

# ***News Release***

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## **ROYAL KONA MAI TAI FESTIVAL WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

(Kailua-Kona, Hawaii) From over 100 initial bartender applicants, the top prize of \$10,000 and title as the “World’s Best Mai Tai” were won by Christina Maffei, food and beverage manager at Trump International Hotel Waikiki Beach Walk, at the Third Annual Don the Beachcomber’s Mai Tai Festival recently held at the Royal Kona Resort on Hawaii’s Big Island. The event saw thousands of mai tai and rum aficionados and visitors from around the world enjoy a full day of entertainment. August of 2012 is already tentatively set for the fourth annual event.

Liz Bell, event coordinator and marketing and business development director for Hawaiian Hotels & Resorts, parent company of the Royal Kona Resort and Royal Lahaina Resort, said, “The event was a tremendous success, drawing thousands of visitors to enjoy the Mai Tai Mix-Off, ‘World’s Best BBQ’ contest, Mai Tai Marketplace that showcased local arts, crafts, and foods, mai tai and rum seminars by historian Beach Bum Berry, a pool party featuring live entertainment by Henry Kaponu, and an evening concert with the alternative rock group the Spin Doctors at the Royal Kona Resort. We’re already planning for next year’s Festival.”

The top 30 bartenders were selected from the original 100 mai tai mixology applicants to compete for the title as the “World’s Best Mai Tai” and \$10,000 grand prize. The first place winner Christina Maffei, who helped open Trump International Hotel Waikiki Beach Walk in 2009, was fourth place at last year’s Festival, but she was determined to go all out this time with her philosophy of cocktail making she calls “Liquid Artistry.” The secret to her award winning recipe was the addition of pineapple sorbet made with Bacardi Gold, which, with other ingredients, kept the drink cold and tantalizing with a nice texture.

Second in the mix-off was Adam Eddy Bursik, who was on vacation in Hawaii, visiting the Islands and learning more about his idol, Don the Beachcomber for whom the Festival is

dedicated. Bursik is the bar bartender and manager of The Rum Club in Bratislava, Slovakia, where he won “Bartender of the Year” honors in his home country in 2010.

John Abreu came in third in the mai tai competition with his concoction called the “Nutty Mai Tai,” which blends rum with macadamias, pistachios, cashews, and coconuts.” He works at the Outrigger Reef’s Kani Kapila bar in Honolulu.

The People’s Choice Mai Tai winner was Brice Ginardi from Okolemaluna Tiki Lounge in Kona. He took in over \$500 in tips and won a hand-carved tiki trophy.

In addition to the Mai Tai Mix-Off competition at the Royal Kona Resort, the day-long festival featured the “World’s Best BBQ” contest, which was won by Chef Aaron Carter of Banji’s Paradise Bar and grill in Waikoloa. He won both the Judge’s and People’s Choice awards, which earned him four round trip tickets for two from Kona to Maui, 10 night at the Royal Lahaina Resort, luau for four, and \$1,000 food and beverage credit at the property.

This year’s judges were celebrity super chef Sam Choy, Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Mick Fleetwood, famed mixologist Manny Hinojosa, Publisher of Hawaii Beverage Guide Chris Teves, Mai Tai historian and rum expert Beach Bum Berry, and Bacardi Brand Master Juan Coronado. The festival sponsors are Hawaiian Hotels & Resorts and Young’s Market.

Plans are already underway for the Fourth Annual Don the Beachcomber Mai Tai Festival tentatively scheduled for August 18, 2012. For additional information and hotel stay reservations, call toll-free 800-22-ALOHA (222-5642) or visit online at [www.royalkona.com](http://www.royalkona.com).

### **About Hawaiian Hotels & Resorts**

Hawaiian Hotels & Resorts, which owns and operates the Royal Lahaina Resort and the Royal Kona Resort, is a division of Pleasant Travel Service, a family-owned company headquartered in Newbury Park, CA. Pleasant Travel Service has helped over five millions guests create unforgettable vacation memories in Hawaii since 1959. For additional information, visit the Hawaiian Hotels & Resorts website at [www.hawaiihotels.com](http://www.hawaiihotels.com).

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