

JAMAICA

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JAMAICA CELEBRATES THE YAM

The 11th Annual Trelawny Yam Festival Celebrates the Culture and Heritage of a Favorite Jamaican Food and Top Yam-Producing Area

KINGSTON, JAMAICA – February 1, 2008 – At Jamaica's annual Trelawny Yam Festival, which takes place this year on March 24, the star exhibit may weigh in at over 450 pounds and be regally accompanied by a specially appointed Yam King and Queen. This upbeat festival celebrates the rich culture and heritage of the parish of Trelawny and the Cockpit Country, Jamaica's top yam-producing region where cultivation of yams has long played a prominent role in its lifestyle, cuisine and economy.

Tough Competitions

The Trelawny Yam Festival has become one of the top local food festivals in Jamaica, presenting a festive program of events and attractions on Easter Monday each year. Also known as *Grand Yam Festival Day*, this enormously popular festival features many quirky competitions and spectacular sights. The *Yam Farmer's Competition* awards prizes for the most unusually shaped yam, best quality yam and heaviest yam. (One year, the competition featured a 480-pounder.) Additional competitions include: the *Yam Hill Digging Competition*, to judge which farmer can dig the best yam hill; the *Culinary Competition*, featuring local professional chefs; and the *Best-Dressed Goat* and *Best-Dressed Donkey Competitions*, hot favorites at the festival.

Another large-scale event is the *Schools Competition*, featuring the best and brightest students in Trelawny competing in the categories of song, poem and dance on the theme "History, Culture, Folklore and Cuisine of Cockpit Country."

Taste buds may be satisfied by the various creative foods made from yams including yam ice cream, yam porridge, yam cakes and buns and even yam wine. More fascinating activities include the *Farmers Field Day Celebration*, honoring the area's yam farmers; the *King and Queen Pageant*, which selects the most outstanding young female and male to be leading ambassadors of the culture and heritage of yam country; and *Sports Day*, where a three-on-three basketball tournament, 50K cycle race, 10K road race, high school relays and other competitions are staged to showcase the endurance, physical fitness and form of the yam farmers. Celebrations run late into the evening, offering upbeat music and dance performances to round off a greatly anticipated day of high festivity.

All About Yams

Yams are frequently confused with sweet potatoes, which are much smaller and sweeter. The yam is a root vegetable that can grow as big as two to three feet and normally weighs as much as 80 pounds. First brought to the Caribbean from the West Coast of Africa as food for captive slaves, the yam quickly became a staple on plantations throughout the region. In Jamaica, approximately 18 different varieties of yam are currently cultivated and exported to the United States, Canada and Great Britain. The most popular variety of yam is the yellow yam; a favorite Jamaican dish is roast yam with saltfish. Trelawny, home of the Yam Festival, grows the majority of Jamaica's yams.

For more information on the Trelawny Yam Festival and its events, visit the STEA Web site at www.stea.net or contact Hugh Dixon by phone 876-610-0818, fax 876-610-1676 or email stea@cwjamaica.com.

About the Jamaica Tourist Board

The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), founded in 1955, is Jamaica's national tourism agency based in the capital city of Kingston. The JTB was declared the Caribbean's Leading Tourist and Convention Bureau by the World Travel Awards (WTA) for 2006 and 2007, while Jamaica earned the WTA's vote as the World's Leading Cruise Destination, the Caribbean's Leading Destination and the Caribbean's Leading Cruise Destination.

JTB offices are located in Kingston, Montego Bay, Miami, Toronto and London. Representative offices are located in Düsseldorf, Barcelona, Rome, Amsterdam and Tokyo.

For details on upcoming special events, attractions and accommodations in Jamaica go to the Jamaica Tourist Board's Web site at www.visitjamaica.com, or call the Jamaica Tourist Board at 1-800-JAMAICA (1-800-526-2422).

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