Santa Rosa Carib Festival
• The Festival of Santa Rosa is probably the oldest indigenous festival which is still celebrated in Trinidad and Tobago.

• According to oral history, the celebration was started by the Caribs of Arima over 300 years ago.

• It all began with three Caribs who are believed to have seen a manifestation of Rose of Lima - the first new world person to be declared a saint by the Roman Catholic church.

• Rose of Lima (Santa Rosa) is the patron saint of Arima.

• The actual feast day of the saint is August 20th.

• On the last day of the celebration, the statue of the saint is beautifully arrayed and displayed to the public at the Santa Rosa RC Church.
Santa Rosa Carib Festival

Santa Rosa de Lima is supposed to have appeared to a group of Carib men at a time when they were resisting conversion to Catholicism. Rosa, the priests claimed, had been born in Arima and taken by her parents to Peru where she dedicated her life to helping the poor. She was the first canonized saint of the Americas, and her manifestation in Trinidad led to the construction of a church in 1759 dedicated to Santa Rosa de Arima.
Santa Rosa Carib Festival

The underground spring where she was seen by the men still exists in the residential area now known as Santa Rosa Heights. * The community of the descendants of indigenous Caribbean/Amerindian people became known as the Santa Rosa Caribs. As far as possible, they have retained traditional survival systems and practices including the cultivation of cassava, its processing methods and farming implements.

Cassava, first cultivated and processed in the Americas - over 9000 years ago it is estimated - is now grown in equatorial countries around the world, accounting for a wide range of industry and products. It is the fourth most important crop in the world.
Santa Rosa Carib Festival

Though they have little influence on the social or economic life of the islands, they have given us a rich legacy of place names and words. According to John Stollmeyer, Trinidadian artist, Arima is their “place of beginnings,” and Naparima refers to the home of an ancestral hero, Haburi the canoe and paddle maker. Cumucurapo, site of the port of Port of Spain, was built upon an Amerindian meeting place.
The Santa Rosa Carib Festival takes place in August - in the week leading up to Independence Day (August 31) and is intended to pay tribute to the First Peoples of the New World, and to expose their culture to the nation. The ceremonies include the crowning of the Carib Queen, an elder matron of their community who performs the role of focusing their heritage and traditions; a church procession and performance of some of their traditional and ritual activities - smoke ceremonies and prayer; as well as the opportunity to see the preparation of, and purchase cassava bread.
Santa Rosa Carib Festival

The Santa Rosa church is a landmark in Arima which lies in the foothills of Trinidad’s Northern Range. Contact TDC for details of the annual Santa Rosa celebrations.