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Key West Festival to Tempt Appetites for Food, Wine, History and Fun

KEY WEST, Florida Keys — Creative cuisine, premium wines and unique events in a subtropical island setting await attendees Wednesday through Sunday, Jan. 23-27, at the 2019 Key West Food & Wine Festival. The 10th annual festival celebrates Key West's rich culinary culture and historic sites.

Scheduled events showcase local chefs' artistry, indigenous Florida Keys ingredients, fine wines from around the world and intriguing food-related adventures.

The festival officially begins with the Conch Kick-off Party at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 23, saluting the unique food culture of Key West — whose native residents proudly call themselves "conchs" after the mollusk used in many island dishes. Seafood and Cuban-influenced treats by Chef David Fuhrman of Great Events Catering, fine wines and entertainment by The Fabulous Spectrelles characterize the gala in the garden of Key West's Oldest House Museum, 322 Duval St.

"Entree" highlights Jan. 24 include exclusive tasting strolls in Key West's Bahama Village and Mallory Square neighborhoods, a class revealing how to make the Florida Keys' signature Key lime pie, and a savory grilled cheese and beer tasting.

Friday's schedule stars the "Sunset on the Ingham" Grand Tasting aboard the historic U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Samuel D. Ingham, launched in 1936 and now a military museum moored at Key West's Truman Waterfront Park. Attendees can enjoy notable vintages, island-inspired light bites from Small Chef at Large Catering, entertainment by jazz singer Libby York and a chance to enjoy Key West's world-renowned sunset from the deck of the venerable vessel.

Festival attendees can find a mile of temptations Saturday, Jan. 26, at Old Town Uncorked X 10, a sipping and shopping stroll down Key West's renowned Duval Street. Attractions at the 2-5 p.m. event include "intoxicating" forays into galleries and boutiques.

Saturday evening, a paella cook-off is to take place at the Truman Little White House, 111 Front St., where former President Harry Truman spent nearly six months while in office. The annual event supports the preservation of the property — now Florida's only presidential museum — and includes unlimited wine tasting, cigars and live music.

The food and wine festival also features an interactive blind tasting event focusing on Key West's culinary culture and history. Staged at a secret location by event designer Francesca DeFranchis, the guided sensory experience features a six-course tasting menu and nine wines.

Other festival attractions include a tropical garden tour and tasting, the "Red Socks at Rock House" spectacular featuring Eduardo's Table, a lavish shrimp feast in the Key West Historic Seaport and the "Brunch Bucket List" series.

Event information, schedule, prices and ticketing: keywestfoodandwinefestival.com

Key West visitor information: fla-keys.com/keywest or 1-800-LAST-KEY

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