



## 2009 Winemakers Dinner - a perfect marriage of food and wine in the BVI

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The British Virgin Islands Tourist Board and the BVI Charitable Fund welcomed international tastemakers, seasoned gourmands, travelers and media from throughout the world including Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Puerto Rico, Slovakia, United Kingdom and the United States of America to the 2009 Virgin Islands Winemakers Dinners series from December 2 through 6, 2009.

The BVI Tourist Board is the Presenting Sponsor of the 2009 and 2010 Winemakers Dinners.

The gourmet lunches and dinners were held at a collection of exclusive BVI villas and restaurants on three islands and featured flavorful cuisine prepared by some of the world's most celebrated chefs and wine poured by winemakers from Argentina, California, France, Germany and Italy.

Over 860 people in total attended the four dinners, seven luncheons and the VIP Reception between December 2nd and 6th, which featured 74 separate courses of food, and 81 different wines that were paired with these courses. During the July series of the Winemakers Dinners, about 1,000 people in total attended the four dinners, seven luncheons and the VIP Reception, which featured 78 separate courses of food, and 87 different wines that were paired with these courses.

The December series of Winemakers Dinners kicked off with a private VIP Reception on December 2nd at the Pirate's Bight, Norman Island featuring over 12 different Caribbean based dishes prepared by Chef Matthew Webb from Guana Island and Norman Island. Two different wines from Rosemount from Caribbean Cellars and two burgundies from Domaine Bouchard Pere et Fils from Grands Vins de France were served to close to 400 guests who attended this reception.

Dinners respectively followed at Baraka Point Estate at Nail Bay, Virgin Gorda; Frenchman's Lookout on Tortola; Giorgio's Table and Rock Café, Virgin Gorda; and at Golden Pavilion Villa on Tortola. A series of seven course dinners over four nights were paired with 14 renowned wines each night, personally poured by the vintners. Each dinner was preceded by a reception at sunset featuring Grand Cru Champagnes from Pierre Paillard Champagne in France.

Visiting chefs and culinary personalities created a symphony of food under the leadership of Vikram Garg from Halekulani Resort in Waikiki, Hawaii who has served as the Executive Chef of the Virgin Islands Winemakers Dinners from its inception; Anne Burrell, host of the Food Network program, Secrets of a Restaurant Chef; Roberto Trevino from Budatai, Puerto Rico; Otto Borsich from City Hall Restaurant, Keller, Texas; Taekuung Chung from Chung Cooking Studio, Tokyo, Japan and Albert Kramer who served as the first Executive Chef of Virgin Gorda's Little Dix Bay when it opened in 1964. Virgin Gorda based chefs who participated included Heidi Davis Benyair, pastry chef at Biras Creek and Giorgio Paradiso, owner of Giorgio's Table All the chefs volunteered their time and talent.

Exceptional vintners include Antoine and Quentin Paillard from Grand Cru Champagne producer Pierre Paillard in Bouzy, France; Andres Belinsky of Terrazas de los Andes and Cheval des Andes in Argentina; Johannes Haart of Weingut Rienhold Haart in Piesport, Germany; Anselmo Guerrieri Gonzaga of Tenuta San Leonardo, Trentino, Italy; Larry Stone of Francis Ford Coppola's Rubicon Estate in Rutherford, California and Gerhard Grans from Weingut Grans-Fassian in Leiwen, Germany. All the winemakers contributed the wines, time and insight at no cost.

In addition to the four dinners, there were seven lunches featuring one of the winemakers who paired their wines with three to four course lunch menus. Four lunches were held in Virgin Gorda including one at the Bitter End Yacht Club, The Mine Shaft, The Restaurant at Leverick Bay and Fat Virgin Café. The remaining three course lunches were held in Tortola at Long Bay Beach Resort and Villas, Myett's Cane Garden Bay and Tamarind Club.

Mr. Ajit Mathew George, co-chair of the BVI Charitable Fund and Managing Director of Nail Bay Resort reported that both the July and Dinner series of the Winemakers Dinners were completely sold out in advance with a waiting list for each dinner. He also reported that all the lunches were very popular.

"The 2009 Winemakers Dinners were a series of exclusive events during which guests had the opportunity to meet some of the most gifted winemakers in the world and sample their award-winning wines. These are wines were expertly paired with innovative creations by international master chefs together with some chefs in the BVI. We are pleased that over \$110,000 in gross revenue was raised from the 2009 Winemakers Dinners even though the economic climate was very challenging. However the combination of great food and wonderful wine served in unique settings in the British Virgin Islands persuaded both visitors and residents to support this event," said Mr. George.

Martin Dindos, owner of OHMS, a company that imports premium white wines from Germany's Mosel Valley and fine champagnes and a founding sponsor, helped convince many of the winemakers to donate rare and exclusive wines for the event and the silent wine auctions, and fly to BVI for the dinners. Wine and food pairings were made by Richard Grosche, wine journalist from German wine magazine Weinwelt and Manager of the international wine academy MUNDUS vini. OHMS – which stands for On Her Majesty Services - also donated the fine Czech porcelain and glasses for the seven course place settings each evening.

The Co-Chairs of the BVI Charitable Fund are the Premier of the British Virgin Islands, the Hon. Ralph T. O'Neal, OBE and Ajit Mathew George, Managing Director, Nail Bay Resort. The BVI Charitable Fund was established in March 2008 with a \$25,000 challenge grant from Nail Bay Resort to help promote this destination to potential new visitors while at the same time creating new and innovative fund-raising events to benefit various charities in the BVI by attracting support from both outside and within the BVI. The BVI Charitable Fund is part of the Community Foundation (BVI) Limited which has no paid staff or overhead. In addition to Nail Bay Resort the other Founding Sponsors are Allivictus and OHMS.

The four beneficiaries of the net proceeds of the 2009 Winemakers Dinners are The BVI Red Cross, St. Mary's School,

Virgin Gorda, St. George's School, Tortola, and YEP (Youth Empowerment Project) in the East End, Tortola. For additional information including pictures from the various dinners and lunches visit [www.winemakersdinners.com](http://www.winemakersdinners.com).

**\*PHOTO CAPTION:** From Left to right: Ajit Mathew George, Co-chair of the BVI Charitable Fund being interviewed for Jetsetextra by Moira Forbes, Associate Publisher, ForbesLife following the Winemakers luncheon at the Tamarind Club in Tortola.

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