards at their Independence celebration last weekend.

With a packed house of foreigners and locals, Melia Braco showcased the richest aspects of the Jamaican culture, giving its guests front-row seats to the island's iconic attractions, its food, fashion, topography, music and customs.

The resort, which boasts a Georgian-inspired architectural town square, constructed replicas of Fern Gully, a waterfall depicting the world-famous Dunn's River Falls, a corner shop stocked with bun and cheese, 'tin mackerel', Red Stripe and Guinness, with men playing dominoes close by and a

tyrant washerwoman, washing and hanging her clothes for the town to see.

Handing a large slice of the Jamaican culture on a platter, guests' expectations were exceeded. Led by General Manager Dimitris Kosvogiannis, the hotel team took the country's Independence celebration to the apex.

Heralded by the George Washington Marching Band,

dressed in the black, green and gold, the group opened with the country's national anthem, a precursor to the a host of Jamaican Festival hit songs that followed, one after the other.

A steel band added flavour to the event, and was a welcome addition to the adaptation of the Trinidadian culture. Their

performance was bolstered by Dance Xpressions, 'dancehall at its best', and Ashe's folkloric presentation.

The big-bottom mama, stilt walkers and reggae artiste Romain Virgo complemented an evening that will remain etched in the memories of guests for years to come.

"We give you more, we give a new approach to life, higher

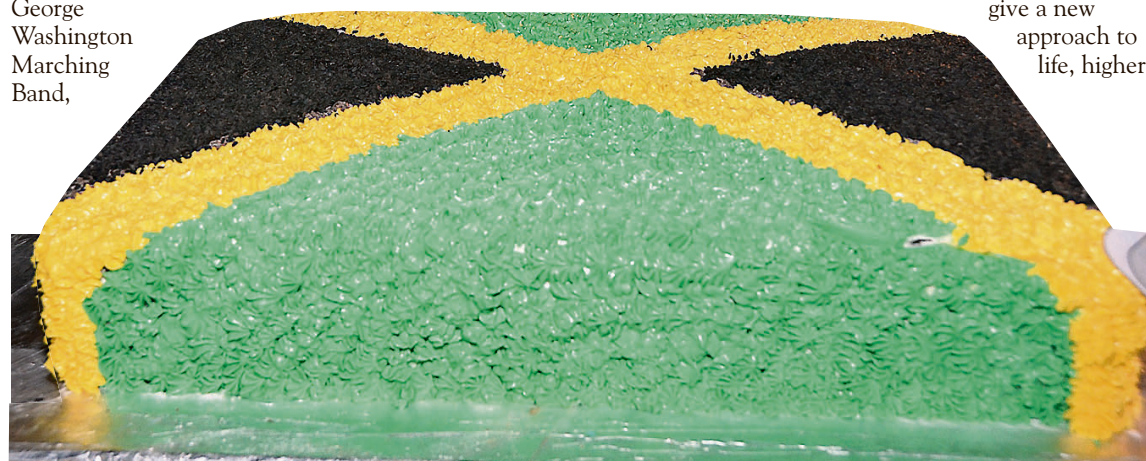
benchmarks of service and quality," Kosvogiannis told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

According to the hotelier, "Independence stands to remind us that we are a nation that breaks records, barriers and resiliently overcomes challenges. We want our guests to appreciate not the cut-and-paste all-inclusive package, but a true Jamaican experience, a flash moment of Jamaican life".

Proud of his team's achievement, Kosvogiannis said Melia has committed to raising the bar in the industry, and, together with this property, set new standards for the country as a destination.

"We aim to break the glass ceiling in all aspects; in training, food preparation, quality of products, and engagement of the local economy by forging relationships with small farming entities that seek to elevate and progress," said.

At the same time, he said they were proudly Jamaican. "At Melia,



The Jamaican fruitcake covered with the country's colours.



Alrick Johnson of Melia Braco serving roasted beef.



Ardine Davis at the Middle Quarters-themed food station serving peppered shrimp.



Chad Waugh and Judy Levy depicting the colonial dress form that ties in with the theme of Melia Braco Village.

we do things extraordinary, sensational, magical and without restraints. Melia Braco Village is an addiction, not a simple holiday."

Walking the talk, the diverse offerings, including the peanut, jelly coconut and cane vendors, had their place near a zinc fenced area, highlighting the 'Gully/Gaza' scene.

The hotel touched on a bit of everything and its herb garden, displaying spices, trees and plants used for medicinal purposes, was a conversation piece.

"Ginger, pimento, garlic, cinnamon, cocoa, coffee beans, noni, leaf of life, marijuana, tuna and three different types of mint and fever grass, were among the things on display," said Acleish Pearson, activities manager.

Artefacts, including a chimney, mortar, the big-back 12-channel television, self-heating and coal-pot irons, coffee grinder, mug, goblets and face basin created their own corner of history.

Infusing the Jamaican taste with the international fare, the pasta station merged jerk and the natural spices with an Italian recipe.

The shrimp station represented Middle Quarters, St Elizabeth, and the jerked products paid tribute to Portland.

"We topped it off with cornmeal and potato pudding, dukunu, grater cake, coconut drops, and fruitcake," said a very pleased Pearson.



Red Stripe corner shop.



The George Washington Marching Band dancers.



From left: Monica Serra, guest experience manager; Dimitris Kosvogiannis, general manager; Angella Bennett, director of sales; and Ann-Marie Burke, human resources manager.



The Jamaican artefacts on display on Independence Day at the Melia Braco Village.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Gardeners Nerrod Fletcher (left) and Jeff Ottey cut the cake with Round Hill's outgoing CFO, Tracy Christie-Smith.

Farewell, Tracy!

THE ROUND Hill team said farewell to chief financial officer Tracy Christie-Smith last Thursday.

After five years at the Hanover resort, Christie-Smith is migrating to Canada. Her farewell party was attended by members of the Round Hill executive team, various managers and staff members and representatives from corporate partners, including Billy Craig Insurance, National Commercial Bank, and principal of the Montego Bay Community College, Dr Maureen Nelson.

Villa owner Ed Falkenberg flew in from New York for the day to attend the send-off.

Christie-Smith was lauded for her no-nonsense approach on the job and for implementing a number of successful initiatives within the company. According to Managing Director Josef Forstmayr, "Tracy was a firm but strong team player who provided leadership, resulting in our continued financial success as a resort. We wish her continued success in Canada."

Christie-Smith has been succeeded by Novelette Maxwell.



Tracy Christie-Smith (centre) with members of her team (from left) Claudine Willoughby, Carolyn Warburton, Calvin Lewis, Sashalee McIntosh and Blaine Grubb.



From left: Patricia Henry-Hard, CFO at Tryall; Josef Forstmayr, Round Hill's managing director; William Craig, Billy Craig Insurance; and Tracy Christie-Smith, Round Hill's outgoing CFO.



From left: Villa owner, Ed Falkenberg and Christie-Smith's daughters, Samantha and Shona Smith.

Landmark Plaza, Mainland China Restaurant open in Ocho Rios

Carl Gilchrist

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

MAINLAND CHINA Restaurant and Bar, located at the new Landmark Plaza in Ocho Rios, is an absolute gem. So it was a double celebration last Thursday when owner Danny Galani welcomed guests to the opening of the plaza and the restaurant and bar, which boasts a fusion of Chinese, Indian, and Jamaican cuisine as its offering.

Member of Parliament for North East St Ann and Minister of Social Security Shahine Robinson, who assisted in cutting the ribbon, thanked owner Danny Galani for the investment, saying it was a show of confidence in Ocho Rios and in Jamaica.

President of the St Ann Chamber of Commerce, Pixley Irons, also hailed the opening of the plaza, saying it means more employment for person in the parish.

Not only were samplings of the food mouth-wateringly delicious, invited guests were left in awe at the beauty of the restaurant, which had several features that left Vana Taylor, vice-president, Jamaica Hotel and Tourism Association, remarking that "it's more than a restaurant, it's an attraction."

"It has blown me away! It's simply fabulous! It's a wonderful addition to our area, especially, Ocho Rios," Taylor told *Hospitality Jamaica*.

"And it has so much to offer, Chinese infused with Indian; and it's such a romantic place."

Her comments complimented those of Janice Allen, Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) regional director, who described the plaza as "fantastic".



From left: Marilyn Burrowes of Dolphin Cove; Danny Galani, owner of Landmark Plaza; and Shahine Robinson, member of parliament and minister of social security.

"It's wonderful to see this addition to Ocho Rios, to see that there are more options available to locals and visitors who come to the town. It certainly is a welcome addition," Allen pointed out.

"The development continues with the addition of a gift shop for visitors, also an in-bond store; and it's so perfectly placed without being intrusive. I think it's fantastic."

The design of the building was also a talking point with architect Jeremy Millingen, coming in for much commendation for the beautifully designed structure.

"Mainland China is the newest dining experience in Jamaica and the most unique, offering hundreds of menu items, a full bar and a variety of dining options. It is the place where you can find something for everyone, modern Chinese cuisine, authentic Indian kebabs and local Jamaican dishes, all at a price that anyone can afford," Mark, the manager, explained.

Among those who were in attendance were Custos Norma

Walters and Custos Emeritus Radcliffe Walters; Mayor Desmond Gilmore; Janice Carr, JPS parish manager; Supt Wayne Cameron, commandant for St Ann; Bobby Chatani; Lorna Escoffery; Marilyn Burrowes and family; representatives of the Indian High Commission and Lachu Ramchandani of Blue Diamond.



A section of Landmark Plaza.



Chefs Nick and Chavelle.



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Is the Chinese tourism market illusory?

THE CHINESE-VISITOR market is distinctly different from what the Caribbean is used to. Despite this, almost every Caribbean tourist board has been giving consideration to the difficult question of how best to encourage its travellers to visit.

Apart from the obvious desire of all destinations to continue to diversify their source markets, the industry's interest in the Chinese travel market has been driven by statistics. These suggest that China's outward bound travel market, one of the most dynamic in the world, is growing by around 19 per cent per annum, with some 117 million Chinese citizens travelling abroad in 2014, spending an estimated US\$500 billion.

This has meant that, in particular, countries at the western end of the Caribbean – Jamaica, Cuba, The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic – have to dedicate significant resources to visiting and researching how best to obtain a share of the market.

Unfortunately, to do so, it has first to overcome some very basic problems. China is a long way away. This means that the primary challenge lies not in determining how best to attract Chinese visitors, but in having them arrive in the region.

Since, at present, there is not enough demand to fill direct regular flights to the

region, anyone visiting the Caribbean from China or coming to join a cruise ship, has first to fly to the nearest point. This means, for the most part, using Air China to Houston or New York, then travelling on with United or, alternatively, using Air China's same-plane service from Beijing via Montreal to Havana. In each case, the overall flying time is at best around 20 hours.

This means that, currently, the only practical solution, when it comes to encouraging land-based Chinese visitors to anywhere in the Caribbean other than Havana, is to develop, as Jamaica is now doing, multi-destination vacations for Chinese, who may already have decided to travel to Cuba.

The idea is now well advanced, with the country's Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett saying recently that he is hoping to have arrangements in place by the end of this year for multi-destination marketing, airlift and possibly a single-visa arrangement for Chinese and other visitors.

The other potential initial source for

significant numbers of Chinese arrivals would be by cruise ship.

China is currently gradually developing its own cruise industry out into the Pacific, and is planning to build its own cruise ships. However, this is still some way off.

For this reason, some in the industry suggest that it may be more attractive to consider working initially with the United States and European cruise lines that sail the region to market selected Caribbean cruises. Many such cruise companies are already engaged with Chinese counterparts in developing cruises off China's coast.

Regrettably, trying to understand China's tourism potential for the region is complicated by the uncertainty surrounding just how many Chinese people are actually visiting the region as tourists.

It is far from clear how each country in the region addresses statistically the significant number of Chinese visiting the Caribbean in relation to the many Chinese public and private projects now under way across the region.



David Jessop

Against this background, and assuming that the region has the capacity to address the quite different expectations and cultural requirements of Chinese visitors – few want the usual Caribbean offering of sun, sea and sand – part of the answer is likely to lie in paying much greater attention to a demand-led approach that is likely to appeal to interests of high-end visitors, who also want the kudos of visiting what they see as an obscure but culturally different destination.

While the Caribbean is never going to be able to compete for Chinese visitors with London, Paris or New York when it comes to shopping or historic sightseeing – both key element in almost all Chinese international travel – there are almost certainly niche opportunities to be developed.

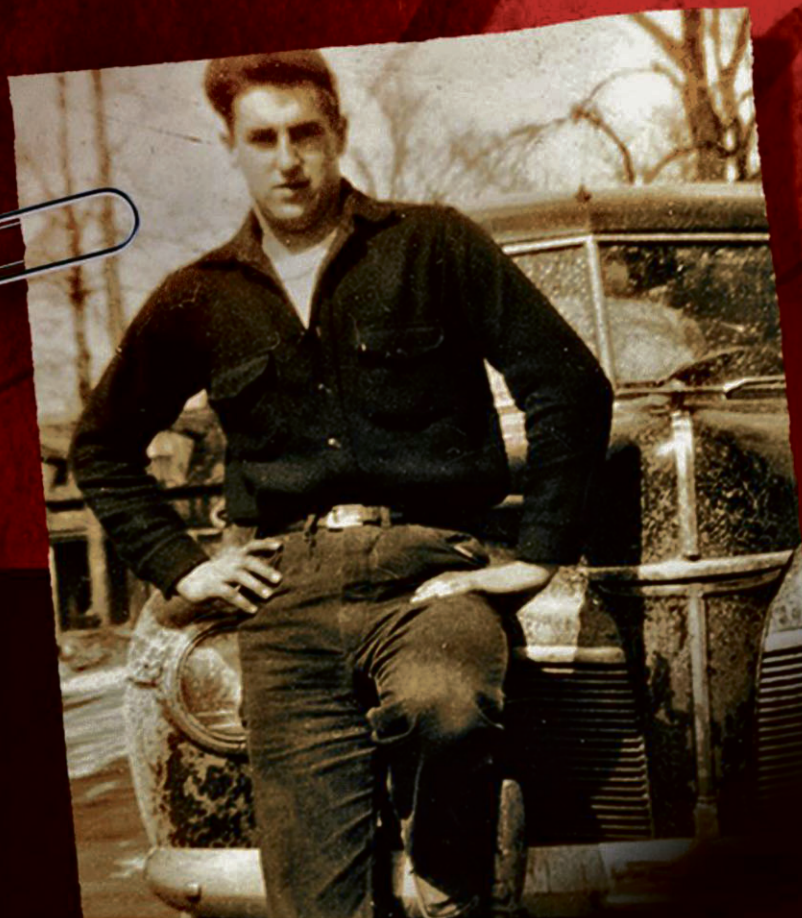
These include, for example, gambling, music, and, as St Lucia has recently recognised, horse racing.

My suspicion is that for many years yet, Chinese tourism, in terms of numbers, will be illusory, not least because of the difficulties of access. New initiatives and niche marketing may see a gradual rise in arrivals, but for me, Chinese tourism seems likely to only become significant for the Caribbean at the point at which visitors begin to arrive on Chinese-built and catered cruise ships.

BRASH AND UNPRETENTIOUS

*"Just like my Dad,
Josh, who inspired it"*

- Joseph Carr, Winemaker



UnWineCPJ
with WINES





From left: Delano Seiveright, senior adviser to the minister of tourism; Andrew Holness, prime minister; and Deborah Newland, chief of staff, Office of the Prime Minister.



From left: Lee Issa, chairman of Couples Resorts; Philipp Hofer of Iberostar; and Edmund Bartlett, minister of tourism.



Prime Minister Andrew Holness (centre) and Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett present a copy of 'Beautiful Jamaica' to Guy Steuart III, chairman of Half Moon Bay Ltd, owners of the 400-room upscale Half Moon in Montego Bay.

Big tourism dollars for Ja

THE GROWING tourism industry represents the most important form of economic activity in the Caribbean today, with earnings in excess of US\$27 billion, providing jobs for one of every five employed, and attracting just over 30 million visitors annually. Notably, too, 1.2 billion people traverse the globe annually, spending billions every year.

These facts were not lost on the well-heeled global tourism investors, some of whom jetted into the island for a day of discussions at the Office of the Prime Minister and Vale Royal, the official residence of the prime minister, where a private dinner reception with Prime Minister Andrew Holness, his wife, Mrs Holness, and Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett was held.

"The prime minister assured the investors of the Government's resolve to clear red tape so as to allow for smoother investments, while reaffirming the administration's growth and prosperity agenda. At the same time, the tourism minister reiterated the robust targets to secure five million visitors by 2021, generating US\$5 billion in tourism earnings and increasing the total direct jobs to 125,000 with no less than 15,000 new rooms added," said Delano Seiveright, a senior adviser to the minister of tourism.

"Tourism is a sector that has the potential to stimulate wide-scale economic activity, foster new growth in our communities, generate the jobs we need so badly, and earn billions of dollars in foreign exchange. The Government is positioning tourism to become a powerful catalyst for improving the socio-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

From left: Rafael Feliz, CEO of Karisma Hotels and Resorts; Andrew Holness, prime minister; Edmund Bartlett, minister of tourism; Neil Evans, senior executive, Karisma Hotels and Resorts; and Ruben Becerra, vice-president of Karisma Hotels and Resorts.

economic conditions of our people," said Seiveright.

In that vein, the talks with Holness and Bartlett resulted in investments to the tune of more than US\$1 billion being discussed, inclusive of timelines with several thousand new hotel rooms on stream to start operations in the coming months and years. Among the

hotels and resorts that have already commenced development projects and/or plan further expansion in room stock shortly are Riu, Bahia Principe, Sandals, Royal Decameron, Royalton, Spanish Court, the Hendrickson-owned Wyndham, Half Moon, Karisma, Hilton Rose Hall, Secrets, among several others.

Among the owners and executives attending, many of whom stated that they have never had this level of close engagement with a prime minister and other government officials, were Luis Riu of Riu Hotels & Resorts; Guy Steuart, chairman of Half Moon; Alejandro Zozaya, CEO of Apple Leisure Group, operators of Secrets and



From left: Neil Evans of Karisma Hotels and Resorts; Juliet Holness, member of parliament and wife of Prime Minister Andrew Holness; and Dr Rafael Echevarne, chief executive officer, MBJ Airports Limited, share a moment at the dinner reception at Vale Royal.

Sunscape Resorts; Stephen Hunter, president and CEO of Sunwing Travel Group, operators of Royalton; Phillip Hofer of Iberostar; Fernando Bosque Mohino, CEO of Grupo Aeroportuario del Pacifico, the operators of the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay; Ruben Becerra, Neil Evans and Rafael Feliz of Karisma Hotel and Resorts, among several others.

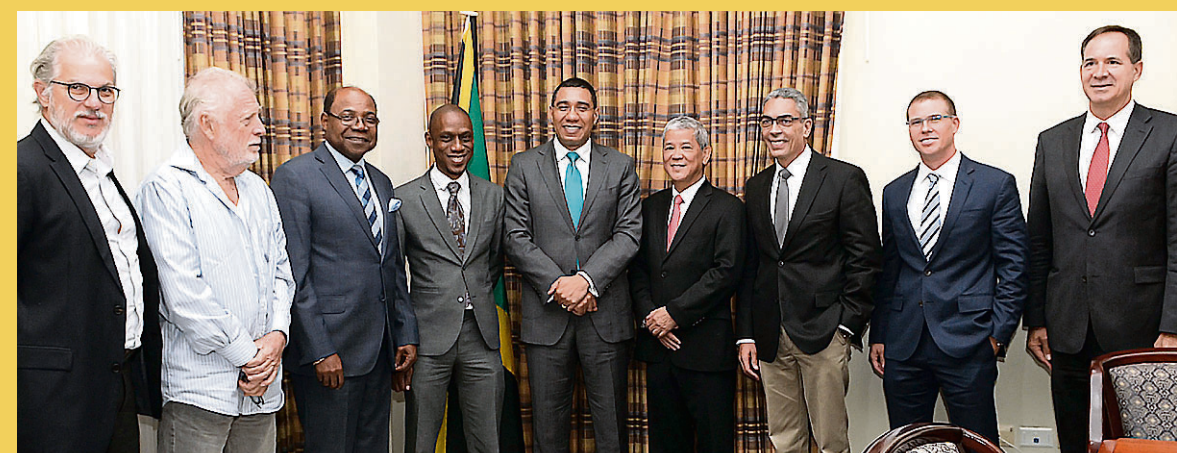
Local investors included Adam Stewart of Sandals Resorts International; Richard Byles of Jewel Resorts and Hilton Rose Hall; Lee and Paul Issa of Couples Resorts; Stephen Facey of Pan-Jam; Chris Blackwell of Island Outpost; and Christopher Issa, among several others.



From left: Luis Riu, CEO of Riu Hotels & Resorts; Edmund Bartlett, minister of tourism; and Prime Minister Andrew Holness.



From left: Dr Rafael Echevarne, chief executive officer, MBJ Airports Limited; John Lynch, chairman of the Jamaica Tourist Board; and Fernando Bosque Mohino, CEO of Grupo Aeroportuario del Pacifico, owners of the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay.



From left: Stephen Facey, chairman and chief executive officer of Pan-Jamaican Investment Trust; Christopher Blackwell of Island Outpost; Edmund Bartlett, minister of tourism; Chris Jarrett of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association; Andrew Holness, prime minister; Kevin Hendrickson, hotelier; Richard Byles, president and chief executive officer of Sagicor Group Jamaica; Adam Stewart, chief executive officer and deputy chairman of Sandals Resorts International; and Christopher Issa, hotelier.

“

Tourism is a sector that has the potential to stimulate wide-scale economic activity, foster new growth in our communities, generate the jobs we need so badly, and earn billions of dollars in foreign exchange.

”



The Rousseau sisters at The Brooklyn Kitchen in New York.



Martin Maginley



Dennis McIntosh

FILE PHOTOS

Jamaica's food ambassadors ... Tantalising taste buds around the world

THE POPULARITY of Jamaican cuisine has grown tremendously with the opening up of many Jamaican restaurants across North America and Europe. Jamaican chefs have successfully blended cooking techniques, spices and recipes to contribute to one of the most flavourful cuisines in the world. Some of our outstanding chefs who continue to fly the epicurean flag high are chefs Martin Maginley, Dennis McIntosh, and Suzanne and Michelle Rousseau.

The multi-award-winning chef Maginley has enriched the culinary experience for many, having worked at four- and five-star hotels in Jamaica and Canada. He is currently the executive chef at Round Hill Villas and Spa. Maginley has appeared on 'The Today Show', Fox 5 Morning Show and others, performing live demonstrations, and has been featured in publications such as **Food & Wine** and **Caribbean Travel & Life**. Chef Maginley was instrumental in the creation of the highly successful 'Epicurean Escape', in association with **Food & Wine**. He

continues to tantalise the palates of his guests with authentic Jamaican fare, affirming that what's uniquely Jamaican can pass anywhere in the world.

Chef Dennis McIntosh grew up in Nest Castle, a small community in St Thomas. At age eight, he and members of his family migrated to England. During his early years, he developed a deep appreciation for the art of fine cuisine and later enrolled in the Henley College to study culinary arts. McIntosh set about creating his culinary path by working in Germany, England, the United States and Bermuda, before returning to Jamaica in 1990 to take up his first executive chef position. A standard-bearer for Jamaican cuisine, McIntosh has appeared on the Food Network Channel, and in 2012, he was the guest chef in Brussels, Belgium, at the request of the Jamaican Embassy for the 50th year of Independence celebrations. As president of the Culinary Federation of Jamaica, he is paying it forward by providing opportunities and exposure young chefs.

Growing up in a family with a deep appreciation for good food, and being surrounded by fresh ingredients, Michelle and Suzanne Rousseau were introduced to the culinary world very early in life. Not only chefs, they are also the authors of **Caribbean Potluck: Modern Recipes from Our Family Kitchen**. The book is a compilation of the stories of their lives in the food business. Both sisters have catered an impressive roster of events, including weddings for Hollywood actresses Drew Barrymore and Reese Witherspoon, as well as dinner for Charles, Prince of Wales. The two sisters opened their first restaurant, Ciao Bella, in 1996, which evolved from a café to a fine-dining experience. They also designed the menu at Usain Bolt's Track and Records. The Rousseau sisters have definitely made it their point of duty to showcase Jamaican cuisine to the world.

These are just some of the Jamaican food ambassadors who continue to make their mark in the culinary world with use of our bold flavours and passion.

JTB announces promotional team for Europe

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) has appointed Interface Tourism, Italy and Interface Tourism, Spain as the sales and promotional agencies for Destination Jamaica in Italy and the Iberian Peninsula. The JTB has also selected GrafensteinFreizeit-und Tourismuswerbug GmbH to drive sales in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Poland.

Tourism Director Paul Pennicook explained that the selection of these firms is strategic to the JTB's growth agenda.

"In an effort to continue to diversify our source markets, we recently appointed new representatives in a region where we are going for growth. The agencies were selected based on their track records and their work plans to increase arrivals from their respective markets."

Commenting on his agency's selection, general director of Interface Tourism, Spain, Victor Muñoz, explained that "Jamaica is a destination and brand recognised worldwide. It perfectly embodies the idea of a natural and cultural paradise, which, along with a unique lifestyle, are strong motives for Spanish and Portuguese travellers in choosing their vacations throughout the year".

ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS

Serena Valle, managing director of Interface Tourism, Italy, was equally enthusiastic about Jamaica's prospects in the Italian market.

"Jamaica is an island with a very strong personality. It is multi-faceted and able to meet the needs of the most discerning self-made travellers, as well as tourists who are looking for a relaxing, dream paradise destination."

Founder and Director of Grafenstein-Freizeit-und Tourismuswerbug GmbH, Frank Grafenstein, said his agency was keen on inspiring special tour operators to sell Jamaica.

"There is a lot to discover. Our special interest topics and insider tips are ideal for group tours and specialised tour operators," Grafenstein explained.

Interface Tourism, Spain, Interface Tourism, Italy, and GrafensteinFreizeit-und Tourismuswerbug GmbH will represent Jamaica on two-year contracts. The JTB is represented in the Netherlands and Belgium by Color Travel Services. The agencies will liaise primarily with tour operators, travel agents and airlines in their respective markets, but will also offer communications and public relations support.

Sandals Resorts Int'l launches phone app

SANDALS RESORTS International is thrilled to announce that its newly developed phone application is now available for download in iPhone and Android app stores.

Through the new app, consumers will be able to browse the company's multiple properties to help facilitate pre-arrival and on-property luxury-included vacation planning, all while receiving inside scoop information.

Once on property, guests can register in the app to receive special notifications and information about resort shop promotions, daily entertainment, fitness and watersport schedules, weekly weather forecasts, Island Routes excursions, Red Lane Spa menu listings, restaurant details and hours, as well as resort maps.

The Sandals App will also give guests the opportunity to book a complimentary photo shoot with snapshots/EPIX, communicate with their butlers via text or calls, and call the US and Canada for free. Additionally, all of Sandals and Beaches social media channels can be accessed through the application.

Phase two of the application, to be launched in 2017, will give guests the opportunity to book services at the Red Lane Spa, excursions with Island Routes, restaurant reservations, multiple service offerings with Snapshots/EPIX, updated maps with navigation capabilities, and have a more enhanced social media integration with Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, and YouTube.

Excited about the launch of the app, Adam Stewart, chief executive officer of Sandals Resorts International, said: "We are thrilled to announce the launch of our new app. We're always looking for new ways to use technology to enhance our guests' experience, and this app is another exciting medium that allows us to do just that. I'm looking forward to seeing our guests and consumers at large engaging with the platform, and we can't wait to launch phase two."



Montego Bay Convention Centre to host CanEx Ja

JAMAICA'S FIRST cannabis seminar, dedicated to shaping the future of the local cannabis market, is set to be held at the Montego Bay Conference Centre. Now is an opportune time as amended legislation has transformed the legal global cannabis market into a burgeoning one and is having an impact on the local market as well.

CanEx Jamaica is a unique one-day conference that will focus on the North American, Latin American, and Caribbean cannabis landscape with key insight for those looking to invest in and be an integral part of the burgeoning market. The seminar will host an international speaker line-up and showcase state-of-the-art grow facilities, technology, branding, and political advocacy measures as well as high-level content on the latest advances in the regulatory, legal, investment, and product development landscape. Through a distinguished panel of experienced and innovative experts shaping the future of the global cannabis market, the seminar will give first-hand insight into the most cutting-edge market innovations and technologies.

The convention centre is happy to be hosting such an event, which is sure to get significant international support, stated the facility's general manager, Dittie Guise.

"We at the Montego Bay Convention

Centre are extremely pleased to be the host venue for CanEx Jamaica. A core part of our platform is the development of Jamaica through the meetings and conference market as an economic arm for Jamaica," she said, adding that the event bolstered that initiative, as well as furthered the discussion on a burgeoning industry within the economy.

According to Guise, the Montego Bay Convention Centre is adequately suited to deliver on all facets of this dynamic conference. "We are looking forward to hosting all our guests both regionally and internationally," she pointed out.

OPPORTUNITY FOR NETWORKING

The seminar is also expected to provide unrivalled networking opportunities among the policymakers, strategic influencers and decision makers shaping the industry and access to players and decision makers in the Caribbean, LATAM, and North America.

Gloria Henry, Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce president, is elated to host the event in the city.

"The chamber supports the development of the legal use of cannabis for medicinal and related purposes. The chamber endorses this conference, which will further expose the tremendous investment opportunities

available within this industry and which Jamaica is yet to exploit. We congratulate Douglas Gordon and his business partners for organising this conference, bringing important players together and raising the visibility of cannabis as another economic driver that can support growth in agriculture and medicine in Jamaica," Henry said.

Last year alone, legal cannabis sales increased by 25 per cent to reach US\$6.7 billion in total US sales alone. The legal cannabis market is forecasted to hit a tremendous US\$21.8 billion in total annual sales by 2020. As Jamaica develops a framework for legalisation and regulation, its long-established brand recognition means that the island already has a head start in establishing a world-class legalised cannabis industry.

Scheduled speakers include Boaz Wachtel, co-strategist, Israel's Medical Cannabis Programme; Professor Asseem Sappal Dean, Oaksterdam University; Edmund Bartlett, minister of tourism, Jamaica; Mark Kleiman, chairman, BOTEC Analysis; Marcus Richardson, CEO, Cannabinoid Research and Development; and Tamar Todd, legal director, Drug Policy Alliance.



Beautifully crafted cushion covers by Sharon Martini.

Sharon's wacky art

HER SPIRIT told her, "Go home to your roots!" And that she did.

Settling in Treasure Beach, St Elizabeth, a place she discovered while on a pilgrimage of sorts to Accompong to explore her Maroon heritage, artistic diva Sharon Martini is proprietor of The Mud Palace Gallery Africa Village, home of her Lady Bird Designs. The gallery features one-of-a-kind art, craft, goodies and gifts that are all hand-made by Martini.

Step inside to a cheery "Welcome to my Mud Palace Gallery where everything inside – well except plastic and iron – is made by me."

Born in London to Jamaican parents, Martini lived in the States for 20 years before answering the call to come home. Martini describes herself and her art as being a combination of first- and developing-world styles.

"It is ancient and modern, old and young, whimsical, wise and fun."

Growing up, she remembers hearing her parents say she was a maroon like her grandmother. Not knowing what this meant, she assumed it was the shade of her skin that was being referenced.



Sharon Martini, proprietor of The Mud Palace Gallery.

Martini reflects, "It made me proud, nonetheless, to be like my grandmother, whom at the time, I had never met. Imagine if I had known the true story? I might now walk on water." She adds, "My parents did not share our story; with each of my pieces, my aim is to ensure the tale is told."

The gallery boasts paintings,

whose muse are black characters, that swing along the whitewashed wall, hand-crafted jewellery dangle from twigs; original, acrylic-painted magnets and buttons shine from converted fans; art-embellished hipster bags and pillows stuffed with love. Instinctively, you know you have entered a magical and mystical place because you are

smiling suddenly. Martini explains it, saying, "even if you are not shopping, I guarantee you a smile!"

The Mud Palace Gallery houses creations made by the utilisation of ancient African techniques using wattle and daub or sticks and dirt. These practices are often times combined with contemporary practices to create extra-special works of art.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

A creator of her own brand, Martini has cascading from the rafters, T-shirts adorned with her 'Soil A Jamaica' logo and the symbols of fertility and good fortune. The T-shirts are all hand-dyed with the red soil of St Elizabeth for a more unique and distinct look.

Martini also caters to the younger audience by creating her own line of children picture books called DottyBeetle books. Her reason for creating this line of work is, as she states, "When my sons were little, I was immersed in children's literature, but my little boys were not represented in contemporary stories with imaginative, wacky art, so I wrote and illustrated my own."

All her pieces have a story to

tell, whether it is personal, historical or spiritual. One such piece that resonates is the cacoon gathered from the forests of Accompong. These seeds were naturally used for protection, food and medicine. Martini reflects that when working with the cacoon, she is reminded of the power and might of the Jamaican people of African descent.

A veritable one-of-a-kind woman, Martini is part sorcerer, alchemist and visionary who dares to unwrap the universe's gifts in her own truth and to share them with the world. No doubt, she has come home to her roots, immersing herself in the soil, she is rooted, blooming, creating and crafting. One would say "she a buss out!"

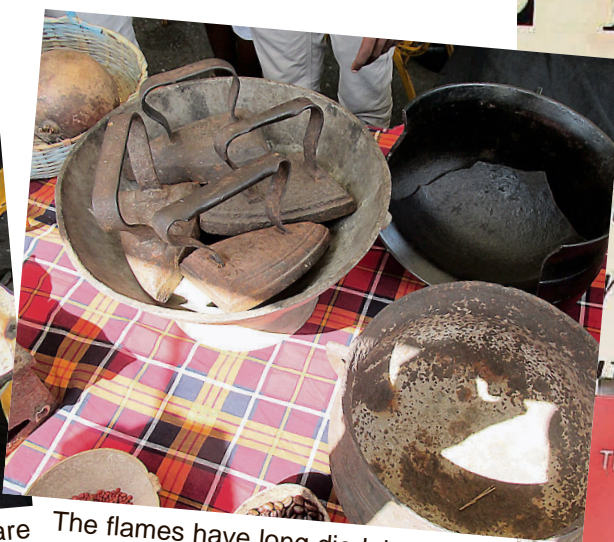
If you like art, visit The Mud Palace Gallery Africa Village, Treasure Beach, St Elizabeth, and if you are lucky, you might just find Martini elbow-deep in a mud-patty-filled Yabba pot, creating a master piece.

The Mud Palace Gallery Africa Village, Treasure Beach, St Elizabeth, may be contacted at www.sharonmartini.com, sharonmartini@mac.com, or 876-275-0832.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H



The enamelled collection. The stories of their time are etched in their dents, scratches and chips.



The flames have long died, but these pieces can tell the hell they have been through. **Right:** With tickets in hand, Marja Morrison-Gallow is anxious to travel back to the past.

A rush of memories

I AM always fascinated by things from the past, especially the ones that existed long before me. They have so much to tell. The ones that I can personally relate to are no less interesting. They remind me of where I am coming from, and keep me grounded.

And on Friday last, I strolled on to the grounds of the Independence Village at Hope Road, St Andrew. There was much food to sink my teeth into, but I opted for coconut water, lemonade and naseberries. I also got some fever grass mosquito repellent, lest those pesky insects sink their needles into my tender flesh.

There was also much to see, but nothing really exciting. Boredom was beginning to consume me, until I found myself in front of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust booth. There were tables full of objects from the past, from my childhood, and many decades before that.

The enamelled articles brought back

PLEASE SEE **MEMORIES**, 14



Richard O'Connor, Jamaica National Heritage Trust's archaeological field assistant, showing a patron how to grind cocoa beans.





Now, they must rest. Travelling bags of yesteryear.

MEMORIES

CONTINUED FROM 13

much sensory memories. I heard the sound of flaking enamel as if it were just yesterday when that big mug fell, many times. I also felt the heat of the hot chocolate, with the oil on top, in the enamelled mug. Scorched gums, hot 'chocolate tea'.

But these articles were strange. They looked smooth and glossy when they were new, but they became unsightly over time because of chips and scratches and dents. And so, it was not pride anymore to own a 'chip-up' enamelled item. I also remembered that Miss Rhoda, an elderly, cantankerous neighbour, had a big 'chip-up' chimmy when I saw some chamber pots on display. But I rather let the chamber pot stories remain in the annals of time.

Moving on to the clothes irons, including the self-heating ones that were popular among tailors. Unlike the regular irons that were put over the burning coal, the coal was placed into the self-heaters, so they remained hot. No need to keep reheating.

Stories of these irons abound – of when my white shirts and khaki got soiled by them, grief, when I was hurrying and they could not get hot fast enough; when they were too hot, and I had to wait, or burned the cloth leaving a permanent triangular mark, more grief; or when the coal got burned out before I am finished ironing.

The lamps, lanterns and kerosene stoves shed much light into those dark nights of yesteryear. The narratives they illuminated, the joys and the sorrows, the feasts and the famines. And there is one particular story of the kerosene stove, of which I give no details, that is forever etched in my brain.

After taking pictures and chatting with other patrons, and was about to leave, I saw a book, lit up by rays of sunlight. My eyes popped. It was a Nola book, as we children called it then, from The Island Readers series. This one was Primer Three, **Nola at Play**. It was a basics/primary-school reader, whose main characters were Nola and Don.

I have seen many a student get beaten when they struggled to read their Nola books. I could read, but I shook my head for my former classmates whose skin burned from the angry spanking by impatient, mean-spirited and unsympathetic 'teachers'.

In retrospect, I wish I had kept some of these personal objects for my archives, but we were not socialised to keep records and preserve the things we used in our daily lives.

As soon as they had become old and useless, they were tossed into the garbage heaps of life. Nothing saved for posterity, nothing to tell our descendants about who we were, nothing to precipitate a rush of memories, pleasant and unpleasant.



Who had their last supper in these? Bowl, mug, tankard, wine bottle, platter and teapot.



They can tell about the days and nights when kerosene was king.



Chamber pots for the ages.



It was by chance that Milton Brown of Mount Rosser in St Catherine became a make of coconut frond hats.



An assortment of coconut fronds hats made by Milton 'Hattie' Brown.

A hatter by chance

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

SOME TIME in 1986, young Milton Brown, a farmer of Ewarton, St Catherine, was planting flowers for a friend when a man acquainted with that friend turned up.

The man was making something artistic from coconut fronds. Brown's interest was piqued, because he said he had always loved craft. He asked the man to show him how to do what he was doing. The man obliged.

Brown learned quickly, and he said the man was amazed. But, he did not show Brown how to start the process. It was after he had left that Brown realised that, but he had never seen the man before, and he has not seen him since. He said, with a broad smile, that the man was like "an angel".

He saw where he could make a living making items with the coconut fronds.

But frustration set in initially. He did not know how to start the process and his friend would not take him to see the man even after several requests.



A church hat.



The oriental look.

A few months into his frustration, he said one Sunday morning he got some fronds; he wanted to make something with them, but still did not know where to start. So, in his desperation, he sent up a prayer.

"A sey, 'God, yuh know mi nuh have nuh trade, enuh, an' yuh promise to provide for

us, so dis mawnin, show mi, God, how fi start dis, enuh."

Shortly after, he put some of the fronds to soak in water. When they became pliable, he attempted three times to start the process, but failed. But he was determined, and upon the fourth attempt, he got it right. Jubilation! Yet, he was only able to make the rim of a hat; he did know how to make the top.

He wore the visor around the community, and caught the attention of people who complimented his rare creation. But he was still not satisfied. He wanted something with a top.

An acquaintance told him the process was simple, and so, he said, he was forced to come up with the technique. He returned home, and he said he went into deep thoughts. About a week after, the idea eventually came. He would make the top and the rim separately and then weave them together. He got it right, after several trials. And he has been making hats since then.

Recently, when **Hospitality Jamaica** chanced upon 'Hattie', as he is now called, he had an array of coconut frond hats, some of which he embellished with other parts of the coconut tree. There is the 'Kangol', the visor, the church hat, the Chinese conical, the traditional straw hat, the kufi (African-inspired), and the topless sunshade. He has mastered the art of making coconut frond hats, it seems.

His biggest challenge, Brown said, is to find a regular market, as hat-making is one of the things he does to make a living, as well as selling fruits along the Mount Rosser main road in St Catherine.



The African prince.

Sport tourism summit for World Travel Market London

A NEW GLOBAL sport tourism summit will be launched at World Travel Market (WTM) London 2016, the leading global event for the travel industry, in association with sport tourism company W2 Consulting.

Taking place on the first day of WTM London (Monday, November 7), the inaugural Global Sport Tourism Summit at WTM London will showcase the burgeoning worldwide sport-tourism sector and provide a platform for destinations, events, academics, and respected professionals in the field to discuss best practices and future trends.

Following a summer of sport – with the European football championships in France and the Olympics in Rio – the summit will feature keynote speakers from across the world to debate one of the fastest-growing tourism industry segments.

The summit will have three key strands:

1. Sport Tourism Summit – Presentations from key figures, events, destinations, and experts, along with networking opportunities.
2. Sport Tourism Data – Launch of the Annual Sport Tourism Monitor 2016.

3. Global Sport Tourism Awards at WTM London – Award presentations honouring excellence in a range of categories including destinations, marketing, events, and charities.

The summit will be hosted by WTM London in partnership with sport tourism consultancy W2 Consulting, which was founded by Mark O'Connell and Keith Wood, a

decorated international rugby union star who played for Ireland and the British and Irish Lions.

Simon Press, senior director, World Travel Market London, said: "I am delighted WTM London will be hosting the inaugural Global Sport Tourism Summit and Awards. Sport tourism is an increasingly important segment within the travel industry, with countries and cities

bidding for major sporting events in part due to the exposure and the positive impact it can have on the destination's tourism industry. Teaming up with W2 Consulting means we will have top-flight speakers, insightful debates, and astute analysis to help attendees get the most out of the summit."

Wood added: "The sport tourism sector has grown significantly in

recent years, with WTM London championing its cause at the annual event. We are extremely excited to announce the establishment of this major Global Sport Tourism Summit for 2016 and working with WTM London on this significant summit. Sporting events are continually in the headlines, offering huge opportunities to the host destination and tourism stakeholders. The Global Sport Tourism Summit at WTM London will hear from international experts how destinations can exploit the potential available in what is the fastest-growing sector in global tourism and win bids for major global events."

WTM London is the event where the travel and tourism industry conducts its business deals. Buyers from the WTM Buyers' Club have a combined purchasing responsibility of US\$22.6 billion (£15.8b) and sign deals at the event worth US\$3.6 billion (£2.5b).

WTM London 2016 will be revamped as a three-day event from November 7-9, with opening hours from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. for all three days.



UNWTO boss to make first-ever appearance at CTO conference

SECRETARY GENERAL of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Taleb Rifai, head of the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable tourism, will make his first-ever appearance at a Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) event when he presents at the State of the Tourism Industry Conference (SOTIC) next month.

Rifai will be joined by president of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) David Scowsill and CTO Secretary General Hugh Riley on a panel to discuss how to pilot an industry through a perpetual state of flux.

"The commitment of the UNWTO and the WTTC to participate in this conference

fulfils our mandate to make leaders of the global tourism industry accessible to our members, to share information with us and exchange ideas on how to resolve issues and challenges, and how to take advantage of opportunities in tourism, globally," Riley said.

During the session titled 'No Place For The Status Quo', the tourism leaders will delve into factors such as changing demographics and attitudes, which drive the tourism industry into a state of constant transition, and how to continuously align the product to consumers' tastes.

"There really is no *status quo* in the tourism sector. Things are constantly changing. It's a dynamic industry. It's vulnerable to external shocks, but it always

recovers. When we look at issues that affect public health, security, terrorism, economic shocks, all of these things affect the success and the sustainability of the tourism sector," the CTO secretary general added.

The session takes place from 9:45 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Friday, September 16, immediately following the feature address by Craig Landry, president of Air Canada Leisure Group.

The State of the Tourism Industry Conference, which has as its theme 'Honouring Our Legacy, Defining Our Future', is the pre-eminent tourism gathering in the region. It brings together tourism decision-makers, including ministers, commissioners, and directors of

tourism; hotel and airline executives; travel agents; students; the media; and persons directly and indirectly involved in tourism. It is preceded by CTO business meetings, including meetings of the board of directors and the Council of Ministers and Commissioners of Tourism.

A number of other presenters have been confirmed for SOTIC, which will explore subjects ranging from how to transition the product and multicultural and emerging markets to create a luxury experience.

This year's conference at the Hilton Barbados Resort is organised in collaboration with Barbados' Ministry of Tourism and International Transport and Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc.