



14AB Peters Rest  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Farmer Speaks Out For ‘Slow Food’ With Art Show**

St. Croix, USVI -- Thursday, January 13th, 2005 -- Local farmer and artist Luca Gasperi is interested in local plant crops as both food and artistic inspiration. He grows fruits and vegetables for his farmstand, and also exhibits paintings of his crops and of his fellow farmers, as a way to promote his passions to the public. Gasperi is one of several farmers here on St. Croix who avoid the use of pesticides and grow in an organic and “sustainable” manner. These growing methods, which follow the philosophy of the world-wide and growing “Slow Food” movement, help support local economies by producing humane jobs and more healthful and flavorful crops unique to the local region, as compared to the output of commercial industrial farming methods often seen in the mainland U.S. Gasperi has an upcoming exhibition opening January 22nd that features paintings inspired by local agriculture.

“I eat fast!” jokes Gasperi. “But I’m a strong proponent of Slow Food: knowing where your food comes from, of having a relationship to the producers of your food.” It is perhaps not commonly realized that much of the produce in the supermarkets here on St. Croix is shipped in from thousands of miles away – and that, in order to survive the journey, many of these “fresh” foods have been modified by food industry scientists for superior shelf life, often at the expense of flavor and nutrition. A “Farm Tour” series organized by the St. Croix Environmental Association last year was heavily attended by a diverse group of people, many of whom were surprised to discover the variety of fresh fruits and vegetables grown locally on the island.

The Slow Food grassroots organization was founded in 1986 and promotes the careful choosing of the foods we eat, selecting fresh local hand-prepared foods over processed and packaged ones. The movement’s philosophy is explained on their website, [slowfood.com](http://slowfood.com): “FAST food doesn’t necessarily mean eating fast, but it does mean having no time to savor what we eat and find out about its history and origin. It is not so much the quantity of time we spend at the table that counts as the quality of the food we eat and the relationship we establish with it.” Founder Carlo Petrini sums up, “The Slow Food movement deals with the culture of food.” Agrees Gasperi, “Small farms are an important part of the St. Croix landscape.”

Customers at Estate Southgate Farms, where Gasperi is manager, sometimes comment on the higher prices of the produce there. “Consumers don’t always see that the cheap foods at supermarkets often comes from places where laborers are not paid a fair wage, where the soil is not being conserved through organic methods, where pesticides are used to allow artificially huge amounts of food to be grown industrially,” explains Johnathan Welch, co-manager at the farm. “The food might be cheaper at the register, but the planet pays a high price for cheap produce. Think of all the pollution created by shipping a

– more –

## Farmer/Artist Promotes 'Slow Food' (page 2)

container of cucumbers from California to St. Croix!" Estate Southgate Farms, located near Cheeseburgers In Paradise, provides food to many local restaurants and has a farmstand three days a week.

Gasperi continues his themes of agriculture with his latest set of paintings. "I choose my subjects to paint because I think they are beautiful, but also to honor them, and to call attention to them," explains Gasperi. His latest exhibition, titled "Three Trees," is opening at 5pm on January 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Walsh Metal Works Gallery, and includes portraits of island farmers, tropical crops and other agricultural scenes. A native of St. Croix and son of a farmer, Gasperi has been farming at Southgate Farms for over four years after completing an internship on an organic farm in New York State. He has been creating paintings and sculptures with subject matter of farming land and sea since he was a teen, and has shown his artwork in local galleries and as far away as Bermuda, New York, and Italy. He is the artist behind the annual food-related "Taste Of St. Croix" posters, and in 2000 exhibited over 25 paintings of Virgin Islands farmers at the Maria Henle Studio. Gasperi will feature live trees as part of his new exhibition of over 60 paintings.

"Three Trees" will be on exhibit from Saturday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> through Saturday, February 5th, 2005 at the Walsh Metal Works Gallery. The opening reception for the show is Saturday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 5 to 9pm. Gallery hours are 10am – 4pm Monday through Saturday, or by appointment. For more information, call the gallery at (340)773-8169. Gasperi's farmstand at Estate Southgate Farms is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 3pm to 6pm, and Saturday mornings from 9am to 12pm. Call the farm at (340)514-4873.

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Photos enclosed. Byline/Photo credit: Christina Frederick. More photos available.

### **Gasperi available for interview.**

#### **SIDEBAR:**

**Who:** Local artist and farmer Luca Gasperi

**What:** Promoting Slow Food and exhibiting new art works in a show called "Three Trees"

**Where:** At the Walsh Metal Works Gallery, 14AB Peters Rest (behind the Coca Cola plant)

**When:** Opening reception Saturday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 5 to 9 pm.

Exhibition runs through Saturday, February 5th.

(Exhibition Hours: Reception Saturday 5 – 9pm, Regular Hours:

Monday through Saturday 10am – 4pm or by appointment at 773-8169)

**Other:** Free of charge, parking available

For more information and press: <http://lucagasperi.com> or <http://walshmetal.com/>

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Walsh Metal Works Gallery is a venue for established and emerging visual artists of the Virgin Islands whose work exemplifies the innovation of contemporary art while advancing the standards of its quality. Through its exhibitions, the Gallery intends: to pursue the discussion of what is relevant to the art of the region and the world, to encourage the development of artists, to foster the dynamic of public participation, and to nurture a community. Where opportunities present themselves, the Gallery will work with artists from other countries of the Caribbean region but not limit itself to this alone. The Gallery will be open to all individuals and groups whose ideas fall within these goals.

