

# Crucian Chef inspires "Caribbean Jam" at Crossing Vineyards and Winery



THROUGH THE  
GRAPEVINE  
CHRISTINE CARROLL

Winter is the perfect time for vineyard owners to take a break. The craziness of the holiday season is over, the vines are asleep until spring and the wines are quietly

aging in tanks and barrels.

In the winter of 2007 we decided to grab some much needed R&R on the little known and often misunderstood island of St. Croix. Here we were inspired with an exciting new idea for Crossing Vineyards' 2007 Summerfest.

For the past three years, Crossing Vineyards' summer celebration has focused on pairing local wine and food. This year, based on the trip to St. Croix, we decided to try something new, fresh and fun, and put our premium Pennsylvania wines to the test.

At Summerfest '07 we're challenging Crossing Vineyards' wines to pair with Caribbean cuisine. We're offering an

evening that will be casual and different...not your grandma's summer picnic... and will include wine tasting and live music. If you're looking for a great way to celebrate summer, check out Crossing Vineyards' "Caribbean Jam," on Saturday, July 28, 2007, from 5-9 PM.

Here's how the idea came to us.

2007 marked the third winter we'd spent time on St. Croix. The island has not been a favorite destination for U.S. visitors due to an unfortunate incident which resulted in the deaths of some tourists in the '70s and the cataclysmic Hurricane Hugo in 1989. ( It is one of our favorite vacation spots ...We think it's the best kept secret around...Shhh-don't tell anybody...)

Largest of the more than fifty islands and cays that comprise the United States Virgin Islands, St. Croix is located in the very heart of the Caribbean Sea. The Island is 1700 miles south of New York,

1100 miles south southeast of Miami, 100 miles southeast of San Juan, Puerto Rico and forty miles south of both St. Thomas and St. John. St. Croix is 22.7 miles long and is 6.6 miles at its widest point.

An "off the beaten path" destination, St Croix has a close to ideal climate, spectacular snorkeling and gorgeous beaches. It is also famous for its cuisine. Crucian food is rich and exotic, yet down-to-earth; trendy, yet steeped in tradition. Today's Crucian cooking has evolved from a unique intermingling of cultures--Spanish, British, Dutch, French, Maltese, Danish and American, with a strong African influence.

During the 2007 stay, we got more serious about exploring Caribbean culture and cuisine. So in the "spirit of research," we decided to treat ourselves to a meal prepared in our rented villa by well-known Crucian chef Burton Peterson.

Peterson is a talented culinary artist who presents his food and himself with warmth and charm. We have traveled the world and have rarely

found such delicious native cuisine, with specialties including Crucian lobster, homemade bread pudding with rum sauce, and conch prepared in a variety of creative ways.

While "hanging out in the kitchen" with Burton, we discussed Summerfest and started kicking around some ideas. Could he possibly travel to Bucks County in July? Would he prepare a menu and fly up to cook for us?

Burton turned down the offer to be our Summerfest chef, but he helped put a menu together featuring some of his favorites appetizers: plantain chips with avocado salsa, conch fritters with spicy cocktail sauce, and jerked spice tuna on skewers with "mango mash."

His influence can also be seen in Summerfest's lavish Caribbean buffet: Island Roast Pork with Calypso Barbecue Sauce & Corn Relish; 'Bahama Mama' Chicken with Pineapple, Mango & Orange Chutney; Grilled Red Snapper with Lime Butter; Caribbean Coconut Rice with Pigeon Peas; Steamed Calaloo & Collard Greens; Roasted Sweet Potatoes with Brown Sugar & Orange Marmalade

Glaze. And for dessert, the pièce de résistance, Caramelized Banana Crepes with Rum Fudge Sauce.

This year at Summerfest, Crossing Vineyards' award winning wines will again be available for sampling, with a spotlight on "whites and lights."

The featured white wines will be: Vintner's Select White, Riesling '06, Chardonnay '06 and Viognier '06. A surprising addition will be Nouveau Blanc '06, which, although it is made in the fall from the first fruits of the harvest, makes a great summer picnic wine. Its light, fruity quality complements dishes such as 'Bahama Mama' Chicken with Pineapple, Mango and Orange Chutney and Grilled Red Snapper with Lime Butter.

The reds available for tasting will include Crossing Vineyards' Blush and Le Nouveau, light, fruity wines that pair well with Caribbean cuisine.

All Crossing Vineyards wines will be available for sale by the glass or bottle.

Live music will be performed by "Caribbean Authentics" a group with a fresh island sound. Leading the way with steel drums and vocals is Raymond Charles, a native of Trinidad and Tobago. Dale Knight, originally from

Barbados, plays keyboard and guitar.

So if you're up for a fun and different summer evening, grab your flowered shirt and flip-flops and enjoy the best of the Caribbean right in your Bucks County backyard.

For more information on Crossing Vineyards and Winery's "Caribbean Jam," visit [www.crossingvineyards.com](http://www.crossingvineyards.com) or call 215-493-6500, ext. 19. Crossing Vineyards is located at 1853 Wrightstown Road in Washington Crossing. Caribbean Jam tickets can be purchased in advance in the Tasting Room, on-line or by phone.

To learn more about St. Croix, visit [www.gotostcroix.com](http://www.gotostcroix.com)

To learn more about Burton Peterson and Top Class Catering, go to: [www.topclasscateringvi.com](http://www.topclasscateringvi.com) ♦

*Christine Carroll is a columnist for Wines and Vines Magazine in San Rafael California and one of the principals of Crossing Vineyards and Winery. She is an officer of the Pennsylvania Winery Association's Board of Directors, Penn State University's Enology Program Advisory Committee and is the Secretary of the Bucks County Wine Trail. You can contact her at [info@crossingvineyards.com](mailto:info@crossingvineyards.com).*