

CUISINE WITH SPIRIT written by Bevan Springer

St. Lucia to host Food and Rum festival

CASTRIES, St. Lucia (July 6, 2006) – According to the International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA), food and beverages have an equal, if not more powerful, allure as museums, sports and shopping.

Caribbean hotelier Allen Chastanet is clearly a believer and is behind this fall's launch of St. Lucia's first ever Food and Rum Festival in Rodney Bay, from October 26 to 29, 2006.

The festival will attract some of the best chefs, wine and rum connoisseurs, and food critics from across the Caribbean and the globe. "Now that we have the Jazz festival established in St. Lucia, we needed another event to start off the winter season," said Chastanet, who believes that for most people food is a huge part of the travel experience.

St. Lucia has a true opportunity to become better known as a culinary destination and the multiplicity of restaurants in Rodney Bay makes the area a perfect spot to host the festival. "We are starting to build the awareness of quality food and making sure that the restaurants in St. Lucia have an appreciation of what's going on in the rest of the world," said Chastanet, who believes the event will also expose the many undiscovered culinary talents of the island nation.

Add rum and music, and the festival presents a true Caribbean flavor. Performing during the festival will be the New York-based jazz virtuoso pianist Monty Alexander of Jamaica, Soca sensation Arrow of "Hot, Hot, Hot" fame, Third World and local guitarist Ronald "Boo" Hinkson, and saxophonist Rob Taylor.

The festival will promote Caribbean rums, restaurants, chefs, and regionally manufactured food and drink products to an international audience, and will feature food demonstrations from world renowned and St. Lucia's finest chefs. Rum and wine tastings, dinners at five-star restaurants, and catamaran cruises to the south of the island are some of the highlights.

The ICTA says culinary tourism is the hottest niche to emerge within the travel industry in years. "Culinary tourism is about how to best develop and market a new kind of visitor attraction – unique and memorable food and drink experiences."

Packages are available from all of St. Lucia's northern hotels, including Chastanet's Coco Resorts which is offering a three-night stay of US\$650 which includes registration, VIP passes to the concerts each night, three upscale dinners – including wine and rum – access to the "Rum Pavilion" and food exhibitions.

The festival is co-produced by the St. Lucia and Hotel and Tourism Association and MACO Magazine and will receive support from Jamaica-based TurnKey Productions.

For further information, visit www.foodandrumfestival.com