Chef BJ Dennis Comes to Staten Island

Renowned Gullah Chef presents Rice Tasting at the Staten Island Museum

Date: Thursday, January 16, 2019  
Time: 7:00PM – 9:00PM  
Location: Staten Island Museum, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Building A, SI, NY 10301  
Price: $35 per person (space is limited, registration required)

(Staten Island, NY – December 17, 2019) Renowned Chef BJ Dennis is coming to the Staten Island Museum on Thursday, January 16, 2019, for an interactive exploration of the culinary traditions of the Gullah, a distinctive group of Black Americans from coastal South Carolina and Georgia. Complementing the Museum’s current exhibition, Field Notes: Seed Stories and the Power of Plants, Chef Dennis will be joined by local horticulturist Wambui Ippolito for this series of rice tastings matched with discussion around the history and culture of this all important seed and special link between the Gullah and the people of West Africa.

“We are honored to have Chef Dennis join us all the way from South Carolina for this very special culinary event. Telling stories and experiencing history through food is a tactile way to experience culture and we are happy to be able to bring Chef Dennis to Staten Island to share his knowledge of the Gullah Geehee culture,” said Janice Monger, President & CEO, Staten Island Museum.

The rice for this program has been generously donated by Anson Mills. All varieties being used were grown by enslaved people in the South Carolina region before the Civil War. By 1800, there were more than 100 distinct rices within the Charleston and local Sea Island communities.

Over the past fifteen years, Anson Mills has emerged as the foremost cultivator and supplier of gourmet, heritage grains in the United States.
Benjamin “BJ” Dennis IV is a chef born and raised in Charleston, South Carolina, whose cooking is inspired by Gullah Geechee culture, with its origins in West Africa. Dennis studied culinary traditions in St. Thomas before returning to the Lowcountry to cook at various restaurants including Anson’s, Carolinas, Hank’s Seafood, and 82 Queen. He now cooks at various events across the country and pop-up dinners across the Lowcountry.

Wambui Ippolito is the horticulturist and principal designer of her own New York based landscape design firm. She is a graduate of the New York Botanical Garden’s School of Professional Horticulture.

Tickets are $35 per person, reservations are required. Visit www.StatenIslandMuseum.org for more information and to purchase tickets.

American Gardens and the African Diaspora and From Seed to Supper is funded, in part, through Staten Island Arts’ Expanding Audiences and Cultural Participation program, which has been made possible through the generosity

About Field Notes: Seed Stories and the Power of Plants
Featuring artworks and seed histories from Hudson Valley Seed Company, documentary videos of Staten Island gardeners by Jay Weichun, photograms of local flora by Gale Wisdom, and museum botanical specimens selected by the Greenbelt Native Plant Center. These four projects explore the cultural, artistic, and scientific impact of collecting plant life. In doing so, they reveal narratives of resilience, fragility, and transformation. Field Notes speaks to the heritage embedded in the flora around us. Visitors can zoom in to see a variety of seeds up close through a high powered microscope, immerse their hands in a mass of seeds for a tactile experience, design their own seed packet, listen to featured seed stories, and enjoy a seed and gardening book nook.

About the Staten Island Museum
Founded in 1881 and celebrating its 138th year, the Staten Island Museum, New York City’s only general interest museum, engages visitors with interdisciplinary exhibitions and educational programs that explore the dynamic connections between natural science, art, and history based on its diverse collections. The Museum serves over 50,000 adults including 16,000 school children at the Museum and in the community. Staten Island Museum is owned by the City of New York and benefits from public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. For current exhibits, visit StatenIslandMuseum.org.