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## **Rare Breadfruit Event in Florida Sparks Growing U.S. Interest**

Big Pine Key, FL — March 26, 2026 — Seventy guests gathered at **Grimal Grove**, the first breadfruit grove in the continental United States, for a rare chance to experience this remarkable fruit firsthand. For many, it was their first taste. For others, a deeper dive. All left with a new understanding of breadfruit's flavor, history, and global impact.

**Chef Sam Choy**, Food Network star and co-founder of Pacific Rim Cuisine, created a menu filled with breadfruit dishes. He used precooked pana (breadfruit) from Puerto Rico, donated by **Raquel de Jesus of Finca Panapén**. Guests imbibed breadfruit-based drinks, including **Mutiny Island Vodka** and breadfruit wine.

Before dinner, **Dr. Russell Fielding** led a walk through the grove. He shared stories from his global research and his book ***Breadfruit: Three Global Journeys of a Bountiful Tree***. Guests learned how this single tree has shaped cultures, economies, and diets around the world. They were amazed by its nutritional, environmental, and economic power.

“Breadfruit has deep roots in the Florida Keys, and these events brought its story to life—from walking tree to tree, where each variety revealed another part of breadfruit's story, to tasting it together,” said Dr. Russell Fielding, author, **Coastal Carolina University** professor, and **Trees That Feed Foundation** board member.

As night fell, fire dancers from the **Drums of Polynesia** lit up the grove. The performance honored the Pacific cultures that first carried breadfruit across oceans.

“This event brought breadfruit entrepreneurs, researchers, foundations, and farmers together to showcase this amazing fruit,” said **Patrick Garvey**, owner of Grimal Grove. “Many attendees arrived knowing little about breadfruit and left with a deep appreciation for its historical, cultural, and culinary significance.”

**Mary McLaughlin**, co-founder of Trees That Feed Foundation, reflected on the moment: “We have been planting breadfruit trees in more than 20 tropical, developing countries since 2009. Part of our mission is spreading awareness of the benefits of breadfruit. This event and Russell's book are powerful tools for that.”

The event was part of a series of breadfruit-focused programs in Key West. At the **Harry S. Truman Little White House**, Dr. Fielding explained how breadfruit has influenced leaders around the world, including American presidents, beginning with George Washington. At the **Key West Art & Historical Society**, the auditorium was packed with members eager to learn more about its global journey with particular focus on Florida.

As more Americans discover breadfruit, demand grows. That demand supports farmers, processors, bakers, and entrepreneurs in tropical regions. It also leads to more trees in the ground. That means more food, more jobs, and a healthier environment. To learn about breadfruit, visit [www.treesthatfeed.org](http://www.treesthatfeed.org).

Event sponsors included **Mutiny Island Vodka, The Perry Hotel & Marina, Harry S. Truman Little White House, Finca Panapén,** and the **Monroe County Tourist Development Council.**

The next event at Grimal Grove will be held on April 19. Learn more at <https://grimalgrove.com/events/>.

**Media Contact:** Natasha Norris, Trees That Feed Foundation, 954-675-5228, [info@treesthatfeed.org](mailto:info@treesthatfeed.org)



(l-r) Clinton Curry, executive director of Key West Harry S. Truman Foundation; Dr. Russell Fielding, author of *Breadfruit: Three Global Journeys of a Bountiful Tree*, professor at Coastal Carolina University, and board member of Trees That Feed Foundation; Chef Sam Choy, Food Network star and author of *Sam Choy's 'Ulu Cookbook*; Patrick Garvey, owner and director of Grimal Grove



Mike and Mary McLaughlin, co-founders of Trees That Feed Foundation, have planted nearly half a million food bearing trees, including breadfruit, in more than 20 countries since 2009 to feed people, create jobs, and benefit the environment.



Guests dined under the canopy of the first breadfruit grove in the continental United States at Grimal Grove in Big Pine Key. Created by celebrity Chef Sam Choy from Hawaii on his first visit to the Keys, the meal showcased the versatility of breadfruit and celebrated the many powerful benefits of planting this unique tropical tree.