

**For Immediate Release**

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**SWEET, SWEET MARTINIQUE**

An island is an island is an island, unless it's Martinique, a seductive little corner of France in the Caribbean, which combines all the elements of stylish and chic French *savoir-faire*, with a sensuous and fun-loving Creole *joie de vivre*.

The Creole language has ample resources when it comes to describe how sweet it is to live in Martinique. "La vi a douce", "la vi a bel", "la vi a ka mache" (life is sweet, life is beautiful, life is going just fine), are just a few examples of the many ways life is perceived on the island.

Blessed with lovely beaches, incredible lush vegetation, idyllic climate and a wealth of cultural, artistic and scenic attractions, Martinique is the perfect destination to savor a unique *art-de-vivre* and to awaken your senses.

**Flatter your taste buds**

Martinique has many traditions that are celebrated throughout the year, and many of them are accompanied by sumptuous local culinary specialties.

When noon strikes, it announces the ritual of *ti-punch*, best appreciated before lunchtime. You have to stop, sit and sip this fiery "eau-de-vie"; "take off!" as the Martinicans say.

There is the tradition of the after-dinner-drink, an aged rum sipped as a *digestif*. The best aged rums are produced in Martinique and incredibly enough, this small island produces more than 17 different varieties of rums *du terroir* and has the only rum *appellation d'origine contrôlée*.

February brings Carnival, a time for revelry and celebration in festive costumes, day in and day out, throughout the island before Lent.

Come Easter, families again gather on the beach. A competition to honor the best *matoutou crabe*, a popular spicy crab dish, is organized with convincing enthusiasm in Sainte-Anne. A nap in a hamac is mandatory with a late afternoon swim thrown in for good measure, then a refreshing scoop of home-made guava sorbet, churned with patience and love, and call it a day.

When December approaches, Christmas is an occasion for delightful treats. Sit down to a chicken *fricassée*, a *gratin de christophines*, home-made *petits pâtés*, tropical fruit jams and *coulies*, topped off by a coconut *blanc-manger*, followed by shrubb, a liquor made from orange peel and sunshine.

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The New Year is a time for paying visits and for sharing warm *accras* and glasses of more rum and vermouth. It is said that a dip in the sea at year's end will bring new beginnings and comfort you from the tyranny of life.

The culinary magic of Creole cuisine is a subtle combination of all the cultures that have come together... its generosity inherited from Africa, its refinement from its French heritage, and its spices from India.

### **Tantalize your senses**

The rhythms of the island are an invitation to join in the festivities and rejoice.

The evening *alizés* by the sea on the pier of Saint-Pierre, at the Anses d'Arlet or in Grand Rivière with the sound of lapping waves will seduce you.

The calls of tropical birds and the rippling Alma River will guide your exploration of the rainforest.

"Cric crac," says the story teller. "God decided to have a party one day... " Martinicans gather around the *fromager* and the *figuier maudit*, the island's magic trees, and listen to myths and legends.

Later, in Fond Saint Denis, you may even hear night falling. 'Round midnight, the inspired concerto of crickets, frogs and rustling bamboo leaves awakens your senses all over again.

And if you are a night owl yourself, the beat of *zouk* will keep you dancing till dawn.

Carried by a lazy breeze, the sweet smell of burnt sugarcane fields permeates the air at harvest time in late September. Sugarcane and rum museums impart Martinique's history, forever intertwined with the process of rum-making. The many distilleries give visitors free tours and tastings.

*Patchouli, ylang-ylang, vetiver* and *citronelle* are but a few of the heady aromas that envelop strollers as they wander through botanical gardens filled with so many different species of tropical plants and flowers, that Martinique is renowned as the "Island of Flowers."

Whether you are enjoying the tranquil seclusion of a private islet, climbing *Mont Pelée*, sailing a *yole*, exploring Empress Joséphine's playground, savoring an *éclair à la vanille*, discovering the architectural wonder of the Schoelcher Library or just relaxing on the Creole riviera, a visit to Martinique is a taste of another France.

*For further information, contact the Martinique Promotion Bureau, 444 Madison Ave., NY 10022, Tel: (212) 838 68 87, Fax: (212) 838-7855. On the Internet: [www.martinique.org](http://www.martinique.org). By email: [info@martinique.org](mailto:info@martinique.org)*

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