

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Ritz-Carlton revives popular Cayman Cookout culinary event with charitable mission

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Cayman Cookout featured culinary creations from top chefs. Image credit: Ritz-Carlton

By KAYSORIN

Marriott International-owned hotel and resort chain Ritz-Carlton has brought back its Cayman Cookout event for the first time since taking a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The Cayman Cookout took place annually in January from 2009 until 2020. After hosting the event for the 12th year in a row, Ritz-Carlton was forced to cancel it in 2021 and 2022, reinstating the experience in 2023 with an eye to charity.

"Cayman Cookout is woven into the DNA of the Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman and has cemented our position as the top culinary destination in the Caribbean," said Marc Langevin, general manager of Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman, in a statement.

Return of giving back

This year's Cayman Cookout was hosted by Chef Eric Ripert of the famed New York restaurant Le Bernardin.

The weekend featured renowned chefs who have become staples at the annual event, such as Jos Andrs, Daniel Boulud, Dominique Crenn, Andrew Zimmern and Emeril Lagasse.

Several newcomers also joined, including Top Chef winners Adrienne Cheatham and Kristen Kish, who enhanced the experience with fresh perspective.

In addition to this impressive line-up of celebrity chefs, the event highlighted sommeliers and mixologists who provided guests with plentiful libations.

This year's Cayman Cookout incorporated several charitable activations into the weekend's programming.

To raise money for the local Cayman Food Bank, Ritz-Carlton partnered with pop and neo-expressionist artist Louis-Nicolas Darbon, who is famous for his street art and content creation.

Mr. Darbon designed a unique travel poster for the event. Two prints of the poster were then included in a silent

auction benefiting the food bank.

In addition to the silent auction, guests were surprised by the presentation of a \$100,000 donation to World Central Kitchen, Chef Jos Andrs's nonprofit foundation dedicated to providing meals after natural disasters.

The donation consisted of \$50,000 from Marriott International and \$50,000 from the Kenneth B. Dart Foundation.

The donation was presented during a conversation between Messrs. Ripert and Andrs that took place in the Beach Pavilion on Feb. 4.

World Central Kitchen will use the funds to provide fresh meals in Ukraine, as well as to improve local food systems.

Train of thought

Global nonprofits were not the only beneficiaries of the event.

Local young hospitality professionals were awarded a two-day training in the Blue by Eric Ripert kitchen, \$250 gift card to Kirk Market and a wine certification class from WineSchool3 as winners of the Bon Vivant Chef Competition Brunch.

By combining charitable donations with entertainment, Ritz-Carlton created a touching experience for guests of Cayman Cookout.

FOR AN EVENT that was so significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, such an altruistic theme made sense.

"As the festival has evolved over the past 15 years, we have made it our priority to not only provide unique culinary programming but also giving back to the community that has allowed us grow and prosper here on island," Mr. Langevin said in a statement.

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