



My Beautiful Belize

TRAVEL PUBLICATION

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| FREE |

Immerse yourself!
Celebrate Belize's cultures!

From the Editor *Tamara Sniffin*



There are many things that are synonymous with the Caribbean... white sandy beaches, turquoise blue waters, coral reefs, sleepy hammocks and to eat...lobster! This sweet, succulent crustacean is what tropical dreams are made of, accompanied by your favorite umbrella cocktail of course! Although we savor this island mainstay, some marine biologists fear we have had too much of a good thing.

As is the case with most creatures fished from the sea, numbers are dwindling and there are questions of how we, as consumers, can take greater measures to responsibly sustain these wild harvests.

In this issue of My Beautiful Belize we explore the history of lobster fishing in Belize, which interestingly enough did not become an industry until the 1920's. Thanks to this creature, who was once regarded as a 'bug' to Belizeans, fisher folk grew from modest means to some of the wealthiest people in the community. The economic benefits remain vital to the Belizean economy, but some fear we may have loved our lobster to death.

This doesn't mean we can't have our crustacean and eat it too! With a closed season that is mutually observed by our fellow Central American coastal countries, and weight and size restrictions in place, good measures are being taken to assure their numbers. However, poaching and undersized catches remain a problem, and as consumers this is where we can help. If we are mindful that we only indulge in legally collected lobster, and do not support the livelihood of poachers, than the demand is no longer there. We have to give our little buddies time to grow and make more babies!

As you visit Belize, your adventures will be culinary too, and there's nothing more delicious than fresh lobster. Enjoy every bite, and thank you for doing your part in preserving a taste of My Beautiful Belize.

Important Information

Belize Tourism Board - 227-2419.

Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) - 227-5717.

Belize Hotel Association - 223-0669, bha@btl.net

San Pedro Tourist Guide Association 226-2391.

Dr. Otto Rodriguez San Pedro PolyClinic II: 226-2536

AA Meetings: Monday - Saturday, 6PM, #5 Boca Del Rio. 226-2020. Every Tuesday & Friday, 12 noon at the Catholic parish hall. Front street, 630-0752.

Al-Anon Meetings: Wednesdays, 5:30PM, SP Catholic Church Hall. 608-3924 / islabon-itaalanon@yahoo.com

Narcotics Anonymous: By request at 623-0316.

Emergency veterinarian care: 610-3647

American Crocodile Education Sanctuary/ACES - Don't take matters into your own hands. Call 623-7920 for crocodile problems.

Saga Society A non-profit "humane society" to address the stray cat and dog population in San Pedro. Phone 226-3266.

SP Town Library - 206-2028.

SP Post Office - 206-2260.

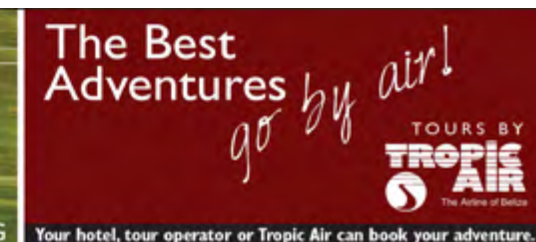
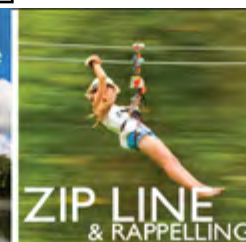
National Aids Commission Island Committee (NACIC) - HIV Testing/ Treatment/Stigma and Discrimination and Pre and Post Test Counseling. 650-7021.

CRYSTAL AUTO RENTALS - 2 BZ locations: Philip S.W. Goldson International Airport and 5 Miles Northern Highway. Free shuttle service to and from our Belize City office to anywhere in Belize City. Tel: 011-501-223-1600 Fax: 011-501-223-1900 (direct dialing from U.S.A.) Toll Free in Belize: 0-800-777-7777 Email: reservations@crystal-belize.com or visit our website at <http://crystal-belize.com>

COASTAL XPRESS WATER TAXI - Scheduled ferry service & water taxi for Ambergris Caye. Phone 226-3007.

GET TRANSFERS - Executive transfer and tour services anywhere in Belize: Chetumal, Cancun, Quintana Roo & even Merida and Guatemala. Phone: 422-2485 (Fx: 422-3511) or email: info@gettransfers.com.

RAINBOW TAXI - Caye Caulker golf cart; guided island tours; reliable service. 226-0123. Minerva: 661-6254 or Champ 602-8136.



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Mayas live among us:

There was no sudden disappearance! In Belize, Mayas continue to thrive, adapting to modern life while holding on to their tradition and culture. P. 13

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Yoga is an adventure! Experience it at Ak'Bol! P. 18



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hello@mybeautifulbelize.com

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Published by *The San Pedro Sun LTD.*



Here's what's happening in February!



February 6th - Kelly McGuire's Birthday Bash at Palapa Bar, San Pedro Town starting at 5PM

February 11th to 12th - Placencia Sidewalk Arts Festival at Placencia Peninsula, all day event

February 11th - "Art after Dark" gala dinner featuring six renowned painters from the Placencia Peninsula. Hosted by Naia's Resort & Spa at their 1981 restaurant, Placencia. For more info and tickets contact Anne-Marie McNeil at 523-4600

February 18th - San Pedro Tiger Sharks vs. Dangriga Dream Ballaz at Stann Creek Ecumenical College, Dangriga Town starting at 9PM

February 18th - Konshens Live in Concert at Riverside Tavern, Belize City starting at 9PM

February 24th - Reina del Carnaval Pageant at San Pedro High School Auditorium, San Pedro Town starting at 7PM

February 24th - Corozal House of Culture Anniversary Celebration at Corozal House of Culture, Corozal Town starting at 7PM

February 25th - Street Art Festival 2017 at Albert Street in Belize City starting at 2PM

February 25th - Carnival Block Party at Central Park, San Pedro Town starting at 6PM

February 25th - San Pedro Tiger Sharks vs Orange Walk Running Rebels at San Pedro High School Auditorium, San Pedro Town starting at 9PM

February 26th to 28th - Grand Carnaval de San Pedro at Barrier Reef Drive and Pescador Drive, San Pedro Town starting at 2PM each day

March 1st - Burning of Juan Carnaval at Central Park, San Pedro Town starting at 7PM

March 3rd - 2017 Belikin La Ruta Maya River Challenge starting at San Ignacio Town at 7AM

March 4th - San Pedro Tiger Sharks vs. Belize City No Limits at San Pedro High School Auditorium, San Pedro Town starting at 9PM

A new adventure awaits you during San Pedro's Gran Carnaval

By Janelle Cowo

When most Belizeans think about carnival, images of elaborate costumes and festive floats come to mind. But for those who live in San Pedro Town, carnival is actually 'carnaval' and the traditional celebration is observed to usher in the 40-day Lenten Season. Unlike the highly anticipated annual Carnival Road March held in September during our country's patriotic celebration, San Pedro's Gran Carnaval usually takes place in February, four days before Ash Wednesday.

Both events do have one thing in common; bringing people together for a fun and memorable experience!

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El Gran Carnaval Continued from Page 3

This year, San Pedro's Carnaval will take place from Friday, February 24th to Tuesday, February 28th. It will open with the annual Reina del Carnaval Pageant on Friday, followed by a block party on Saturday, three days of painting and comparsa (dance groups) dancing from Sunday to Tuesday, and will end with the burning of Juan Carnaval on Wednesday, March 1st. That's quite a line up for some adventurous activities!

This is the only celebration of its kind in the entire country Belize! If you are wondering why San Pedro is the only town in Belize to celebrate carnival, well that's simple; because of its strong ties to Latin culture.

Carnaval dates back 150 years and is celebrated in many ways across Europe, Central and South America. One thing that all Carnival celebrations across the world have in come is that they are very lively and colourful, encompassing

great music and much dancing.

In San Pedro, we have adapted the carnival culture brought by those who migrated from Southern Mexico. Mexico's celebration is centred on the legend of Don Juan Carnaval, a rich man who lived his life breaking the hearts of women and partying. It is believed that he founded the celebration of carnival to allow people to have fun before heading into the solemn Lenten Season.

During the first celebrations of Carnaval in San Pedro, boys would paint girls primarily with talcum powder, flour, blue dye and soot. The comparsas tradition started when the men would dress as women and parade the streets singing sarcastic, often humorous lyrics.

Today, comparsas choreograph original dances and songs that they perform through the town streets. The groups wear vibrant

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Thursdays 2pm: Paint 'n Splash
4pm: Live Music (Rock 'n Roll)
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El Gran Carnaval Continued from Page 4



costumes that depict all forms of livelihood. Groups form months in advance, planning their strategy and costumes, focusing on the music, lyrics to their song, and themes for each day of the festivities. Keep an eye out for the Cholo's Barbies (grown men dressed as women – heels and all!), many of them have been dancing since they were small children!

Even the form of painting has evolved! From 4PM to 10PM children and adults take to the streets painting one another in colorful hues of water paint. During this time, traffic access on Barrier Reef Drive and a portion of Pescador Drive is closed. Those not wanting to participate in the painting are encouraged to avoid these areas.

Carnaval is all about TRADITION and friendship, and we invite you to be a part of it!

Catching the eye of specators every year are the Cholo's Barbies...look out for their humorous performance and unending energy!

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BELIZEAN SHORES RESORT

Making Corn Tortillas the local way!

By Janelle Cowo

Corn tortillas are a staple of almost every Belizean meal. Similar to rice and beans, corn tortillas are the perfect accompaniment for a variety of local dishes, from soups to stews, and especially classic breakfasts like beans and eggs.

At 23, I have pretty much consumed my fair share of corn tortillas, but making them by hand is another story! While most Belizean girls of Mestizo or Maya heritage pride themselves in making the perfect handmade corn tortillas well... let's just say I may have skipped my lessons. But that doesn't mean I still don't try to make them!

Corn tortillas are made from masa (a cornmeal dough), pressed down into flat circles and then baked them over a hot comal (a smooth, flat griddle). Today, pre-prepped masa can be purchased at your nearest tortilla factory; but back in the days, the masa had to be made from scratch.

Growing up, I was always astounded at how my grandmother prepared the masa for tortillas (and other Mestizo dishes such as tamales, bollos and k'ol). The dried corn kernels were boiled with lime powder (Calcium hydroxide) and then grinded on a hand cranked grinder called a molino – this was

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FUN FACT!

According to both Maya and Mestizo tradition, if a girl who plans to make tortillas holds a Cane Toad, locally known as a "w'oh", their tortillas are sure to puff when cooking. Of course, the procedures of the tradition slightly vary in each culture; in the Maya culture, the toad needs to be caught then passed over and under the girl's hands nine times. While in the Mestizo culture, it is only required for the girl to catch the toad and hold it for a short while (these toads are known to puff up the minute they are touched). I guess I might have to revisit this tradition if I ever want puffy tortillas in my future! I'm off toad hunting!



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Making local corn tortillas Continued from Page 6

the part I usually had to do. Many, many children went through this rite of passage!

Once the masa was done, it was time to make tortillas!

- Add salt to taste to the masa and knead until the dough has a fine smooth consistency.

- Heat the comal on your stove top or a fire hearth (cooking over open fire is the traditional way to go, and it's the secret ingredient to an authentic flavor).

- Measure about three ounces of

dough and shape it into a ball.

- Place the dough ball into the center of a plastic sheet on a flat surface and mold it with your fingertips to form flat thin disk. While you press down the dough with one hand, use the other to keep the circular shape of the tortilla.

- Remove the pressed dough from the plastic sheet and gently lay flat to grill on the hot comal. When one side is golden, turn it over using your hands. As the next side cooks, the tortilla will puff up,

use your bare hands or a cloth to pat it down. (The inflation of the tortilla when cooking means that it will be light and airy in the inside – just the way it's supposed to be!)

Once cooked, remove the tortilla from the comal and store in an airtight, lined and insulated container until ready to serve.

Serve up some hot and fresh corn tortillas with your favourite meal!

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EAT



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MAMBO RESTAURANT - Enjoy a unique dining experience at this award-winning restaurant at Matchica Resort. Romantic atmosphere with island ambience, offering locally inspired flavors and meals that will excite even the most seasoned palate. Complimentary transportation with reservations - call 226-5010/226-5011.

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FELIZ BAR & GRILL: THE Sports Bar across the bridge, with four 43" flat screen TVs, delicious thin crust pizza, wings and burgers. Play corn hole, catch the game, and try our Wednesday dart challenge! 1PM-11PM, closed on Tuesdays. At the Cloisters.



THE DIVE BAR: Snorkel/dive with us at SeaStar Belize and then unwind over great drinks, great food and a great time at The Dive Bar. Enjoy beachfront views and complementary water toys, just 1/2 mile North of the bridge. 226-3365/625-3364



MARBUCKS COFFEE HOUSE - Specialty Coffee Drinks - both hot & cold; fresh fruit smoothies and baked goods. Join us for Thursday Wine Fun, 4PM-7PM and our delicious Sunday brunch (with mimosas!). Located just off the main road in Tres Cocos, before the Truck Stop. Like us on Facebook and keep up with the fun!

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X'TAN HA RESORT "The Waterfront" Resort is a secluded getaway 7.2 miles north of San Pedro on a stretch of pristine white sandy beach with beautiful turquoise waters. The resort sits on one of the finest white sand beaches on the entire island of Ambergris Caye.

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THE NOOK: A restaurant and cocktail BARTique, offering fun fusion cocktails and tasty nibbles and main dishes. Happy Hour and a Half from 5PM - 6:30PM at the funky and relaxed lounge on the beach, by Coastal Express.

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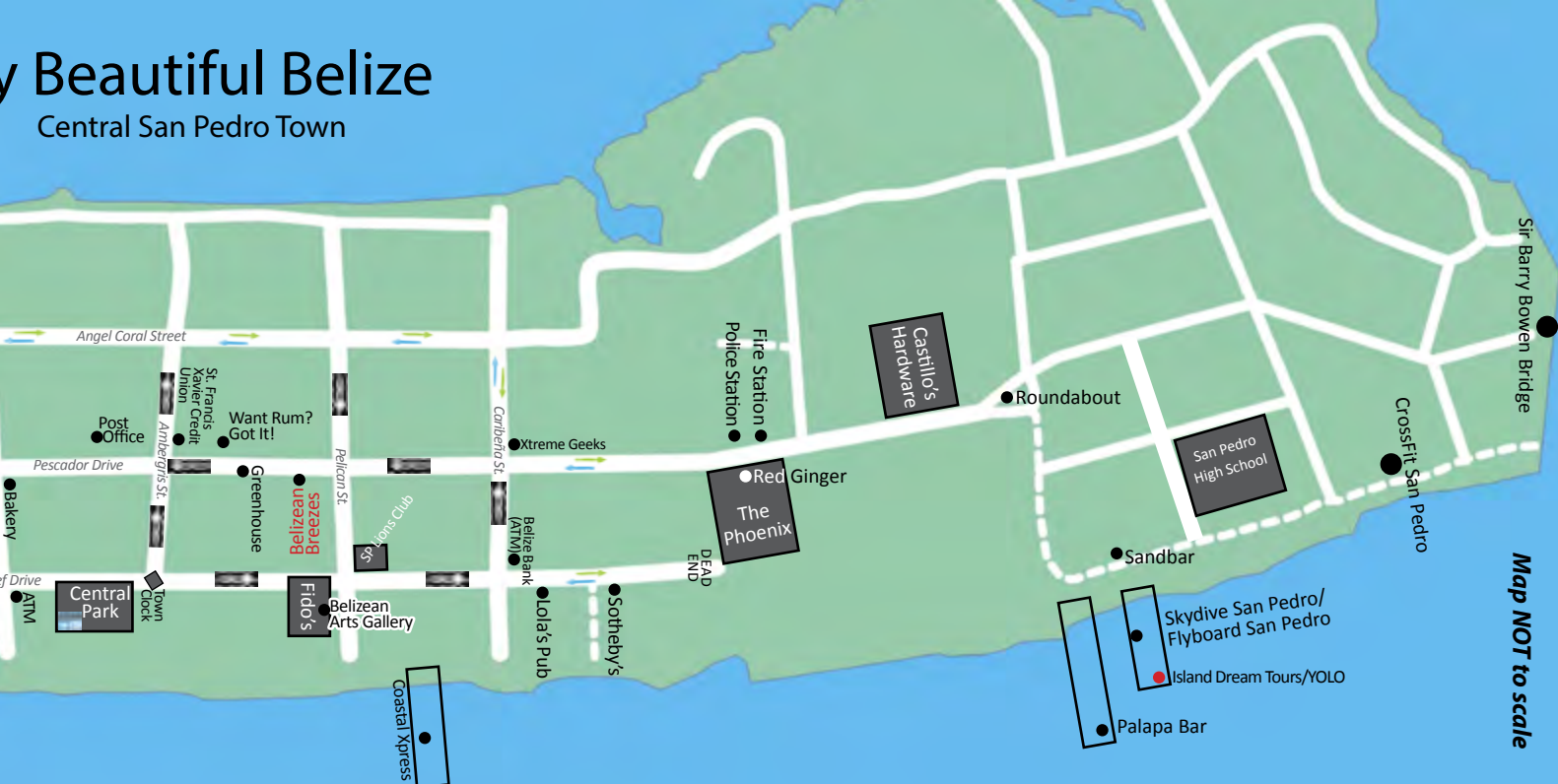
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AQUAFINO ISLAND RESORT AND SPA: An island resort located five minutes behind Ambergris Caye. Offering a 5-star experience, the resort offers a private gym and beach club among other amenities. Offering exclusive island residence and over the water bungalows.

PEDRO'S INN

PEDRO'S INN: Clean, Cheap, Safe and Fun. Pedro's Hotel provides a clean, comfortable and safe setting at an amazingly cheap price. Nightly events in the Bar throughout the week including Ladies Night every Wednesday.



HAVANA CIGARS BELIZE: Our walk-in humidor stocks an ever changing selection of some of the finest hand-made cigars from Cuba, Central America, and the Caribbean. We also offer an air-conditioned smoking lounge with a full bar and café. On Front Street, across from Holiday Hotel.

226-4576 Find us on TripAdvisor!

SAN PEDRO ARTISANS MARKET: Over 20 booths featuring local arts and crafts. Wood carvings, jewelry, paintings, sculptures, souvenirs and much more. Open daily from 8AM until 9PM. Located on Angel Coral Street across from the Hon. Louis Sylvestre Stadium.



ZEN BELIZE: purpose-built rooftop fitness studio, featuring yoga, pilates, kickboxing, krav maga and bootcamp, overlooking the trees and sea, close to downtown. Daily classes, all levels, internationally certified instructors. Drop-in \$20bz, incl. equipment.

See facebook for our daily schedule.

REAL ESTATE

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Sudoku Answers Puzzle on Page 19

1	2	6	5	4	3	9	7	8
7	4	5	9	8	2	6	3	1
8	9	3	6	1	7	4	5	2
6	3	8	4	7	9	1	2	5
9	5	4	1	2	8	7	6	3
2	7	1	3	6	5	8	4	9
5	6	7	2	9	1	3	8	4
3	8	9	7	5	4	2	1	6
4	1	2	8	3	6	5	9	7



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The Modern Maya Among Us

By Mary Gonzalez

In 2012, it became abundantly clear that a lot of people around the world had no clue that Mayas are still living among them. I will never forget the look on a young man's face when I confirmed that indeed, the Mayas do exist. It was a novelty for him, and being that it was the much-buzzed about '2012: end-of-the-world', his curiosity led to asking, "How do you live?"

I take that question and add to it, "How do we continue our traditions and way of life in a modern society?"

The answer is a bit complex, as we are now far-flung through the corners of Belize, and many other countries around the world. One

thing we have in common, beside our language, is our love for home, Tanah. I was born and raised in San Antonio Village in the Cayo District. The westernmost district is home to some of the most beautiful landscapes, and in my humble and biased opinion, San Antonio is nestled in one such spot: a valley ringed by mountains as far as the eye can see, homes dotting high hills and dirt roads snaking every which way.

The population is primarily Yucatec, and I am fortunate to have been born in the era of one of the most famed healers, Dr. Eljio Panti. I also grew up with the Garcia Sisters, who had their brush with fame with their slate carvings and art. In

fact, one sister continues pushing for tradition and preservation of culture, lobbying alongside other villagers to honor Dr. Panti with a medicinal trail/reserve. Another group of hard-working artisans have taken on the magnificent art of pottery-making, using the help of a New York University professor to create bowls and figurines in homage to our ancient ancestors' styles. We speak our Mayan language, conversing wherever we meet, be it in the center of the village, or on this very island where I now reside. We can pick each other out, bound by a common thread...and we talk and reminisce.

Continued on Page 14



Dr. Eljio Panti, San Antonio's famed
Maya healer



The Modern Maya Continued from Page 13

One of three

There are three confirmed groups of Maya in Belize: Yucatec, Mopan and Ke'kchi.

I'm the product of a Yucatec Maya man and Creole/Garifuna woman, and identify as Maya.

Life in the village

Like so many children in the village, I grew up around a host of uncles and aunts and cousins. As an only child, I often gravitated towards my grandmother in her kitchen. In hindsight, Grandma was the tiniest wizened creature, but to a small child, she was the world, bigger than life itself.

Her thatched kitchen was made of skinny logs, wide open doors and windows so the smoke from her fogon (fire hearth) would get out easily. Directly overhead, the thatch was ebony black with soot from the wood smoke. I remember seeing long strips of deer meat often draped on a line high above the fire, curing and smoking for many days. The day she would bring down the meats, it was feasting time.

Sometimes I'd help pick the brightest habaneros from the tree just outside, and she would pick tomatoes ripe on the vine. After raking some coals off to the side, she would add more wood to the fire and her comal would be placed to heat up. Freshly washed habaneros were dropped directly on the separated coals, spitting and hissing as they got charred and their scent filled the air. Tomatoes roasted atop the comal as well. Some fresh cilantro would be chopped, along with shallots grown in the backyard garden.

Grandma would smash the hot habaneros with generous sprinkles of salt and fresh lime juice, using a homemade wooden pestle. Cilantro and onions would get added, and being the fearless woman she was, she'd stick her



Scan here to learn how to make your very own!

finger in the bowl and taste! The roasted tomatoes got a similar treatment, with just a tiny bit of the habanero sauce added to give it a little kick.

There was always masa (corn

dough) ready to go, and she would start patting out round stacks of hot and fresh tortillas. When the stack was ready, often in danger of toppling over, she would sit at the table, shredding her portion of the shredded smoked meat, dabbing handfuls in both sauces, wrapping with a hot fresh tortilla and savoring it with her eyes closed.

Today, the joy of a hot fresh corn tortilla is still enjoyed, whether from a fire hearth or stovetop, it still is about making our own food.

Where were the men?

Culture and tradition in many Latin-American countries have often led to the idea that the men do the hard labour in their milpas (farm) while the women stay at home and tend to home and children. Grandma had a total of 16 children, of which 10 survived to adulthood.



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The Modern Maya Continued from Page 13

Like in many families, our mornings began before the sun rose. Children often slept through the clatter and bang of the kitchen as mothers and grandmothers prepared a hot breakfast and lunch for the man/men of the house. During school days, it was only the father, but at holiday time, so long as you could walk through a grove of corn, you could help carry something, and children and all were packed up and taken to do some milpa work!

After packing scrambled eggs, perhaps some beans in a bowl and a few fresh tortillas, a recycled bottle filled with milky coffee, the men would pull on their long-sleeved shirts, tuck in their pants into their rubber boots, tie their scabbards carrying extra-sharp machetes, and if they were feeling lucky, they would also sling a rifle over their back. At the top of the mountains due east, the first rays of sunshine would start sending some light. With one foot on the stirrup, and a quick swing of the leg, they would take off, the morning air filled with the clip-clop of horses all headed to parts deep in the jungle. By the time they broke through the thicket of trees and crossed creeks, the sun would be blazing on the rows and rows of their crops: peanuts, corn, onions, cabbages, watermelons, peppers, tomatoes...whatever it was that they decided to plant.

At home, those who saw the rifle being slung over would wait to hear the shot. Often, there would be a loud boom, which would echo from mountain to mountain, and the question was

usually, "Who? And did they get it?" Today, the sound of a gunshot ringing through the valley still brings a frisson of excitement for those eager to have some game meat.

Folktales

When everyone was settled home, and there didn't seem to be much work to do, the gathered children would sit at the feet of our wizened old grandma, listening to the folktales passed down from generation to generation. There was nothing better than getting the full story of the Alux (A-loosh)/ Tata Duende (*pictured at right*), the Xtabai (Ish-tah-bye) or the Cadejo (ka-de-ho).

For us naughty kids, the Alux story would ALWAYS get to us. Tales of the tiny man luring badly behaved children into the jungle with him were terrifying, as were the stories of him riding horses for fun, braiding their manes so impossibly tight that owners would have to cut them off. The stories always ended with a warning to: listen to your parents, don't wander off alone...and well, I'm still not sure what the poor horses could have done to avoid their braided manes!

When we witnessed tightly braided horse manes, the stories of the Alux would come back to us, bringing chills up and down our spines. Perhaps they were real, perhaps not; there isn't much to say that we don't walk a fine line between fantasy and reality. If nothing else, Grandma told us these stories as a warning to behave, and for the chuckles she got watching a group of four or five grandchildren walking each other to use the outhouse at twilight!

The others

We've always been aware of other Maya people in the rest of the country. At one point, my grandfather panned for gold, going away for weeks on end, deep in the jungle. He would come back with stories of other villages where the people spoke Maya. He described them as completely different from us...many of them running away and hiding from the group of gold-diggers. He said their language was different, Maya, but different. Later in our Social Studies class, we would learn more about the Ke'kchi Maya, who primarily populate the southern district of Belize.

Nowadays, they, along with the Mopan, continue living among the other ethnic groups of Belize, adapting to modern life while maintaining their traditions and continue to proudly share their culture with the rest of the world. So, to answer the original question, "How do we live?"

The answer is simple: happily...proudly...contentedly. It is a beautiful thing to be Maya.



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Living la vida lobster

By Tamara Sniffin



The Belizean fishing industry dates back to the time of the Maya when snappers and anchovies were the most important food from the sea. Over the years sleepy fishing villages prospered from the bounty of the sea, from the northern cayes of Ambergris and Caye Caulker, to the mainland coastal communities of Corozal, all the way south to Punta Gorda. For generations, fisher folk benefited from harvesting

fish, but did you know it wasn't until the 1920's that they became lobster trappers as well? At that time lobster were so abundant many old-timers tell the stories of how you could simply catch them from the beach!

Although the Caribbean Spiny Lobster were once regarded as 'trash fish' by the locals, that trash turned to treasure when the US market for the crustacean opened after North American

lobster numbers declined. In the first years of exportation, Belizean fishermen sold their lobster tails for one cent a pound! Of course the industry was advancing with the times, and motorized boats, along with the availability of ice allowed the fishermen to thrive. By the late 1940's the lobster industry grew to be the most lucrative marine export product, with freezer boats coming from the US, and new processing and cold storage facilities in Belize City. For the fisher folk, this meant full-time, year-round lobster fishing, and they were now getting five to seven cents a pound!

Back in the day lobster were so easy to catch that fisherman could catch up to 400 in one day, and as many as 2,000 lobster in a week! With this success, it became apparent that some sort of management was necessary to assure the viability of such a valuable resource, and the Fisheries Act of 1948 mandated that during the reproductive season it was illegal to harvest lobster between



February 15 to June 14th. The Act also stated that the carapace (the hard, upper shell) length had to be at least three inches in length, tail-weight had to be more than four ounces in weight, and that it was illegal to harvest 'berried' females (having eggs) or molting or soft shelled lobster.

Lobster traps were the first means of catching the crustaceans, and diving for them didn't begin until the late 1950s with the introduction of masks and fins. This innovation quickly took hold, allowing more men to

Continued on Page 17

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La Vida Lobster

Continued from Page 16



catch lobster easily and cheaply. Divers would swim the reef and rocks with hook sticks looking for lobsters hidden under rock crevices. When a lobster is spotted, the diver hooks its soft underside and then deposits the catch in his canoe-like dory. The diving is done without tanks at depths of five to thirty feet.

By the early 1950's, buyers started to increase payment for lobster; eventually coming to Ambergris Caye to buy directly from the fishermen, paying them up to \$1.25 to \$1.50 per pound. Although this was a significant increase in income, the lobster fishermen realized that the buyers were the ones making all the money, so in 1960 the first fishermen's cooperative was formed in Caye Caulker, called the Northern Fishermen's Cooperative Society. In 1963, Ambergris Caye followed suit and opened the Caribeña Producers Cooperative Society Limited. Once a week the lobsters were transported from the island to Belize City on a sail boat, and delivered to the Caribbean Queen Company in Belize City



where they were processed for export.

At one time lobster fishermen were some of the wealthiest people in Belize. In the 1980s, the average salary of a lobster fisher was five times greater than the average per capita income and twice the salary of civil servants! In addition to improved distribution of export earnings, the cooperatives provided financial support, through loans, allowing members to invest in technology, and local cooperatives gave local fishers access to the export market.

However, all this prosperity led

to over-harvesting the species, which by the late 1980's was all but fished out. Nowadays, during the closed season many lobster fishermen subsidize their income by harvesting conch, or work as tour and fishing guides. Some have abandoned the profession altogether.

As well-intentioned as fishing regulations are, enforcement remains a challenge, and over the years, harvest numbers have been on a steady decline. Due to the dwindling inventory, the cooperative on Ambergris Caye closed in February 2010. In an effort to boost the population and growth of lobster in the entire region, the Belize Fisheries Department joined the Harmonized Closed Lobster Season in 2010. Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama all share the same season dates now.

Even though harvests are smaller than the days of plenty, the Spiny Lobster remains one of the top marine exports for Belize. With earnings for the 2014-2015 season amounting to an estimated \$15,270,000BZ and a total of 484,891 pounds of lobster, this income is essential to the Belizean economy. This success certainly calls for celebration, and in July 1994 Caye Caulker was the first to honor the prosperity and culture of this tasty crustacean as a Lobster Festival. Placencia followed their lead in 1998, and in 2007 San Pedro Town on Ambergris Caye began hosting a lobster fest as well. These annual celebrations are huge draws for the tourism industry and enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

The lobster has certainly transitioned from the ugly duckling to the belle of the ball. From a fishermen's way of life, to becoming a vital part of Belize's economy and tourism, the success of our Spiny lobster is vital to our success countrywide.

Source and (black & white) photo credit:

San Pedro House of Culture

Yoga is an adventure!



Come play at Ak'bol

By Mary Gonzalez



At the end of a dock, there is a thatched structure overlooking some of the bluest water imaginable. Under the shade, a group of people transition from one position to the other, the soothing sound of their instructor's voice leading them. The objective? To center themselves...to relax...meditate...reflect...or simply get their daily stretch on.

This is yoga at Ak'bol. It is the quintessential Caribbean experience: lapping waves, blowing breeze, the scent of salt air at each inhale.

Open since 2008, Ak'bol Yoga Retreat has been offering yoga classes to visitors and residents alike. Owner Kirsten Miglio leads the classes; her students following her guidance and gentle teaching methods. She accommodates beginners through advanced yoga practitioners, happy to share the joy and adventure of yoga.

Yes, yoga is an adventure! There are so many styles and variations! Having tried yoga myself, I can attest to how HARD it can be to slow down and breathe deeply.



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Yoga at Ak'Bol Continued from Page 18

Sure, we live on an island, and enjoy sunny skies, lovely sea breeze, warm Caribbean waters, but we also work, and in my case, there is always a deadline. The first time I had to slow down during yoga, I realized just how shallow my breathing is. Learning to drag those breaths were possibly the most difficult part of the class... so don't let those complex asanas (postures) fool you...when you're having to breathe deep and exhale slow...suddenly, the downward dog...the head/handstand seem a breeze! But constant practice and listening to a nurturing teacher like Kirsten can help!

AkBol is pleased to invite drop-ins, and if you ever find your way 1 3/4 miles north of the bridge, take the beach route and try a class! And to really get into the game,

check out their retreats! Week-long retreats bring visitors from around the world to practice their yoga, explore and become one with Ambergris Caye. These visitors are happy to share their wisdom and yoga fun with drop-ins, who may just find a new passion. All ages and fitness levels are welcome to try any of the variety of classes offered during their retreat specials.

Upcoming retreats:

* 5th Annual Belize Yoga and Meditation Vacation with Kali Om, February 4-11, 2017

* A Yoga Retreat with Jill Sand Consulting, February 11-18, 2017

* Jivamukti Yogawood Retreat to Belize with Maiga, February 18-25, 2017

* YOGA IN PARADISE with Janine, February 25 – March 4, 2017

* Priya in Paradise: Belize Edition w/Ashley & Lisa March 4-11, 2017

* Centre Yoga Retreat to Belize March 11-18th 2017

* Breath, Body and Belize, March 18 -25, 2017

These are just a few of the retreats coming up! Be sure to check out their website at www.akbol.com to stay up to date with their plans. You can reach Ak'Bol via a short bike or golf-cart ride, and traveling by water taxi is also a great option – especially as you are dropped off directly at their pier. Contact them by phone: 226-2073 or 626-6296 or email them at akbolyoga@mac.com. Namaste!



*Even Maya
the dog has
her moves
down!*

The Fun Corner Wolfe's Woofers Happy and Mad

"Hey Mr. Dennis; I thought I would find you here."

I was sitting on the deck at the Holiday Hotel enjoying my morning coffee from Celi's Deli when Mario walked up to my table and sat down.

"Hello, Mario." I said. "Ooh, that is some black eye you got there. How did you get it?"

After he chugged down his beer he said. "I got this black eye for something I said. I had a chance to do a good job last week that paid two hundred dollars for one day but I got drunk the night before and I couldn't wake up. My friend Jaime got the job."

"That's a shame," I said.

"Yeah, Maria she give me hell. She said I should feel like an idiot. I told her 'no'; I feel happy and mad at the same time. I'm mad I didn't get the job but I'm happy for Jaime. She said that's stupid because you can't be happy and mad at the same time."

"I know what you're talking about," I said. "It's kind of like watching your mother-in-law drive over a cliff in your brand new car. But why did you get that black eye?"

"I told Maria that if somebody gave her a compliment she would be happy but she could be mad, too depending on what the compliment was. So I gave her a compliment and she banged me with the frying pan."

"I told her that out of her and all of her sisters she kisses the best."



By Dennis Wolfe

SuDoku Time!

Answers on Page 12

		6		4			7	8
	4						6	
	9	3			7	4		
	3	8			9	1	2	
			1		8			
	7	1	3			8	4	
		7	2			3	8	
		9					1	
4	1			3		5		

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