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***BUEN PROVECHO** PUERTO RICO: A DINING PRIMER TO THE CULINARY CAPITAL OF THE CARIBBEAN**

SAN JUAN, March 29, 2005 – Whether traveling on business or visiting for pleasure, Puerto Rico is a diner's paradise. Considered the Culinary Capital of the Caribbean, Puerto Rico not only offers a vast array of top international cuisine, but also prides itself on its own local specialties. For meeting attendees as well as leisure seekers, no visit to Puerto Rico is complete without exploring and experiencing the full range of dining options on the Island.

Local cuisine

The culinary arts of Puerto Rico (often called *criolla*) are a fusion of Spanish, African, Taíno and American influences. Fruits and vegetables of the Caribbean feature prominently in many dishes, and also include tasty rice dishes, meat, poultry and seafood.

Some traditional favorites include *empanadillas* (flaky turnovers stuffed with chicken), cubed potatoes and raisins; *arañitas* (plantain fritters); *tostones* (fried green plantains); *mofongo* (*mashed plantain*) stuffed with beef, fish or chicken; *arroz y habichuelas* (rice and beans), and rich *café con leche*.

Restaurants which specialize in local fare range from simple mom-and-pop restaurants called *fondas* to high-end, white linen tablecloth affairs. For a casual yet truly authentic dining experience, some of the restaurants to visit are **Café Manolín** (251 San Justo St., Old San Juan; 787-723-9743) in Old San Juan, which features daily specials which includes sancocho (beef stew) on Mondays and serenata (codfish salad) on Fridays or **Mofongo**

* *Buen Provecho* translates to "Enjoy Your Meal" in Spanish and is a common phrase used when sharing a meal with special friends and family in Puerto Rico.

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Criollo (111 Gilberto Concepcion de Gracia Plaza Sheraton, Old San Juan; 787-725-6680), located across the cruise ship terminal in Old San Juan. This cozy restaurant offers many traditional dishes, including its namesake house specialty, 'mofongo,' stuffed with tasty seafood, chicken or beef.

For a memorable upscale experience, consider **Ajili Mojili** (1006 Ashford Ave., Condado; 787-725-9195; also at The Westin Rio Mar Beach Resort, Golf Club and Spa, 787-888-9195; www.ajilimojili.com), with its award-winning and uniquely savory menu featuring contemporary Puerto Rican cuisine. Excellent for groups of any size, private dining and catering are also available. Another fine-dining option is **Pikayo** (299 de Diego Ave., Santurce, San Juan; 787-721-6194), located within the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, the restaurant features a fusion of local flavors in an elegant and sophisticated setting (private dining and catering available).

International Flare

Located at the crossroads of the Americas, Puerto Rico's many offerings include a wide range of culinary specialties with an international flare. Visitors and attendees can choose from Japanese to Italian, Indian to Mexican as well as Thai, French, Chinese, Spanish, and Argentinean.

For those who aren't quite sure what they desire, fusion has hit Puerto Rico's dining scene, with some of the most creative and distinctive culinary creations ever served. For instance, **Tantra** (356 Fortaleza St., Old San Juan; 787-977-8141) features both traditional Indian and Indo-Latino specialties; **Passaggio** (Inter-Continental San Juan Resort, Isla Verde, San Juan; 787-791-6100) specializes in Italian with a deep Mediterranean flair; and **Dragon Fly** (364 Fortaleza St., Old San Juan; 787-977-3886), is considered a dining hot-spot for Asian-Latino fare.

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Steak lovers are also in luck, with some of the world's top steakhouses making San Juan a home, including **Morton's of Chicago** (Caribe Hilton Hotel, Condado, San Juan; 787-721-0303); **Ruth's Chris** (Inter-Continental San Juan Resort, Isla Verde, San Juan; 787-791-6100) and **The Palm Restaurant** (Wyndham El San Juan Hotel, Isla Verde, San Juan; 787-791-1000).

Old San Juan

Dining in Old San Juan is a wonderful way to take a break from or end a day of meetings or sightseeing.

For individuals seeking Italian fare, **Al Dente** (309 Recinto Sur, Old San Juan; 787-723-7303) is a local favorite, with an authentic Neapolitan menu and a popular lunch buffet. At **Il Grottino** (361 Tetuan St., Old San Juan; 787-723-8653) fine Italian dining is available upstairs, while casual dining downstairs features a wood-burning pizza oven. Another popular Italian restaurant is **La Bella Piazza** (355 San Francisco St., Old San Juan; 787-721-0396). For a romantic French dining experience, **Trois Cent Onze** (311 Fortaleza St., Old San Juan; 787-725-7959) offers French cuisine served Provencal style and also offers a special bar menu.

For a classic Spanish dining experience, **La Querencia** (320 Fortaleza St., Old San Juan; 787-723-0357) is housed in a distinctive Old San Juan building with several dining rooms, as well as private group dining. The oldest restaurant in Old San Juan, **La Mallorquina** (201 San Justo St., Old San Juan; 787-722-3261) has been welcoming diners for over 100 years and serves specialty dishes such as *paella* in an airy dining space.

For a Nuevo-Latino experience, try **The Parrot Club** (363 Fortaleza St., Old San Juan; 787-725-7370) or **Amadeus Café-Restaurant** (106 Calle

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San Sebastián; 787-722-8635), both offer creative and tasty Latin-inspired meals in an elegant and hip setting.

Hotel & Resort Dining

Hotels provide outstanding dining options that range from casual beach huts to fine-dining. Some top hotel restaurants include, **Palio** located in Rio Grande at The Westin Rio Mar Beach Resort, Golf Club and Spa (787-888-6000), where diners can enjoy top-rated classic Northern-Italian specialties.

Augusto's (Hotel Excelsior, 801 Ponce de León Ave., Miramar, San Juan; 787-721-7400) is one of San Juan's most popular and renowned restaurants, offering creative and traditional continental cuisine by Master Chef Augusto Schreiner.

For an intimate dining experience at one of the Island's favorite guesthouses, **Pamela's** (Number 1 Guest House, 1 Santa Ana St., Ocean Park, San Juan; 787-726-5010) offers sensational Caribbean cuisine in a beautiful setting complete with reflecting pool and ocean views.

At the Wyndham El San Juan, **Yamato** (787-791-1000) has become a favorite for locals and visitors for Japanese sushi, and also feature an authentic teppan-yaki table for a unique group dining experience. At the Holiday Inn San Juan, **Vin Santo Café** (787-253-9000) offers an elegantly casual dining experience featuring a contemporary "Tapas" menu with an extensive selection of wines.

Dine-Around Programs

With such a large array of dining options available, Dine-Around programs for meeting attendees in Puerto Rico provide an excellent option to planners who want to give group or convention attendees the opportunity to

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sample several of the many enticing dining options in Puerto Rico. Many restaurants are able to host convention dinner parties ranging in size from ten to 100 guests and since many restaurants are located within walking distance of one another, a Dine Around option for breakfast, lunch or dinner allows group members to enjoy several restaurants in a short period of time.

To host a Dine-Around program in Puerto Rico, meeting planners can work with one of the many Destination Management Companies (DMCs) available in Puerto Rico, which can assist with coordinating such details as ground transportation to and from dining venues, reservations, menu options, seating, payment and other details to ensure a seamless and memorable group dining experience. To find a DMC, contact the Puerto Rico Convention Bureau at 787-725-2110 or visit www.meetpuertorico.com. For information about other restaurants in Puerto Rico or to request a copy of Tables, the official restaurant guide of the Puerto Rico Convention Bureau, call 787 725-2110 or visit www.meetpuertorico.com.

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Editor's Note:

The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau (PRCB) is a non-profit organization established in 1962 to drive meetings, conventions, trade shows and incentive groups to Puerto Rico. With offices in San Juan, Chicago, New York, Miami, and Washington DC, the Bureau strengthens Puerto Rico's competitive position in the Americas and abroad by increasing awareness of the Island's outstanding meeting facilities and services, and produces approximately \$83 million to the local economy. The Bureau can be reached electronically through the Internet at info@prcb.org or at its website www.meetpuertorico.com. The PRCB is the official marketing and sales agent for the new Puerto Rico Convention Center (PRCC) slated to open in late 2005. For more information on the new Convention Center visit www.prconvention.com. The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau, representing the capital city of San Juan, has been granted full membership as of January 2005 into BestCities.net, a global alliance of Bureaus that represent the highest standards of service in the meetings and convention industry. For more information, visit www.bestcities.net.



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