



**MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY**  
**News Release**

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*Tourism is Everybody's Business!*

**PRISCILLA M. IAKOPO**  
MVA MANAGING DIRECTOR

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**17<sup>TH</sup> TINIAN HOT PEPPER FESTIVAL FUN AND SAFE**

**Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands (NMI)** – The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival was held on Feb. 13-14, 2021, highlighting the success of The Marianas in preventing the spread of the coronavirus through strong policies and community cooperation.

The annual signature event of the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA), organized in cooperation with the Mayor of Tinian & Aguiguan, pushed through with a favorable turnout enjoying all the food, fun, and festivities associated with the festival within the parameters of enhancing public safety measures.

The Marianas has not had any community spread of the coronavirus in six months. In her remarks at Saturday's opening ceremony, MVA Managing Director Priscilla M. Iakopo also emphasized the importance of indigenous values in helping to flatten the coronavirus curve in The Marianas.

“Here in The Marianas, we have all pulled together to support our executive leadership and our health care leaders in doing what is necessary to keep our people safe, first with testing and quarantine for all arriving passengers into The Marianas, and second, by supporting the very practices we are all committing to this weekend: frequent handwashing, wearing our masks, and social distancing,” said Iakopo. “It’s about respect and care for others, and we can all take pride

that this important virtue in our Chamorro and Refaluwasch cultures has helped keep our community safe and has helped make this weekend's festival possible.”

The 50K Pika Bike Race early Saturday morning attracted 48 bikers. Joel Buco (01:42:11) and Kriz Gozon (02:17:43) earned 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Open Category for Men and Women, respectively.

Later that evening Ricardo Carrazco of USA chomped through 100 “donne sali” peppers first to top the Male Hot Pepper Eating Contest. The following day Jessica Cabrera of Tinian took the Women's title. The JC Café Pikalicious Burger Eating Contest tested competitors with giant, “donne sali”-laced patties, with Thomas Erickson of Tinian defending his title and once again devoured the competition to placed first.

Bernard T. Lopez served up the tastiest dish in the Estufao Pika (spicy chicken stew) Cooking Contest.

The “Umang” (hermit crab) Race for boys and girls was topped by Joaquina Aldan and Hombre Hocog for having the fastest crab to exit the circle. In the adult round of tug of war, two groups of friends faced off with a quick win going to the team informally named “Facial Hair,” while the Sack Race was won by the team of Stanley Jr. and Conan Briggeman Iakopo.

The 2-person canoe race was held with mixed success, with only two of four teams finishing the timed course in the turquoise lagoon. Finishing first were Adam Steves and Hannah Dodge of USA.

Local musician Parker Yobei helped wind up the weekend with a Cha Cha Dance Competition topped by Carmen Dela Cruz and Melvin Cruz of Tinian. First place in the Booth Decoration Contest went to Sweetie's Corner.

Iakopo added that the MVA and the Mayor of Tinian & Aguiguan could not have made this year's “Pika” festival – as it is affectionately known to locals - possible without the event sponsors and donors, including the CNMI Office of the Governor, 18<sup>th</sup> Tinian Municipal Council, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp, CNMI COVID-19 Task Force, Tinian Fishermen's Association, JC Café, Bikers Association of Tinian, Dept. of Public Safety and Boating Safety, Dept. of Fire Emergency & Medical Services, KKMP, and Capt. Cecilio Raiukiulipiy.

The Tinian Hot Pepper Festival was held at the Fiesta Grounds in San Jose village and is

organized every President's Day weekend in February. Ferry service and airport shuttle service were also provided during the festival.

For more information on Tinian, visit [www.mymarianas.com](http://www.mymarianas.com).



The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival was held on Feb. 13-14, 2021, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas. The annual signature event of the Marianas Visitors Authority is jointly organized with the Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan.



Upon entry, attendees of the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival on Feb. 13-14, 2021, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas receive temperature checks and leave their contact information for contact tracing.



Craftsman Matthew Masga, left, explains his work to a guest on Feb. 13, 2021, at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



Food vendors serve island favorites on Feb. 13, 2021, at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



Marinas Visitors Authority Managing Director Priscilla M. Iakopo, center, joins the candidates of the 2021 Miss Marianas contestants for a photo on Feb. 13, 2021, at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



Ricardo Carrasco of USA chomps his way through 100 “donne sali” peppers on Feb. 13, 2021, to win 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Hot Pepper Eating Contest (Male Category) during the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



Fit Beats warms up the crowd during the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival on Feb. 13, 2021, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



Participants in the 50K Pika Bike Race traverse Broadway on Feb. 13, 2021, at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival in The Marianas.



The 50K Pika Bike Race on Feb. 13, 2021, attracted 48 bikers at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.



Issac Anderson, left, and Stacy Escueta haul their way to a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish in the canoe race on Feb. 14, 2021, during the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas.

# FOOD

Best Seller!

Ⓐ DOUBLE BURGER  
comes w/ Chips \$9.00

Something Spicy !!  
Ⓑ CHICKEN TERIYAKI  
comes w/ Chips \$8.00

Ⓒ PULLED PORK  
w/ BACON  
comes w/ Chips \$8.00  
(adobo style)

Ⓓ TURKEY SUB  
comes w/ Chips \$7.50

Ⓔ French Fries  
\$4.50

Ⓕ Nachos \$4.00  
top with cheese

ISLAND FAVORITE  
Shawarma  
(BEEF OR CHICKEN)  
\$8.50 - \$7.50

DRINKS  
FRESH CUCUMBER  
Lemonade! \$3.00  
COFFEE \$3.00



Mask wearing is mandated and frequent handwashing is encouraged at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival on Feb. 13-14, 2021, in San Jose, Tinian, in The Marianas. The Marianas has not had any community spread of the coronavirus in six months.

From South Korea, Asiana Airlines, Jeju Air, and T'Way provide direct flights to Saipan from Seoul-Incheon or Busan. Direct charter flight service is available from Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Hangzhou, while HK Express flies from Hong Kong. Daily flights from Tokyo, Japan, are operated by Skymark Airlines, and United Airlines has daily flight connections from four cities in Japan to Saipan with one stop via Guam. Interisland travel to Rota and Tinian is provided by Star Marianas Air. For more information on The Marianas, visit [www.mymarianas.com](http://www.mymarianas.com), [Facebook/mymarianas](https://www.facebook.com/mymarianas), or [Instagram @themarianas](https://www.instagram.com/themarianas).

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