A man in a light blue long-sleeved shirt, blue patterned shorts, and a white cap is standing on the deck of a boat, casting a fly fishing line. The ocean is a vibrant turquoise color, and the sun is shining brightly in the sky, creating a lens flare effect. The boat's white hull is visible in the foreground.

Grand Slam!

Belize's fly fishing industry is in good hands

From the Editor *Tamara Sniffin*

Each year we find a thread of inspiration to focus on when publishing My Beautiful Belize. 2017 was our year of adventure, and even though rappelling down waterfalls, jumping out of perfectly good airplanes and swimming with sharks might come to mind, we had great fun finding adventure in making tortillas, crab races, souvenir shopping, celebrating chocolate, smoking cigars and sampling cheese and wine! The lesson learned? Everything in life can be an adventure, and it was a great lens to look through when crafting our stories last year.



As we began discussing our inspiration for the new year, it was suggested we shine a light on conservation. Just like the obvious subjects that came to mind when thinking about adventure, we were quick to associate conservation with the many non-profit organizations in Belize who are dedicated to protecting, preserving, rescuing and rehabilitating our precious wildlife. As the idea blossomed we grew more excited when we realized how far reaching the subject was. On the other hand, it was with great concern to consider how much is in need of safeguarding. As a diverse country rich with a variety of cultures, there are many efforts to preserve indigenous languages, customs, arts, music and even cultural foods. And geographically there are those who champion for the preservation of our glorious jungle landscapes, precious Meso-American Barrier Reef, hardwood forests and vast savannahs. Throughout 2018 we look forward to sharing some of these inspiring stories with you.

There is so much to value and protect within in our tiny country, and while you are visiting our stunning home chances are you will appreciate why it is important to care for these national treasures. They are the very soul of My Beautiful Belize and worthy of preserving for generations to come.

For ad rates and story opportunities, email us at : hello@mybeautifulbelize.com

For detailed stories and many more beautiful photos, visit www.mybeautifulbelize.com

Published by *The San Pedro Sun LTD.*



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.

IN THIS ISSUE:

The Passion of Fly Fishing:

When a 3rd generation fly-fisherman beckons, Mary takes the day off to try her hand at casting, reeling, and a lot of learning about what makes our fly fishing guides tick. P. 3

Recado:

The signature brick-red color on a lot of our Belize cuisine comes from a paste known as the recado - it's the perfect condiment to add to your kitchen! P. 11

Defending the manatees

People from all walks of life can make a difference in the world. Belize is blessed to count Jamal Galves, the Manatee Man, among this elite crowd. P. 12

Cocktail Time:

What do you get when you mix pineapple juice and coconut rum? Find out on P. 14

Guessing Games:

Our new feature should be fun for eagle-eyed travelers. Let us know if you can guess where this place is! #whereinbelize P. 15

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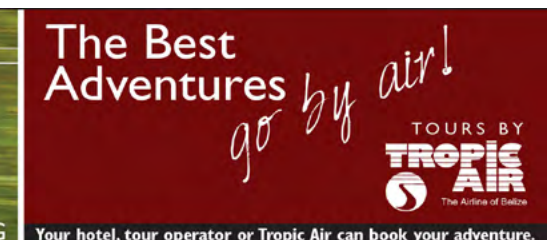
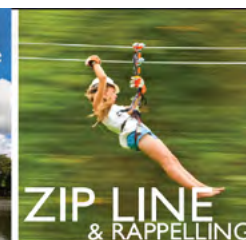
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A glimpse at the passion behind Fly Fishing in Belize



*I'm having the BEST...DAY...EVER.
It's the middle of the work week, and I'm on a boat; the sun beats down mercilessly as we search for the coveted permit, tarpon, and bonefish. I am laughing uproariously with my guide and friend Alexander Gomez, and new best friend, Captain Michael Peralta. Despite being the saltiest guest ever (I mean, could the fish avoid me any harder?!), I'm having a blast fishing – something I never thought I would ever do willingly. Yet by day's end, I'm in love, grateful that I had a chance to watch the masters at work fly fishing.*

Passion

The moment I mentioned to Alex that I was interested in doing this story, his enthusiasm was off the charts. Never mind that the entire conversation lasted a minute and took place inside a bar after downing way too many Belikins. He did not forget, and as a matter of fact, neither did I. He was excited to introduce me to his mistress: the sea – and his enthusiasm was infectious. I couldn't wait to see him in action, so we set a date.

Then the north winds hit. One day after the next turned into another postponement until finally, I bit the bullet and left the office mid-week to go fishing (OMG, alert the presses!). It was the best Christmas present ever. Thanks to El Pescador Fishing Lodge, Alex was able to get Captain Mike to join us, so he could give me his full attention, and get me to at least reel in one of the three protected flats species: permit, bonefish or tarpon.

Natural Instinct

As the least experienced fisherwoman on earth, reef, deep-sea or flat, the entire day is a lesson. I'm amazed at the men's keen sight and instinct. There is no doubt about it, their grace as they make their way around the boat, Captain Mike easily balancing on the platform as he poles gently through the low waters in the Bacalar Chico area. Alex is at the bow of the moving boat, fishing pole in hand and looking around with intent. I'm seated, waiting for something to happen, because all along the way, Alex

has been telling me of the various spots with guaranteed permit sightings. We had passed the bonefish and tarpon spots but would return to them. For now, it's permit time.

Their eyes roam all across the waters while I'm looking at the rolling waves, almost hypnotized by the undulations. Just as I start to wonder if my face will take on a killer tan line like the guys', Alex excitedly points to a spot just ahead. I look and see ripples of waves, the same I'd noticed closer to the boat. *They were not the same.* Clearly, years of being on the water, raised by a fisherman father and grandfather, a lifetime spent in the embrace of the silken Caribbean had taught these guides all the subtle nuances. It's ingrained in them. I keep looking at where he's pointing, and suddenly black tails flash under the sun, their glint sudden and gone as quickly as it came.

The boat heaves with action, as Mike secures it while Alex begins prepping to cast. It's our first attempt and having zero experience with casting, I'm apparently going to reel them in instead. I obviously have a long way to go, but I'm enthusiastic and ready for whatever. Alex casts out and I study the movement closely, wondering if I'll ever be able to do it myself someday. It's a waiting game on the flats, and despite a sighting, the fish were not biting. Not ready to give up, we move through a variety of spots and stalk. We're as quiet as possible, not wanting to spook any of the potential catches, and

Continued on Page 4

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The Passion for Fly Fishing

Continued from Page 3



I'm reminded of my grandfather's stories of hunting. They would be gone for a few days, camped out deep in the Maya Mountains, stalking their prey as silently as possible, only firing when one was in sight. It was the same on the water, a waiting game, a silent stake-out under the sun, eyes trained on the waters for just one subtle movement before a line is cast in hopes of reeling in the prey.

We don't give up, but we decide to move to a different spot. The boat is coasting along when suddenly Captain Mike swerves the boat with a shout. I'm slack-jawed – **HOW** did he notice? Once again, I'm humbled as I realize that while words may be my forte, they will never come close to detailing the passion and instinct that these men, and their counterparts, have on the water.

I do finally catch glimpses of ripples and sudden movements, and even join them in the water as they stalk on foot, casting and reeling in, but there is no bite. "I told you I'm salty," I laughingly tell Alex. He grins as he agrees, "Estas bien salada!" I take no offense, as I am the equivalent of a banana on a fishing boat – already resigned to the fact that there shall be no grand slam that day.

Instead, we move on to a channel flanked by mangroves, where I'm told the bonefish await. I learn so much more about mangroves while we plot our next move, as Alex has a passion for all that is the waters and its inhabitants. When the hook is set and the line is cast, I get to hold the reel. It had to be tortuous watching me botch the simple act of reeling in line, but eventually, I actually feel a tug. Any slump I'd felt at my previous failures is gone, and I'm excitedly pulling, tugging, letting the fish pull back...then tugging and reeling again. Eventually, the bonefish draws insight and I can't believe it – my first catch! Well, technically, it was a joint effort but still, I'm pretty proud.

We take the requisite photo of my tiny fish and I, then it gets released with

a million apologies on my behalf. We try one more cast and I feel another tug...I land a tiny snapper that we quickly release, and then it's time to go looking for the tarpon. From everything I've read and heard, they can get pretty big (I'm talking 200-pounders) so I'm beyond curious to see what will happen.

We cruise into gorgeous turquoise waters, all part of the Hol Chan Marine Reserve, and Mike and Alex explain that the entire area we're trolling is like a "Tarpon Highway". I'm envisioning schools of them just whizzing by – oh, how naïve I am! Like with the permit, it's a waiting game, and I've been instructed to keep an eye out for a certain movement that Mike describes as a bit of a slow, elongated shadow moving with purpose. He poles the boat around as I start straining my eyes, and far in the distance, we realize there's another fishing boat. The hunt is on for tarpon, and I'm hoping against hope we at least sight one. After an agonizingly long wait, we have to accept that one bonefish may be my only catch of the day. I'm more than happy with that score, as it means I just have to return to the flats. I decide to wash away my bad fishing luck by jumping into the water for a quick swim before returning to El Pescador Lodge.

Continued on Page 6



El Pescador Lodge makes catching your first fish extra special by rewarding you with a pin. With the bonefish pin secured, I've now made it my mission to collect the remaining two: permit and tarpon.

| | |
|--|---|
| December 21 @ 7pm. Ugly Sweater Party! DJ-prizes-giveaways | Sundays 4pm: Live Music (Cover Band) |
| | Mondays 12pm: Guitar JAM circle 8pm: Live Reggae |
| | Tuesdays 6:30pm: Hermit Crab Races & Live Music |
| | Wednesdays 4pm: Live Music |
| | Thursdays 2pm: Paint 'n Splash |
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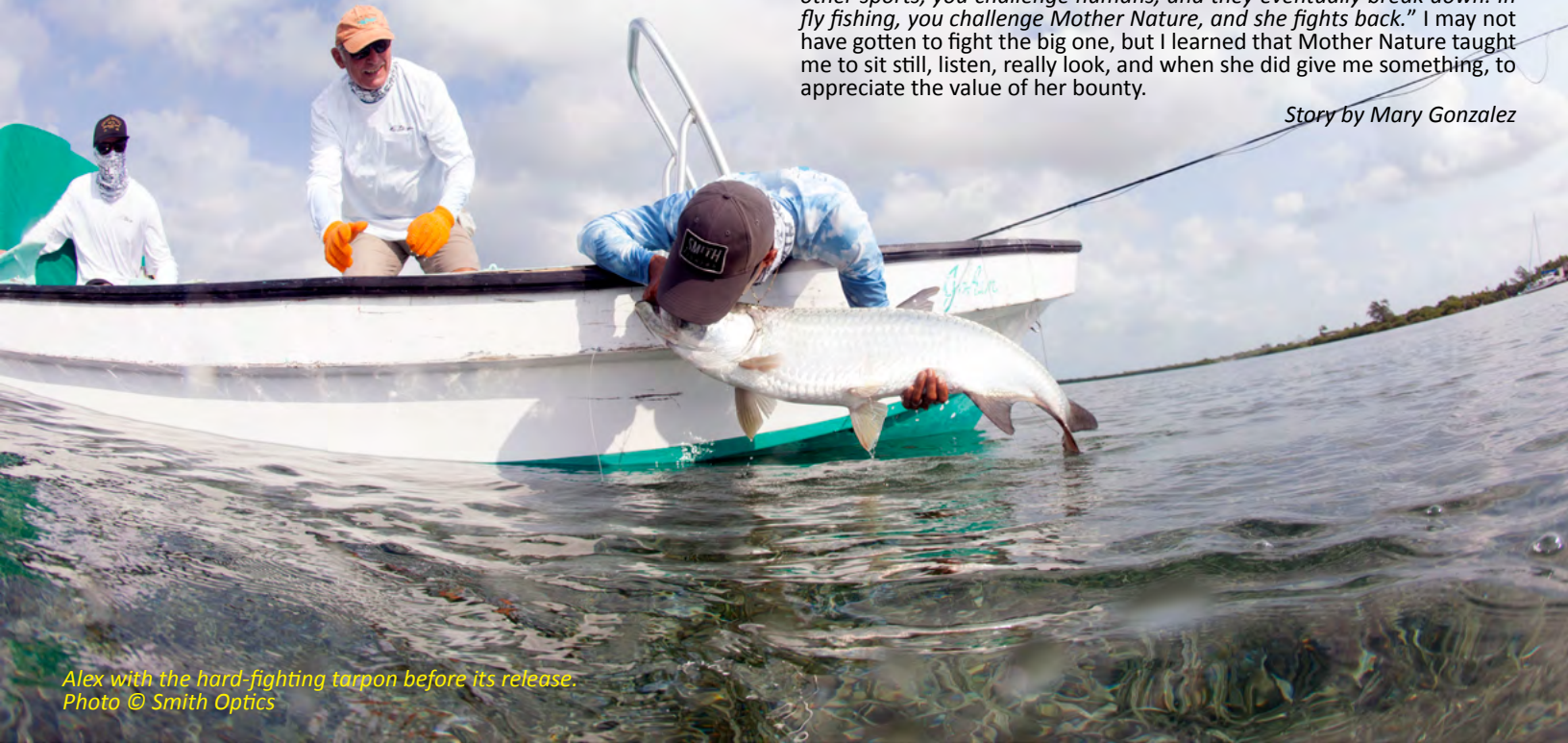
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The Passion for Fly Fishing

Continued from Page 3

On the boat ride to the lodge, I think back to one of the first things Alex told me as the trip started. Fly Fishing is a sport, and one of the most challenging in his opinion. When I questioned his reasoning, he said, "In other sports, you challenge humans, and they eventually break down. In fly fishing, you challenge Mother Nature, and she fights back." I may not have gotten to fight the big one, but I learned that Mother Nature taught me to sit still, listen, really look, and when she did give me something, to appreciate the value of her bounty.

Story by Mary Gonzalez



Alex with the hard-fighting tarpon before its release.
Photo © Smith Optics



Alexander Gomez is a third generation fly fisherman, learning at the hands of his father and grandfather. His children Evan, Bella Flor and Aleya are equally enamored of the sport, and of the Caribbean Sea, taking every opportunity to join him aboard the Silver King for the best days ever. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and passion with My Beautiful Belize!



About El Pescador Lodge

El Pescador was one of the many entities in Belize that worked tirelessly to enact legislation that brought about the protection of the bonefish, permit and tarpon species in Belize. The law was made official on September 26, 2009, designating the three species as 'Catch and Release' fishing only.

El Pescador is the premier fishing lodge in Belize, located in North Ambergris Caye. With access to hundreds of miles of fishery, experienced guides – many who span generations, your fishing expedition in Belize is in excellent hands. Their lodge is located beachside along a gorgeous expanse of white sand, and after a day of fishing, there's nothing better than a refreshing beverage, a dip in the pool, or a game of pool inside by the bar. Comfortable rooms and fresh cuisine on-site make for the perfect fishing getaway.

Contact them at 501-226-2389 or online at www.elpescador.com / info@elpescador.com.

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EAT



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CROCS SUNSET SPORTS BAR: The newest bar north of the bridge, with refreshing cocktails, bar food, killer sunset views and all the games on large-screen TVs. Book upstairs bar for private events. Open from 11am everyday.



THE TRUCK STOP: Belize's first shipping container food park. Come try the different exciting options from our food trucks, play backyard games, or cool off with a sundae from our ice cream shop. Pig roast & cornhole tournament every Sunday!



- Belizean Comfort Foods and Gourmet Seafood. One Mile North of the Bridge, at the island's only Yoga Center. Fresh, is the order of the day! Gourmet Dishes by Master Chef JoVannie Rowland, menu changes daily. Imported Wines, Seafood and Pasta. 7 days.

AJI TAPA BAR RESTAURANT: Beachfront dining in a romantic setting. One of a kind 5-Star Tapa Bar and Restaurant situated on the enchanting island of Ambergris Caye. Have a cocktail in our bar, or bring the family to dine in our outdoor beachfront restaurant. Open Mon to Wed 5PM-10PM +501-226-4047 for reservations.



PORTOFINO RESTAURANT - Enjoy our Euro-Caribbean inspired menu and spectacular Caribbean views. Also offering a full VEGETARIAN Menu. For Reservations & Free Transportation, please call 226-5096 or 678-5096.



PIRATE'S NOT SO SECRET BEACH BAR & GRILL: The newest trending destination; adventure to SECRET BEACH! Soak up the sun or take a dip in crystal clear shallow waters accompanied with island music, refreshing cocktails, gourmet lunch menu by AWARD WINNING CHEF. Credit Cards Accepted. Open daily 10am to SUNSET!

MAMBO RESTAURANT - Enjoy a unique dining experience at this award-winning restaurant at Matancha 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.

PLAY



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



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.



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!



THE GREEN PARROT - Eats and treats. Relax on the patio, sip your favorite island drink gaze out at the azure Caribbean Sea, take a dip in the pool and enjoy our great beach bar. Friendly staff always on hand 6 miles north of town. Open daily from 9AM-9PM. For complimentary boat transportation please call 226-5096/ 678-5096.

WHITE SANDS DIVE SHOP: A PADI 5 star Dive shop in San Pedro Town on Ambergris Caye teaching scuba diving and certifying divers, as well as providing daily Diving and Snorkeling adventures to the beautiful Belize Barrier Reef. Scheduled (local) departures are at 9:00AM, and they pick you up at the hotel dock. 226-2405.

SHOP



MATA GRANDE GROCERY The biggest little grocery store on Ambergris Caye, located 4.5 miles North of San Pedro Town, it's a must see! Open Monday-Saturday 8AM-5PM; Sunday 10AM-5PM. You can also order online at www.matagrandegrocery.com or call us at 226-4290.... we DELIVER!

SuDoku Time!

Answers on Page 15

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EATS & TREATS

EL FOGON: Authentic Belizean Cuisine prepared on a fire hearth. Featuring dishes that represent the diversity of our Belizean culture. Lunch menu and daily dinner specials. Open Mon. – Sat. 11AM – 9PM 206-2121/610-1277 See map for our location!



BOOMERS: Fabulous Cafe' Bar and Grill serving American and Belizean breakfast, lunch, dinner and daily specials. Now in a great NEW LOCATION at Carlo & Ernie's Runway Bar. Same great food and service that you have come to love! 226-2299.

CALIENTE: On the beach at Spindrift, Caliente Restaurant serves delicious Caribbean and Mexican cuisine. Try our Jalisco chicken, or our awesome ceviche and don't skip the fabulous margaritas (half-off on Fridays!) Indoor and outdoor dining available. Locally owned/family run. 226-2170.



MAXI'S: "A little epicurean art for a fraction of the price! Everything is simply amazing; it's difficult to have a favorite." Maxi's offers tasty eats and fantastic drinks. Tuesday – Saturday, 7AM-11AM/ 3PM-12AM. Sundays, 10AM-10PM. Breakfasts: 7AM – 11AM Tuesday-Saturday, 10AM-1PM Sundays. Barrier Reef Drive, 226-2052.

THE SAN PEDRO LIONS CLUB Join us on Fridays for fun bingo (7PM) and delicious chicken BBQ (from noon). All proceeds go back to assisting the community in times of need.



SANDBAR: BEST PIZZAS ON THE ISLAND! Sandbar hosts an amazing happy hour special: \$10BZD wood-fired pizzas and 2-for-1 rums on weekdays (3-6PM) and beer and wing specials on the weekend (11am-4pm). Enjoy your afternoon or evening at the bar, tables, or chaise lounges on the beach!



FINN AND MARTINI: The only Martini house in Belize. Serving International cuisine with local infusion in a chic and eclectic setting. We are Fodor's 2017 top choice. Visit our Facebook page for hours or call 623-4789 for reservations.

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

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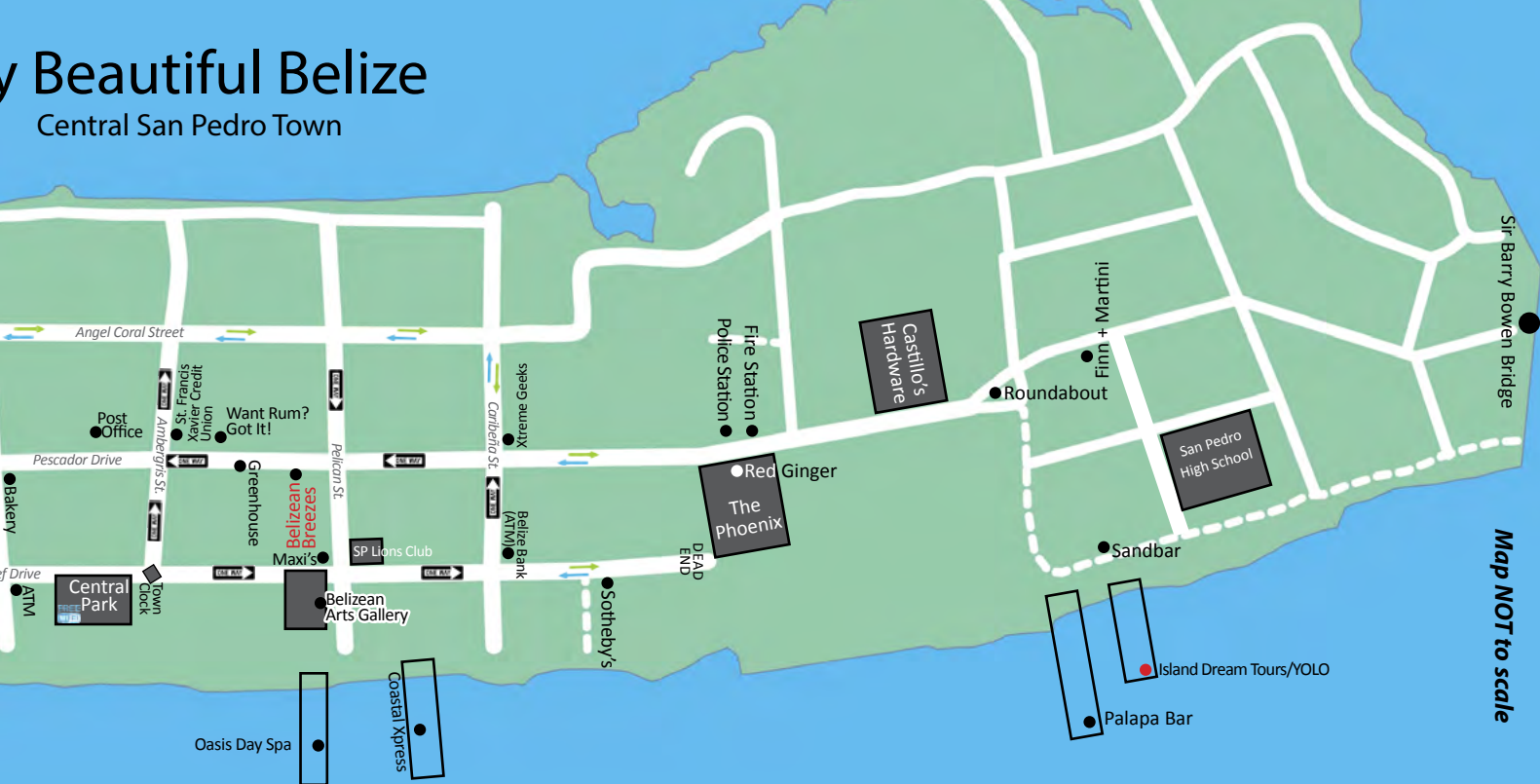
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SAN PEDRO ARTISANS MARKET: Over 20 booths featuring local arts and crafts. Wood carvings, jewelry, paintings, sculptures, souvenirs and much more. Open daily from 8AM until 9PM. Located on Angel Coral Street across from the Hon. Louis Sylvestre Stadium.

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PALAPA BAR AND GRILL – On the Wet Willy's Dock. Daily 11am – 11pm. Relax on the inner-tubes and have your bucket of ice cold beers lowered to you. Outdoor seating, awesome smoked food, cheeseburgers, seafood and tropical drinks and an astonishing view!





EATS & TREATS



THE COCONUT CAFÉ: Life's better when it's made from scratch! The Coconut Cafe offers breakfast all day, as well as pizzas, paninis and burritos/wraps. We make all of our own breads, pies and cinnamon rolls from scratch.

Open daily from 7-3, closed Wednesdays. Located just south of town, on Coconut Drive, across from Road Kill Bar. 226-4311.



TROPICANA BAR & GRILL: Fine dining in a casual setting. Dine outdoors under our palapa, or upscale your experience and enjoy our New York steakhouse-themed dining room. Daily dinner and drink specials. Dinner 5PM - 10PM. Reservations recommended: 226.2992.

CASA PICASSO RESTAURANT: Tapas dining in an artful setting. Global flavors from local ingredients...martinis, wines, cocktails. Vegetarian & gluten-free options. Open Tuesday-Saturday at 5:30pm. Last reservations 9:00pm. 226-4443 or reservations@casapicassobelize.com. Located south of town past Caribeña Gas Station & Belikin Distributor. Check out our specials & weekly "Tasting Thursday" menu at facebook.com/CasaPicassoBelize & casapicassobelize.com.



EI DIVINO CARIBBEAN STEAKHOUSE & MARTINI BAR: *Nominated for Restaurant of the Year 2016 by BTB!* Banana Beach's signature restaurant, featuring indoor and outdoor dining and sports

lounge. Serving USDA meats, wood fired pizza, fresh seafood, pastas... locals LOVE our ceviche! Daily dinner and drink specials, Happy Hour from 3-7pm. 226-2444.

THE PALMILLA RESTAURANT AT VICTORIA HOUSE: A casual experience with a unique mix of island seafood and continental cuisine. Relaxed and informal yet romantic. Admiral Nelson Bar is the place to be casual and relax in your swimsuit, enjoying breakfast, lunch and dinner with magnificent views. Reservations recommended: 226-2067.



BLACK ORCHID RESTAURANT & LOUNGE: Come visit us; just a quick Golf Cart Ride 2 1/2 miles South of Town after the Croc Pond Lagoon and well before the Marco Gonzalez Maya Site. Open Tuesday through Saturday; Happy Hour: 3PM-5PM, Dinner: 5:30-9PM. Reservations Recommended (501) 206-2441. www.blackorchidrestaurant.com.

PARTY PARTY!

CRAZY CANUCKS BEACH BAR: Beach bar located at Exotic Caye Beach Resort. Open daily 11am-midnight. Bar food and daily drink specials. Mondays: Live reggae @8pm Tuesdays: Live Music & Hermit Crab Racing @6:30pm Thursdays: Paint n Splash @2pm Fridays: Trivia @7pm Karaoke @8:30pm Sundays: Live music/horseshoes @3pm Follow us on Facebook. Phone: 670-8001

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UNIQUE OFFERINGS



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Recado

Adding color to our Belizean cuisine

It's an essential staple in Belizean kitchens, and responsible for that special color in the chicken that tops our national dish. Recado is distinctive in both color and taste, adding a rich hue to meats and gravies. Also known as achiote paste, recado is a combination of rich spices, based around the annatto seeds that give it the rich red color. Joining the delightful combination is oregano, cumin, cinnamon, black pepper, allspice, garlic, salt and for some, the creamy texture comes from masa (corn dough).

For as long as I've been around Belizean kitchens, whether they be top-of-the-line modern or the modest fire hearth, dirt floor, thatch roofed open air fogon spaces, there's always been a block or hunk of red paste nearby. Those delicious salbutes and panades that we happily munch on? Their orangey hue comes from the addition of a small bit of recado in the corn dough. Meats are marinated in a combination of spices, with a final rubdown of recado all over, so when the smoke and heat hit it, it takes on a golden brown hue that has a unique flavor all to its own.

No matter how many different ways one prepares their stewed chicken, chances are, the cook of the day has at least three fingertips dyed red from dissolving a piece of recado in water to make its gravy. It's an integral part of our Belizean cuisine, used in a variety of ways to bring out color and flavor to every bite. Belize has a variety of pre-packaged recado, and it's a great souvenir to take back so you can recreate your favorite bites from Belize!

Stewed Chicken

Ingredients:

1 large chicken (4lbs) cut into pieces
Seasonings of choice: seasoned salt, chili powder, complete seasoning/sazon completa, fresh cracked black pepper
1 medium bell pepper, diced
1 small onion, diced
1 clove garlic, minced
1-inch cube of recado

Directions:

Rinse and season chicken with spices of choice.
Sauté diced onions, peppers and garlic in a large pan with a heated tablespoon of vegetable oil. Once translucent and fragrant, toss in the chicken cuts, tossing till they're browned. Cover the pan to create some steam.
After about 5 minutes, lower the flame to medium heat. Chicken will steam and create its own gravy for about 10 more minutes.
While that happens, dissolve recado in a small bowl with some water, pinching between thumb, index and middle fingers.
Add dissolved recado to chicken, mixing it thoroughly so all pieces are coated and can start creating that special flavor.
Cover pan and simmer for approximately 20 minutes, stirring every so often to prevent sticking.
Taste towards the end, adding salt if necessary.
Serve over rice (or rice and beans!)



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Paintings Jewelry Decor Crafts





Across the globe, there are non-profit organizations that are dedicated to conservation. Powered by selfless individuals who are dedicated to the cause nearest and dearest to their hearts, there are shining stars within the constellation of people who work hard to make a difference in this troubled world. Be it the preservation of endangered flora and fauna, to keeping native languages, cultures, music and the arts alive, each person is an essential cog in the wheel of conservation. Belize is blessed with many such organizations, and although it takes a collective group to accomplish the many challenges before them, often there are those who inspire others to share the same commitment. In this monthly series, we spotlight one of these outstanding individuals.

When you look into the eyes
of an orphaned calf or an
adult after being hit by a boat
and barely alive, I see in their
eyes four words unspoken,
'I'm grateful for you'.

- Jamal Galves



Jamal Galves - Defender of the Manatees

Jamal Galves grew up in Gales Point, a fishing and farming village on a peninsula in the Southern Lagoon area of the Belize District. Located within a huge estuary system of rivers, creeks, and channels, the region is prime habitat for the Antillean manatee, an endangered subspecies of manatee found in the Caribbean Sea. Jamal was too young to remember the first time he saw a manatee, a common sight along the still waters of the lagoon, but he will never forget the day in 1998, when fascinated by the fancy research boat he admired from afar, he walked to the dock and asked Dr. James "Buddy" Powell (now his boss) to take him out with them on the Sea to Shore Alliance research boat to study manatees. "I had no experience, no training and little knowledge of manatees. But what I had was a willing heart, determination and a body fueled with care. He [Dr. Powell] saw that in me, and at 11 years old and barely 4 feet tall, he took a chance on a kid he didn't even know," recalls Jamal.

Over the years Jamal volunteered every opportunity he had to work with Dr. Powell and United States Geological Survey scientist Robert Bonde. He was immediately hooked, and while his classmates were busy doing the usual kid thing, Jamal spent his weekends and holidays working with the renowned scientists while they monitored and fed two manatees that were in their final stages of rehabilitation. It wasn't long before Jamal was a citizen-scientist, helping to track the manatees after their release and learning how to take the necessary health assessments of the animals.

After finishing high school, Jamal continued to volunteer with Sea to Shore Alliance, working closely with biologist Nicole Auil Gomez. Eventually, he was offered a full-time position as Program Coordinator for the Belize Manatee Project, continuing his dream of protecting wildlife. Jamal's responsibilities include addressing and responding to any manatee-related incidents in the entire country of Belize; capturing, tagging, and tracking manatees; collecting data; release and monitoring



Jamal Galves – aka the Manatee Man
Belize Manatee Project Program Coordinator
Sea to Shore Alliance

of rehabilitated manatees in the wild; and educational outreach and awareness.

In 2005 Nicole Auil Gomez's research concluded that there were approximately 1,000 Antillean manatees left in Belize. Once traditionally hunted by indigenous people, their numbers are now declining primarily due to boat strikes that cause death or injury when captains disregard the no-wake zones in manatee habitats. Habitat degradation, entanglement in fishing gear and poaching also contributes to their dwindling numbers.

In 2014, Jamal's dedication and passion were rewarded with the prestigious Ocean Hero Award by Oceana Belize, and the same year was also recognized by the government of Belize with a meritorious award for his contribution to conserving the manatees of Belize. For Jamal, his greatest honor is helping these animals. "What rewards me the most is that these animals aren't deaf or mute, they just speak differently...to humans, they are considered to be deaf or mute, simply because they are not like us. However, when you look into the eyes of an orphaned calf after two nights lost and alone or an adult after being hit by a boat and barely alive I see in their eyes four words unspoken, 'I'm grateful for you'. This is what convinces me that I am making a difference! Those that are deaf and mute speak such a beautiful language, but we must listen and

care to hear them," Jamal commented.

According to Sea to Shore Alliance there were 40 manatee strandings in 2017. This includes dead, alive or rescued, with most sustaining fatal or life threatening injuries from boat collisions. Jamal, now aptly known as the 'Manatee Man', is often the first-responder to these heartbreaking incidents. "What frustrates me the most is the folks that make a living off our environment and our wildlife yet they don't seem to appreciate it and are the ones causing the biggest impact. I can't understand how can we hear of a species being endangered and dying and not find within ourselves the care to do our part," reflects a thoughtful Jamal. "If I could have one prayer answered it would be that care is instilled in all humans. If that is possible, the world will be a better place. First, we need to care for each other for us to be able to care for other species and the environment. Today I have grown up to be an OK guy with a heart for the things that can't help, defend or speak for themselves. You're never too old or young to be inspired or to inspire others, and most definitely never too old or young to care...what we do with it is determined by us."

Jamal lives in centrally located Belmopan where he is able to respond to manatee incidences countrywide. Always the animal lover, he lives with his beloved dog Sony and his girlfriend Oceana environment-defender and their greatest volunteer, Celeshia Guy. For more information about efforts to protect manatees in Belize please visit Sea to Shore Alliance's website at <http://sea2shore.org/>

Photos courtesy dodo.com and Sea to Shore Alliance

Story by Tamara Sniffin

*****Waterfront Dining

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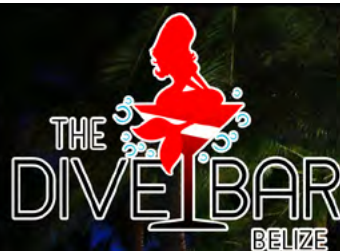
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You know those disclaimers you hear on TV when you watch a car speeding down a raceway or some death-defying act of craziness and the voice-over states, "These stunts are performed by trained professionals, don't try this at home." Well, yes we have asked Jason Williams, a professional bartender at Caprice Bar to demonstrate the art of making the perfect Pantí Rippa, but by all means PLEASE try this at home. We've even used Del Monte Pineapple juice to show that even if you live in Duluth, Minnesota you can imbibe in this tropical taste of heaven from the comfort of your own home! Heck stoke up the fireplace or crank the heat, put on some reggaeton music and bring in the lawn chairs! After a few sips of this Belizean libation, you just need to close your eyes and you're instantly back on the beach with sand between your toes!

Any brand of coconut rum will do. My personal favorite is the Caribbean Coconut which is mastered by Cuello's Distillery in Orange Walk Town. It makes a great souvenir to take home after your vacation in Belize, but the beauty of a Pantí Rippa is that you can use any brand of coconut rum, and to make things even easier, any pineapple juice works and any shaker does the job. Who needs a fancy martini shaker when two glasses together or a mayo jar with the lid on does the trick? This Caribbean cocktail just might be the simplest, two-ingredient libation on the planet!



Add ice to your shaker, add coconut rum, 1/3rd rum to 2/3rd juice is a good balance, and shake, shake, shake! Pour the frothy happiness into the glass of your choice and voilà, you be jammin' Belize style. The only disclaimer here is to please drink responsibly and be sure to invite your friends for a taste of Pantí Rippa bliss! While visiting our country, be sure to sample this island mainstay and remember, it's super fun to feel like James Bond when you order it shaken, not stirred!

OUR FAVORITE WAY TO ENJOY THIS ISLAND COCKTAIL

The Pantí Rippa



Story by Tamara Sniffin

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Where in Belize...



Photo by: Clara Alberio

Despite its relatively small square mileage, a lot of Belize remains a mystery. There are so many hidden nooks that may never be discovered by all. We can't tell you how often it is we take the wrong turn down a dirt road, only to find ourselves feeling like we're in a whole new world. It's the beauty of exploring a place that remains relatively undeveloped, and if you're up for the adventure, who knows where you'll end up!

This month's mystery location is a beauty (as are many of the places we hope to bring to light), and we're hoping that some of you may actually know of, or have visited it before. Thus, we are posting a poll on our Facebook page to see if our readers can guess correctly!

To find out where exactly it is, and how to get there, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @mybeautifulbelize, using the hashtag #whereinbelize. We can't wait to see your guesses!

January in Belize

January 7th – Maya Epigraphy Training at Nuuk Cheil Cottages, Maya Center Village from 8AM to 4PM

January 18th – Opening of the NEBL 2018 Season at University of Belize Auditorium, Belmopan City starting at 8PM

January 19th to January 21st – Gasoline Lollipop Returns to Belize at The Dive, North Ambergris Caye starting at 8PM each day



January 27th – Belize Defence Force Day at Price Barracks, Ladyville Village starting at noon

January 27th – 7th Annual Bob Marley Tribute at Muffles College Auditorium, Orange Walk Town starting at 6PM

January 28th – Cayo Race for Conservation starting at Belize Wildlife & Referral Clinic, Mile 60 George Price Highway from 6PM

February 2nd – Belize Yoga Adventure at The Sacred Healing Center, Tower Hill, Orange Walk Districts starting at noon

Wolfe's Woofers

The Collar

"Time for you to take your shower and get ready," Sherry said.

"Ready? Ready for what?"

"We're having dinner at Denise and John's house. Remember?"

"Oh, no," I said. "I forgot all about it. Melody called while you were gone this morning and roped me into taking care of Davin this evening."

It was too late to get out of that commitment because there was a knock on the door and Melody came in like a whirlwind.

"Thank you so much," she said, giving me a hug. "You're the best grandpa ever."

"You only say that when you want me to babysit."

"All right," Sherry said. "I called Denise and she says bringing Davin is no problem. It's time to get dressed."

"What's the occasion for a dinner party?" I asked.

"John's brother, Martin, is a priest. He's on the island for a short visit on his way from Peru to the U.S."

Davin was very well behaved at dinner. As a matter of fact, I was worried about him being so quiet until I realized that he spent the best part of the meal staring at the priest.

Finally, Martin said, "Davin, we weren't properly introduced. I'm Father Martin."

"Uh. Hello," Davin said.

"I couldn't help notice you staring at my collar all evening. Am I right?"

"Uh. Yes, sir. That thing you're wearing around your neck."

"And do you know why I wear it around my neck?"

Davin nodded his head.

"Yes, sir. Because it kills fleas and ticks for up to three months."



By Dennis Wolfe

Sudoku Answers Puzzle on Page 7

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

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