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MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY
News Release

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19th ANNUAL TINIAN HOT PEPPER FESTIVAL JUST “PIKA”

Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) – “Pika” is a Chamorro word in The Marianas meaning either “spicy” or “excellent.” Both definitions apply to the festivities held on Feb. 18-19, 2023, at the 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, known as “Pika Fest” among locals. The festival pays homage to the island’s small but potent donni’ hot pepper.

The festival had a soft opening at 7 p.m. last Friday (February 17) with the posting of colors by the Tinian Jr./Sr. High School JROTC Color Guard, followed by remarks from Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan and other dignitaries. Activities included food sales, live entertainment, competitions, arts and crafts sales, and more.

Taking top honors in the Male and Female Hot Pepper Eating Contests were Tim Rolle and Jessica Cabrera, respectively. Luis B. Mundo served up the best spicy chicken to win the “kadun pika” cooking contest. The Pika Burger Eating Contest winning title was captured by Patrick Chance. David Bamba and Dolores Palacios took home the top cha-ching cash award for their cha-cha moves. The San Jose Parish Crusaders tore through the competition to win the tug-of-war contest. Crawling slowly to finish first in the “Umang” (hermit crab) Race were the entries of Galyug Untalan in the Boys Division and Lilliyana Moreno in the Girls Division. The Karaoke queen for the youth was Jeriah Ann Cruz, while Colleen Cing took the title in the adult division. Fresku kept it fresh, garnering 1st place in the booth decorating competition. All contest winners

received cash prizes.

“We express our profound gratitude to all our distinguished guests, off-island visitors, participating booth vendors, and most especially the sponsors for making the 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival a success!” said Mayor Aldan. “This year’s festival would not have been possible without your generous donations and in-kind contributions to the Tinian Mayor’s Office. Every one of you played an important role in making this year’s Tinian Hot Pepper ‘Pika’ Festival a success through your participation, enthusiasm, and contributions. We hope everyone enjoyed the festivities, and we look forward to welcoming you all again next year! Thank you *yan un dangkulu na si yu’us ma’ase.*”

The event is organized this year by the Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan with support from the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA). Additional sponsors were Saipan Marine Stevedore, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, DOCOMO Pacific, CNMI FPA Corporation, Tinian Ice & Water Bottling Company, Black Micro Corporation, Marpac Inc., Triple J Enterprise, Tinian Fuel Services, Tinian Shipping LLC, and Pacific Engineering Group & Services (PEGS). The event was also supported by Karma Tent and Table Rental, Kana’s Rental, Susan Perez House Rentals, Star Marianas Air, Inc., JC Café Restaurant, Eagles Enterprise, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), Telesource CNMI Inc., and 168 Poker.

The annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival is traditionally held on President’s Day weekend in February.



The 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival was held on Feb. 18-19, 2023, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas. This event is organized by the Tinian Mayor's Office and the Marianas Visitors Authority.



Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan welcomed festivalgoers on Feb. 17, 2023, at the opening ceremony of the 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, held on Feb. 18-19, 2023, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



The crowd participates in a group dance at the 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, held on Feb. 18-19, 2023, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



Competition for the best "kadun pika," a spicy chicken dish, was held at 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, held on Feb. 18-19, 2023, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



The San Jose Parish Crusaders tugged the hardest to top the tug-of-war contest at the 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, held on Feb. 18-19, 2023, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



Honors for best decorated booth went to Fresku at the 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, held on Feb. 18-19, 2023, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



Winners of the karaoke contests claim their prizes 19th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, held on Feb. 17, 2023, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas. From left to right, Jeriah Ann Cruz, Letricia Palacios, Serenity Luzman, Payton Christian, Colleen Cing, Joan Oliverio, and Dillion Hee.

The Marianas is an archipelago of 14 islands - including Saipan, Tinian, and Rota - in the Western Pacific. The Marianas are home to indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian people, as well as over 20 different ethnicities from around the world who live and work in this harmonious tropical paradise. Ancient latte stone limestone monoliths, traditional naturebased ocean navigation not reliant on modern technology, and a culture seasoned by East and West influences are just a few of the experiences found in The Marianas, where pristine sea, sand, and skies are only a 3-4 hour flight from major Asian gateway cities. The Marianas is the first destination with a travel bubble agreement with South Korea, where Asiana Airlines, Jeju Air, and T'Way provide direct flights to Saipan from Seoul-Incheon and Jeju Air and Air Busan operate weekly flights from Busan. United Airlines flies three times a week from Tokyo, Japan, and daily from Guam. Interisland travel between Saipan, Tinian, and Rota is provided by Marianas Southern Airways and Star Marianas Air. For more information on The Marianas, visit www.mymarianas.com, Facebook/[VisitTheMarianas](https://www.facebook.com/VisitTheMarianas), or Instagram [@themarianas](https://www.instagram.com/themarianas).

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