

Vakaovaci named as top mixologist at NTPC's Hospitality and Tourism Festival

Mixing and serving up signature cocktails is Lavinia Vakaovaci's passion and it did not come as a surprise when the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) student was crowned the winner of the Cocktail Mixing Competition during the Hospitality and Tourism Festival currently underway at the Fiji National University's (FNU), Namaka Campus in Nadi.

The Certificate in Food and Beverage student was part of 15 students from four tertiary institutions who participated in the two-day competition.

Vakaovaci said she was confident that her signature cocktail drink would tantalise the tastebuds of the judges.

"Ever since I was introduced to cocktail mixing at NTPC, I have been experimenting with different base spirits and different traditional Fiji favours to see what goes well," said Vakaovaci. "It is important for the drink not to be overwhelmed by one taste but to have a balanced out overall taste."



Lavinia Vakaovaci during the final round of the cocktail mixing competition.



Lavinia Vakaovaci receiving her award.

"My experimentation bore fruit, as today I won the Hospitality and Tourism Festival's cocktail competition," the NTPC student added.

Vakaovaci's winning cocktail was a mix of coconut with a gin base and a dash of salt, along with other ingredients. It was aptly named the Coconut Heaven Cocktail.

Head Mixologist at Sofitel Fiji Resort and Spa and Competition Judge, Clement Cujus said he was impressed with the level of skills exhibited by the competitors.

"It is very nice to see experimentation and some great Fijian flavours in the cocktails presented to us judges today," he said.

Fellow Judge, Oswald Chambers said he was quite impressed with the improvement shown by the participants from the start of the competition to the finals.

"When they started, their mix was not balanced and they were not using the right glasses, but as we went to the finals there was a marked change with the quality of the cocktails they offered," he said.

Oswald said he was impressed with the prompt nature of the participants, who took heed of their advice and made balanced cocktails reflecting the tastes of Fiji.

The Hospitality and Tourism Festival continues until Friday, 27 September. The week-long festival is organised by NTPC and opens daily from 10 am to 10 pm. Entry is free to the general public.