

FORT LAUDERDALE — A FESTIVE CITY

BRINGING PEOPLE AND CULTURES TOGETHER

WRITERS PETE STEVENSON

Festivals and cultural events are an essential part of urban life, generally having, very diversified themes. Festivals are also an excellent way of promoting a city, by attracting tourists, as well as business, but more importantly, they allow a community to stay united, to play together and grow stronger.

In history, festivals brought all the subjects together from the far-flung reaches of the kingdom. They were held to exchange knowledge, share common bonds and

to celebrate. People also enjoyed festivals because many times, they were associated with food, and historically they were held in relation to a particular harvest.

Before the advent of television, the internet, and social media, many festivals provided local populations with a way to experience different cultures. Festivals and cultural events today provide introductions into the diverse populations and culture in our area. Below we profile a few of the upcoming events.

TASTE OF THE ISLANDS

DATE: April 26 - 28, 2019

LOCATION: Along the Riverwalk and by the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society

INFORMATION: www.ttiexperience.com

THE
taste the islands
EXPERIENCE

Living in South Florida, it is surprising how many people I've talked with that have never been to any of the wonderful island nations of the Caribbean. Now you can get a little taste and inspiration from one of the newer and exciting festivals to grace the downtown by attending Taste Of The Islands.

What is the origin of Taste Of The Islands? It all started when Calibe Thompson, who produces a TV series called Taste The Islands, which aired nationally on PBS. The event is a spin off of her TV series, to allow locals to try some of the fantastic fare featured on her show, as well as showcase the culture. On the show they have two lead chefs, however, neither of them has a restaurant. People kept contacting Thompson and asking 'where can we get the food?' "So I called David (Muir), a friend who has organized events, and said I wanted to create a food event that allows people to experience what they see on television," explained Thompson.

The first Taste Of The Islands event was held at a restaurant in Miramar. It was such a success; they had a hard time keeping up with the demand for food. So, in 2017, with the launch of the second season of the television show, the event was moved to an outside venue. This year's Taste Of The Islands will be the third annual event. Even though this event does have other artisans and some music – the focus is the food.

This ticketed event will have several venues encapsulated within – First there is The Island Pavilions where chefs will be cooking up regional delights from Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Haiti, and more.

You can then walk along Restaurant Row, where restaurants will recreate some of their famous dishes that you can sample. No need to drive all around South Florida trying to find your new favorite island restaurant when you can do it in one afternoon with a cocktail in your hand along the banks of the New River.

Finally, there will be an Arrival & Departure Lounge – as you would have in any island nation. Here they will be holding Chef Talks, along with a Culinary Museum and other surprises.



PHOTOS BY MARK JAMES

PIRATE FESTIVAL

DATE: Saturday, April 20, 2019 / 11:00 am - 5:00 pm

LOCATION: Esplanade Park in Downtown Fort Lauderdale on Riverwalk

INFORMATION: www.ftlpiratefest.com



Another one of the newer festivals to grace the downtown and Riverwalk is the Rotary Club of Fort Lauderdale's **Pirate Festival**. This event had its origins in the longtime event that was the Rotary's River Raft Race, which was known as "Pirates of the River." "It was a great team building opportunity, but we wanted the event to grow," explained Fort Lauderdale Rotary Club President David Kramer. So the Rotary looked at ways to expand, and the Pirate Festival was born. It now includes activities on both land and sea.

This exciting one-day event is a great family experience. In addition to the traditional Pirate themed Raft and Paddle Board Races, there are Pirate Encampments, a Beer Garden, food vendors, and a variety of live entertainment demonstrations. But it's not just an adult fun day; Pirate Festival offers a booty of options for the little buccaneers as well. The children's area includes a climbable pirate ship, shows, face painting, climbing wall, pony rides (did pirates use horses?) and much more.

All the net treasure goes towards the Rotary Club's 1090 Foundation, which furnishes college and vocational scholarships for local High School Seniors along with funding other worthwhile community service projects.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY FORT LAUDERDALE ROTARY CLUB

RIVERWALK FORT LAUDERDALE BURGER BATTLE X™

DATE: Friday March 29, 2019 / 6:30pm-10:00pm


LOCATION: Huizenga Plaza, 32 E. Las Olas Blvd on Riverwalk

INFORMATION: www.goriverwalk.com



We would be remiss if we didn't mention Riverwalk Fort Lauderdale's own Burger Battle. This will be the tenth year of the wildly successful, mouth-watering burger competition, as well as alternative options. Over the years most of South Florida's top restaurants and burger joints have participated in the Burger Battle. In fact, many of the winning burgers still appear on menus around town.

This sizzling event always pits the top burger joints and restaurants against one another as they show off their creative juices and grilling skills to over 1200 guests along the scenic New River.

The Battle brings together South Florida burger aficionados for an evening of gourmet burger creations, cocktails, beers and the always stomach-churning burger eating contest while raising funds to support the Riverwalk Fort Lauderdale mission of building and nurturing a vibrant community connected by the New River and downtown. Burger Battle sells out every year, so get your tickets soon. 



PHOTOS BY JASON LEIDY