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black restaurant week

Richmond Black Restaurant Week runs through Sunday

By HOLLY PRESTIDGE Richmond Times-Dispatch Mar 5, 2017



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND/times-Dispatch
Mama J's is among the 19 restaurants participating in the first Richmond Black Restaurant Week, which runs March 6-12.

Richmond's food scene is as diverse as the people behind it — just ask Claudius Charles, a native of the island of St. Thomas and owner of Charles' Kitchen in Henrico County, where coconut-infused rice and rich curried chicken stews are accompanied by homemade spice blends and refreshing mango slaw.

Never heard of Charles' Kitchen? That's about to change.

Charles and many others are participating in the first Richmond Black Restaurant Week, which kicks off March 6 and runs through March 12 and involves 19 restaurants spread out across the city and beyond. Richmond is one of three cities — the others are Memphis and Birmingham — to join in a new effort to highlight black-owned restaurants across the nation .

From Mama J's in Jackson Ward and Southern Kitchen in Shockoe Bottom to Charles' Kitchen in Henrico and Croaker's Spot just south of the river on Hull Street, "the buzz is crazy," said restaurant week organizer Kelli Lemon.

"They're small; they're mom-and-pop — they don't think they're chefs," she said about some of the participating restaurants' owners. But they have wide-ranging menus and years of cooking behind them, often re-creating dishes that have been passed down through generations that continue to keep the crowds coming.

"These restaurant owners are just excited that someone is taking the time to recognize them," Lemon said. With all the buzz, she added, the restaurants are expecting larger-than-normal crowds.

Richmond Black Restaurant Week has partnered with Renew Richmond, a nonprofit organization that works to strengthen communities by raising awareness of health and wellness and environmental issues through urban and public school gardening projects. While proceeds from Richmond Black Restaurant Week will go toward each participating restaurant, Lemon said patrons will be encouraged to learn more about and donate to Renew Richmond while dining out next week.

Charles, of Charles' Kitchen, said he's hoping to share his love of island food with anyone who stops by, and he's featuring two specials next week. For lunch, fish and chips, or seasoned and lightly fried kingfish with yucca fries and his signature mango slaw, as well as a dinner special of seafood stew filled with scallops, red snapper, shrimp and more.

"We are bold with our flavors," he said, adding that everything is made from scratch — including his hot pepper spice blends — and many of the dishes are made with olive and coconut oils instead of butter.

"We are very excited" about Richmond Black Restaurant Week, Charles said. "We definitely want to have more people come in and try our food."

"We bring a different piece of the Caribbean to Richmond. You will definitely be hooked."

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Richmond Black Restaurant Week participating restaurants

Family Secrets Restaurant, 5310 Chamberlayne Ave.; familysecretsusa.com
Croaker's Spot, 1020 Hull St.; www.croakersspot.com
Mama J's Kitchen, 415 N. First St.; mamajskitchen.com
Southern Kitchen, 1726 E. Main St.; southernkitchenrva.com
Nomad Deli & Catering, 207 W. Brookland Park Blvd.; www.nomaddeli.com
Brewer's Cafe, 1125 Bainbridge St.; www.brewerscafeva.com
Chef Mamusu's Africanne on Main, 200 E. Main St.; www.chefmamusu.com
Sugar's Crab Shack, 2224 Chamberlayne Ave.; www.facebook.com/pages/Sugars-Crab-Shack/511420422373590
Loft Seventeen, 1717 E. Franklin St.; www.loft17rva.com
Ma Michele's Café, 10811 Hull Street Road, Midlothian; www.mamichelescafe.com
Cary 100, 100 E. Cary St.; cary100.com
Charles' Kitchen, 9127-C W. Broad St.; www.charleskitchen.guru/home.html
Sweet Teas Southern Cuisine, 1700 E. Main St.; www.sweetteascuisine.com
Ms. Girlee's, 112 N. Fifth St.; www.msgirleesrestaurant.com
Spoonbread Bistro, 2526 Floyd Ave.; spoonbreadbistro.com
Traditionz Wings & Grill, 3330-5 S. Crater Rpad, Petersburg; www.facebook.com/eatattraditionz
Inner City Blue's, 3015 Nine Mile Road; wearebbq.com
The DM Restaurant & Lounge, 5114 Richmond Henrico Turnpike; thedmrestaurant.com
Big Herm's Kitchen, 315 N. Second St.; bighermkitchenrva.com/5175

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