

From the Editor Tamara Sniffin

Many who travel to Belize claim that one of our finest features is our people, and without a doubt some of our national treasures are individuals who personify the rich culture of our diverse country. In our June issue of My Beautiful Belize we are honored to share with you the story of one such individual, the one and only Aurora Garcia-Sagui. We were hard pressed to abbreviate her life story within the confines of these pages, and can only suggest that if you have the opportunity to travel to Maya Center you must meet this amazing woman for yourself. From Maya healing, to traditional cooking and even chocolate making, you will leave Ms. Aurora feeling at the metate' y mano! renewed and energized.



Speaking of national treasures, this month we celebrate the Spiny Lobster! Since February 15th our plates have been devoid of this tasty crustacean, but on June 15th the dinner bell will be ringing, proclaiming open season. From lobster pizza to lobster ice cream, we savor it all! In this issue we even indulge in sumptuous sushi at Las Terazza's signature restaurant, "O". One thing's for sure, there's never a shortage of good eats on

June is a wonderful month to visit our gorgeous country, and we welcome you to My Beautiful Belize!

Weh Di Go Ahn Eena June?!

STANN

Lobster Festivals!

San Pedro Town: June 14th - 20th. A week-long celebration of the lobster, capped off with the annual block party at Central Park on Saturday, June 20th.

Placencia Village: June 19th - 21st Caye Caulker: The granddaddy of them

all: June 26th - 28th.





Maya Equinox (1 of 2),

Dia de San Pedro:

June 26th: Opening Ceremonies with cultural presentations

June 27th: Sabado de bando

June 28th: Fishing Tournament

June 29th: Traditional Fisherman's breakfast and boat blessing and procession.

Belize Archaeology & Anthropology Symposium (BAAS): San Ignacio, Cayo, June 30th - July 3rd. Special topics: Settlement and landscape Archaeology and Examining the representation of Indigenous peoples in Belize and the region. Contact NICH at iscr@nichbelize.org for more information and registrations.



Wolfe's Woofers By: Dennis Wolfe

Mexican Eggs

"A friend of mine works for a company that makes bowling balls," Bruce said. "Twice a year I contract to pick up a load of bowling balls at the factory and distribute them all over Texas."



"Why would you do that?" I asked.

"Because it only takes me two days for a trip and I make a lot of money. Since you're here on vacation why don't you take the ride with me?"

About twenty-five miles out of McAllen, Texas we came across two Spanish looking guys pedaling along on a bicycle.

"These guys must be lost," Bruce said. "It's thirty miles to the nearest town. I'll give them a ride."

We loaded up the Mexicans along with the bowling balls and shut the trailer door. Half an hour later we heard a siren as a female Texas State Trooper pulled us over.

"Oh, no!" Bruce said. "It's that dumb blonde trooper again. I've had dealings with her before and she is as dumb as a rock. When she stopped me with a load of limes I told her they were California tennis balls and she believed me.'

After looking at Bruce's license she said, "Sir, I need to check the contents of your trailer. What are you hauling?' Bruce looked at me and winked. "It's a load of 20,000 Mexican eggs, ma'am."

When she opened the trailer door the two Mexicans sat blinking at the sunlight, clutching their bicycle. She slammed it shut and immediately radioed her headquarters.

"I need some backup along with the SWAT team and Border Patrol," she said, hysterically. "Hurry! We got a big problem!'

'What is the nature of the problem?" the dispatcher asked.

"I just stopped a truck with a load of 20,000 Mexican eggs. Two of them have hatched out and they already stole a bicycle."

SuDoku Time! Answers on Page 10									
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Aurora Garcia-Saqui, Maya Healer and Entrepreneur By Mary Gonzalez

That saying "everyone knows someone or is related in some way" really applies in Belize. Our trip down south on the Hummingbird Highway was full of "oh, that's my friend so-and-so" and "oh look, I met her in college!"We made a pit-stop for food, and there was a friend helping serve food! In fact, even before we got into our rental car (from the super nice folks at Crystal Auto), our travel companion Nana was surprised to find out she would be reconnecting with someone she'd met in MY home village back in the 1980's! Oh yes, our road trip was destined to be one of memories: both old and new.

We may move away, stay away, or run away, but our backgrounds remain with us no matter how far we are. This is the story of my aunt Aurora Garcia-Saqui, an entrepreneurial Yucatec Maya woman who married into a Mopan life, and has managed to artfully balance both cultures into one successful, happy life!

Many years ago, five sisters lived in a small village called





San Antonio in the Cayo District. Surrounded by mountains, forest and wildlife, but still remote from the bustle of the main town, the Garcia Sisters had discovered something unique and befitting their artistic nature: carving on slate. The soft black rock lent itself to sharp tools, allowing images to be carved into its surface, and soon, there were full images showing up in sharp relief, getting more and more intricate as the girls' skill manifested. The stones' edges remained rough, but their smooth façade shone after polishing. Aurora, second-born daughter, soon put her

Continued on Page 4













Reservations recommended 226-4249 www.orestaurantbelize.com





Aurora Garcia-Saqui continued from Page 3

marketing and entrepreneurial skills to use.

"We had no idea how much people would like our art. We went to the market in town on Saturdays and soon enough, people began buying," said Aurora. The market she speaks of is considered one of the largest and busiest in Cayo, and sees hundreds of locals and travelers passing through making purchases. "I remember one day we were just about to get up; it was about five in the morning, and we could hear a vehicle pull up, beeping loudly." It was a van full of tourists who wanted a piece of slate carving for themselves; word had spread. "We had no idea how ideally situated we were. Our little village is in the right spot for visitors to pass through on their way to the Mountain Pine Ridge,



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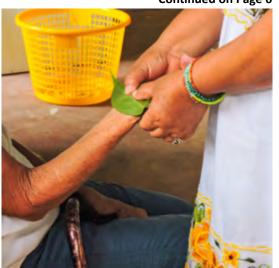
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and Caracol..." Business began booming, and the Garcia Sisters became legendary within tiny Belize.

But slate carving was not Aurora's only forte. Her mother Paulina was an herbal healer, and she utilized the trees and forest surrounding their village to the best of her abilities, taking care of her children's ailments as they grew up. Also living in the village at the time was legendary healer Don Elijio Panti, a man Aurora refers to as Tio (uncle). "My mother always told us to learn to take care of ourselves." Along with her sister Maria,

Continued on Page 6







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RESERVATION 011 501 226 501 INFO@GAIARIVERLODGE.COM Aurora Garcia-Saqui

Continued from Page 4

Aurora apprenticed with Don Elijio, learning a great deal from the man considered to be one of Belize's greatest natural healers of the 20th century.

From art to herbal medicine (which is a form of art itself), Aurora had been braced for a lifetime of knowledge. She knew her strengths and developed them as best she could. They all did. When their father dismissed their slate carvings: "Who's going to buy a piece of stone?!" They marketed themselves nonetheless, and the cash earnings from their sales one day saved his cattle-farming business.

And then, love found its way to her heart.

A blushing 24 years old, Aurora met Ernesto Saqui, a Mopan Maya from the south-



ern district of Stann Creek. How could two people from distinctly different cultures make it work? It was not easy, but Ernesto won her over with letters sent over time, and much to her parents' dismay (especially her father), she chose to leave the comfort of her home and join Ernesto at his home village Maya Centre.

Continued on Page 11



North Ambergris Caye ©2014, Map not to scale

Portofino





Mambo Restaurant

Resort & Restaurant

*TIPS FOR TRAVELLING IN NORTH AC

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on the beach. Thatched Cabanas. Budget rooms the end of pier + Massage + Tours. Restaurant/ Bar with shared bath. 7 night yoga retreats. 626-6296 9PM. Drop in daily yoga classes at North of Bridge. Open Daily 7AM AK'BOL - Yoga & Resort. 1 Mile

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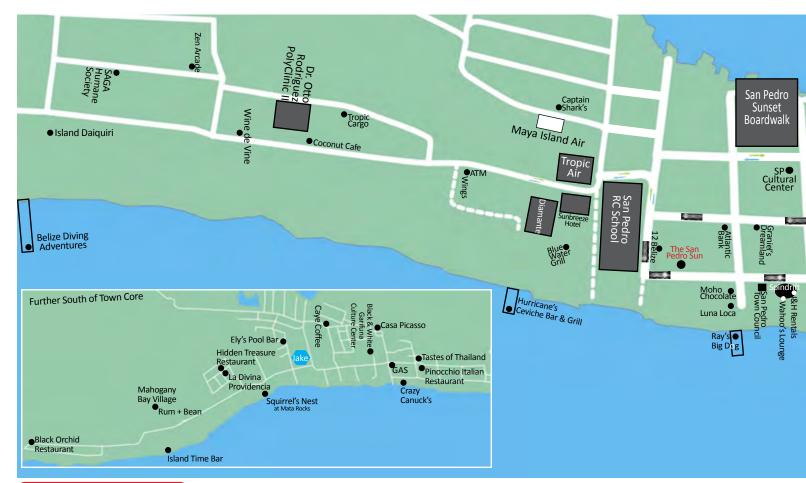
snacks & dinner all day. Pool open. Daily happy hour are located 1 minute across the bridge on the beach from 4-7. Closed on Wednesdays. in front of Reef Village. We serve breakfast, lunch,

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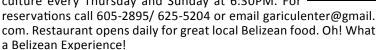
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Sudoku Answers Puzzle on Page 2

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Aurora left the art and familiarity of her village, and made her own way in Maya Centre. Throughout the years, she has become an accomplished businesswoman, running Nuuk Cheil Cottages alongside Ernesto. The cottages are nestled just off the main road at the cut-off leading to Cockscomb Basin Jaguar Preserve. The rooms are perfect for visitor's wishing to explore the preserve over a few days (or even just for a little getaway). Their successful enterprise includes a restaurant, gift shop, laundromat, and Aurora's H'Men

Herbal Center/Clinic. Her combination of Mopan and Yucatec Maya cooking is so unique that she worked on Uj Janal Aj Maya, a cookbook detailing delicious recipes for those wanting to recreate the meals served at the restaurant.

That is where we met them, a couple comfortable in each other's presence, surrounded by their business and family: three sons, a daughter-in-law and grandson. According to Nana, Aurora still has the same smile she remembers from three decades ago. The couple and their family welcome us as

one of them, and in no time, we're laughing and chatting away like we've known each other all our lives...which it seems, we have!

Culture, tradition (old and new), conservation and memories are fabulous topics of discussion at the dinner table. Folklores and stories loaded with meaning are shared, and we feel like we're back at home. When the time comes for a cleansing ritual at the hands of Aurora the Healer, we're more than ready. Wet leaves brush all around us as she chants quietly, sending prayers to the

requisite deities. After being cleansed, we stand steady as Copal blesses us with fire and smoke. It's a ritual I've never partaken in, but will certainly hold on as a memory for a lifetime.

It's easy to see how Aurora has adapted to her surroundings. Just as she stubbornly kept honing her carvings on slate all those years ago, so she has etched her place amongst the Mopan Maya, surrounded by the jaguars of the Cockscomb Basin, and a family who carries its heritage and culture proudly forth.







Oh how I love the sweet succulent splendor that is the Caribbean Spiny Lobster! Four months out of the year, I face the terrible sacrifice of going without my favorite lobster dishes. Of course, this is done to allow our Crustacean friends time to replenish their population and continue feeding our love for all that is lobster....so I suffer silently. With only a couple weeks until the lobster season opens, I

am already planning the myriad of delectable eats I am going to

have!



We all love the classics: grilled lobster, lobster kebabs, lobster dip, lobster sliders and so much more, but when you grow up in an island community, and your step-dad is a fisherman and your mom is a restaurant cook, the tasty treats you get to sample are like no other. So until June 15th rolls around, all I can do is recall my all-time favorite dishes and start making preparations to get cooking.

Here are a couple of my personal favorites!



Lobster Pasta Salad

My love for pasta and lobster are pretty even, so I seem to always insist on my mom making this. It doesn't take much to do- it's one of those quick fixer uppers that will have you eating all day. All you need is a couple pounds of cooked lobster tails- preferably fresh (I get my lobster straight from the sea), a pack of cooked fusilli pasta, half pound diced tomatoes, one medium size thinly diced purple onion, one medium size diced green pepper, one small can sweet corn (you can add fresh corn kernels of you can get it), two minced garlic cloves and one small can of light whipping cream (I like Nestle Brand). Preparation is simple once the lobster and pasta are cooked and cooled, toss them in a bowl with all the other ingredients. Add salt and pepper to taste and a drizzle of olive oil and give it a good toss. And that is all it takes to make a Cold Island Lobster Pasta Salad. I personally like to top of my salad with some parmesan cheese and some garlic bread on the side, but you definitely don't need them! It's perfectly delicious as it is!

Lobster Cocktail

We all love a good shrimp cocktail, but did you know it can be made with lobster too? I like my cocktail with all the traditional sweet and tangy flavors that make this dish popular, while still allowing the protein to be the star of the plate. That's why I love how my step-dad prepares his lobster cocktail. Again it



all starts with fresh lobster shucked and diced into chunks, but instead of boiling it, it is marinated in lime juice. The acidity of the

Continued on Page 15





Discovering the Healing Ingredients of a Rainforest Recipe

By Tamara Sniffin

I have always enjoyed perusing the aisles of well stocked grocery stores. I love finding ingredients I've never seen before and imagining their tasty possibilities. Some may think it a tad crazy, but I consider it a wonderful way to kill a couple of hours...you never know what you will come across! So, you can imagine the level of my enthusiasm when I had the opportunity to go rainforest "shopping" with Aurora Garcia-Saqui, who knew the sylvan aisles like the back of her hand. But we weren't browsing for a delicious meal...our shopping list was comprised of exotic healing flora like yhax leh, piper and gomo che!

Just as I would in a grocery store where I pick up and examine an item before throwing it into my basket, Ms. Aurora took her time to select the specific plants she needed to create her special Pain Away remedy. Explaining the name of each leaf she picked, as well as the healing powers it possessed, she collected a handful of leaves that would soon end up as a soothing, healing ointment.





After our rainforest shopping we gather in her open cooking area, complete with a traditional fire hearth. First the leaves are torn into small pieces and placed on a metate' for grinding.



The grinding process takes some time (and effort) to get the leafy mixture to the right consistency, releasing the healing powers within. We even try our hand at using the metate', gaining a quick appreciation for the effort and technique (it's all in the wrists) that it takes to maneuver the mano while grinding!

Once the leaves are mashed to the right texture they are added to the melted lanolin. The pot is placed on the fire hearth and the mixture is brought to a boil.

The hot pot of melted, healing goodness is then removed from the fire, and then run through a strainer.

The next step is to funnel the mixture into individual bottles. They are then labeled and ready for sale!







The end result is a smooth, soothing ointment with a slight menthol scent. We tried it on a variety of ailments, from achy arthritic hands to bug bites and burns...it worked like a charm and smelled so good! I now carry it with me at all times for quick relief to whatever mishap I happen to get into!





Sushi Time at Las Terrazas By Mary Gonzalez

Sushi...for someone who could have happily lived off of vegetables and fruit all her life, I'm surprisingly (slightly) obsessed with sushi. This Japanese food item has been adopted (and adapted) worldwide – even on Ambergris Caye, where it's considered quite a treat. Sticky rice, seaweed wraps, a variety of seafood, vegetables and sometimes, even fruit, are base ingredients for some of the most beloved rolls. At Las Terrazas' O Restaurant, Chef Papi has started a delightfully delicious Friday night sushi special, and well, you know I just had to swing by and test a roll or ten!

With my partner in crime Janelle, we drove up the delightfully smooth paved road north past the bridge to our destination, the beautiful Las Terrazas resort. Chandra greeted us warmly, escorting us to a pavilion near the pool,

where the sounds of Any and Pupo echoed beautifully. Our server for the evening, Edvin, took excellent care of us as we settled in, a refreshing drink in hand as we perused the sushi menu.

We were intrigued at the list, especially when we happened on one that incorporated the lionfish! The Predator sounded most interesting, and, since we are all about doing our part for the environment, we decide to give that a try, along with a few other delicious-looking options. Chef Papi joined us for a bit, then highly recommended we start with the Cobia sashimi. Thinly sliced fresh cobia fish over a sauce of sesame seed oil, soy, ginger, scallions, a little lime juice and topped with fried rice noodles and Tobiko caviar and seaweed salad. I would say that was quite the introduction to our fabulous dining experience! So much flavor on a dish...Janelle,













my little "I don't like fish that much" companion seemed to have no problem downing some cobia! She was so impressed, she couldn't wait for the next course!

We were delighted to move on to the Lionfish Nigiri. This is of course, different from The Predator, but also does its part to eliminate those prolific little suckers from our waters! Sticky rice is topped with filets of lionfish, and I dipped each roll in a combination of soy and wasabi for some good eating! This is definitely a delicious way to get rid of lionfish! Another good way is by eating The Predator! The Lionfish is lightly seasoned and seared, then rolled up with pickled ginger and seaweed salad for some good eating!

We laughed at the description of the Hurricane: everything but the kitchen sink! It sure was tasty, and primed us for the spicy tuna. Janelle needed another beverage after that roll – it was definitely a sneaky spice, but I loved it. To cool down our palates, we were served the Philly. This is one roll I recommend for those starting out

their sushi journey. It has elements that are familiar (cream cheese and avocado), accompanied by flavorful fish like smoked salmon. Newbies will also enjoy the crispy Tempura Shrimp roll, which is presented cleverly on the plate for you to enjoy. Hey, playing with your food can be fun!

In fact, while we were seated at one of the most beautiful resort grounds with live music in the background, we couldn't help but acknowledge what a wonderful time we were having. O Restaurant's menu also contains other fabulous dishes besides sushi, and any night of the week is a guaranteed delicious time! But if you're looking for something fun and different to kick off your weekend right, Friday night sushi is definitely one way to start!

For reservations, be sure to call 226-4249. Sushi is the Friday special, but the menu is a delight – so check them out any day of the week!



Lobster Cravings

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lime 'cooks' the meat, enhancing its natural flavors. When boiling lobster, you have to be careful not to overcook it or it becomes tough and tasteless, but you don't have to worry about that when marinating it.

Let the lobster sit in the lime juice about 20 minutes, then you add diced onions, tomatoes, bell peppers and cilantro (the quantity of the vegetables depends on how you like it- I prefer less vegetables and more lobster). Mix the vegetables, lobster and a 24 ounce bottle of ketchup (Hunts Brand is my pick) in a bowl. Season the cocktail with salt and black pepper to taste. If you like a little heat in your food, add a couple diced habaneros. In my house we like our cocktails to be two things: SPICY and SOUR, so we go heavy on the habanero and lime! Enjoy your with some fresh corn tortilla chips, soda biscuit or just with a spoon!

With all this talk about lobster, I'm craving it. Time to start counting the days till the season opens. Until then I need to start stocking the pantry with all necessary ingredients to make my favorite treats!

Remember it is illegal to be in the possession or consume lobster during the closed season. The lobster fishing season is closed from February 15th to June 14th, this time is allowed for Spiny Lobster to reproduce and the young to develop. The best always comes to those who wait!





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