

VIRGIN ISLANDS Life & Style MAGAZINE

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MAGAZINE

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OF LEVICHE:**
A New Chapter in
Virgin Islands Culture

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IF YOU KNOW, YOU KNOW,



IF YOU KNOW YOU KNOW

The British Virgin Islands is one of the world's leading international business centres, playing a critical role in the global economy.

Yet, many in our local community don't know what our financial services industry is, how it works, and how it benefits the BVI.

"If You Know, You Know" is the latest campaign by BVI Finance to change this.

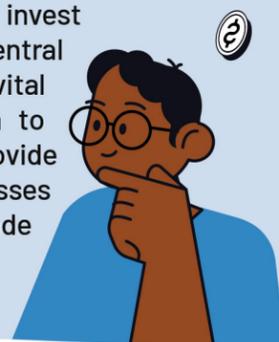


A CLEAR MISSION

Our mission is simple: To highlight the importance of the financial services industry in a way that connects to everyday life.

WHAT ARE FINANCIAL SERVICES?

From helping people save, spend or invest their money, financial services are central to our lives. Financial services are vital for businesses too, allowing them to trade and grow. As a country, we provide the services to international businesses and investors that support global trade and investment.



WHAT DO WE DO IN THE BVI?

In the British Virgin Islands, financial services help people and businesses with important things:

1. Starting and Running Companies

It's easy and affordable to set up a company here. These companies can trade and do business with people all over the world. They can sell products, offer services, and make international deals. We help persons or businesses place their company on our official register, ensuring its legal recognition and compliance with local laws and international standards. We also assist with day-to-day management like handling paperwork, keeping accounts, and making sure everything runs smoothly. Our experienced directors can guide companies to operate efficiently.

2. Setting up Trusts

A trust is a way to manage and protect your money or property for someone else, like your family. It's like having someone you trust look after your valuable things to keep them safe and plan for the future.

3. Creating Investment Funds

Investment funds collect money from many people to invest in different things and try to make more money. We ensure these funds follow both local and international regulations and are managed effectively.

4. Virtual Assets Service Providers

We support persons and companies involved with virtual assets like cryptocurrencies. This includes helping them register properly, comply with local laws and international guidelines, and operate securely. We guide them in offering services related to virtual assets, making sure they meet all legal requirements and understand the risks involved.



5. Legal Services

We offer a wide range of legal help for businesses and individuals. This includes making sure they comply with local laws and international standards, drafting contracts, resolving disputes, and other legal matters related to running a company or trust.

Our financial services industry assists with all these activities and more, providing support and guidance, making sure everything is done properly according to both local and international rules. Doing so not only helps individuals and businesses, but also brings jobs and international business to our islands



WHY DO THEY MATTER TO THE BVI?

Financial Services has been a consistent employer through thick and thin over the past 40 years. For instance, after the devastating Hurricane Irma hit and during the global pandemic, it was the financial services sector that helped the territory get back on its feet when tourism was wiped out.

This industry helps fund public services like schools, healthcare, and roads, and keeps businesses running - meaning that without it, our local economy wouldn't exist as we know it today.

IT'S A MYTH

"The BVI is a Tax Haven"

The BVI is not a tax haven. Persons using BVI companies pay taxes in their home country or where their investments are based, but they don't pay taxes in the BVI.

"People Use the BVI to Hide Dirty Money"

Financial service providers are required to follow strict rules to ensure that dirty money does not pass through their systems.

Service providers in the BVI face heavy penalties, including cancelling of licenses, for failing to follow these rules.

"BVI Offshore Companies Exist Only for Illegal Activities"

Companies registered in the BVI are used around the world for a variety of purposes, including property holding, investment, merging businesses, forming partnerships, and managing big financial deals.

Many companies listed on major stock exchanges, like the New York Stock Exchange or the London Stock Exchange, use BVI companies.

The BVI is closed for business to illegal activities.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Since the launch of the first BVI Business Company 40 years ago, the financial services industry has become an essential part of how the world does business. And more importantly, it's central to life here in the BVI.

HERE'S HOW:

1 Big on Business: The BVI is home to over 350,000 active companies. Many international companies choose to set up here because of the strong legal and financial support we offer. This helps bring in more jobs and money, which benefits everyone.

2 Global Reach: BVI Business Companies hold US\$1.4 trillion of assets, equivalent to 1.5 per cent of global GDP. Roughly 44% of active BVI Business Companies are ultimately owned by individuals or entities in China, 20% in Latin America, and 16% in North America and Europe, based on the location of their ultimate beneficial owners.

3 An Economic Lifeline: Financial services have helped the BVI navigate economic challenges, whether hurricanes, or the pandemic. When tourism was hit, financial services remained the backbone of the economy, keeping people in jobs and money flowing into public services, such as schools and hospitals.

4 Keeping Public Services Running: Financial services provide a significant portion of the government's revenue. This helps fund schools, hospitals, and essential services like waste management and emergency response, which we all rely on daily.

5 Creating Jobs: The financial services sector directly employs thousands of local professionals, including regulators, lawyers, analysts, accountants, auditors, and corporate service officers. It also indirectly supports numerous jobs across sectors such as hospitality, retail, and construction. When businesses flourish, they hire people, and that's crucial for everyone in the BVI.

6 Supporting Local Businesses: Whether you're running a small business or working for a larger company, many of the financial services offered in the BVI help ensure businesses have the support they need to grow and succeed. This boosts the entire community.

7 Resilience and Growth: The financial services sector helps the BVI adapt and grow. Whether it's through supporting new technologies or helping businesses remain competitive globally, the industry is always evolving to create new opportunities.

8 A Local Boost: Many of the services that international businesses use here are also available to local businesses. This helps smaller, local companies thrive and create jobs for people in the community.

9 A Better Future: Financial services in the BVI aren't just about making money; they are about securing a future for everyone. By supporting sustainability and working to create jobs for future generations, the industry is focused on building a stronger BVI for all.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How does the financial services industry support the BVI's local economy?

Financial services directly employ over 2,000 people and support many more jobs in related fields. Beyond that, the industry is the largest contributor to government revenue, which helps fund public services we all rely on, from schools to hospitals to road repairs.

Q: How can the BVI community benefit from the financial services sector?

The wealth generated from financial services doesn't stay in the boardrooms; it flows into the community. It funds public services, creates jobs, and provides opportunities for locals to gain valuable skills through training programs and internships.

Q: How does the financial services sector make sure it's operating fairly and safely?

The BVI works hard to ensure that the financial services sector is transparent and follows international rules. This helps protect both our community and the businesses that choose to operate here, making sure everyone plays by the same rules.

Q: How is the financial services industry preparing for the future?

The BVI is committed to staying ahead in areas like technology and innovation, including exploring new opportunities in digital finance. This means more jobs, more investment, and a stronger future for everyone in the territory.



GET IN TOUCH

To find out more about our financial services industry or the 'If You Know, You Know' campaign, please visit bvifinance.vg or follow us at [@bvifinance](https://twitter.com/bvifinance) on social media platforms.

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ABOUT US
Virgin Islands Life&Style magazine offers a true reflection of the people, places, events, and concerns that shape Our Lives, Our Style, Our Islands. The magazine informs, challenges, delights and inspires the people who live, work, and play in our islands. We give our readers relevant and compelling content, and present it in an attractive format. Every great country has a magazine that showcases its people, spotlights its culture, and tell its stories – we are Virgin Island's.



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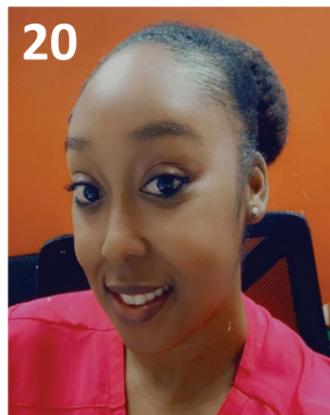
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THE BIG PICTURE

THE SETTING MOON
Northside, Tortola from Sugar Mill Hotel, BVI





HOW DO YOU DANCE TO BVI MUSIC TODAY?

Photos by - Epic Design Photography Studio

THE BIRTH OF LEVICHE: A New Chapter in Virgin Islands Culture

The question has followed Che Pemberton from Road Town to foreign dance floors, from curious tourists on the beach to fellow dancers at international festivals: "How do you dance to your music?"

For years, he would pause. The BVI has the rhythm — bands like VIBE and Xtreme Band are proof of that. We have the music that makes your body want to move. But when it comes to how we actually dance to it, that answer has been harder to pin down. Until now.

The Question That Started It All

"Every time I travel, people ask me the same thing," Che says. "They want to know — how do Virgin Islanders dance to VI groovy soca? What's our style? And I'd explain our two-step, our sway, the rock, but it was never formalized. There was no name for it, no structure. Just something we did."

When tourists visit the BVI, enchanted by the infectious beats of our local bands, they ask the same question:

"Can you teach me how to dance to this?"

That was when Che realized something was missing. We have salsa for Cuban music, kizomba for Angolan beats, bachata for Dominican Republic rhythms. Afrobeats has its own social dance style. But the Virgin Islands? We have been dancing without a name — without a format people could learn, share, and celebrate. So Che created one.

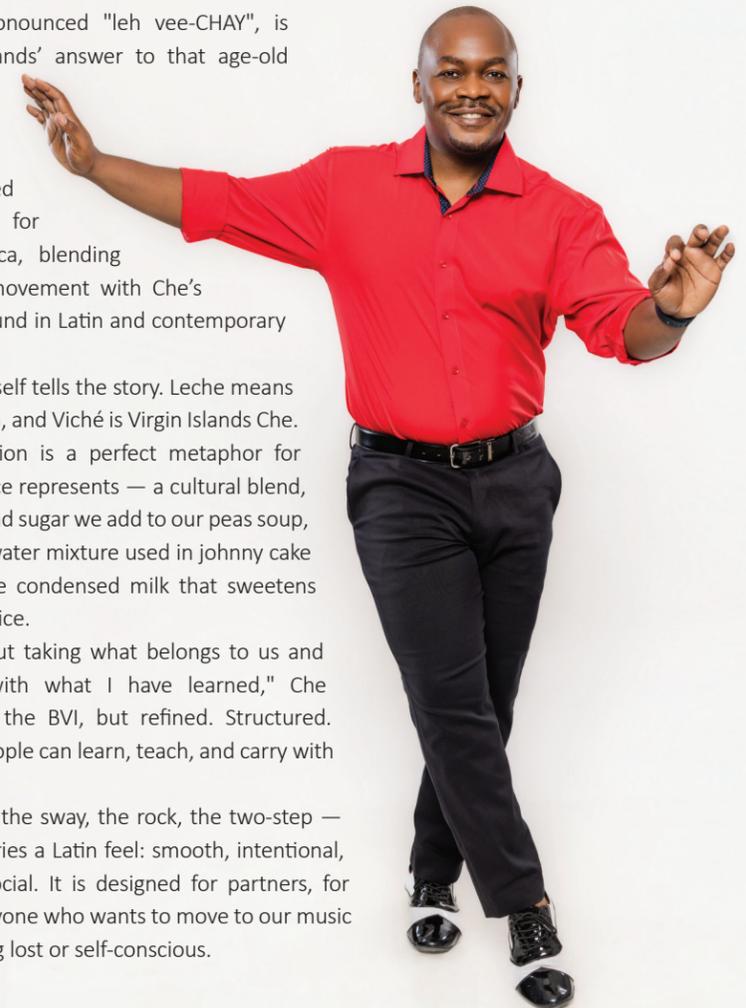
Enter LeViché

LeViché, pronounced "leh vee-CHAY", is the Virgin Islands' answer to that age-old question. The social dance style is designed specifically for VI groovy soca, blending our cultural movement with Che's deep background in Latin and contemporary dance.

The name itself tells the story. Leche means milk in Spanish, and Viché is Virgin Islands Che. The combination is a perfect metaphor for what this dance represents — a cultural blend, like the milk and sugar we add to our peas soup, the milk and water mixture used in johnny cake recipes, or the condensed milk that sweetens our soursop juice.

"This is about taking what belongs to us and blending it with what I have learned," Che explains. "It's the BVI, but refined. Structured. Something people can learn, teach, and carry with them."

LeViché has the sway, the rock, the two-step — but it also carries a Latin feel: smooth, intentional, and deeply social. It is designed for partners, for groups, for anyone who wants to move to our music without feeling lost or self-conscious.



Why We Needed This

The Virgin Islands has always had rhythm. From fungi jams to the soft roll of the sea, we have always been a people who move. But somewhere along the way, we stopped dancing — at least publicly.

The oldest generation, the ones who remember quadrille and folk dances, have mostly retreated indoors. They appear at Gospel Fest, clap along respectfully, and head home before the soca kicks in.

The adults of today? Many of us stand on the sidelines — watching, judging, too self-conscious to let loose unless the lights are off or the drinks are flowing. We have forgotten how to move — to sway, to feel the music in our bodies without overthinking it.

And the youngest generation? They have grown up in the era of wining and grinding — raw, unfiltered movement that, while energetic, does not always reflect the grace and intention that once defined our dance culture.

LeViché is meant to fill that void. It is not about replacing wining or grinding, but offering an alternative. A way to enjoy our music that feels respectful, intentional, and culturally rooted. A way to connect with a partner, with a group, with the music itself.

"This is social dancing," Che says. "Like salsa, like bachata. You don't have to be a professional. You just have to want to move."

The Man Behind the Movement

If you know anything about dance in the BVI, you know Che Pemberton. He is a fixture in the cultural scene — a Heritage Dancer and one of the only tap dancers in the territory.

He has choreographed everything from intimate private events to large-scale performances. He has taught contemporary, Latin, jazz, tap, and Afrobeats. He is IDTA-certified in International Latin Dance and Contemporary Freestyle Dance, trained by Salsa Kings in Cuban salsa, and studied tap in Chicago with Sarah Reich and M.A.D.D Rhythms.

For 13 years, Che has been moving between worlds — traditional and modern, structured and free, local and international. Through it



all, he has carried one mission: to ensure the Virgin Islands never loses its voice through movement.

Understandably, Che's work with the Heritage Dancers and other performance groups — most of it is choreographed. Rehearsed. Beautiful to watch, but not something the average person can join at a fete or a beach lime.

"Heritage Dancers perform our culture," he says. "But the social dancing element is missing. There is no way for regular people to participate unless they are on stage. I wanted to change that."

LeViché is that change — the bridge between performance and participation, between tradition and today.

A Dance for All of Us

LeViché is not about being the best dancer in the room. It is about being in the room — present, moving, connected to the music and the people around you.

It is for the couple at a wedding who want to do more than shuffle side to side. For the tourist who falls in love with a VIBE song and asks, "Can you teach me?" For the young person who wants to move beyond grinding but doesn't know what else to do. Moreover, for the elders who remember when dancing was a language we all spoke fluently.

"People can't preserve what they don't understand," Che says. "So let's teach it, live it, and dance it again."

He is working on more than just the dance itself. A companion instructional guide is in the works, making it easier for schools, community groups, and new students to learn the movements and understand their cultural significance. Workshops, social dance nights, and a launch event are also being planned to introduce LeViché to the BVI and the world.

This is more than choreography — it is a blueprint for cultural revival.

The Rhythm Lives On

The Virgin Islands has always been a people of rhythm. The question was never whether we could move — it was how we would choose to move forward.

With new bands pushing our sound into the future and a dance master giving us a way to move to it, the Virgin Islands is finding its rhythm again. Not by looking back with nostalgia, but by honoring where we've been while creating something fresh — something ours.

LeViché is not just a dance style. It is a reclaiming. A celebration. An invitation. So the next time someone asks, "How do you dance to BVI music?" we finally have an answer. We dance LeViché.

And once the music starts, your body will remember what to do.

LeViché is coming. Are you ready to move? For more information about LeViché classes, workshops, and the official launch event, follow @LeViche on social media or contact Che Pemberton at 284-441-6503.

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Preserving the Spirit of Virgin Islands Culture Culture Thursdays in Carrot Bay

Words by Claudia Hodge - Photos by Adrian Peters Photography

On the western side of Tortola lies the farming, seaside village of Carrot Bay — a community built on culture, unity, and the ongoing effort to restore and sustain a cherished way of life. Every third Thursday, something special happens here. The young and old come together for a community celebration filled with old-time games, seasonal fruits, and traditional Virgin Islands dishes.

Vendors from across the First District gather in a festival-village setting, sharing family recipes, cultural dishes, and local baked goods with the many who turn out for the celebration. They call it Culture Thursday — a grassroots revival of tradition that's breathing new life into the community and reconnecting the Virgin Islands with its roots.

A Gathering with Purpose

Once, gatherings like this were a staple of island life. People cooked on coal pots, played fungi music, danced in celebration, and passed down lessons through song and story. But as modern life quickened and imported influences seeped into everyday living, many of those practices began to fade in the Virgin Islands. Carrot Bay — a village known for its deep cultural pride — refused to let that happen.

The introduction of Culture Thursday can be traced to Dr. Karl Dawson, First District Representative, who saw the importance of bringing the community together through culture. Inspired by his experience at the Oistins Fish Festival in Barbados, Dr. Dawson envisioned an event that would bring back the warmth and authenticity of Virgin Islands life.

At the time, serving with the portfolio for Agriculture and Fisheries, Dr. Dawson wanted to create a space where elders could share their knowledge and young people could feel proud of where they come from. Out of that vision, Carrot Bay's Culture Thursday was born — a celebration of community, tradition, and the Virgin Islands spirit.

Today, Culture Thursday has become a fixture on the island's social calendar, attracting locals and visitors alike who come not just to be entertained, but to experience the true heart of Virgin Islands life — food, games, culture, and heritage.

What began as a simple village idea has blossomed into a cultural movement — one that showcases the beauty, creativity, and resilience of Virgin Islands people. The Committee has partnered with the HSLCC Community College, Virgin Islands Communal Association (VICA) and various villages to ensure a share focus is placed on building on this cultural event.

Keeping Tradition Alive

Culture Thursday is more than an event — it's an opportunity for sharing, teaching, and learning led by the culture bearers of Carrot Bay. Each month, elders, artisans, and young people come together to keep traditions alive.

Children help in the food stalls, learn traditional games, and experience the taste and rhythm of their culture firsthand. The strong sense of unity that defines Carrot Bay shines through every detail of the event. From the youngest participant to the oldest storyteller, everyone contributes to making each Culture Thursday special.

Local farmers and fisherfolk are always present, showcasing whatever is in season — from fresh produce to the catch of the day. It's a reminder that sustainability, self-reliance, and respect for the land and sea remain at the heart of Virgin Islands life.



A Taste of the Virgin Islands

Taking centre stage each Culture Thursday is, of course, the food. The scent of locally caught fried fish, peas soup, johnny cakes, fried pate, and boiled fish and fungi fills the air as vendors prepare traditional dishes using time-honoured recipes passed down through generations.

And then there are the sweets — coconut and almond sugar cakes, tamarind and gooseberry stews — all made the old-fashioned way. Visitors sip on homemade mauby, freshly made fruit juices, and brightly coloured snow cones, connecting their taste buds to stories of generations past.

Also making appearances are beloved baked goods such as cassava bread, sweet potato pudding, carrot cake, and of course, the famous Virgin Islands tarts. Whether coconut, pineapple, guava, or guavaberry, every person has a favourite — and the friendly debate over which flavour reigns supreme is part of the fun. It's a never-ending feud. At the end of the day, everyone wins when there's tart on the table.

Each dish tells a story — of family, resilience, and resourcefulness. Food in the Virgin Islands has always been more than a meal; it's a form of cultural storytelling, connecting people to their roots one bite at a time.

Culture Beyond the Plate

While food may draw the crowds, it's the mix of art, culture, and music that keeps them dancing. Local artisans display handmade jewellery, straw crafts, and island-inspired



Light the coal pot race



Needle and thread race

artwork, while fungi and calypso bands set the rhythm that carries through the night.

For visitors, the experience is immersive, authentic, and unscripted. Tourists who come here aren't just watching culture. They're part of it. They dance, they eat, they join in the games — and that's the Virgin Islands experience we want them to take home.

Culture Thursday isn't just an event — it's a heartbeat. A living reminder that the Virgin Islands' spirit remains strong, pulsing through its people, its food, and its traditions.

A Living Legacy

In Carrot Bay, every third Thursday is more than a date on the calendar — it's a testament to the power of community and the beauty of continuity. Through laughter, music, and shared meals, a village reminds the world that true culture never fades; it evolves, sustains, and inspires.

Culture Thursday continues to echo across the BVI — inviting other villages to take part and be. Culture is not just something we talk about — it's something we live.

To be apart of this experience, follow the Carrot Bay Culture Thursday Facebook page for updates on upcoming events — and when you visit, be sure to stop by one of the many vendors such as First District One Social Action Group, Velma Chung, Jennifer Bertie, Wisteria Donovan, Kelly's, Selly's BBQ Pit, Vittinton Callwood, Smyrna Romney, Melina Stoutt, Chi Chi's Mango Smoothies, and more for a true taste of Virgin Islands flavour.



Three legged race



The Bitter Cocoa

FROM HERITAGE TO HABIT

By Chelsea Hodge

For many Virgin Islanders of Caribbean descent, cocoa tea is more than a drink — it's a morning ritual that helped shape who they are. Its bittersweet aroma conjures memories of kitchens before sunrise, where mothers stirred the pot with patience and care, and fathers poured steaming mugs before heading off to work. It was comfort, discipline, and nourishment all at once — a daily practice that grounded the day in warmth and resilience.

Yet not everyone grew up on cocoa. Across the Virgin Islands, bush tea held a sacred place in homes and hearts. Brewed from local herbs like lemongrass, basil, mint, or soursop leaf, bush tea carried the wisdom of generations. Steeped slowly, it cleansed, strengthened, and awakened both body and spirit. Mothers and grandmothers knew that a cup of carefully prepared bush tea in the morning was more than a beverage — it was a quiet lesson in self-care, connection, and attentiveness.

Together, cocoa tea and bush tea formed an unspoken cultural philosophy: that the way you begin the day shapes how you meet the world. The morning ritual, simple as it was, taught patience, discipline, and respect for natural rhythms. Stirring cocoa tea or steeping herbs wasn't just about flavor; it was about grounding oneself in a continuum of history and care. It was a way of carrying forward the values of those who came before, one slow, intentional step at a time.

From Plantation Kitchens to Modern Lives

Historically, cocoa tea played a more profound role than nostalgia alone. Its roots stretch back to the plantation era, where enslaved Africans and their descendants relied on cocoa as both sustenance and comfort. Cocoa sticks were made by hand: beans roasted, pounded, and shaped into cylinders, then simmered with bay leaf, cinnamon, nutmeg, or other spices that had been brought through colonial trade routes.

For plantation laborers, cocoa tea was more than warmth; it was fuel. Its rich, bitter flavor carried calories and nutrients that helped sustain long, grueling days under the Caribbean sun. The drink offered strength for the body and a small but essential measure of solace for the spirit. It was, in essence, a daily ritual of endurance — a quiet act of care in a life otherwise controlled by hardship.

Bush tea played a similar role. Herbs grown in small provision gardens or gathered from the surrounding landscape were boiled for medicinal properties, soothing digestion, supporting energy, and calming nerves. In a world shaped by oppression, these

beverages were not indulgence; they were necessity, infused with knowledge, intuition, and survival.

The Lost Ritual in a Fast-Paced World

Today, many young adults in the Virgin Islands are disconnected from these rituals. The rhythms of modern life — early commutes, desk jobs, smartphones, and endless notifications — have left little room for the patient brewing of cocoa or herbal infusions. Coffee pods, instant teas, and energy drinks have replaced careful preparation, efficiency often prized over ritual.

In skipping the morning cup, we lose more than flavor. We lose pause. We lose connection. We leave behind the simple act of honoring both body and history — the same way a generation of plantation laborers once honored their strength and their limited autonomy in a hostile world. There is power in that continuity. The cocoa that fueled long days under oppressive heat now has the potential to sustain long days under the oppressive pace of modern life. Bush teas, once used for physical and mental fortification, now offer an antidote to stress, disconnection, and the constant pressure to perform.

Even in a world of multitasking, there is value in slowing down for a cup. Holding the warm mug, stirring gently, inhaling the aroma, and savoring the first sip offers a moment of grounding. It reconnects us — if only briefly — to the land, the hands that prepared the drink, and the lineage that taught patience, care, and attentiveness. These drinks are still a form of medicine, still a form of culture, still a way to center the self before meeting the world.

Culture in Every Sip

Cocoa and bush tea are more than beverages; they are archives of memory, resilience, and identity. Every sip carries the story of ancestors who survived impossible conditions, who made the best of limited resources, and who understood that care and attention — even in small measures — mattered.

For young adults, returning to these traditions is not about nostalgia or resisting

modernity. It's about balance. A cup of cocoa tea or bush tea is a practice that instills mindfulness in a life otherwise dominated by rush and distraction. It reminds us that culture is not something left behind as we modernize; it is something we carry forward — sip by sip, day by day.

There is also a social dimension. Preparing tea at home, sharing it with family or neighbors, or even taking it as a ritual before leaving the house strengthens bonds. It reconnects young adults to a broader cultural and familial ecosystem, one that stretches back generations. It teaches that wellness is not just individual; it is communal.

Reviving the Practice

Reintroducing cocoa and bush tea into daily life can be simple. Schools, workplaces, and community programs can encourage the use of local herbs and traditional recipes. Families can reclaim breakfast rituals, taking even a few minutes to brew and savor the drink together. Cafés and restaurants can feature local teas, giving young people access to taste, culture, and connection outside the home.

Ultimately, cocoa and bush tea are lessons in self-care, continuity, and identity. They are reminders that the body, mind, and spirit are intertwined with culture, and that even in a world of speed and convenience, the old ways can sustain us just as well today as they did centuries ago.

Carrying Culture Forward, One Sip at a Time

The same cup that once fortified plantation laborers now has the power to sustain young adults navigating modern stresses. Its bittersweet taste teaches patience. Its warmth teaches presence. Its ritual teaches care — for self, for family, for culture.

So the next time life rushes by, pause for a cup of cocoa or bush tea. In that simple act, you are honoring the past, grounding the present, and preparing yourself for the future. The ancestors knew what they were doing — and their wisdom, steeped in every mug, is still medicine for the body, the spirit, and the soul.

Cocoa and bush tea are more than drinks. They are living culture. And they are ready to teach us again.

“Take care of your body. It’s the only place you have to live.” - Jim Rohn

BUILDING A HEALTHY VIRGIN ISLANDS

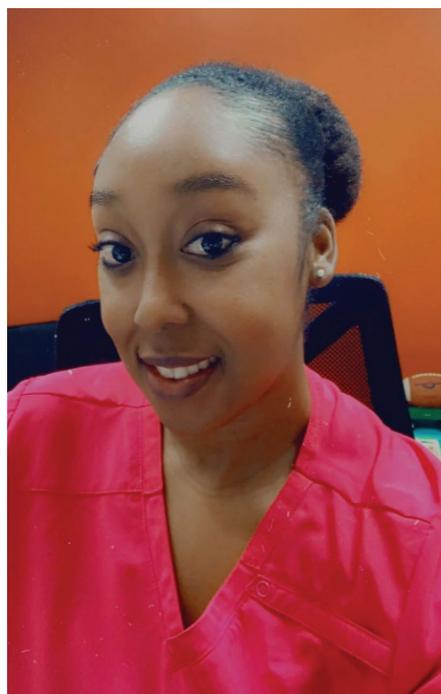
When we think of beauty, we often picture what’s seen from the outside — glowing skin, bright eyes, strong healthy hair, an energetic body and spirit. But true beauty begins deep within. It starts with what we feed our bodies, the nutrients that support our hearts, our minds, and even our moods. Vitamins, minerals, proteins, and healthy fats each play their part in the orchestra of wellness, performing together to create a life of vitality.

The beauty of nutrition lies not in restriction, but in appreciation. It’s about embracing the natural rhythm of nourishment, finding joy in every flavour, and remembering that every healthy choice is an act of gratitude for the gift of being alive. It is self love!

Beyond BeauTi sat down with Gabrielle Joseph, local Nutritionist at the Dr. D. Orlando Hospital to gain insight on knowledge-building a healthy Virgin Islands.

BB: How would you describe the current state of nutrition and eating habits in the Virgin Islands — and what are some of the biggest challenges you see?

GJ: We seem to be overly busy and dependent on foods prepared outside of the home. The art of home cooking is dwindling away. The cost of living, groceries included is steadily rising, decreasing our ability and desire to stock healthy fridges and cupboards. Many families are struggling just to survive. Despite these challenges, I do find that there is an increased awareness of the need to eat healthy. More and more people are taking an interest in nutrition. From the ministry of Health we see the drive to promote good nutrition and teach the public what that means with the recent work done on the eat-well guide. Nutrition is buzzing and people want to eat better, but



Gabrielle Joseph - Nutritionist

aren’t always empowered to do so.

BB: How do traditional Virgin Islands foods — like fungi, fish, and callaloo — fit into a healthy lifestyle? Can culture and wellness go hand in hand?

GJ: Culture and wellness most definitely can go hand in hand. These are foods that kept our forefathers strong and out of the clinics

and the hospital. What I think we have to remember about our cultural delicacies, many times they were portion controlled for the simple fact that there was only so much food to share for everyone in the household. They were also accompanied by significant amounts of physical activity. The fishermen caught the fish that they brought to their families and if not catching the fish themselves, at the very least energy was exerted to clean and cook the fish. The veggies were grown in the garden, harvested and prepared. In this generation, we crave convenience and have lost physicality that often preceded eating.

BB: What role does nutrition play in managing common health conditions like diabetes or hypertension, which affect so many families here?

GJ: Nutrition plays a pivotal role in managing many if not all chronic non-communicable diseases. In the case of diabetes, nutrition can be used to reduce the burden on the pancreas and reverse insulin resistance in the case of Diabetes type two. For hypertension, nutrition can help to promote the opening of our blood vessels, decreasing the strain on the heart and reducing hypertension.

Nutrition helps to support the body’s natural inclination to choose health over sickness. It provides the body with the tools (nutrients) needed to recalibrate where necessary to decrease the impact of disease on the body. Nutrition also plays a major role on mediating inflammation, a major contributor to many chronic illnesses.

BB: What are a few practical, affordable changes people can make to eat healthier every day — especially with the cost of food being so high?

GJ: 1) Incorporate more beans into diet. This can be done by adding beans to traditionally all meat dishes like ground beef and spaghetti

or replacing meat with the beans, for example, lentil bolognese sauce. They are good sources of protein and great sources of fiber, a nutrient we tend to under consume. Beans have also remained quite affordable.

2) Practice portion control. Where hunger may drive us to eat a 6 oz chicken leg, portion control can turn that chicken leg into two 3 oz portions.

3) Remove the added sugar. Majority of the added sugar in the diet comes in liquid form. If we trade in juices, sodas, commercial smoothies, coffee and tea beverages etc for their naturally no- sugar added versions, we would decrease our risk for many illnesses. Hydrating without sugar is the way to go. On the other hand, over-consuming artificial sweeteners is not what I am trying to promote either. Although I believe that sparing use of artificial sweeteners can help someone on the journey of decreasing their sugar intake, it should not become a crutch.

Added sugar is already hiding in many of our favorite snacks, sauces and baked goods. If we take sugar out of our cupboards and off our dinner tables, we would do ourselves a great service.

BB: What is one nutrition myth you wish more people in our community would stop believing; — and what is the truth instead?

GJ: “Carbohydrates make you fat”. A blanket statement like this is dangerous. It lumps all carbohydrates together when they are not all created equal. It also makes it seem like there is no place for carbohydrates in weight loss plan or general healthy diet plan. Whole grains, fruits and vegetables are all healthy carbohydrate sources. They provide energy, fiber and needed nutrients. Refined carbohydrates on the other hand like pastries and sugary drinks can most definitely contribute to weight gain if over-consumed. This overconsumption can lead to the caloric imbalance that precedes weight gain.

Weight gain is a complex process, of which caloric imbalance is just a part. Hormones, sleep quality, certain medications, sedentary lifestyles and alcohol consumption can all play a role in “making us fat”.

BB: What does “eating well” mean to you personally, and how do you apply that philosophy in your own

life and your client’s life.

GJ: A sustainable way of eating that promotes health and longevity, reducing risk for disease. In my life, this has steered me clear of fad diets and any diet pattern that realistically I could not stick to consistently for a long period of time. It must actually be feasible. Yes, all essential nutrients should be covered but in a way that fits my schedule and my pocket. This often means meal planning and prepping.

I often recommend meal planning and prepping to clients as well, because like the saying goes, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Being intentional about proteins, carbs, and fat with a focus on balancing animal and plant contributions to the diet has helped me. Planning and prepping has helped me and clients to make space for the foods we often forget in the hustle and bustle of life, foods like vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds.

BB: How can families, especially parents, encourage children to develop healthier eating habits from an early age?

GJ: As a parent myself, I would say that the most important thing that we can do is lead by example. It is crucial that our children consistently see us eating the foods that we are encouraging them to eat. When eating healthy is a part of our lives, it should affect the foods that we put into the grocery carts and consequently our cupboards and refrigerators. On top of that, using beloved characters on youtube or in books that promote healthy eating can also be helpful.

Realistically speaking, it’s not every time that we introduce healthy foods that our kids will embrace it. But we must not get weary in well doing. We have the responsibility to present those foods often, sometimes in different forms. Overtime we just might see the changes we desire to see in their diets. I would also caution the excessive use of junk food as reward, it creates negative messaging around the types of foods that they should enjoy.

BB: From your experience at the hospital, what is one success story that shows how proper nutrition can truly transform someone’s health or recovery?

GJ: Two men come to mind. What really impressed me about these men was their resolve to get better and change their

situation. They both were ready and willing to be active partners in their recovery, which included enduring sound nutrition education and planning to put the information learned into practice.

For one of these men, the issue was a new diabetes diagnosis and the other was a new high cholesterol diagnosis. Mr. High Cholesterol was determined to reduce his cholesterol levels without medication and was granted a grace period to do just that. We worked on increasing soluble fiber and omega-3’s in the diet, while moderating cholesterol and saturated fat intake. He was able to lower his cholesterol into normal ranges in 4 months. Mr. Diabetes could not avoid medication as he was a type 1 Diabetic, but he was able to stabilize his daily blood sugars, regain some of the weight that he lost due to poor blood sugar control and is on the road to avoiding diabetic complications and a long healthy life.

The beauty of good nutrition and local food lies in its simplicity — growing, sharing, and nourishing together. When Virgin Islanders support local farmers, we do more than just buy produce; we invest in our health, our land, and our community’s future.

Gabrielle emphasizes the importance of strengthening the foundation of local agriculture, stating, “Our farmers must have what they need in order to feed the community. I would love to see a more structured approach to farming in the BVI, where there isn’t as much overlap between farmers in what they produce, increasing the diversity of what’s offered.”

She further encourages continued support for the farming sector, “whether in the form of grants, subsidies, or simply bridging the gap between farmers and their needs.”

Imagine a Virgin Islands where every family has access to fresh local produce, local fruits and vegetables — where our children learn the value of farming and the science behind what they eat. With the right support, structure, and education, this vision can be our reality.

Choosing local, farm-fresh food is not just about what’s on your plate — it’s about the freedom to live well. Start small, stay consistent, and remember that every healthy choice is a gift to your future self. The journey to better living begins with one simple act: choosing to nourish yourself and your community from the ground up. Let us all live a beautiful, healthy life together.



How the Rising Tide of Technology is helping to power **Blue Economy Research at HLSCC's Centre for Applied Marine Studies (CAMS)**

In recent years, technology has undergone a dramatic transformation, with emerging tools shifting from experimental novelties to everyday essentials. Artificial Intelligence (AI), for example, is now deeply embedded in daily life, with platforms like ChatGPT handling over a billion queries each day. The technological revolution is reshaping how we live and work, driving innovations so seamlessly integrated into our modern routines that we often overlook their impact.

By **Susan Zaluski**

Simultaneously, global awareness of the ocean's critical role in human well-being is driving momentum behind the "Blue Economy," a development model that balances economic growth with marine conservation. As the Virgin Islands embraces this approach, demand is growing for innovative solutions. Technology is increasingly shaping how we study, protect and find new opportunities in our marine environment

The H. Lavity Stoutt Community College's Centre for Applied Marine Studies (CAMS) is using a range of tools to advance applied conservation and research for marine, coastal and island habitats. Here's a look at a few.

Spy Cams: Using Video Surveillance to Monitor Wildlife

Just as home security cameras provide alerts about nosy neighbours or the delivery of packages to doorsteps, cameras and video surveillance offer a low-impact way

for researchers to monitor wildlife in remote locations. Motion-triggered cameras known as "trail cameras", first developed by the hunting industry, allow for secret insights into the behaviour of elusive animals.

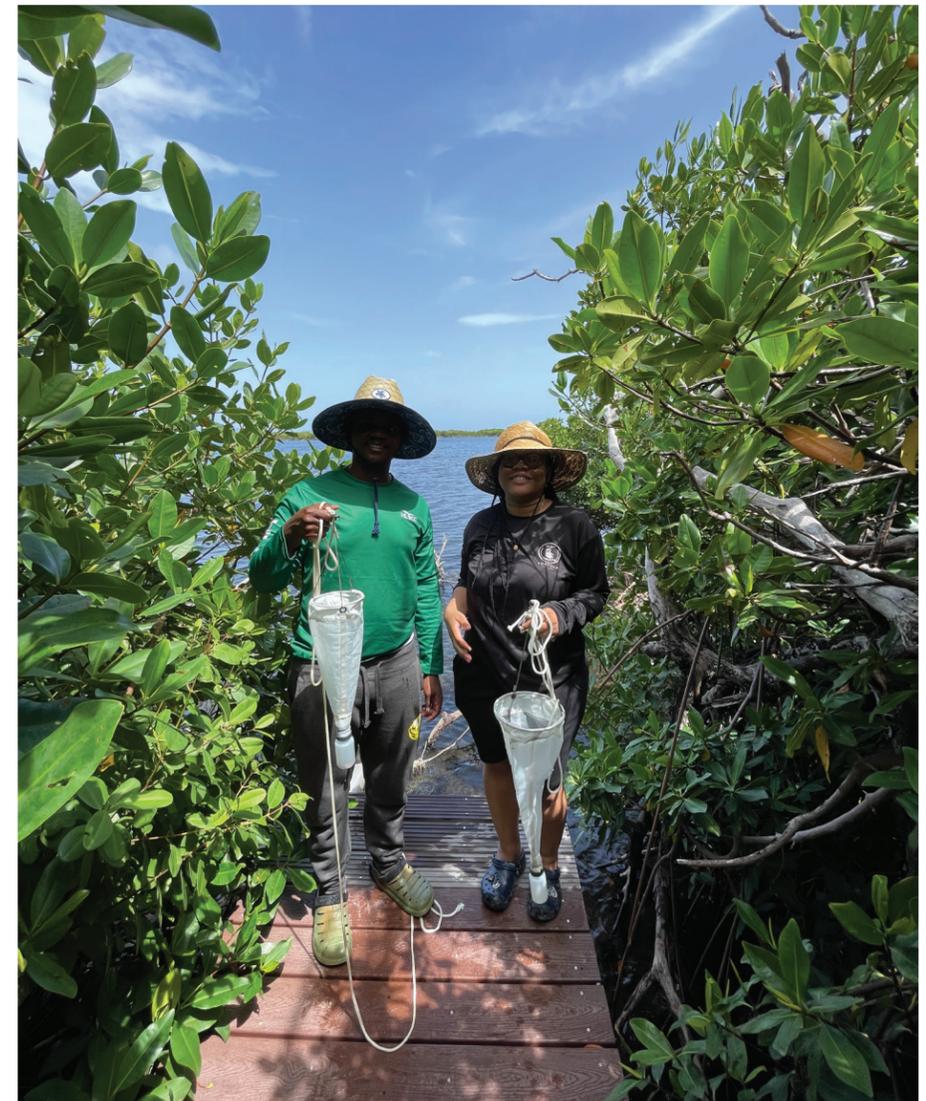
CAMS researchers have installed temporary trail cameras in remote mangrove and salt pond habitats. Cameras help track the presence and distribution of resident and migratory birds and other animals, improving understanding of ecosystem health and identifying potential threats. In 2022, former CAMS intern Rondel Smith used one such camera to solve a mystery: flamingo chicks were vanishing from Anegada. A single feral cat was identified and removed, saving the remaining chicks at the important nesting site.

Camera and video technology, including Drones (aerial) and UUVs (Unmanned Underwater Vehicles), is also being used to monitor marine life both above and below the water. CAMS is currently developing new research projects for a variety of coastal and marine habitats and the wildlife that inhabits them.

Mapping the Underwater World: Creating "Digital Reefs" to Support Marine Management

If you have ever previewed a destination with Google Maps' "Street View" before your toes or tires have touched the sidewalk or street, imagine using similar technology to explore coral reefs and other underwater habitats, without getting wet.

In early 2025, the Centre for Applied Marine Studies (CAMS) teamed up with Dr. Dan Holstein's Seascape Ecology lab (now based at Stony Brook University in New York) and local BVI partners (the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change (MENRCC) and the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI)) to equip CAMS with the tools and skills to create "digital reefs" using Large Area Imaging (LAI). Using techniques like photogrammetry and Structure-from-Motion (SfM), researchers stitch together thousands of underwater images, which are then processed with specialised software to create detailed 3D models and high-resolution





maps of reef sites.

These “digital reefs” provide opportunities for researchers to monitor coral health, bleaching, structural complexity and other environmental changes over time. CAMS has already helped map three key sites in the BVI and now has the equipment, software, and data storage infrastructure to continue this work.

This technology also creates unique outreach opportunities. Digital reef models and 360° VR (virtual reality) experiences can allow students, policymakers and others (many of whom may never snorkel or dive) to see the condition of these underwater ecosystems. This can help raise awareness and build support for reef protection.

Machine Learning: Building a database of Marine Microorganisms

Like the “People” feature in your smartphone’s image gallery that groups images by face, EcoTaxa (an open-access online platform) uses a machine learning model to classify marine microorganisms into ecologically relevant groups.

In 2025, CAMS teamed up with HLSCC alumnus, Dr. Loay Jabre, a microbiologist and postdoctoral investigator at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), to study microscopic life in the BVI. Plankton form

the foundation of marine food webs and may hold clues about water quality and ecosystem health, which may help CAMS improve the effectiveness of its ongoing restoration efforts. Using a specialised microscope known as a “planktoscope”, the team has been processing and analysing water samples from salt ponds and mangrove lagoons where CAMS is working to restore degraded mangrove ecosystems. Instead of manually sorting thousands of images, EcoTaxa helps deal with this data load, vastly speeding up the identification process.

Microphones for Marine Life: Bioacoustics in the BVI

Bluetooth speakers, baby monitors and speech-to-text systems are familiar devices that convert sound into digital data. This core technology is shared with hydrophones, underwater microphones that record marine soundscapes and are at the heart of marine bioacoustics. The underwater world is far from silent. Many marine animals use sound to communicate, reproduce, and hunt. Bioacoustics, the study of sound in nature, is emerging as a powerful conservation tool.

In collaboration with the University of New Hampshire, CAMS is deploying hydrophones in BVI waters to monitor marine biodiversity and track environmental change. Units placed in mangrove lagoons are helping identify

species that signal ecosystem health. Others, deployed in the Sir Francis Drake Channel, are monitoring noise pollution and detecting whale migrations.

The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Trend: Building Instruments to Support Marine Research

The do-it-yourself (DIY) movement has been fueled by YouTube tutorials and TikTok hacks, changing how we learn and create. Open-source tools are also transforming marine science. Low-cost sensors, 3D printing, microcontrollers (like Arduino and Raspberry Pi), and shared software platforms allow students and researchers to build instruments that once cost thousands of dollars for a fraction of the price.

In late 2024, CAMS hosted marine ecologist and inventor Dr. Andrew Thaler for a hands-on workshop in building Open CTDs, instruments that measure conductivity (salinity), temperature and depth. Local participants learned to build, calibrate, programme, deploy and maintain these affordable monitoring tools. The open access movement in conservation science is helping to remove barriers to knowledge, especially cost, copyright, and technical restrictions, so that science can be more collaborative, inclusive and impactful. As small island communities like the Virgin Islands work to conserve the marine environment, this could be a critical step in promoting data independence and local ownership of the means of knowledge production.

About the Centre for Applied Marine Studies (CAMS)

The Centre for Applied Marine Studies (CAMS) is a part of the H Lavity Stoutt Community College, located on the South Campus in Paraquita Bay on Tortola. CAMS is working to advance environmental research and education in the Virgin Islands through applied conservation, technical training, and community engagement, all in support of sustainable development and the blue economy.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Life & Style
OUR LIFE - OUR STYLE - OUR ISLANDS MAGAZINE

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The keys to looking and feeling good for 2026 and beyond are within the pages of **VI Life & Style Magazine JANUARY - MARCH 2026 Edition**. Our **HEALTH & WELLNESS** edition is a unique marketplace where we educate our readers both in print and online about what the Virgin Islands has to offer in helping them live a more healthier lifestyle through all phases of their lives.

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Beaches

TORTOLA

- 1 Trellis Bay, Beef Island
- 2 Long Bay, Beef Island
- 3 Little Bay
- 4 Josiah's Bay
- 5 Lambert Bay
- 6 Trunk Bay
- 7 Rouges Bay
- 8 Brewers Bay
- 9 Cane Garden Bay
- 10 Apple Bay
- 11 Long Bay, West End
- 12 Smuggler's Cove
- 13 Brandywine Bay

VIRGIN GORDA

- 14 St. Thomas Bay
- 15 The Baths, National Park
- 16 Devil's Bay, National Park
- 17 Spring Bay, National Park
- 18 Mahoe Bay
- 19 Trunk Bay
- 20 Little Dix Bay
- 21 Savannah Bay
- 22 Pond Bay

JOST VAN DYKE

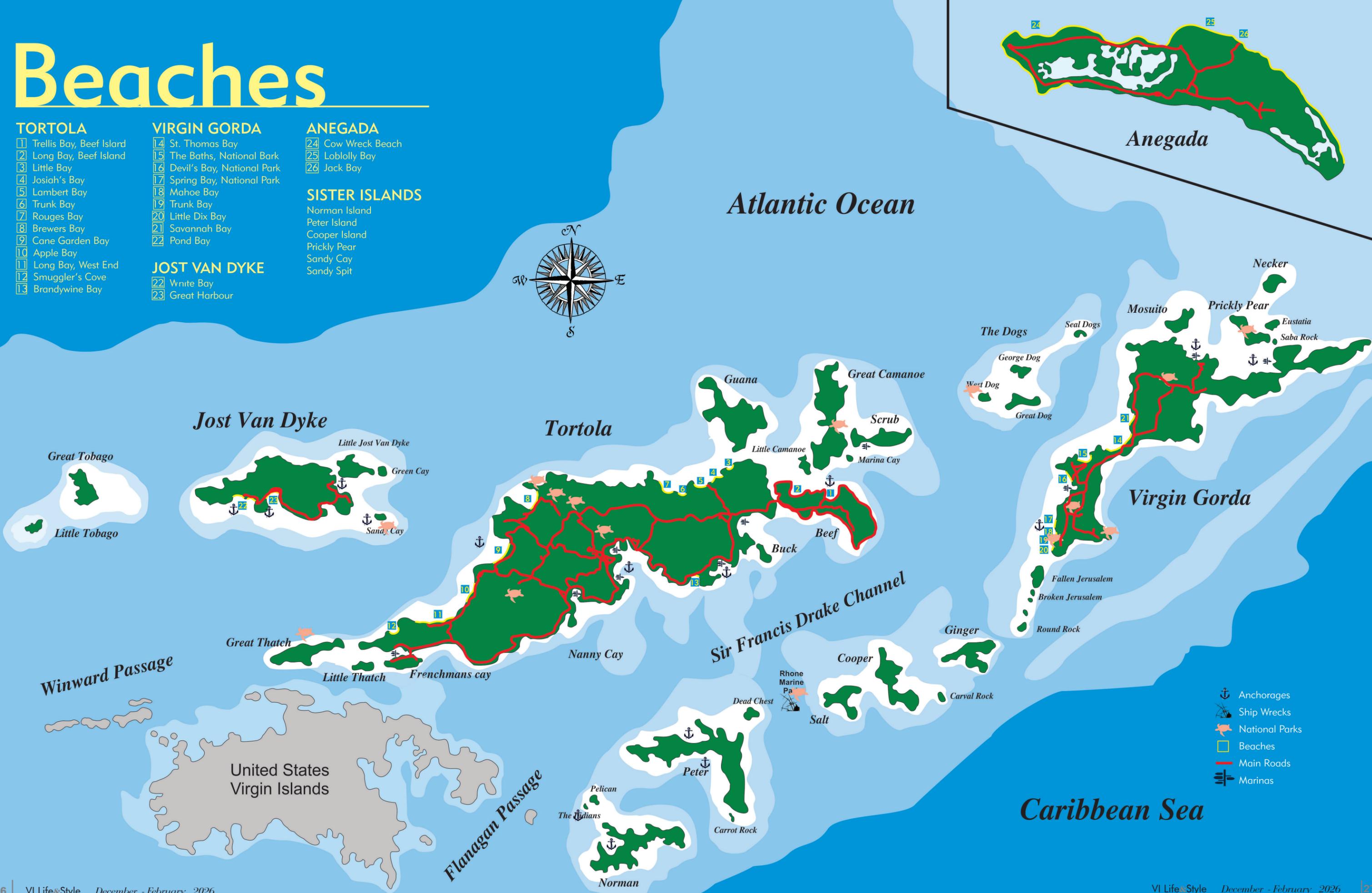
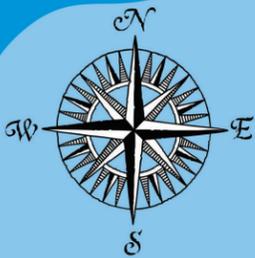
- 22 Write Bay
- 23 Great Harbour

ANEGADA

- 24 Cow Wreck Beach
- 25 Loblolly Bay
- 26 Jack Bay

SISTER ISLANDS

- Norman Island
- Peter Island
- Cooper Island
- Prickly Pear
- Sandy Cay
- Sandy Spit



- Anchorages
- Ship Wrecks
- National Parks
- Beaches
- Main Roads
- Marinas



BANKING SERVICES

There are several major banks in the British Virgin Islands: Banco Popular de Puerto Rico, FirstBank Puerto Rico, CIBC-First Caribbean International Bank (Cayman) Limited, National Bank of the Virgin Islands (formerly Development Bank), Republic Bank (British Virgin Islands) Limited and VP Bank (BVI) Limited. Hours vary, but most are open Monday through Thursday, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. They all have extended hours on Fridays. Banco Popular opens a teller drive-through window from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays, and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays. FirstBank is open Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most businesses open at 8:30 a.m. and close at 5 p.m. Many merchant stores, including pharmacies, are closed after 1 p.m. on Saturday and all day on Sunday; but a few open if cruise ships are in port. Supermarkets open earlier and close later, and most are open on weekends and holidays. Bobby's Supermarket in Road Town is open from 7 a.m. until midnight every day. Call a specific business for its hours of operation.

CLIMATE

The islands benefit from the trade winds that keep humidity low, but temperatures rarely go above 95 F or below 75 F. The wettest months are between September and November, coinciding with the height of the hurricane season.

CREDIT CARDS

Many BVI establishments accept credit cards, generally MasterCard or Visa; some, but not all, take American Express. There is an American Express office at Romney Associates in Road Town. There are several ATM machines on Tortola located in Road Town, Cane Garden Bay, West End and at the Terrance B. Lettsome

International Airport on Beef Island. There are no banks or ATM machines on Virgin Gorda, Anegada, Jost Van Dyke or Peter Island. Please note that there is a 10-cent stamp duty charged on all cheques, including traveller's cheques.

CURRENCY

U.S. dollar is the only legal tender in the BVI. Major credit cards are accepted in many, but not all, establishments. It's advisable to travel with U.S. traveller's cheques.

MONEY TRANSFERS

MoneyGram and Western Union provide services to receive and send money worldwide.

VISITOR REQUIREMENT

Passports are required by all. Return tickets are required for visitors and those coming on work permits.

DEPARTURE TAX

After you have checked in at the airport or at any sea-port, look for the departure tax window. Every air travel passenger must pay a \$20 departure tax in cash or by Visa or MasterCard (cheques are not accepted). For those leaving by sea, during the second half of 2013 departure tax from sea ports increased to \$20 for visitors and \$15 for residents. Cruise ship passengers pay \$7.

DIVING AND SAILING

Many diving and yachting companies specialise in helping you take advantage of BVI's excellent diving sites and the fact that it's the Sailing Capital of the World.

DRUGS

Recreational drugs are strictly forbidden. Their possession, sale, use or distribution is a criminal offence punishable by law. Conviction can lead

to heavy fines and jail sentences.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity is supplied by the BVI Electricity Corporation. The standard electrical current is 110 volts on all the islands.

FISHING

Non-British Virgin Islanders need a recreational fishing permit to remove any marine organism from BVI waters. There are closed seasons for harvesting certain species of fish and other seafood. Call the Conservation and Fisheries Division at 494-5681 for information. Recreational fishing permits will be issued at all ports of entry for \$45. A licence is required for every adult on board who will be fishing.

2025 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day	Mon. 1st
H. Lavity Stoutt's Birthday	Mon. March 4
In lieu of Thursday 7 th March	
Good Friday	Fri., March 29
Easter Monday	Mon., April 1
Whit Monday	Mon., May 20
Sovereign's Birthday	Fri., June 14
Virgin Islands Day	Tues., July 1
Festival Monday	Mon., August 5
Festival Tuesday	Tues., August 6
Festival Wednesday	Wed., August 7
Heroes' & Forefathers Day	Mon., October 21
Commeration of 1949 March	Mon., Nov. 25
Christmas Day -	Wed., Dec 25
Boxing Day	Thurs., Dec 26

PETS

Pets are allowed into the Territory only after an import permit is obtained from the Department of Agriculture. For regulations concerning animal importation, contact the Department of Agriculture, Paraquita Bay, Tortola; tel. 495-2532 and fax 495-1269.

INTERNET

There are several places throughout the islands that offer Internet access. Most have free Wi-Fi and can be found at the following locations: Saba Rock, North Sound, Virgin Gorda; Trellis Bay Market, Beef Island; Lambert Beach Resort, Tortola; Nanny Cay Marina, Tortola; Village Cay Marina, Road Town; Myett's Garden Inn and Grille, Cane Garden Bay; Foxy's, Jost Van Dyke; The Watersports Centre, Jost Van Dyke; Anegada Reef Hotel, Anegada; Big Bamboo, Anegada.

ISLAND INFORMATION ONLINE

The BVI Tourist Board's website (bvitourism.com) offers printable online information about each island, useful schedules and much more. The BVI Chamber of Commerce & Hotel Association (BVICCHA; bvihotels.org, BVI Government, VI Life&Style magazine, Property and Yacht magazine, two local newspapers also host helpful links to other web-sites belonging to various individual hotels and organisations. You may also want to visit experiencethebvi.com for useful information about the islands.

MEDICAL

Dr. D. Orlando Hospital is the main general hospital in Road Town, Tortola; but health clinics are available at villages on Tortola, Virgin Gorda and other sister islands. There's also a government dental clinic in the hospital in Road Town. Dr. Adamson, Smile Dental, Premier Dental, Dr. Rhymer and B&F Medical Complex, VI Medical - Manual Reef, pro-vided experienced general dental services, whilst Vision Center offers advanced eye care.

POST OFFICES

The main post office on Blackburne Highway also has a philatelic counter. There are sub post offices on Beef Island (Airport), and West End on Tortola, and on the larger sister islands. Most hotels and resorts offer daily mail pickups. Virgin Islands' stamps are worldwide collectors' items. The BVI Philatelic Society (494-7789) organises an annual stamp exhibition, usually held in the spring, that attracts a wide range of enthusiasts.

RADIO AND TELEVISION

Local radio stations, most of which are available on-line, include ZBVI (780 AM), ZKING (100.9 FM), ZROD (103.7 FM), ZCCR (94.1 FM), 100.5 Tola Radio and ZVCR (106.9 FM). Local cable channels include 1, 51, 52 and 55. Public service channels include 12 (VVCJX, St. Thomas, USVI) and 25 (BBC World). A few channels broadcast in Spanish, including Channel 4 (Azteca). News and entertainment are also available on cable channels beamed from numerous U.S. cities and satellites.

SMOKING

Smoking in public places such as restaurants, bars, shopping malls, recreational facilities, offices, public transportation terminals, etc.

is forbidden, in accordance with the Tobacco Products Control Act of the BVI. It's also forbidden to smoke within 50 feet of these public spaces. A person found smoking tobacco in a public place will be subject to a fine. In the BVI, it's illegal to sell cigarettes to persons who are under 18 years old.

TIPPING

A 7 percent government tax is usually added to your hotel bill, as well as a 10 percent hotel service charge. Additional tipping is optional. It's customary to include a 15 percent tip when dining out. Most restaurants automatically include this on the bill as a service charge.

TRANSPORTATION

Air: Regional airlines connect Beef Island with international hubs (e.g., San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Antigua) and other Carib-bean islands. Small planes fly between Beef Island and Virgin Gorda and St. Thomas, USVI. Charter planes are also available to the outer islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands from the airport on Beef Island.

Land: The British Virgin Islands have 150 roads, of which 118 are paved. The two main roads on Tortola are Blackburne Road, which runs along the seashore from the eastern to the western end of the is-land, and Ridge Road, which runs centrally over the hills. Both offer spectacular scenic views of the islands.

Buses: Mini and safari bus outings are usually arranged by the hotels and are also available for other extended group trips and scenic sightseeing.

Car Rentals: Renting a car is both economical and convenient. There are several agencies offering reasonable rates, unlimited mileage, emergency services and additional insurance. If visiting for more than a month, a temporary licence must be obtained from the Department of Motor Vehicles in Pockwood Pond. The cost is \$10. Bring your passport and a valid driver's licence from country of origin. Driving is on the left-hand side of the road.

Ferry Services: The main ferry docks on Tortola are in Road Town and at West End. Inter-island boat services operate several times per day between Tortola and several other islands in the BVI (including Marina Cay, Scrub Island Virgin Gorda, Peter Island and Jost Van Dyke) and the USVI (St. Thomas and St. John). Ferry services to Anegada are available daily except on Saturday. Departure and arrival information can be obtained at the front desk of your hotel.

Taxis: Taxis are available at the air-port, hotels, taxi stands and other venues throughout the islands. Some hotels have a franchised taxi arrangement for guests or will quickly order a taxi from the front desk. Taxi drivers usually provide running commentaries on local history and other useful information. New government rates are now in effect. It's a good idea to check the fare with your driver in advance.

TAXI CONTACTS

West End Taxi Association - 284-543-4241
Nanny Cay Taxi Association - 284-394-2512
Waterfront Taxi Association - 284-494-4959
Road Town Taxi Association - 284-494-8755
Quality Taxi Association - 284-422-0353
BVI Taxi Association - 284-494-2322
Moorings Taxi Association - 284-393-2331
Beef Island Taxi Association - 284-495-1982
Valley, Virgin Gorda Taxi Association - 284-540-6482

Taxi Rates Tortola: A fare for one person from the airport to Slaney is US\$30. A chartered taxi from Road Town to any of the villages can range from \$15 to \$27 for one person depending on the distance, and the regular fare around town is \$5. Farther out to the suburbs is \$6, and the fare from Road Town to West End is \$27. From the cruise ship dock to most beaches, the range is from \$24 to \$27 for one person, but for three or more people the fare ranges from \$8 to \$12 each. Virgin Gorda: From The Valley to The Baths is \$6, and from Gun Creek to the Yacht Harbour is \$30. **Anegada:** From the airport to Loblolly Bay is \$7, whilst to Setting Point is \$14.

Jost Van Dyke: One person going from Great Harbour to White Bay pays \$10, and to Bubbly Pool, \$20. Three or more people going to Bubbly Pool pay \$10 each.

Tours: A one-hour tour for up to two people is \$55 (fixed rate), whilst for up to three people the cost rises to \$70. A group of five persons is \$100 (each additional person over the five pays \$15). A two-hour tour starts at \$110 for up to two people. Waiting charges: First 15 minutes are free, but every subsequent block of 15 minutes is \$10. Tour costs are the same for all islands. Children three years or younger travel at no cost, children ages 4-10 pay half fare, and children 11 and over pay the full fare. Between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. there is a sur-charge of 30 percent on all fares. Always dis-cuss the rates with your driver in advance. There is limited bus service running from Road Town to East End. The fare is \$3.

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Fire or Police 311
Hospital 494-3497
VISAR 494-4357 (Virgin Island or 767 (SOS) Search & Rescue)
Airlines
Air Sunshine 495-8900 Cape Air, Ltd. 495-2100, Fly BVI 495-1747, Island Birds 495-2002
Seaborne Airlines 340-773-6442

Other Useful Telephone

BVICCHA - (284) 345-3513
BVI Red Cross 494-6349
BVI Tourist Board (284) 494-3134
CADA (Drug Information)
Family Support Network (FSN) (284) 540-2085
Humane Society of Tortola (284) 494-2284
BVI General Post Office (284) 468-5160
Medical HOTLINE (284) 852-7650

TASTE THE BVI

A Culinary Love Letter to Virgin Islands Culture



Photos compliments of Taste The BVI

Nestled in the heart of the capital on historic Lower Main Street, in a charming and cozy space infused with old-world island warmth, you'll find Taste the BVI — a restaurant serving up the cultural flavours of the Virgin Islands with pride and purpose.

More than a dining destination, it is a living tribute to heritage. Rooted in family legacy and strengthened by cultural pride, Taste the BVI is the vision of founder Riiah Durante, an eighth-generation descendant of Salt Island — a lineage defined by resilience, community, and an unwavering Virgin Islands spirit.

Taste the BVI began as more than a business venture; “it was a calling,” Durante shares. She recognised a void in the local culinary landscape — the need for a place that not only served food but told the stories of the people who shaped these islands. While many restaurants offer Caribbean flavour, few delve into the cultural traditions, ancestral recipes, and shared memories that form the backbone of Virgin Islands cuisine. Taste the BVI emerged

to fill that space, offering a culinary experience anchored in authenticity, memory, identity, and heritage.

The restaurant first opened in December 2023 inside a bright yellow dome at the Cyril B. Romney Tortola Pier Park. The cheerful structure quickly became a beacon for locals and visitors alike. Its early success led to a charming 10x10 kiosk, and soon after, Taste the BVI found its permanent home at #60 Historic Main Street — a location that symbolises growth, gratitude, and a deepening connection with the community it serves.

Stepping inside feels like walking into a cherished memory. Inspired by the warmth of Durante’s grandmother’s home, the interior blends nostalgic island charm with modern, welcoming touches. Wooden accents, soft natural tones, cultural artefacts, and historic photographs come together to create an



Riiah Durante

intimate, soulful space that is unmistakably Virgin Islands. It’s a place where the storytelling of old meets the aromas of today — rich, bold, and full of life.

Taste the BVI is open Tuesday to Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., proudly serving dishes that reflect the flavours that shaped generations. The menu highlights authentic Virgin Islands cuisine crafted with fresh, locally sourced ingredients from island fishermen and farmers.

Signature dishes embody cultural pride, especially the beloved Steamed Fish & Fungi



with traditional Mayo Sauce, a heartfelt tribute to the National Dish of the British Virgin Islands. Made with cornmeal, okra, freshly caught local fish, and a delicate blend of island herbs, it is both a comfort food staple and a vibrant celebration of Virgin Islands culture. Each bite carries echoes of family gatherings, seaside traditions, and the unchanging rhythm of island life.

The philosophy at Taste the BVI is simple yet powerful: honour the Virgin Islands by supporting the Virgin Islands. This commitment shines through in every dish, every ingredient, and every partnership with the farmers and fishers who keep local food culture thriving.

Running a restaurant is not for the faint of heart, and Durante speaks candidly about the demands of the industry. But for her, the purpose behind Taste the BVI far outweighs

the challenges. Sharing Virgin Islands culture through food is both her passion and her responsibility.

“Food is one of the most powerful storytellers we have,” she says. “Each dish is an opportunity to honour our ancestors, celebrate our identity, and inspire pride in being a Virgin Islander.”

That mission is carried out with heart by a dedicated team. From the culinary artists who balance authenticity with innovation, to the warm front-of-house staff who greet guests like family, to the behind-the-scenes crew who ensure smooth operations, each member plays a vital role in preserving flavour, hospitality, and culture.

More Than a Meal — It’s an Experience

Taste the BVI is more than a restaurant; it is a cultural experience wrapped in food, memory, heritage, music of old times, and deep community spirit. Guests don’t simply dine

— they connect, laugh, share, and commune. They reminisce. And they feel the Virgin Islands in every sense.

Whether you are a local seeking the comfort of tradition or a visitor eager to understand the heart of the BVI, Taste the BVI offers a space where stories are shared, culture is honoured, and history comes alive through every flavour.

As the restaurant continues to grow, Durante envisions expanding beyond the dining room — with curated culinary events, collaborations with local artisans and farmers, and immersive experiences where food, art, and storytelling intersect. The future of Taste the BVI is rooted in legacy but inspired by innovation and exploration.

From its humble beginnings in a yellow dome to its proud home on Main Street, Taste the BVI stands as a reminder that culture thrives wherever it is nourished — through community, through connection, and most beautifully, through food.

Caribbean Holiday Eats



KESHI YENA (Aruban Stuffed Cheese Shell)

Keshi Yena is a popular dish throughout the Dutch Caribbean and especially in Aruba. When the Dutch brought Edam cheese to the Caribbean, locals found a way to transform the shell of the hollowed out cheese into this delicious casserole. A sauteed mix of tender shredded chicken with sweet raisins, spicy peppers, salty olives and capers, and a tangy blend of sauces are all wrapped up in a mouthwatering cheese shell for a meal that hits every taste bud.

(Serves 10-12)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 onions, sliced
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 small Edam cheese (2 – 2 1/2 lbs.)
- 2 lbs. cooked chicken, shredded
- 3 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1/4 cup sliced olives
- 1 tbsp. capers
- 1 tbsp. parsley
- 1/4 hot pepper, minced (or hot sauce to taste)
- 1/2 cup raisins and chopped prunes
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tbsp. ketchup
- 2 tbsp. mustard
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 5 eggs

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Slice the top off the cheese, reserve. Gently scoop out the inside, leaving a 1/4" – 1/2" shell. Soak the empty shell in hot water and peel away the red wax.
2. Preheat oven to 350° F.
3. Heat butter in a large pan and sauté the remaining ingredients, except the eggs. Reduce the heat and simmer for about 20 minutes.
4. Remove pan from heat. Whisk 4 eggs and stir into the pan.
5. Spoon everything into the cheese shell and replace the reserved top. Beat remaining egg and brush over the top of the cheese to seal it.
6. Grease a shallow baking dish and fill it with about 1 inch of water. Place the stuffed cheese in the dish and bake for 1 – 1 1/2 hours.
7. Serve piping hot, cut into wedges.

BAKED HAM WITH PINEAPPLE (Jamaican Christmas Ham)



It's that time of year again for Baked Ham with Pineapple, also known as Jamaican Christmas Ham. Flavorful cloves and sweet pineapple pair up perfectly with ham in this traditional recipe. This simple dish has been a constant in Jamaican culinary history.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 10 lb ham
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 12 pineapple slices
- 10 cloves
- 12 cherries
- 1 cup water

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven at 300 degrees F.
2. Place ham skin side up on a baking tray and bake for 90 minutes.
3. Remove from oven and score the ham placing cloves in the groves.
4. In a sauce pan cook pineapple slices with water and sugar until a glaze is formed.
5. Pour the glaze over the ham and garnish with pineapple and cherries.
6. Put the ham back in the oven and bake for another 30 minutes.

BARBADIAN CONKIES

Conkies are a Barbadian dessert or snack made with a flavorful base of corn flour, coconut, pumpkin, and sweet potato, and seasoned with brown sugar, spices, and raisins. The mixture is wrapped in banana leaves and steamed, which makes for a convenient unwrap-and-eat treat. Traditionally they're made in November to celebrate Barbados' Independence Day, however conkies are a popular treat all throughout the holidays.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups corn flour
- 1/2 cup white flour
- 1 cup grated coconut
- 3/4 lb grated pumpkin
- 1/2 lb grated sweet potato
- 6 oz butter or margarine, melted
- 1 cup whole milk

- 1 egg, beaten
- 3/4 lb brown sugar
- 4 oz raisins
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 1 tsp almond essence
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp salt
- Fresh banana leaves, wax paper, or foil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix the coconut, pumpkin, sweet potato, sugar, spices, raisins, flour, corn flour, and salt together in a large bowl.
2. Add the egg, butter or margarine, and milk. Mix thoroughly with hands to combine. The consistency should be thick enough that it slowly drops from a spoon- add a more flour to thicken or milk to thin the mixture if needed.
3. If using banana leaves, strip them from the stalk with a sharp knife, then briefly singe them over an open flame to make them more pliable. Cut the leaves, wax paper, or foil into individual 8" squares.
4. Spoon 2 to 3 tablespoons of the mixture into the center of a banana leaf, wax paper, or foil. Carefully fold the wrapping around the mixture.
5. Place conkies in a steamer basket over boiling water and cover. Let steam for 1 hour, or until they are firm.
6. Cool, unwrap, and enjoy.





SOUP JOUMOU (Haitian Pumpkin Soup)

Soup Joumou is a colorful, pumpkin-based soup traditionally enjoyed with fresh bread on Haiti's day of independence, January 1st. With beef, vermicelli, and plenty of veggies and spices, it's full of flavor and has everything you need for a complete meal.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb beef stew meat, cubed
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 lb Caribbean pumpkin, peeled and chopped
- 1 lb cabbage, sliced and chopped
- 3 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 stalks celery, sliced
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 6 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 lb malanga, peeled and cubed
- 3 medium sized turnips, peeled and cubed
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1/4 lb vermicelli, broken up into short noodles
- 4 cloves garlic, mashed
- 2 scallions, sliced
- 1 tsp thyme
- 2 tsp salt

- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 scotch bonnet pepper, whole

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Rinse the beef in hot water and rub with lemon juice. Place in a large bowl.
2. Combine the garlic, scallions, thyme, salt, and black pepper. Add spice mixture to the beef (coat well) and allow to marinate for at least one hour.
3. Bring 3 quarts of water to a boil in a large stockpot. Add the marinated beef and whole scotch bonnet pepper, cover, and cook for 1 1/2 to 2 hours, until tender.
4. Add the carrots and pumpkin. Continue to cook for 20 more minutes, until pumpkin is soft.
5. Strain out the pumpkin and scotch bonnet pepper. Discard pepper and puree pumpkin.

Return pumpkin, now pureed, to the pot.

6. Add the potatoes, celery, turnips, and malanga. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer for about 15 minutes.
7. Add the cabbage and cook for 20 more minutes. Add more water if level gets low or soup becomes thick. Continue to simmer until vegetables are cooked and meat is tender, about 30 more minutes.
8. Add vermicelli and continue cooking until tender.
9. Taste and add more salt and additional seasoning if needed. Pour in lime juice and stir.
10. Serve hot with fresh sliced bread.

NOTES

- If you can't find Caribbean pumpkin at your local grocery store or ethnic food store, butternut squash is a good substitute.



Trinidadian Christmas Rice

In Trinidad during the holiday season, colorful Christmas Rice is a popular side dish that is as flavorful as it is festive. This tasty rice will get you in the holiday spirit with garlic, fragrant ginger, and sweet peppers and raisins.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup rice
- 1 1/2 tbsp. grated ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 medium red bell pepper, chopped
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, chopped finely
- 2 sprigs fine leaf thyme, chopped finely
- 1/3 cup raisins
- 2 tbsp butter
- Salt to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook the rice and set aside.
2. Melt butter in a frying pan over medium heat. Sauté the ginger, garlic, and onion for about a minute.
3. Add the celery, thyme, and bell peppers. Sauté for another minute. Be careful not to overcook the bell peppers or the color will fade.
4. Stir in the raisins and continue to cook for about 30 seconds.
5. Add the cooked rice and mix well. Remove from heat. Add salt to taste.
6. Serve hot.

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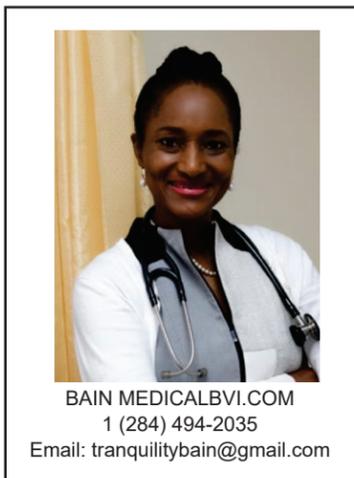
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Guarding the Goods:

What Every Man Should Know about Prostate and Testicular Cancer



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When it comes to men's health, there is one conversation that too many guys still avoid — what's going on below the belt. While conversations about mental health and fitness have (thankfully) gone mainstream, issues like prostate and testicular cancer often stay in the shadows. However, here is the truth: early awareness and regular checks can save lives.

HOW'S YOUR PAIR HANGIN'?

TESTICULAR CANCER IS THE #1 CANCER AMONG YOUNG MEN

KNOW THY NUTS!

THE PROSTATE: SMALL GLAND, BIG IMPACT.

The prostate — a walnut-sized gland located just below the bladder — plays a key role in male reproductive health, producing seminal fluid. Nevertheless, as men age, it can also become a hotspot for trouble.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men. The risk rises sharply after age 50, though genetics, race, and lifestyle also play a role. African American men, for example, face a higher risk and are more likely to develop aggressive forms.

The good news? When caught early, prostate cancer is highly treatable — often before it causes symptoms.

Watch for warning signs:

- Frequent urination, especially at night
- Weak or interrupted urine flow
- Painful urination or ejaculation
- Blood in urine or semen

However, many early-stage cases show no symptoms at all; making screening crucial.

The Screening Debate:

Doctors use two main tests: the PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test and

the digital rectal exam (DRE). While some men shy away from the idea, these simple tests can detect cancer before it spreads. Most experts recommend discussing screening with your doctor starting at age 50— or earlier if, you have a family history.

TESTICULAR CANCER: A YOUNG MAN'S DISEASE

While prostate cancer tends to affect older men, testicular cancer most often strikes younger guys — typically between ages 15 and 40. It is rare, but it is the most common cancer in young men.

The silver lining? It is also one of the most treatable cancers, with cure rates exceeding 95% when detected early.

Know the signs:

- A lump or swelling in one testicle
- A feeling of heaviness or ache in the scrotum
- A sudden collection of fluid
- Dull pain in the lower abdomen or groin

Unlike prostate cancer, you can check for testicular cancer yourself. Once a month, after a warm shower, gently roll each testicle between your thumb and fingers. If you notice a lump, change in size or anything unusual — see a doctor right

away. Most lumps are not cancerous, but it is always worth checking.

PREVENTION STARTS WITH YOU.

While no one can eliminate risk completely, healthy lifestyle choices go a long way toward protecting your reproductive and overall health:

- **Move your body:** Regular exercise helps balance hormones and maintain a healthy weight.
- **Eat smart:** Focus on colorful fruits and vegetables, healthy fats, and lean proteins. Limit red and processed meats.
- **Don't smoke:** Tobacco increases the risk of many cancers, including prostate.
- **Know your history:** If cancer runs in your family, get screened earlier and more often.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

One of the biggest barriers to early detection isn't access to care — it's discomfort. Too many men skip checkups out of embarrassment or fear. However, taking charge of your health isn't a weakness; it's actually strength.

A quick exam or conversation with your doctor could add decades to your life. So talk about it. Schedule the test. Encourage your buddies to do the same.

Your health is worth more than your pride.

BOTTOM LINE

Whether you're in your twenties or your seventies, paying attention to your body and staying proactive about prostate and testicular health could save your life.

Because real strength isn't just about muscle — it's about the courage to care for yourself.

The healing power of Soursop

Soursop is a prickly green fruit, generally oval shaped and it comes from the graviola tree. The inside of the fruit is white, soft and somewhat custard like. The black oval shaped seeds are not edible. The fruit when full (ready for harvest) can weigh up to 10 lbs and on average are usually around 3 - 5 lbs and is sweet yet a little tart, the perfect balance that keeps it from being overly sweet. It is an evergreen plant which is commonly grown in the Caribbean, Mexico and Central and South America.

The tree is grown for domestic use and commercially. It emits a white flower which exudes a very pleasant smell in the early morning.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF SOURSOP FRUIT AND THE LEAVES

Antioxidant and anti-inflammatory

- Antioxidant protection: Soursop leaves are rich in antioxidants, which help protect cells from damage caused by free radicals.
- Reduce inflammation: They possess anti-inflammatory properties that may help reduce swelling and pain, potentially aiding with conditions like arthritis.

Immune support

- Boosts immunity: The leaves are high in vitamin C and other compounds that can enhance immune function and support the body's natural defenses.
- Antimicrobial properties: They may have antibacterial and antifungal effects, helping to

combat certain infections.

Digestive health

- Aids digestion: Soursop leaves can help with digestive issues and promote regular bowel movements.
- Soothes stomach issues: They may help relieve stomach problems like ulcers.
- Blood sugar and heart health
- Regulates blood sugar: Some animal studies suggest soursop may help lower blood sugar levels.
- Supports heart health: The potassium and fiber in soursop may contribute to better blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Other potential benefits

- Pain relief: Traditionally used for pain, the leaves can act as a natural analgesic.
- Aids sleep: Soursop leaves can also be used as a sedative by infusing a few of them in a cup and drinking the tea before going to bed. It will make you sleep like a baby.
- Skin benefits: When applied topically, soursop can help with skin issues like eczema, and the antioxidants promote healthier skin.

There have been claims made across the internet that the Soursop extract can be used for the treatment of certain cancers. While research suggests soursop can fight cancer, it has not been studied in humans. In the absence of data to support this claim, experts warn against using the fruit for this purpose because there is no evidence of either its safety or effectiveness for cancer treatment.

- The leaf is also used for tenderising meat.
- The fruit can be placed in fish traps as bait.





When Food Becomes the Enemy

Food becomes an enemy when it leads to disease and disrupts normal living. Most people would say, "I love food," and the profit-driven food industry knows this well. Often at the expense of our health and environment, it offers highly processed products enhanced for shelf life and taste not nourishment. These foods are packed with preservatives, artificial colors, and unhealthy fats that contribute to chronic illness.

Christians pray for healing while ignoring the habits that invite disease. There are prayers we wouldn't need to pray if we took seriously what we put on our plates. We ask God to restore what we keep breaking. Instead of binding and blaming the devil, we need to bind our ignorance and take captive our disobedience because often, the culprit isn't a demon. It's our dinner.

We blame the food industry, supermarkets, and the lack of consumer protection laws, but

rarely ourselves. Yet the eating choices we make are ours alone.

Stewardship of the Temple

Food was meant to nourish and sustain the body, not destroy it. But in a culture of excess, convenience, and emotional eating, the very thing designed to sustain us has become a silent killer. The church must no longer ignore this silence. We must rise and champion God's message: the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we must steward it well.

"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? Therefore, honor God with your bodies." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

God cares about what we eat. He created us and knows what harms or heals the body. The body is not just flesh, it's a vessel for purpose, worship, and witness. When we neglect, poison, or abuse it, we compromise more than our health, we compromise our calling. A sick body is a helpless vessel, unable to complete its God-given assignment.

The Consequences of Poor Eating

Here are just a few ways unhealthy eating sabotages our spiritual and physical lives:

- **Sluggishness in Prayer:** Overeating and processed foods dull mental clarity and spiritual alertness. Fatigue sets in, and when we pray with bursting stomachs, we slip into sleep instead of intercession. We lose the sensitivity needed to tarry and mumble through prayer as our bodies surrender to drowsiness.

- **Avoidable Illness:** Heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension are often linked to diet. These illnesses rob families of time, energy, and legacy. Consider the cost of dialysis, heart transplants, medication, hospitalization, and amputation. Prolonged unhealthy eating can sabotage or even abort your life. "Some meals feed your future, while others steal it." Let us be wise in what we eat.

Don't Make Yuh Belly Be Yuh Enemy: A WAKE-UP CALL TO WISER EATING

A young Christian woman felt it was time to shift her diet after receiving troubling results from her latest medical report. Having battled rising blood sugar levels and fearing dependence on medication, Jan resolved to "eat to live, not live to eat."

While walking through the supermarket, inspecting labels and prices, she muttered, "Healthy eating is expensive." But not long after, the Holy Spirit whispered, "Sickness is what's expensive, not

healthy living. The money you spend on the right food now will save you spending money on doctors later."

In that moment, Jan's eyes were opened to a truth she had long overlooked. Right there in the aisle, she made a commitment: food would be her friend, not her enemy.



Dr. Joycelyn D. Hoyte

Dr. Joycelyn Hoyte is a Licensed and Ordained Minister of the Assemblies of God Peninsular Florida District, Biblical Counselor and Certified Christian Coach. She is also the author of the book "Experience the Marriage of Your Dreams".

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• **Emotional Bondage:** Food becomes a comfort idol, replacing the Holy Spirit's role as Comforter. Some eat when stressed, others indulge on "cheat days." Hormonal imbalance, grief, boredom, or celebration, food becomes the go-to companion. Many have become slaves to a powerless master.

the health of the spirit man but neglect the physical man. Yet how confined is the spirit in a body riddled with disease? Without a healthy body, leaders lack the energy, flexibility, and strength to fulfill God's purpose. May we not allow food to become a tool the enemy uses against us.

• **Shortened Ministry:** Many leaders burn out or break down physically before completing their spiritual assignment. We preach about

A Call to Wake Up

In church, we love opportunities for fun, food, and fellowship, but we struggle to

keep it healthy. We celebrate with sugar, mourn with grease, and fellowship over fried everything. But what if our tables are contributing to our tombstones?

The call is to wake up and recognize the impact of unhealthy eating on our quality of life. While this article doesn't list specific foods for a healthier shift, a nutritionist or dietician can guide you toward better belly habits.

It's time to challenge the norm. Let's stop normalizing overeating as fellowship. Let's stop using food to mask emotional pain. Let's stop ignoring the health crisis sitting in our pews.

Food was never meant to be our enemy; it was meant to nourish and heal. When we lose sight of that purpose, we trade opportunity for oppression and blessing for bondage. We must shift our focus and make lifetime choices with every bite. We must connect the dots from our tables to our tombstones. We were not created to eat in ignorance but with wisdom.

Let us vow today: we will never "make we belly be we enemy."



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Marva Titley-Smith,
CMgr FCMI CCM

Marva is a work and life strategist with a passion for helping women thrive in all areas of life. She's the BVI's first local female architect and former Chief Planner. In 2012, after 26 years in the Public Service, she successfully transitioned careers and founded the management consulting firm, MatrixSpark specializing in strategic management, training and coaching. Following her calling, she became certified as a life breakthrough coach to address the growing work-life balance challenges facing women. Marva is the author of the best-selling book, *Time to Thrive: A Busy Woman's Devotional Journal*. You can find her writing about work-life synergy and intentional living on her website www.MarvaSmith.com.

How to Thrive (Not Strive), This Holiday Season

We love holidays, especially the holidays during the Christmas and New Year season. But if we're honest, we'll admit that these holidays often come with more stress than we would like.

Sure, we love the cooking and baking, landing that perfect gift, and the lingering moments spent reminiscing with family and friends. We all look forward to the tasty treats and cherished memories, but we could probably do without the stress of the crowds, the traffic, and the heat in the kitchen, just to name a few. Too often, we are completely spent (pun intended) by the time Boxing Day rolls around.

Being stressed out for the holidays is no fun, so instead of throwing your hands up in the air expecting this year to be the same stressful saga, let's get you on track for a thriving—not striving—holiday season.

ENVISION YOUR PERFECT HOLIDAY

Before you get ahead of yourself, take some time to imagine what your ideal holiday season looks like. Do you envision quiet moments of reflection at the end of each day? Do you look forward to baking together as a family and passing down those family recipes? Want to make it a point to visit friends you haven't seen much of this year? How do you want to spend the holidays?

It might help to think in terms of what you would miss if it didn't happen. If the holidays were over and you were heading back to work in the new year, what would you wish you had done? That will help you

clarify what you'd like to do.

More importantly, think about how you'd like to feel during the holidays. Do you want to feel energised, motivated, well-rested?

The goal here is not to create the perfect holiday but to clarify what's important to you. By taking time to think about how you'd like your holidays to go, you can step back and create space to make it happen, even if it doesn't go exactly as you would like.

MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

To manage the holiday stress, communicate your thoughts and holiday plans to those close to you. If you and your spouse are at odds about how the holidays should be spent, seek to find a compromise early.

The longer you wait to resolve conflicting expectations, the more stress is likely to occur.

Is your mom expecting you to host Christmas lunch this year while you're hoping to sleep in? Have those conversations as soon as possible so that everyone is on the same page. The sooner you manage expectations, the better you'll be able to handle any unwelcomed surprises that might come up.

START WITH A PLAN

Once you've thought about how you want the holidays to go and you've had conversations around that, you can then start to make some plans. If you want it to be a peaceful holiday with lots of reflection time, you'll need to pick and choose how many activities you get involved in. You may then need to plan your shopping early. Gift lists and grocery lists will be your friend.

If you want to save your evenings for reflection time, plan to use your breaks and lunch hours to run those errands. Get strategic about how you will use your time so that you're not stressed out at the last minute.

Plan your menu if you're the one cooking. Some things can even be made ahead of time so you're not doing all the cooking and baking in one day. You can still have a festive holiday meal without the stress if you plan well in advance.

KEEP THE MAIN THING - THE MAIN THING

If you view Christmas as a Christian celebration, be sure to keep Christ in Christmas. Rushing around, feeling stressed out will likely leave you too tired to spend time in the Word. You'll need to be intentional about making time for devotions during the holiday season.

Short devotions like those in my *Time to Thrive* book will allow you to spend time with the Lord even when you don't have a lot of time. In just 15 minutes, you can sit at Jesus' feet, reconnect with the heart of God,

and find the encouragement you need for each day.

The last thing you want is to feel guilty about not spending time with the Lord during a season when you want to share Him with the world. So carve out time for devotions and make it a priority in your day before the busyness of the holidays creep in.

MAKE WISE CHOICES

As much as you might like the holidays to be like old times, keep in mind that we are still living in the midst of a pandemic. As the older people would say, you don't have to go where 'every pan knocks'. Pay attention to the COVID numbers and plan your holiday movements accordingly. Continue to observe social distancing, wear your mask, and practise proper hygiene, such as frequent hand washing. Remember, you want to enjoy the holidays with good health and strength for you and your loved ones.

Be wise in practicing moderation as well. Keep your wits about you, and make wise choices that will respect the overall wellbeing of yourself and others.

Give yourself breathing room

As mentioned earlier, planning in advance isn't about wanting everything to go perfectly. In fact, it's better if you expect that some plans will fall apart. That's okay. Just give yourself some breathing room. Control the things you can, and accept grace for the things you can't.

Even when things don't go as you hope, you still get to choose how you will respond. Stress does not have to be your sidekick this holiday season.

RELAX ALREADY

Holidays are called holidays for a reason. They are meant to be a break from your regular routine, a respite of sorts, and a time of replenishment. Make time to relax and enjoy the time you have, no matter how short it might be. Give thanks, relax, and enjoy it.

Happy holidays!



Newness of Life

By Sandra Phillip Hodge (Ndigo Naka)

Hi Dear, What's New!?

By the time you read this message, we may have entered the New Year. Everyone, everywhere will be saying, "Happy New Year" as they greet family, friends, colleagues, and even strangers. It's tradition. We do it year after year.

But on a personal level, some of us think about changes we want to see or make as we begin a new chapter of life, beginning at the start of a New Year. And some people just don't have the will anymore to make anymore "New Year's Resolutions", because they fail every time to keep up with what they started.

As the year progresses beyond the first few days, everything reverts back to the

same old, same old. But here's a trick that will work for you this time, if you try it.

BE YOUR OWN LIFE-IMPROVEMENT COACH

We all want to improve our lives, within ourselves we desire better. We look for tips and recommendations from 'life coaches', people who make a living out of telling others how to live their life, but they don't know your life, so it's beyond me how they can be an effective coach for you. Am not saying that sometimes you can pick some useful hints from them.

But, at the end of the day, you are the one who must determine what it is that you want to change or improve in your life, and I'll make it simple for you:

any of their business.

3. Make up your mind to work on that one thing: it could be a secret addiction, an old bad habit, a negative attitude, something that doesn't add value to your life and you here and now decide to eradicate it once and for all.

4. Start counting the days from the time you begin to make the change, and every day that goes by when you're victorious, celebrate by saying: "Thank you, Lord, I didn't do (so and so) today". After one week, you'll pat yourself on the back. After two weeks, you'll be more encouraged, and after three weeks, you'll think you have won the battle, but don't stop there. Count the months, go into years until you stop counting.

5. Continue each and every day to observe how you are doing: you don't have to tell anybody about it, at least not yet, or you may not even feel the need to talk about it. Just keep counting every day that you overcome the "thing" that had you "bound". Keep being victorious over it, and by the time you stop counting, you will have beaten that habit, behavior, attitude or whatever it was, and that would be the end of it.

1. Make a list of things that YOU (not anybody else), want to change or improve about yourself: This calls for deep reflection. You must be introspective about this, and be honest. Look at all your flaws and faults (we all have some), and don't make excuses. If you can't find more than one, that is enough, for starters.

2. That one thing that you have picked, only you know what it is, nobody else knows, it's between you and God: Whatever it is, it is something that you are not proud of, something that you wouldn't want anybody to talk to you about because it would be embarrassing, and you don't think that it's

6. What about a relapse, you may ask: Look at it this way, if you have a white shirt that got stained, and it took you time, effort and resources, to get out that stain, would you put that white shirt where it can get stained again? No, you will be more protective. More careful. Just so it is when you overcome a problem or anything that you want to get rid of, you don't go back in the garbage and take it out again. It's gone for good!

THE PRINCIPLE BEHIND THE SUCCESS

Remember earlier I said that this "thing" that you're trying to beat is between you and God? So, let's look at what the Word of

God says in this regard. The Apostle Paul said to the people he had led to a new life:

"Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now not only in my presence, but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12, CSB)

Your success belongs to you. Your victory belongs to you. Yes, others may benefit from the new and improved you, but ultimately, the biggest beneficiary is you. That's why you must "work out your own salvation". It does not depend on any coach, or anybody else. You may get support from others if you share your goals. But you're the biggest shareholder in this undertaking.

Just do what you need to do, and watch the results. Fear and trembling may come if you're doubting yourself, and when you are tempted to quit. The enemy of your soul that wants to keep you in bondage will taunt you. But press on, stay on course, and eventually you will be the winner.

Beloved, a new you is always possible, it doesn't have to be a new year, or a new month. All that is required is that you make that decision to go on a journey, and challenge yourself, with God's help, to fix a part of your life that needs fixing. Whatsoever it may be. And when you've successfully won a battle, you can go onto another one, if you see where you need to continue to challenge your fears, and your weaknesses.

So, we end where we started: "What's new? Take this idea and go work on yourself. You won't regret it. Instead, you'll experience improved mental health, gain confidence in your ability to change for the better, and have a new lease on faith. Your relationship with God will improve as you thank Him for being with you through your transformation, as He will be right there with you supervising His new creation.

God bless you, and have a bright and prosperous 2026!



Reflection and Expectations

Hark! It's that time of year again, a time that retains the unique Yuletide flavour, no matter the events that transpired in the preceding eleven months.

There are two prevailing schools of thought at this time of year; thoughts of reflection and thoughts of expectation. Of course, the younger ones have the single-minded focus of having their wish list fulfilled. But, for the average adult, the reflection on what was, what could have been, what should have been (done differently), and how to make the adjustments next year is a pressing matter. While reflection is necessary for self-evaluation on the road to growth and maturity, care must be taken to avoid the pitfalls of becoming too harsh on ourselves because of unrealised or failed endeavours. On the other hand, equal care must be taken to avoid overestimating the future potential of those endeavours which were successful.

In a word, moderation is the order of the day because this season can easily tip us too far in either direction.

Galatians 5:22-23 (Amplified Bible)
But the fruit of the Spirit [the result of His presence within us] is love [unselfish concern for others], joy, [inner] peace, patience [not the ability to wait, but how we act while waiting], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...

There can be despondency or over-enthusiasm depending on the weight we place on our musings. However, when the "fruit of the Spirit" is applied, the helper (Holy Spirit) comes alongside to temper both despondency and unrealistic enthusiasm.

Take a few moments to consider the



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tumultuous swings on the personal, national, and global realities due to the effects of the COVID-19 and its variants. Certainly, the stabilising nature of the "fruit of the Spirit" is what has preserved the equilibrium of many. Every trigger point has been compounded and severely tested. The highs and lows of anxiety, grief, joy, the unknown, sighs of relief when rules are relaxed, and the unavailability of the ever-elusive funds have been the common threads that define the past eleven months. And yet, the hope found through faith in God portends a rising above what seemingly should have taken away the unique flavour of the Yuletide season.

Psalm 30:5 (Amplified Bible)
For His anger is but for a moment, [a]His favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may endure for a night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.

There is always great promise and comfort found in the Word of God. The Psalmist gives great perspective to what is common to the human experience as it relates to an Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient God. Nowhere else and by no one else can anger, favour, weeping, and joy be so intricately woven into a web of hope, encouragement, and peace in the midst of reflecting on 2025 and expectations for 2026 and beyond!

Deh Loss Taste Ah Hume (Home)

Eh-eh, come sid down, young man. Yo look loike yo- in a rush — always running, always eating some foreign food outta a box. Leh meh tell yo something: back in deh day, food in the Wirgin Islands wasn't just food, yo hear? Food was lowe. Food was pride. Food was tdeh whole family in de kitchen — yam boiling, cassava bread baking on deh coal pot, and somebody always licking deh spoon before it done cool.

Yo could smell Saturday morning from a mile away — sweet bread, fish soup, bush tea strong enough to wake deh ancestor dem. Now? Yo can't ewen smell breakfast in deh air no more. Everything come wrapped in plastic and taste like it too. From Ground Prowisions to Macaroni en Rice Yo see, long ago, ewerybody had a little piece of garden. Some had cassava in deh back, a few sweet potatoes on deh hill, maybe a goat or two if yo lucky. Yo didn't hawe to run to no supermarket — yo just walk outside and pick dinner. But when deh country start changing,

we start changing too. Tourism come een, finance come een, and deh ground get lonely becausein we prefer easy wuk. Deh people dem trade showel feh briefcase, and next ting yoo nuh, we eating like deh American dem — macaroni, rice, and eweryting from a can.

En choile, don't talk bout deh fast food dat come from St. Thomas on deh boat dem — One taste of deh fried chicken and ewerybody fehget wah seasoning come from a garden taste loike.

When Mama Had to Wuk

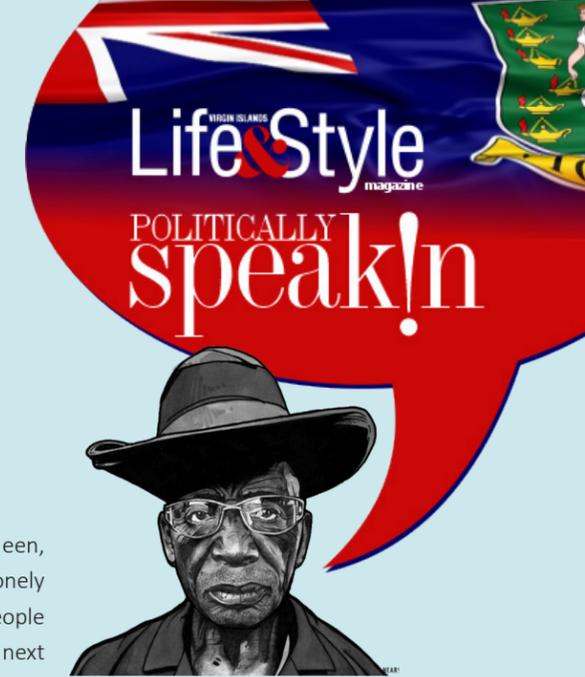
Now, Oiy een't blaming nobody, eh. Toimes geh harder en harder, en mothers had to go wuk to mek ends meet. But yo see dem "latchkey" chiren — dem who used to come hume to ah empty house, Dem grow up eating boxed mac and cheese, rammin noodles and canned soup. No toime feh ah slow cooking or no pot singing on ah coal pot.

Yo see, when mama leawe early and come home tired, deh whole rhythm of deh house change. Deh kitchen used to be a classroom — now tis just another stop between wuk and sleep.

We Losing More Dan Flavor

Now look around, ewerybody sick, tired, and eating nonsense. Diabetes, pressure, obesity on deh rise and we wonder why. But it een just about health, tis about memory. When yo stop cooking local food, yo fehget who you are.

Yo ewer notice how we only make cassawa bread or cocoa tea for festiwal toime now? Loike we doing a show for deh tourist dem. We clapping feh how we used to live loike tis



with Pepe Bucky

entertainment. Imagine dat — turning our way of life into show!

Caught Between Conwenience and Culture We one big cultural mix-up now. Imported food easy and cheap, local food hard and slow. But leh meh tell yo something: every tin of corned beef yo open, every cereal box yo buy — dat's one more step away from your roots.

Conwenience sweet, yes — but culture sweeter. Yo can't microwave identity, meh boy.

Deh Way Back Home

So wah we goan' do? It een about throwing away progress, yo nuh, it's about balance.

Plant ah likkle mint in a bucket. Boil bush tea on a Sunday. Ask yo grandmother how to mek fish broth or cassawa bread. Sid down en lissen to deh story dem that come with deh recipe — 'cause dem stories well seasoned too.

Yo don't hawe to liwe in deh past, but yo can carry it with you. deh soil still here. Deh ole people dem still here — still willing to show yo how to mash, peel, and stir like tis magic.

So next toime yo feel to grab dah driwe-thru meal, stop and think: maybe deh way hume start right at the table — one pot, one story, one sweet mouthful at a toime.



DECORATING FOR WARMTH AND TOGETHERNESS

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON WITH THE ART OF HYGGE

Hygge is more than a design aesthetic—it's a way of life. Imagine it's a cold evening, the scent of a cinnamon candle hangs in the air, soft music plays in the background, and you're wrapped in a thick knit blanket with a hot drink in hand. That simple, comforting moment? That's hygge.

Hygge is all about embracing simplicity, creating comfort, and meaningful connection. The holiday season is the perfect time to lean into that spirit—when our homes naturally become the centre of warmth, gathering, and celebration. Let's walk through how you can bring hygge into your home this holiday—not just with decor, but with intention.

Start with the Feeling, Not the Furniture

Before you rush to buy new throw pillows or candles, pause. Ask yourself: What makes me feel truly cosy? Is it the glow of candlelight? The sound of laughter around the dinner table? The smell of fresh-baked cookies? Hygge begins with atmosphere. It's about creating spaces that invite people in, encourage lingering, and spark joy in the quiet moments.

Cosy Up with Textures That Hug You Back

One of the easiest ways to hygge-ify your space is through texture. Think of your home like a warm embrace. Every surface should feel inviting. Drape chunky knit throws over sofas and armchairs, mixing materials like wool, fleece, and faux fur to create a tangible, welcoming feel. Add visual warmth under your feet by layering rugs—try a soft shaggy rug beside the bed or a woven jute rug in the entryway for instant cosiness. Oversized, plush cushions in muted tones help soften the space even further, and if you can score a few handmade pieces, they'll add that extra layer of character that makes a room feel not just styled—but truly lived in.



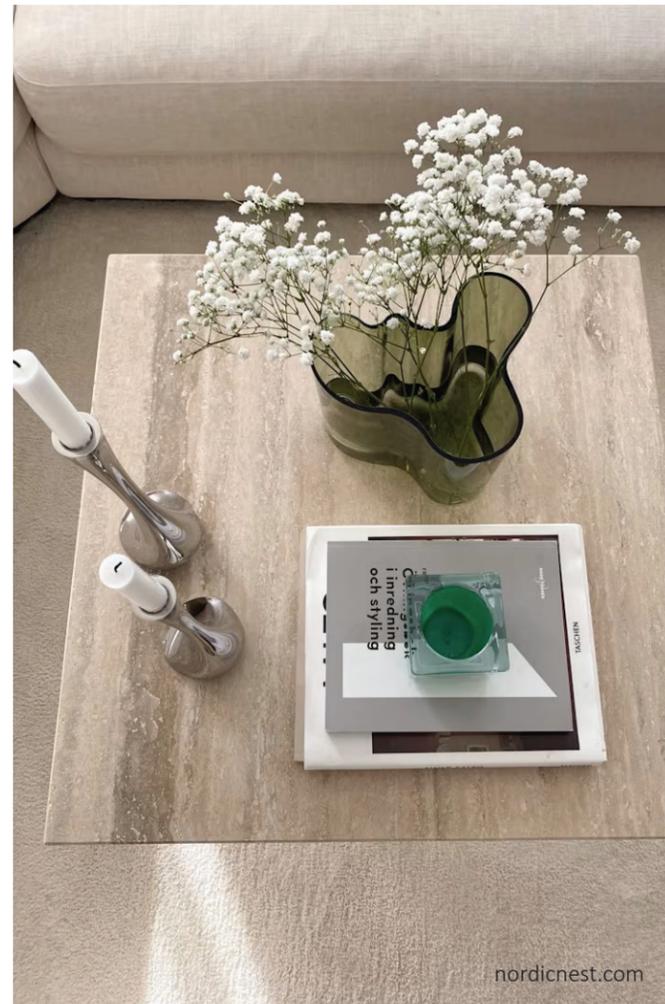


Light That Grounds and Warms

Lighting sets the tone for how a space feels—and when it comes to hygge, softer is better. Instead of bright overhead fixtures, opt for gentle, layered lighting that creates a warm, relaxed atmosphere you'll want to settle into. Candles—real or flameless—are essential. Cluster them on windowsills, mantels, and dining tables to create a gentle, flickering glow that instantly softens the room. Add a touch of whimsy with string lights draped over shelves, wrapped around mirrors, or tucked inside glass jars for a subtle sparkle. For everyday lighting, swap out harsh bulbs for warm white or amber-toned ones in your lamps to mimic the cosy feel of natural firelight. Together, these elements create a calming ambiance that invites you to slow down and settle in. Try setting aside one evening a week for a “candle hour” where you switch off all electric lights and let your space be lit solely by candlelight. The soft, flickering glow creates a sense of calm that’s hard to replicate, inviting you to slow down, breathe deeply, and simply be.

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Bring Nature In with Organic Elements That Soothe

Hygge embraces the outdoors, especially in winter when nature feels distant. Bring nature indoors to deepen the sense of calm and connection in your space. Start with evergreens and branches—fill vases with pine, eucalyptus, or even bare twigs to add sculptural beauty and a seasonal touch. Incorporate natural materials like wood, stone, linen, and ceramic throughout your home; these elements offer grounding textures and a sense of quiet elegance. For a bit of sensory charm, try seasonal accents like dried orange slices, cinnamon sticks, and whole cloves—they're not only visually appealing but also fill the air with a warm, nostalgic fragrance.



Create Spaces for Connection

Hygge is deeply social. It's about gathering, sharing, and being present. Design your home to create togetherness. Designing your home with hygge in mind means creating spaces that encourage connection, comfort, and ease. In the living room, try arranging seating so it faces inward—toward each other rather than the television—to spark conversation and togetherness. A basket of board games or a stack of well-loved books adds a casual, inviting touch. At the dining table, simplicity goes a long way: think linen napkins, handmade place cards, and a centerpiece of candles and greenery to set a warm, welcoming tone. In the kitchen, a tray stocked with teas, mugs, and snacks signals hospitality and encourages guests to help themselves, making everyone feel instantly at home.

Holiday Hygge Craft Touches

Now let's add a touch of seasonal charm—simple, soulful details that bring joy without the overwhelm. Gather with loved ones to craft handmade ornaments—think paper stars, salt dough shapes, or cosy knitted baubles that add charm and meaning to your decor. Create memory corners by displaying holiday cards, framed photos, or cherished keepsakes that spark nostalgia and invite storytelling.

Here's the secret: hygge isn't about perfection. It's about presence. Hygge is a Mindset. It's the quiet joy of watching snow fall or going gift shopping, the comfort of a shared silence, the laughter over a simple meal. So, this holiday season, don't worry about matching your garland to your throw pillows. Instead, ask: Does this space feel like love? Because that's the art of hygge—designing not just for the eyes, but for the heart.





LIVING GREEN in the Virgin Islands

Fully Belly Farm BVI

As a small island nation, our survival depends on our ability to preserve the natural environment. Our motto for sustainability must be Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Protecting our natural environment by adopting a green living philosophy will not only protect the environment but will also enhance the quality of life for our residents. Our conservation goal must be to transform our islands into a net-zero waste, carbon-neutral territory.

One major waste reduction initiative will be to establish a sustainable recycling programme, that would eventually result in waste reduction and improved air quality. Introducing the use of Solar Energy will reduce the cost of producing electricity. The introduction of water conservation techniques will ensure efficient water use, and when coupled with eco-friendly building practices, will benefit the environment and contribute to the well-being of our community.

As a small island community, our people should be made aware of the concept of green living. Adopting a green living lifestyle ensures that, as a community, we can work towards a net-zero waste and a carbon-neutral territory, while protecting our environment and

ensuring the health, welfare, and economic viability of our islands and our people. Island green living is a priority if we wish to preserve this environment for future generations.

Education on the preservation of these islands must be a priority for all sectors of our population, including our visitors. Our goal is to transform our islands into a net-zero waste, carbon-neutral territory, ensuring the security and protection of the natural environment and the economic sustainability of our citizens. A major factor in achieving this would be the recycling of aluminium and plastic waste. The goal will be to achieve a carbon-neutral environment.

Environmental protection must be a major project for the government of our territory. The future of our environment depends on the level of protection exercised. As a community, living green should be a major commitment to



The Reverend Esther Georges is an Episcopal Priest and Retired Deputy Director of the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands

sustainability and environmental protection. The inclusion of waste reduction with the main emphasis on recycling, especially of plastic, a ban on burning waste, and the use of solar energy for the generation of electricity will contribute to a cleaner, healthier environment.

Implementing eco-friendly building practices will ensure sustainability, and contribute to the preservation of the natural environment. The future of our planet depends on how efficiently we can protect the natural beauty of our islands, while ensuring the sustainability, viability, and livelihood of our citizens. Implementing the concept of island green living may be the basis for the survival of the beauty of these treasured islands.

Our community should be aware of the vital importance of maintaining the concept of island green living. The natural preservation of these islands should be our priority. To achieve success, education must be an essential component, as our community needs to understand the vital importance of our environment in the survival and preservation of the environment.

Living green on these Virgin Islands we call home is necessary for their survival and protection. Island green living is a priority if we wish to preserve the environment for future generations. Education on the preservation of their unique natural features is essential for all members of our community, including our visitors. The previous generations left a legacy of sustainability for us to continue. Our goal should therefore be to join our efforts with those of our neighbours in the USVI to work together to make these islands a net zero waste, carbon neutral territory.

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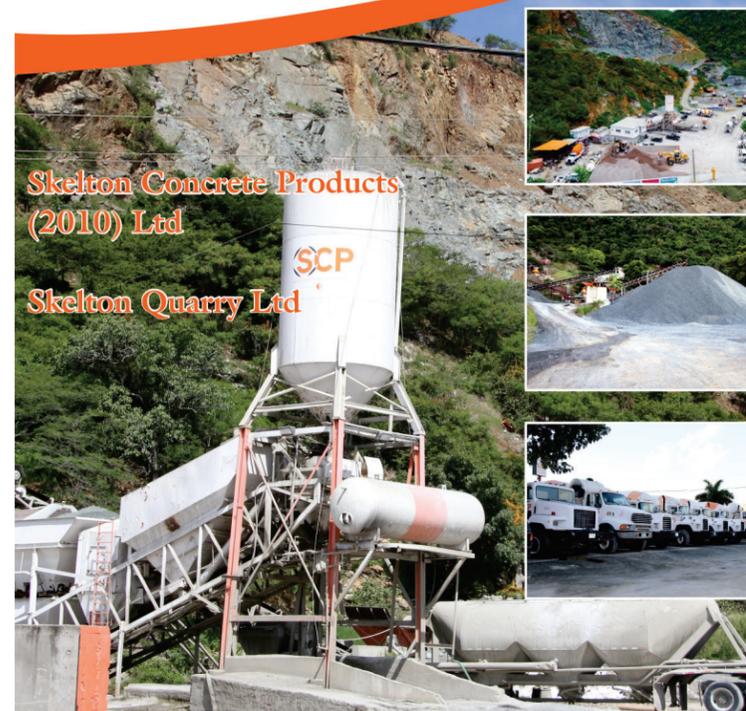
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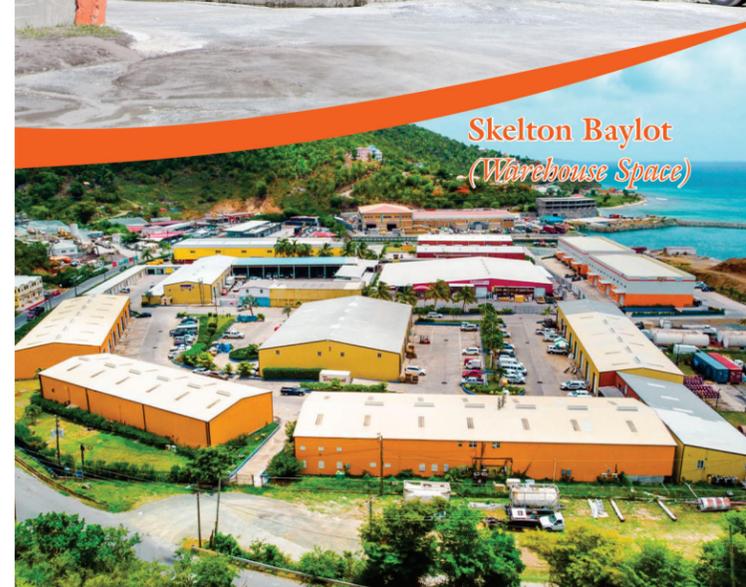
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