

LIME
FABULOUS
FOOD

FOOD

Where to eat, drink, sip and celebrate food across the Caribbean, by **Janet Kipling**

EAT THIS...

The Cupcake Faerie

Slice into a magical creation made by this glittering Trini baker

When she was 15 years old, Selena Khan was already an accomplished baker. "From my first banana oat-bread, made aged nine, to the cakes I made for friends on weekends, baking has always been a profound presence in my life," she says. But it was when she designed a Superman-themed chocolate cake that her cake game changed forever. "I knew then that this was the beginning of a deliciously colourful journey," she recalls, "and since then I have been honing and mastering my skills as a self-taught cake artist."

Her fantastic made-to-order cakes come in many flavours, from spiced coffee to pineapple



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tonka bean with vanilla buttercream and 'Unicorn Surprise'. Her designs are as fabulous as the flavours, with lavish use of edible glitter and shimmer paint.

"My truest fulfilment is that moment when the customer catches a glimpse of their cake and they become wide-eyed with excitement; like a kid in a toy store," says Selena.

For Christmas Selena offers seasonal flavours including golden fruit sponge with orange blossom frosting and sorrel sponge with cinnamon-vanilla

buttercream. These creations are more edible art than mere cake; her Instagram is a spectacular online storefront, and she welcomes customers to her home to discuss their cake order dreams. "I always shine – though mostly by default, with all the edible glitter on my skin," Selena smiles, "and I smell like cake almost all the time – it's wonderful!"

Left & below: Selena Khan, aka The Cupcake Faerie, creates a fabulous range of sweet treats – many of them shimmering with a coating of colourful icing and edible glitter



* WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/THECUPCAKEFAERIE
* INSTAGRAM: THECUPCAKEFAERIE1

TRY THIS...

GREEN THUMB GROWERS

We're told to eat our greens – but delicate fresh produce can be challenging to grow in the Caribbean. In Trinidad, Lesley-Ann Bernard can make it easy for you. She set up Green Thumb Growers TT three years ago to supply varieties of microgreens, salad leaves and kale using sustainable aquaponics and hydroponics. Lesley-Ann uses a network of PVC pipes, pumps, water and koi carp. The plants absorb the circulating water, along with nutrients from the fish waste. "It's basically a mini ecosystem that's in perfect balance," says Lesley-Ann. "The business is growing faster than



my plants!" she adds. "I have my growing client base in Diamond Vale, a few offices that order regularly and one retail outlet (Bodega) so far." Lesley-Ann is hoping to get her fresh greens into major retail chains on the island, as well as passing on her knowledge with workshops for others who want to set up their own home-growing systems.

* WWW.GREENTHUMBGROWERSTT.COM

MAKE THIS...

Ponche de creme

Making your own ponche de creme is the very warmest welcome you can give Christmas visitors. This creamy, spicy, citrusy Caribbean cousin of eggnog goes down best with a slice of rum cake

INGREDIENTS: 9 eggs * 5 tins condensed milk
1 bottle white rum (750ml) * Rind of 1 green lime * 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon * 1 teaspoon grated nutmeg * Angostura bitters * Hot water

1 Pour half a cup of hot water onto the lime peel and set aside.
2 Beat eggs until fluffy. 3 Add milk, rum and liquid from lime peel. Then add cinnamon, nutmeg and bitters. Blend well. 4 Pour into clean bottles for storage. Serve over crushed ice.

* FOR A WEALTH OF CARIBBEAN CHRISTMAS RECIPES, BROWSE WWW.HOMEMADEZAGAT.COM





JUMP ON HERE...

The Youthful Vegan

Go plant-based with this inspiring Trini entrepreneur

When Jeunesse Pouchet set up The Youthful Vegan Café in 2014, it was the first vegan eatery in Trinidad. It secured a legion of regular customers, and Jeunesse has now redirected her efforts into running a fully fledged plant-based catering business.

Influenced by videos about animal factory farming when still young, Jeunesse vowed to change her way of eating and to experiment with vegan recipes, including plant-based versions of Trini favourites. "I shared my dishes with loved ones and received positive feedback," says Jeunesse. "I realised there was a need for vegan food in Trinidad. No one was doing it at the time." Now, Jeunesse has closed the store and built a catering kitchen at home. Her grab-and-go meals, desserts, pastries and frozen foods are available across the island at outlets including The Happy Gourmet, Starlite pharmacies and Fresh organics.

* WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/THEYOUTHFULVEGAN



ARIANNI MEIKA

COOK WITH THIS...

Green Gardens Flavas

Burke Maronie's business began bagging and freezing leftover fresh herbs. Now he sells packs of chives, thyme, celery and parsley mixed with seasoning peppers to restaurants, hotels and consumers. All the herbs are produced by small farmers within the farming community of Morne Prosper, then chopped, mixed and frozen with no additives or preservatives. Green Garden Flavas is stocked in two supermarkets in Dominica.

Dasheen balls

- * 3lbs dasheen
- * 2 tsp salt
- * 2 tbs butter
- * 1/3 cup Green Gardens Flavas
- * chopped seasoning
- * 1 tbs complete seasoning
- * 1 tbs adobo all-purpose seasoning
- * 1 cup flour
- * 1 cup oil

METHOD

- 1 Peel, wash and cut dasheen. Boil in water with 1 tsp of salt. When soft, drain, crush the dasheen and add 1tbs of butter.
- 2 Sauté Green Gardens Flavas seasoning in remaining butter and add to dasheen. Add remaining salt and adobo seasoning and mix until combined.
- 3 Put flour in a bowl, take enough mixture to form a ball, coat it with flour. Repeat. 4 Fry balls, turning occasionally until golden brown. Serve with salad or as a side.

* WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GREENGARDENSFLAVAS

RECIPE BY JUL'S PLACE, 55 POTTER ST, ROSEAU, DOMINICA



Left: Whimsy 'n Spice cookies can be used for making cheesecake – and they're delicious on their own, too

GIFT THESE...

WHIMSY 'N SPICE

Meet the Trini mum baking cookies for a better life

Seven years ago, Tessa Sooklal had a broken marriage, an 11-month-old baby, no job, no steady income – so decided to bake herself out of her predicament. She had shared her home-made shortbread biscuits with friends but never considered it as a viable business.

"Motherhood forces you to be the best version of yourself, and that means being creative, resourceful and strong," says Tessa. "I had to channel all that negativity into something that could generate income almost immediately and have the potential for development."

She started in one teashop in Port of Spain; when it went well, she decided to produce wholesale. Her first flavour was rosemary, which has been joined by salted chocolate, date and almond, spiced guava and coconut. She now supplies to ten speciality stores and cafes

nationwide. Each flavour has a different mixing and baking technique, and is hand cut.

While shortbread is a treat on its own, Whimsy'n Spice shortbread may also be used as a base for cheesecakes. Coconut cookies, blitzed in a food processor with melted butter and ground ginger, are perfect for mango or passion fruit cheesecakes.

* FACEBOOK: WHIMSY 'N SPICE

TESSA'S CHRISTMAS CONCOCTION

"Shortbread evokes nostalgia of Christmases past. To pay homage to that while maintaining that Caribbean element, I've created a special sorrel and ginger shortbread!"

TRY THIS...

St Lucia Sea Moss

Discover the magic that can be made with this humble alga found on Caribbean beaches

Sea moss might not look like much, but it contains 92 key minerals that the body requires, and is reputed to be good for everything from digestion and anaemia to guarding against coughs and colds. Tamisha Francis first tuned in to its health benefits when she

was pregnant, but couldn't find anyone who was importing it to the UK, where she is based. So, with the help of family in St Lucia, she found a sea moss farmer on the island and decided to set up a business.

"It is grown organically in protected coastal waters, and is some of the best quality you can find," says Tamisha. "Also, the government is supporting famers to ensure sustainable practices are maintained."

* WWW.STLUCIASEAMOSS.COM

The dried moss needs to be soaked in water for 12-24 hours to remove the salt, then blended with clean water (600-700ml per 70g) to make a tasteless gel that can be drunk by itself, added to soups, smoothies and other dishes, or used as a vegan gelatin replacement.

It can also be used in homemade beauty products. "There are so many possibilities with this beautiful alga," says Tamisha, who has high hopes for the business.

"Due to our close connection and love for the island, one of our goals is to be able to put money back into St Lucia in the form of community projects and working with local charity organisations," she says.

DID YOU KNOW...?
Eucheuma cottonii – sea moss – is a seaweed algae, brown, red or green in colour; it is also known as Irish moss

