

# FALL YACHT SHOW CULINARY CONTEST

FEEL THE MAGIC'S ZAZO TRIUMPHS AGAIN

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER



PHOTOS DEAN BARNES

Zazo's winning dish – Crunchy Coconut Shrimp Fritters

Think of coconut as an ingredient and coconut cream pie springs to mind. Yet the sixteen chefs competing in the Virgin Islands Charteryacht League's (VICL) 2013 Fall Yacht Show Culinary Contest didn't make the ordinary, they created the extraordinary. A panel of five judges, which included two professional chefs (one an award winning member of the Virgin Islands Culinary Team), a registered dietitian, former charter chef, and broker – summed up the entries with a variety of comments such as: innovative; full of flavor; an awesome display of talents. And they expressed amazement that dishes of this caliber could come out of small galleys and be served aboard yachts. In spite of their different descriptions, the judges were in 100% agreement that the winning dish was flawless in every respect, from presentation to flavor. That dish was Crunchy Coconut Shrimp Fritters



Feel the Magic

# United States Virgin Islands

prepared by Micheale Zazo, aboard the Voyage 500, *Feel the Magic*.

"I wanted to prepare something outside the box and away from the usual uses of coconut," explains Zazo, who won this competition last year in her and captain Michael 'Hank' Hampton's first season of charter. "In the end, my dish had the familiarity of traditional Caribbean conch fritters with a twist."

You could say Zazo traveled the world looking for recipe ideas. She and fellow charter chefs learned that coconut would be the competition's key ingredient at the end of August. Therefore, during travels to see friends in South Africa and Spain in the fall, she searched restaurant menus and each country's culinary magazines for inspired uses of this tropical fruit. Zazo also did her homework. She brainstormed with friends and fellow chefs, made a list of all types and forms of coconut, and worked out a variety of flavor combinations that paired with coconut. Ultimately, she created a recipe that didn't just call for a little obligatory coconut, but one in which three different types of coconut were strategically used throughout the dish.

## **Championing the VICL's 2013 Culinary Contest is a great way for Zazo and Hampton to kick-off their second season of charter aboard *Feel the Magic*.**

First, Zazo incorporated sweetened shredded coconut into a pound of raw peeled and deveined shrimp of which half was minced and the other half coarsely chopped. This combination created a fritter that held together well without the use of a filler such as breadcrumbs. Tropical flavors such as lime zest and grated ginger rounded out the seasonings. Secondly, the fritters were dipped in an egg wash made of egg and unsweetened coconut milk and a crunchy coating mix of sliced almonds, cracker crumbs and sweetened shredded coconut before frying. Thirdly and last, Zazo served the fritters with a dipping sauce that called for non-alcoholic piña colada drink mix and sweetened flaked coconut along with crushed pineapple.

"The win gave me confidence that last year wasn't pure luck," Zazo says.

Championing the VICL's 2013 Culinary Contest is a great way for Zazo and Hampton to kick-off their second season of charter aboard *Feel the Magic*. While they enjoyed a great first season with 18 charters, they have learned along the way and this has strengthened their position as one of the most popular charter boats in the VICL fleet.

"Many people still don't know what a charter yacht vacation is," says Zazo. "It's important to answer their questions,

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Chef Micheale Zazo and  
Captain Michael 'Hank' Hampton

and work both ourselves and with the brokers to keep us out in the forefront.”

The island lifestyle can sometimes present challenges in the form of a different way and pace of doing things. Zazo and Hampton have used their natural friendliness, patience and flexibility to successfully navigate through everything from government agencies to local retailers. In fact, Zazo has really dialed in to secure select food and wine purveyors in order to provide greater variety and quality for her guests. She shops at a warehouse store, conventional grocery and gourmet market, plus fresh seafood suppliers as well as several local wine distributors.

Finally, Zazo and Hampton are looking forward to pacing themselves more evenly this upcoming season.

“Last year we got off to a slower start since it was our first season, and then we gained momentum and had many charters on very tight turnover the last few months to fit them all in,” she explains. “This season, we’re off to a much earlier start with the holidays all booked and the spring filling up nicely. Our goal is to book 20 weeks of charter out of our 34 week season. Making sure to have time to recharge and be 100% for guests is really important.”

For Zazo’s recipe, visit: [www.vicl.org/culinary-contest-winners.html](http://www.vicl.org/culinary-contest-winners.html)



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