

Chefs clash in spicy cook-off battle

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Competitors are sharpening their knives and perfecting their jerk recipes for the 10th annual [Grace Jamaican Jerk Festival](#)

's Publix Jerk Cook-off and Celebrity Quick Fire Competition. Local jerk masters will show off their jerk flavor potential in these fiery competitions at the event slated for Sunday, November 13 at Markham Park in Sunrise.

While jerk cooking has come a long way from its days of wild hogs roasting in coal pits, these culinary stars will dial back the clock for authenticity and add their modern flavor to compete for a cash prize and the coveted golden Dutch Pot trophy.

"This year's competition will be even more exciting with the new rules and a new area, outfitted with tiki huts and jerk pits, where contestants will be cooking in front of the judges and the audience," says June Minto, coordinator of the Jerk Cook-off.

These competitions have been the centerpiece of the festival's [annual jerk celebrations](#). Jerk battles from past festivals have been filled with smoking hot rivalry, and this year's lineup promises to be just as intense.

Two former challengers will return to compete for the title in the Publix Jerk Cook-off. Last

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year's winner, Chef Robert Wong of Miami's Half Way Tree Restaurant, will again face last year's runner up Chef Michelle Jones. Chef Rolin Gordon of Tropic Gourmet will also enter the fray.

Each contestant is given 90 minutes to create an appetizer, entrée and dessert. Their creations must feature the signature jerk spice and an additional secret ingredient. The dishes will be judge based on presentation, taste, consistency, creativity and their use of the secret ingredient. The winner will receive a \$1500 cash prize and the golden Dutch Pot trophy.

The popular Celebrity Quick Fire competition returns for this year's festival. Local news anchor Neki Mohan of Channel 10 and the original Dreamgirl, Jamaican-American actress and singer Sheryl Lee Ralph, are scheduled to compete in this exciting showdown.

Chef Michael Jacobs, main chef for the Miami Heat, and Jim Denzel, owner of the Flamingo Road Nursery, will judge the culinary creations of both competitions.

Minto says she plans to keep the history of jerk at the forefront of this year's competition, in which contestants will prepare the jerk delicacies in the first ever Taino Village.

The Taino Village venue is an expansive space for guests to watch the competition unfold. A diorama of the history of jerk will also be displayed during the cook-off. Guests can learn more about the origins of jerk, while watching contestants cook up jerk delicacies with modern techniques and flavor combos.

Used as a method of curing meat, jerk comes from the Caribbean's original inhabitants, the Tainos. Runways slaves called Maroons, living deep in the mountain ranges of Jamaica, adopted the technique to preserve the wild meat hunted for their community in the late 17th century.

"This is the little known history of jerk that we intend to make an integral part of our 10th anniversary celebrations," says Minto. "I can't wait to see how this will all come together," she added.

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. The event is produced by Jamaican Jerk Festival USA, Inc., in association with Jamaica Awareness, Inc.

For more information please contact Jamaican Jerk Festival USA, Inc., at 786-361-1103, email info@jerkfestival.com or log on to www.jerkfestival.com