



# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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### **Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education to Host Virtual Holiday Crucian Cooking Show in Partnership with St. Croix Culture Group**

ST. CROIX, USVI – The Virgin Islands Department of Education’s Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education (DVICE), in partnership with the Christiansted Community Alliance: Crucian Cultural Group, will host the “Crucian Cultural Cuisine” virtual holiday cooking series—an effort to further preserve traditional foodways in the Virgin Islands—at 11:30 a.m. daily on the Department’s Facebook page, beginning Dec. 21 and concluding on Christmas Day.

The Crucian Cultural Group, which curated local activities during the 2019 holiday season on St. Croix, engaged DVICE this year “to show how traditionally our food was prepared, along with the history of it, which is very important,” DVICE Director Stephanie Brown said. “We were happy to help them showcase how many of our dishes were made traditionally.”

The featured cooks include Sandra Gerard, on Dec. 21, who prepares guava jelly preserve and greengage with co-host Brown; Norma Pemberton Llanos, on Dec. 22, who prepares traditional benye with Sommer Sibilly-Brown, executive director of the Virgin Islands Good Food Coalition; Janet Rouse Cochrane, on Dec. 23, who makes traditional Crucian kallaloo alongside Madga Moolenaar of Bayside Kitchen; Dwayne Howell, on Dec. 24, who prepares sweet bread with co-host LaVerne Joseph from the Office of Delegate Stacey Plaskett; and Eleanor Sealey, on Dec. 25, who prepares traditional red peas soup.

Foodways, Brown explained, has to do with understanding one’s “identity through food. Everything [Caribbean people cook] might have an African derivative, but because each island was colonized by different countries, we each have a unique way of cooking our dishes.”

Brown pointed out that using ingredients traditionally available in the Virgin Islands to prepare local dishes is what sets those dishes apart from similar ones.

“There are a number of dishes that are made, but are not being traditionally made,” she said. “The influences of our neighboring islands, and our international and mainland communities might be changing the landscape of Virgin Islands’ foodways.”

One example of the way in which the preparation of some local dishes has changed is how some residents prepare red peas soup today.

“The reason the soup is red is from the red peas and the boiling process,” Brown explained. “But, seemingly, people have been skipping that process, because it’s a lengthy process, and are using seasonings and food colorings to make this food red. But it also loses its historical significance and its taste.”

She continued, “We have to understand our foodways and why our ancestors choose red peas – it is because of what was available to them here on the island and it also links us back to our West African roots, where a lot of these dishes are a combination of our West African history, as well as our European colonial influences.”

Brown said the featured cooks were selected because of their long-standing participation in cultural activities on St. Croix and the preparation of their dishes in traditional ways.

“Since we are not going to have a Crucian Festival this year, this is a good opportunity for them to showcase what they do,” she said. Many “still cook the way our ancestors cooked. They haven’t changed recipes to make things more modern. They’ve been doing it from the way persons who may have been enslaved in the Virgin Islands to possibly how persons did it in Africa.”

The prerecorded, 30-minute segments will also air on the Government Access Channel at 11:30 a.m., beginning Dec. 21.

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