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The World Comes to Delaware as Chefs from Six Continents Visit for May Festival The MidAtlantic Wine + Food Festival Doubles Number of Chef Participants for 43 Events

WILMINGTON, DE (January 22, 2014) – The MidAtlantic region will soon play host to an extraordinary number of international chefs converging on Delaware for the MidAtlantic Wine + Food Festival, May 14-18, 2014. The Festival has sourced its 2014 visiting chefs from six continents, and its total number of participating chefs has more than doubled since 2013 with 92 international, national and regional chefs committed to date. Following is an overview of the intercontinental talent who will be cooking as part of this 43-event festival:

- Born into the Thai Royal Family, ML Sirichalerm Svasti, known to many in the United States as Chef Siri McDang, grew up in a Bangkok palace and has become one of Thailand's most famous celebrity chefs. He is the expert on Thai cooking for *Le Cordon Bleu*, as well as an author and well-known television personality in Thailand. Delawareans would know him as the former chef of Rehoboth Beach's Back Porch Café. ([full bio](#))
- Chef Yara Castro Roberts authored *The Brazilian Table*, the first book about Brazil's cuisine written in English by an acclaimed Brazilian chef. She operates the Academy of Cooking & Other Pleasures in Paraty, Brazil, (featured on *Gourmet's Adventures with Ruth* on PBS) which offers courses in four languages that cover the Minas Gerais, Bahia, Amazonas and Cerrado cuisines. Chef Roberts has presented at Culinary Institute of America, Boston University, Cambridge School of Culinary Arts, New York University, Chaine des Rôtisseurs, Les Dames d'Escoffier, AIWF, Rhode Island School of Design, Draeger's Culinary Center, conferences and festivals. She has collaborated with Old Ways Preservation & Exchange Trust to create the Latin American food pyramid and with Brazil's Slow Food movement. Chef Roberts hosted the PBS Emmy-nominated *Cook's Tour* and is currently the host of a new, in-production TV series, *Delicious Brazil*, which presents culture and lifestyles through food. ([full bio](#))
- Chef Bronwyn Zeca Solomon is the Executive Chef of Morukuru Family Restaurant in South Africa. Morukuru is part of Relais & Châteaux, an exclusive collection of the finest restaurants and hotels around the world, and won a World Luxury Hotel Award in 2013. Recent chef engagements include

some of the most exclusive lodges within other “Big 5” game reserves in Southern Africa, namely, Kwandwe Private Game and Sabi Sabi Earth Lodge. Chef Solomon attended Silwood Kitchens and completed a Grande Diploma in Cordon Bleu Cooking in 2011. ([full bio](#))

- Chef Vincenzo “Vince” Trotta, is the Executive Chef of Chateau Tanunda, Barossa Valley, Australia. Once Australia’s youngest Executive Chef, at Mount Lofty House, Chef Trotta has also served as Chef aboard “Rodney Fox Great White Shark Expeditions,” as owner of Salter’s and as Executive Chef with Accor Novotel Barossa Valley. Following successful engagements at Bar Ravesi and Rogues Streetons, in 1998, he was named one of the top 25 young chefs in Sydney, and won Sydney’s Best Pizza award at Bondi Restaurant Biboteca. He has served as guest chef at Vinexpo (France), The Grand Formosa Regent (Taiwan) and The Hong Kong Jockey Club. Chef Trotta was Executive Chef at the 2001 South Australian Premiers’ Federation Feast Dinner. ([full bio](#))
- Chef Robert Staegemann is Executive Head Chef of Commander Porterhouse and Oyster Bar in London, England. This Johannesburg, South Africa, native has achieved two coveted Chef of the Year titles in his home country. Chef Staegemann has consulted on restaurant openings, run successful establishments, mentored many aspiring chefs, written recipes for magazines and newspapers, appeared on cooking programs, and led master cooking classes. In 2014, he will be launching “Confident Cooking,” a relaxed home-based cooking course teaching all levels of non-chefs how to buy ingredients, prepare them and cook with confidence. He was previously Executive Head Chef of Vivat Bacchus where he had London’s most expensive set menu at £1,000 (\$1,640 at today’s exchange rate) per head for a seven-course extravaganza including grilled Wagyu fillet plus a board of 15 cheeses. ([full bio](#))

Festival founder and Board President Ajit George said, “We set our sights on having six continents represented between chefs and winemakers—one more continent than last year. We’re more than thrilled to have achieved it with just the chefs, and six continents’ worth of winemakers is not out of reach. We know it’s unlikely that we could ever get an Antarctic chef to participate, but we’ve been known to dream big. Perhaps next year!”

Chefs from North America, the sixth continent represented, include a number of chefs from the British Virgin Islands (BVI), the “exclusive island sponsor” of the 2014 Festival, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), Haiti and St. Lucia:

- Heidi Stevens is the Pastry Chef for Sir Richard Branson’s Necker Island, BVI. In addition to desserts and breads fit for the Royals, dignitaries and stars that stay at this £37,500-per-night (\$61,000 at today’s exchange rate) destination, Chef Stevens also regularly satisfies the needs of guests with special dietary requirements, including gluten-free, vegan, lactose intolerant and sugar-free items. Previous chef engagements include Little Dix Bay Resort (BVI), Biras Creek Resort (BVI), The Banyan Tree Resort (Seychelles), Plateau Restaurant, Bar and Grill (London) and Claridges (London). ([full bio](#))
- Chef Jermaine “Monk” George is the Executive Chef of Hilltop Restaurant and Bar at the prestigious Biras Creek Resort, Virgin Gorda, BVI. In 2013, the property was named one of the “35

Best Island Resorts for Food” by *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine. Previous chef engagements include Lake Placid Lodge and the White Barn Inn, a Relais & Châteaux property in Maine. ([full bio](#))

- Chef Imran Ashton is the Executive Chef and Owner of Plumrose Restaurant, BVI. Previous restaurants include Federal House (Annapolis, Maryland), The River Café (London, England), The Body Holiday Spa Resort (St. Lucia) and Executive Chef at the Moorings (BVI). He is the winning chef of the first ever “Taste of the BVI” cook-off and trained with the gold-medal-winning BVI National Culinary Team. ([full bio](#))
- Ariq Flax-Clarke is the 2012 BVI Junior Chef Champion, and is currently in his last year of high school. Upon graduation from Bregado Flax Educational Centre in July 2014, Flax-Clarke intends to attend the Johnson and Wales University in Miami, Florida. He has worked at Rosewood Little Dix Bay (BVI) during school breaks. ([full bio](#))
- Chef Ron Duprat is the Consulting Executive Chef for Sugar Ray Resort and Spa, USVI. Chef Duprat is a past competitor on Bravo's *Top Chef*, and hosted *Bar Rescue, New Orleans* on Spike TV. He garnered a “Chef of the Year Award” from the American Culinary Foundation in 2000. Previous chef engagements include the Pelican Bay Foundation, Opl Ocean Properties, Host Mark, Benchmark International and The Fame Montauk Yacht Club Resort and Marina. ([full bio](#))
- Chef Greg Engelhardt is the Corporate Executive Chef for Grand Palazzo Club Restaurant and owner of “Off the Grid” at Sapphire Beach, USVI. Once named “Rising Star Chef” by StarChefs.com, Chef Engelhardt became the youngest chef in Las Vegas to earn a Michelin Star (the city’s only star awarded to a stand-alone restaurant), at Andre Rochat’s Andre’s French Restaurant. Later, his Old Stone Farm House restaurant was rated the number one Caribbean restaurant on TripAdvisor. Previous chef engagements include Crystal Cruises’ M.S. Harmony, Commander’s Palace, Alain Ducasse’s Mix, Michael Mina’s SeaBlue, Fiamma Trattoria, Wynn Resort and Paddy’s Beach, a restaurant he helped rehabilitate following Hurricane Sandy. ([full bio](#))
- Javier Cuesta Muñoz is the Executive Chef of The Landings Resort, St. Lucia. This Seville, Spain, native’s previous chef engagements include Hotel Barcelo’s Asia Gardens (Alicante, Spain) and Buccament Bay Resort Luxury Spa (St. Vincent and The Grenadines). Chef Muñoz’s La Encina Restaurant (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) was named one of the 10 Best Restaurants for Ethnic Food by *Philadelphia Magazine*. ([full bio](#))

A number of nationally-known chefs will also descend upon Delaware to join chefs from the Delaware Valley, a detailed list of which will be announced in February.

In its second year, the Festival features international vintners and chefs in collaboration with local talent, bringing tourism to Delaware and increasing awareness of the region’s cultural assets. Local and regional chefs as well as high school and college culinary students, will collaborate with visiting winemakers, chefs, brewers and distillers. The 2013 Festival attracted 4,328 ticketholders from 16 states and nine countries for 42 events;

visiting personalities hailed from five continents, with winemakers from five countries, seven international chefs, eight national chefs and 26 local and regional chefs.

Expanded chef bios as well as Festival event descriptions can be found on www.mawff.org. For additional information about the Festival, call Laura Stimson at 302.660.2200 extension 105.

About the MidAtlantic Wine + Food Festival

The MidAtlantic Wine + Food Festival™ began as an independent festival in 2013. The Festival's purpose is to be the premier food and wine event of the MidAtlantic featuring international vintners and chefs in collaboration with our local talent, to bring tourism to Delaware and to increase awareness of our cultural assets. The Festival is the beneficiary of a generous two-year capacity-building grant from the Longwood Foundation. MidAtlantic Wine and Food Festival, Limited, is a Delaware nonprofit. A designated portion of the net 2014 proceeds will benefit five arts-related beneficiaries throughout Delaware. The beneficiaries are: CAMP Rehoboth, Christina Cultural Arts Center, Joshua M. Freeman Foundation (which operates the Freeman Stage in Fenwick Island), OperaDelaware, and the Smyrna-Clayton Heritage Association (which operates the historic Smyrna Opera House). Beneficiaries will also receive board governance consulting services from the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA). The Festival is managed by Strongpoint Events Marketing, LLC.

Interviews with international chefs can be arranged, including limited pre-Festival personal appearances.