

J'can Chefs Top First Int'l Jerk Challenge

Jerk specialists Rupert 'Shaggy' Bourne and Mark 'Max' Miller, were crowned joint winners in the first ever Jamaica Jerk Challenge.

Jamaican jerk specialists Rupert 'Shaggy' Bourne of Boston Beach, Portland and Mark 'Max' Miller, head chef at Scotchies 2 in Ocho Rios were crowned joint winners in the first ever Jamaica Jerk Challenge, held on one of the island's pristine beaches at the luxurious Jamaica Inn in Ocho Rios recently. The Jamaican pair beat out two of the world's leading chefs, self-taught Jamaican Executive Chef Cheryl Smith of Cheryl's Global Soul in Brooklyn, New York and former star of the Food Network's Melting Pot, as well as UK celebrity chef, Antony Worrall Thompson, resident studio chef and main presenter for BBC's Food & Drink.

Both chefs were equally elated to have emerged winners in the inaugural exclusive cook-off. According to Chef Shaggy, "We are the original jerk cooks in Boston. It's great that jerk is popular all over the world but no matter how good these chefs are, it all started with us." "I was quietly confident because this is something I do every day and I am passionate about it. We stay true to the traditional way of jerking meat," noted Chef Max, Jerk Specialist at Scotchies 2, Ocho Rios.

The judging panel included celebrated chef authors and key food players including Jamaican born Virginia Burke, author of two cookbooks Eat Caribbean and Walkerswood Caribbean Kitchen; Gariel Ferguson, co-owner and operator of popular Kingston restaurant Rib Kage Bar and Grill and celebrated chef Dennis McIntosh, President of the Culinary Federation of Jamaica. This highly esteemed team of judges conducted a blind tasting before announcing the winner of the Jamaica Jerk Challenge.

Jamaica's Director of Tourism John Lynch commented, "Jerk is our signature dish and is both tasty and original, so when Chef Antony said he had the best recipe it seemed like a great idea to host this challenge and include some of Jamaica's most famous jerk chefs on one of our best beaches."

Mary Phillips, General Manager of Jamaica Inn which hosted the event was pleased with the outcome. "As one of the finest resorts in the Caribbean, we are known for our cuisine but our guests couldn't wait to sample this wonderfully spicy jerk pork and chicken served by these world-class chefs straight from the fiery pit barbecues on the beach."