



Bringing people together through the  
Preservation of Culture



# From the Editor *Tamara Sniffin*



I love Christmas in the Caribbean. While others love the holiday spent in a snowy wonderland, there's nothing like hanging a string of lights on a coconut tree while wearing shorts and bug spray! Palm trees wrapped in lights with colors dripping from their fronds are just so pretty.

Of course holiday meals are the best, and there's nothing better than grilled lobster for that special dinner instead of boring old ham or turkey! Another favorite? Rum Popo! This sweet and creamy liqueur has a boozy kick and is super yummy over

ice, as a shot or added to coffee.

On the mainland Christmas Brams are celebrated by the Kriol culture, where people make their way through the streets singing and playing Brukdong music while dancing from house to house. The Garifuna culture normally reserves Wanaragua or Jankunu for Christmas afternoon, when dancers dress to reenact oppressive European slave masters.

However you choose to 'holiday' while visiting our country, chances are you'll get a proper dose of Christmas in the Caribbean. Enjoy our food, traditions and celebrations. We welcome you to My Beautiful Belize and wish you a Happy Holiday!

## About the front page:

Established in 2001, the San Antonio Women's Group started when a group of like-minded women decided to share experiences while gathered to share chores, working together sewing, embroidering pieces, and even cooking. Eventually, they were able to streamline their idea and thus their tours were born. In 2018, they will have hosted over 1000 visitors. That is a lot of tamales and tortillas!

[www.mybeautifulbelize.com](http://www.mybeautifulbelize.com)

## Wolfe's Woofers Hair Remover

"Who's a good girl?" Sherry said, to her little dog. "Ladybug's a good girl—that's who."

"Stop treating that mutt like a person," I said.

"What do you mean—mutt? Ladybug is a pure-bred miniature Schnauzer."

"Most people don't even know what a Schnauzer is," I said. "To me, a Schnauzer is a hairy little yapping dog."

"Speaking of hairs," Sherry said. "I need to get rid of that hair in her ears. Take me to the drugstore and I'll get some hair remover."

"I need a depilatory cream," she told the young lady behind the drugstore counter.

The girl looked confused.

"We got pills," she said, "But what's a depilatory?"

"A depilatory is something for removing hair," Sherry told her.

"Oh, you mean hair remover," the girl said.

She pulled a jar from the shelf behind her.

"This is the only hair remover we have in stock right now," she said. "But this one is especially strong."

"Is it dangerous?"

"No, but it can irritate the skin. If you use it under your arms, it's best to wear a sleeveless blouse for a few days so it doesn't get the skin inflamed. If you use it on your legs, you should wear a dress for a while."

"I don't need it for my underarms or my legs," Sherry said. "It's for my Schnauzer."

"In that case you shouldn't ride a bike for a week."



By Dennis Wolfe

## IN THIS ISSUE:

**Sharing Traditions:** Belizeans love sharing their culture and traditions to those willing to learn, and our Maya heritage is one of great pride! From making chocolate to cooking and pottery, you can learn a lot in 1 day! P. 3

**Exploring a favorite:** Being able to see the inner workings of a favorite pizzeria is a highlight for us this month! P. 6

**Unexpected treats:** Not just breads and cakes! Belizeans also enjoy some different desserts during the holidays, like the sweet potato pound! P. 11

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**Matachica's new look:** Who dis? Matachica has a fantastic new look, complete with upgrades lounging spaces and the coolest tree bar, where bottles of liquor nestle in branches, waiting for you to indulge! P. 14

**Where in Belize?** Have you tried our guessing games? We're having fun with it! P. 15

## What and Where in Belize...

### Belmopan City, Cayo



#### WHERE?

While no-one can actually say what this cluster of interesting structures is, we can share that it is in **Belmopan City, Cayo**!

#### WHAT?

Gordon Kirkwood shared this photo of a tiny **Spinyhead Blenny** sticking its head out of a hole in the coral.

To join our guessing game, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @mybeautifulbelize, using the hashtag #whereinbelize.

You can also send us your images of mystery locations to add to our guessing game! Send them to [hello@mybeautifulbelize.com](mailto:hello@mybeautifulbelize.com) and join the fun!

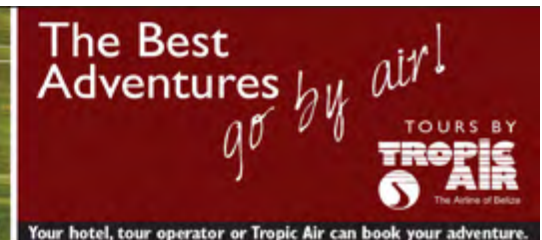
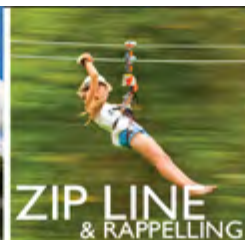
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For detailed stories and many more beautiful photos, visit [www.mybeautifulbelize.com](http://www.mybeautifulbelize.com)

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# Tradition and Heritage: Belizeans are bringing both to the modern world

In 2015, researchers made major discoveries at Nim Li Punit Maya archaeological site, in the southernmost district of Belize, Toledo. Within one of its pyramids, two buried tombs were discovered by one team member and first-year graduate of The University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Maya Azarova, and a team led by Dr. Geoffrey Braswell. Besides unearthing Stelae, eight pieces of jade and 26 ceramic pots were found within the tombs, and the biggest find of all: a jade pendant as big as a human heart! The pendant was once worn by the king/ruler during the classic bloodletting ceremonies. Its illustrations reveal that it was taken to Nim Li Punit by Janaab of K'inich ruler of Caracol (another major site in the Western Belize District of Cayo), on a royal visit for some important calendar event, and goes into more detail revealing his family, meaning that the lords of Nim Li Punit and Caracol, had very powerful relations, something that was previously unknown, and would have probably remained that way before the discovery of the pendant. This story bodes well for our Belize Tourism Board (BTB) Media Trip in the Cayo District, so bear with me...

## Ajaw Chocolate - a tasty surprise in the West

One fine day in 2013, a couple from Toledo happened to be swimming in the waters of the river running through Bullet Tree Falls Village, in the Cayo District. They looked across and uphill, realizing that they were staring at a familiar sight, if in a completely unexpected location! Could it be a fully laden cacao tree?!



Adrian and Elida Choco had stumbled upon Mr. Marcelino Medina's 20-acre farm, where cacao was growing merrily away despite not being in the Toledo district, considered the ideal location for such a plant. After speaking to Mr. Medina, the Chocos agreed to a partnership wherein the Chocos buy all the cacao produced on the farm, and Mr. Medina benefits from the farm tour, which adds to the fun of their package to visitors.

Speaking to Mr. Medina, we learned that he only ever knew farming, and despite having sons and daughters, their interests lay elsewhere, and he wondered what would happen to his beloved land. A daughter-in-law of his happened to bring back a sack of cacao seeds

for him, knowing his love of growing things. From Toledo to Cayo, a gift exchange brought forth an entire production that now flourishes under the name of Ajaw Chocolate. His children may not carry on the tradition of farming, but his produce drew the interest of an enterprising couple who have gone on to show visitors the beauty and flavors of traditional Maya chocolate.

Ajaw is NOT a factory, as the Chocos make clear to all who enter their demonstration room/museum. After a quick visit to the farm to see the origin of the cacao beans,

**Continued on Page 4**



By Mary Gonzalez



Visit us at our **NEW LOCATION**

Located 2 1/2 blocks north of the roundabout

226-4304



**"The Gallery"**  
of San Pedro Ltd

The largest collection of Belize Paintings in the country.

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We also make Specialty cakes  
615-9327







**Ajaw Chocolate flourishes in an unlikely place**  
Continued from Page 3

visitors get to see the traditional grinding of roasted organic cacao beans. Using the mano y metate (traditional stone grinding tools), the cacao beans turn into a thick paste, which then can be made into a delicious spiced drink much like the ancient Mayas' xocolatl. Ajaw also prepares delicious chocolate squares, ranging from 70-90% dark, some flavored delightfully with ginger and other spices. Chocolate wine shots are handed out during the tour, and it is easy to see why chocolate is so beloved the world over!

Like the story of the newly-discovered jade pendant down south in Toledo, Ajaw Chocolate is the result of a gift exchange that brought together two unlikely families and saved a farm from uncertainty. Ajaw processes about 1000 pounds of cacao seeds, exporting the powder and roasted nibs. Their museum/demonstration room is located on Benque Viejo Road in San Ignacio and can be contacted via 631-0569.

## Teaching our visitors the Maya lifestyle



Our media adventure took us from the warm embrace of silky chocolate to the searing heat of a fogon, where we learned to make corn tortillas from the cooked corn to the flattened baked discs of dough. In a valley between San Ignacio Town and Mountain Pine Ridge lies San Antonio Village, primarily populated by Yucatec Mayas. Hoping to teach the world about the traditional cooking methods of the Maya, the San Antonio Women's Group has a special tour set up to welcome visitors into their home and watch and learn, taking turns on the mano y metate to grind corn cooked in lime, converting it into masa (dough) and eventually into tortillas.

From molding dough into food, we moved to molding clay into pottery. The group also has cornered the market in reproducing beautiful pieces of pottery reminiscent of the kind being discovered in various caves and archaeological sites around the country. Artisans Rafael Canto and Timotea Mesh, brother and sister, work locally sourced clay and mineral pigments. Both artisans have been putting their efforts into capturing the colors and designs in a most organic way, avoiding commercial dyes and applying methods taught to them by Professor Jeremiah Donovan, a professor of ceramics in the Art and Art History Department at SUNY Cortland

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At Island Galleria on Tarpon St., San Pedro. (South end of backstreet at the red door)

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9am to 7-ish, sometimes later

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Tuesdays	6:30pm: Hermit Crab Races
Wednesdays	4pm: Live Music
Thursdays	2pm: Paint 'n Splash
Fridays	7pm: Trivia & Karaoke (9pm)

**For More Information on Trips and Overnight Charters:**

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## Visitors experience the Maya lifestyle

Continued from Page 4

in Cortland, New York, United States. Using terra sigillata, their polychrome painting is highly inspired by the kind of work that our ancestors once made. Professor Donovan discovered their work by accident as a tourist, and he has remained in touch since even getting their work displayed at the Dowd Gallery in 2016!

Through much laughter and camaraderie, one of our group members manages to create a small bowl, after much painstaking effort. While the use of a modern spinning wheel is employed to create these pieces, it only serves as a reminder of how truly talented and patient our Maya ancestors were to craft unique pieces without access to such tools.

Under the shade of a thatched roof, in the village where Mayas once roamed and hunted, cooked and created art, we ate a delicious meal of tamales (made with corn) fresh salad and fresh juice. Handmade pottery was used to adorn our tables, the product of the family artists. It was clear to us that passed down from generation to generation was a passion and talent that, if not nurtured and celebrated, may soon be forgotten. The San Antonio Women's Group has not forgotten, and they are ensuring that we continue to celebrate and honor the Maya of Belize in their unique way. The fact that our visitors can participate and take back with them memories of a unique, truly Belizean experience is a bonus!

Contact the group via phone at 651-6948, to make your reservations for your own unique immersion experience.







## BEHIND THE SCENES AT AN ISLAND ICON: PEPPERONI'S

When those lucky children got to tour Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, did you get the same feelings of jealousy and excitement like I did? Imagine being able to go and see where some of your favorite treats were made! We got to live our dream when we went behind the scenes and into the hallowed kitchen of an island icon: PepperOni's Pizza.

Established in 2001, PepperOni's has been the island's go-to pizza place ever since, offering amazing cheesy, meaty, saucy, breadly goodness to the masses. From its humble beginnings inside a trailer to its expanded location featuring outdoor seating (both covered and uncovered), and a nice big kitchen, PepperOni's has evolved, but one thing that has not changed is its delicious recipe!

We were able to witness the trays full of round balls of dough, resting peacefully away, perhaps dreaming



of the kind of pizza pie they would become in their lifetime. We even got to witness the prepping of a pie, watching how sauce is added, followed by mounds of cheese, meats, and vegetables onto a pan holding a flattened disc of dough. Once the pizza was deemed ready for baking, we watched in anticipation as the pan slowly wended its way down a conveyor belt and through the fancy (and completely unexpected) oven. In seven minutes, flat, the pan was out the other end, perfectly crisped and bubbling with ooey, gooey melted cheese, and hot toppings.



We were early visitors, because, yes, their hours have changed! After 17 years, PepperOni's has gone from only open in the evenings, to offering lunchtime pies, whole or by the slice, from 10AM to 10PM, Fridays to Sundays. On Mondays through Thursdays, they're open at noon until 10PM. You can dine-in, carry out or get delivery. Delivery has not changed either – you still get those super-fast delivery guys on their bikes arriving at your home, hot pizza in their classic red insulated bags in one hand.

Also, on the menu? Personal 8" pizzas, pizza rolls (8-combo), fresh dough (for hot fresh bread smothered in butter and honey), and of course, custom pizza orders. Follow them on Facebook (gasp! Yes they have a Facebook page), and catch up to the fun new stuff they're adding. Call those orders in at 226-4515, and enjoy your favorite pizza in your favorite location – whether it's at home or on site.







## EAT



**PIRATE'S TREASURE** - A unique dining experience with their Chef's Table. Watch as Chef Mar prepares a fresh 3-course Belizean meal over a coconut-husk fire while you enjoy refreshing cocktails and island vibes. Regular Menu always available without reservations. 4PM to 10PM. 668-2156.



**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.



- 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. Open all week, 5PM-10PM, except on Tuesdays. Open Friday, Saturday & Sunday for lunch. Call +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 island's 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 Matachica 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



**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.



**MARUBA BEACH KLUB @ Secret Beach** - The ultimate SOLAR / OFF the GRID beach experience! Stylish, sleek lounge chairs & bean bag floats. EAT•DRINK•SPA•SWIM•SUNSETS. Open 11-5PM 4 miles from main road. BOAT TRANSFERS available by reservation, 9am - 4pm. Call 610-3775/9

## 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](http://www.matagrandegrocery.com) or call us at 226-4290....we DELIVER!

## SuDoku Time! Answers on Page 9

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



## 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 206-2121/280-2626 See map for our location!



**CALIENTE:** On the beach at Sprindrift, 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.



**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!

**JUICE DIVE:** Belize's first cold press juicery, we offer juice cleanses, daily specials, fresh organic salads and wraps, VEGAN options and so much more healthy, delicious cuisine. Pescador Drive. 615-7395.



**IGUANA JUAN'S:** Serving thoughtful burgers, killer vegetarian and creative cocktails in an eclectic top floor space overlooking Back Street. Professional stand-up comedy, Saturday reggae brunch and other unique events. Open 11 - 10 Tue. - Sun. Come Find Us!

**POCO LOCO'S:** Fabulous food court located in the heart of San Pedro Town on Barrier Reef Drive. Choose from delicious crepes and desserts, salad bar and soups, creative burgers and vegan options, mission style burritos and tasty libations. Charming décor in a relaxed atmosphere.



**HURRICANE'S CEVICHE BAR & GRILL:** Now located in Boca Del Rio, 3 blocks south of the bridge! Fine outdoor dining and delicious tropical drinks. Full lunch and dinner menu, seafood specials and pastas. Open Tuesdays - Saturdays, 10AM-10PM, Sundays 1PM-10PM. Closed Mondays. We also run Tanisha Eco-Tours – and the best Lamanai Tour in Belize! Call 226-2314.

## PARTY PARTY



**WAHOO'S LOUNGE:** We are home to the WORLD FAMOUS CHICKEN DROP! Thursday nights starting at 6PM. Drink specials, games and an amazing view of the reef. Located on the beach at the Spindrift Hotel. 226-2002.

**WANT RUM? GOT IT!** 100% Belizean Rums. Travellers Liquors FACTORY OUTLET and showroom! Home of world class and award winning rums. Wholesale and retail. Daily complementary rum tastings of over 25 products! [www.facebook.com/wantrum](http://www.facebook.com/wantrum) #15 Pescador Drive 226-4690.



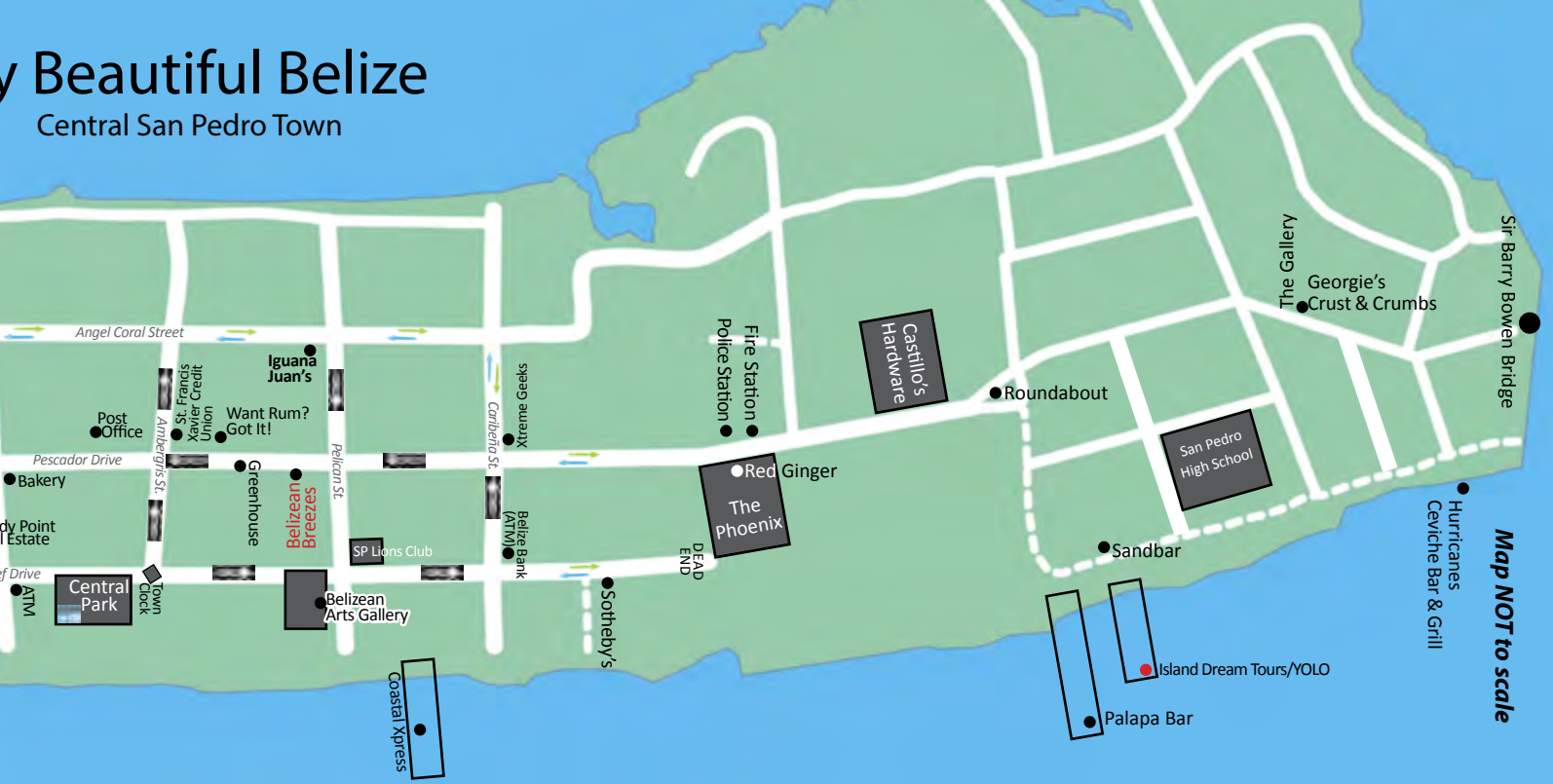
**PALAPA BAR AND GRILL:** On the Wet Willy's Dock. Daily 11am – 11pm. Relax on the inner-tubes and have your bucket of ice cold beers lowered to you. Outdoor seating, awesome smoked food, cheeseburgers, seafood and tropical drinks and an astonishing view!





# My Beautiful Belize

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**BELIZE CHOCOLATE COMPANY:** The first ever chocolate boutique in Belize, makes bean to bar chocolate on Ambergris Caye, together with delicious truffles, tasty hot and cold chocolate drinks and unique chocolate gifts. Located on Front Street. Call 226 3015.

**GRANIEL'S DREAMLAND:** Exotic Hard Woods and Mahogany Products made locally. Gift Items, indoor and outdoor furniture, carvings, and custom-made orders. Worldwide Shipping. Free Delivery to Hotel, Airport or Boat within town limits. 226-2938, Pescador Drive. granielsdreamland2@yahoo.com, www.granielsdreamlandbelize.com Facebook: Graniels Dreamland



"12" is the only shop in Belize that features only Belizean made luxury products & gifts suitable for both locals and tourists. Featuring exclusive items from around the country from soaps & scrubs to handbags & sauces, we ship same day throughout Belize. www.12belize.com 670-5272.

**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!

**ISLAND DREAM TOURS:** Specializing in Sunset Dinner Cruises (Gourmet, Buffet) Booze Cruise and Private Charters – you design your own dream on-the-water tour! Cruise includes wine, fresh fruits and hand-crafted cocktails! Join the Fun!! 615-9656! Like us on facebook.com/islanddreamtours

**BELIZEAN ARTS GALLERY** - Largest collection of paintings in Belize. Featuring contemporary, native and realistic works by leading and on the rise artists. Gold and silver artisan jewelry, ceramics, fabrics and more. Open daily 9am to 10pm. Deep inside Fido's Courtyard. 226-3019.

December 2018



**KIDTOPIA:** Located on the second floor of Sancas Realty Plaza (Unit #13) on Coconut Drive, downtown San Pedro, Kidtopia is a kids club/drop-off center for children between the ages of four to fourteen. Open Tuesdays-Saturdays from 10AM-7PM, and on

Sundays from 12PM-5PM.

**HERBAN VAPE:** We offer a wide range of vaping products, a vast amount of flavors and great customer service. Stop in anytime from 9am to 7ish maybe even till 9pm. Island Galleria, Tarpon Street. 615-7580. 9AM-7PM-ish \*WE ARE VAPERS\*



**"THE GALLERY" OF SAN PEDRO:** The largest collection of Belize Paintings in the country. Original Paintings and affordable HD Canvas Prints in custom sizes. New Location, 2 1/2 Blocks North of the Roundabout. Plus pies/cakes from the "Pie Queen". 226-4304.

**GEORGIE'S CRUST & CRUMBS:** Over 25 pies using only fresh fruits (Blueberry, Blackberry, Cherry etc) and first class ingredients. Flakey, buttery crusts. Also a variety of specialty cakes. Located 2 1/2 blocks north of the roundabout with "The Gallery" 615-9327.



**XSITE BELIZE SAILING AND ADVENTURES:** Come sail on our live aboard catamaran. We will take you diving, snorkeling and fishing too! Focusing on day sailing, overnight sailing and charters. Contact 501-601-0226 or xsitebelize@yahoo.com.

**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.

**SANDY POINT REAL ESTATE:** Making Your Dreams of Owning Real Estate in Belize a Reality! Exclusively listing Wyndham Grand Venezia del Caribe properties. We are located on Barrier Reef Drive. For more info visit www.sandypointrealestate.com

**BELIZE SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY** is a full-service firm offering sales, vacation rentals, and property management in Belize (Ambergris Caye & Placencia Peninsula). We are service oriented and will ensure that our clients' needs are met and exceeded. www.belize-sothebysrealty.com

### Sudoku Answers Puzzle on Page 7

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





## EATS & TREATS



**ISLAND BUZZ CAFÉ:** A cozy friendly café serving Breakfast and Lunch all day, at least until 1:00ish Monday-Friday. Sometimes Saturday. Hardly ever on Sunday. Coffee, Bacon & Eggs, Biscuits & Gravy, Breakfast Burritos, Subs, Paninis, Smoothies. Call ahead or delivery 668-1322.

**PEPPERONI'S PIZZA:** The island's most delectable combination of traditional Italian crafted pizzas with Belizean influences. Handmade, local, and fresh ingredients made daily along with good vibes, music, and service. Dine-in, carry-out, & delivery offered. Open 7 days a week at 4:30pm-10:00pm and Friday-Sunday from 10:30am-2:30pm. 501-226-4515



**CASA PICASSO RESTAURANT:** Tapas dining in an artful setting. Global flavors from local ingredients...martinis, wines, cocktails. Vegetarian & gluten-free options. Open Tuesday-Sunday at 5:30pm. Last reservations 9:00pm. 226-4443 or reservations@casapicassobelize.com. Located south of town past Caribeña Gas Station & Belikin Distributor. Find us on Facebook or casapicassobelize.com.

**EL DIVINO CARIBBEAN STEAKHOUSE & MARTINI BAR:** 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.



**HIDDEN TREASURE RESTAURANT:** Serving Latin American & Caribbean cuisine in an enchanting atmosphere. Serving dinner Wednesday-Monday from 5pm - 90pm, closed on Tuesdays. Located in the Escalante neighborhood. Live music on Thursdays! Free shuttle service to customers in town. Contact us 226-4111/4236 and

[www.hiddentreasurebelize.com](http://www.hiddentreasurebelize.com)

**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.



**JYOTO JAPANESE RESTAURANT AND SUSHI BAR:** An authentic Japanese restaurant by native Fukuoka sushi chef, Toshiya Tsujimoto serving locally sourced produce and the freshest of seafood. Open Wednesdays to Mondays from 12-2:30PM and 5-9PM. For reservation email [jyotorestaurant@gmail.com](mailto:jyotorestaurant@gmail.com) or call 501-628-0100

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# Sweet Potato Pudding – an unexpected holiday treat!

By Mary Gonzalez



I know I often talk about growing up steeped in village life, but it is such an important aspect of who I am today that I want to cling to those memories, reliving them and reviving as many old traditions as I can. Ask anyone what is a vital part of their childhood, and more often than not, food is a common answer. Many of our memories are built around the kitchen, and mine is filled with the ubiquitous fire hearth (fogon). The scent of smoke, the sound of its crackling flames, the scrape of the pot spoon on blackened pots, the scent of bubbling soups, or the sweet aromas of dessert baked using the low flame below and glowing embers above. I truly admire the genius of the women and men who figured out how to evenly bake bread, sweets, and even meats, on an open flame.

Possibly my favorite treat, especially around the holidays, is the Sweet Potato Pudding. Ground sweet potatoes (purple skinned with starchy white flesh), freshly grated ginger, some thick, creamy coconut milk, and brown sugar to enhance the sweet potato are all mixed and placed in a pan to bake till it's a gorgeous dark hue.

The old-fashioned way involved my mother sitting me down with a large bowl in my lap, box grater in hand, peeled and chopped potatoes and a nice knob of ginger ready for grating. (Yes, having children around was handy for these kinds of tasks.) Oh, but in the meantime, she was busy chopping down a fresh young banana leaf from the tree in the backyard. She would 'turn down' flames of the fogon by pulling out some of the burning wood, creating a smoky fire. Over this she roasted the leaf, smoking it out to turn from a vibrant, almost neon green to a dark smoky olive.

Once I was tired of the grating, she would take over, finishing up the potatoes and the coconut separately. Hot water over the coconut brings out the fresh milk, and a welcome addition to the pudding mixture.

I'd watch in eager anticipation as she began the mixing process, the white flesh of the potatoes oxidizing slightly, turning color as sugar and coconut milk were added. When the mixture was at the desired consistency and sweetness - using the classic finger licking test - she would lay the smoked banana leaf (torn in pieces) to fit the pan.

Slowly the mixture gets poured over the prepared pan and using her palms, flattened it until it was even. A flat pot cover went over it, and she would place it over the low flames of the fogon. After about half an hour, she would turn the pan slightly, and some fiery red embers would get placed on the cover, perfect to start baking the top of the pudding. After about 20 minutes, she would lift the cover and see if the top was getting caramelized, forming a rich crust. By now, the pudding was getting aesthetically pleasing, and the smells? Ohhh, the sweet and spicy smell permeated the air! A few more minutes of hot anticipation and she would remove the pan from the fire to let cool.

As chief grater, I was allowed my favorite bits, the sides. Rich, sweet, and uniquely starchy, the sweet potato pound stands out as my favorite treat around the holidays.

Make your own in your modern kitchen, using the same ingredients but with less open fire.

## Ingredients:

4-5 large sweet potatoes, grated  
2 tbsp. freshly grated ginger  
1 cup of coconut milk  
Brown sugar (to taste)

## Directions:

Mix the ground sweet potatoes and ginger, adding splashes of coconut milk till desired consistency. Add brown sugar, mixing well till you reach desired sweetness. The mixture should not be runny. Place on a well-greased 9" round pan, and flatten till level.

Slide the pan into the 350°F preheated oven, and bake for 45 minutes. Slide to broil the top for 5 minutes, till caramelized. Cool, then slice into delicious wedges and enjoy!



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# ...Leave nothing but memories behind

As a visitor to Belize, you may be surprised to learn that roughly 26% of our land and sea is preserved within a total of 95 reserves, which vary in purpose and level of protection. Our commitment to protecting these environmentally sensitive areas that are home to unique and even endangered flora and fauna above and below our Caribbean Sea runs deep, and we are proud to share the beauty of Belize with the thousands of visitors who grace our country each year. Many of our protected areas are popular tourist destinations that can experience a high volume of 'visitor love' when explored, and even locations outside of these protected areas can see too much of a good thing, causing stress on our sensitive environments. As travelers who want to be mindful of ways to minimize our tourism footprint, less impact can go a long way in preserving the long-range sustainability of these areas and protect them for generations to come.

# ...Working together for sustainable tourism

## Tread Lightly

Our gorgeous jungle landscapes, forests, savannas and offshore cayes are picture perfect, and the adage "take nothing but photos and memories" applies. Always stay on designated paths, leave no litter and don't alter the landscape. Your only trace should be the footprints left behind.



By Tamara Sniffin

## Respect the Critters

Belize is home to more than 150 amazing species of mammals, 549 birds and 150 amphibians and reptiles, with more than one hundred of them considered threatened from local extinction! It is not unusual to come across exotic wildlife when exploring Belize but please enjoy these amazing creatures from a distance. Take a ton of photos and thank your lucky stars that you were in the right place at the right time. Tempting them with food is not only illegal but dangerous - even the cutest creatures can have big teeth!

## Don't be a part of the illegal wildlife feeding, hunting or pet trade

It is illegal to disturb, feed or possess Belizean wildlife unless permitted by the Forest Department. Sadly, some wild birds in Belize, especially parrots, can end up in the illegal pet trade and our protected animals can fall prey to poachers who hunt them for their teeth, claws, hides, and feathers. When souvenir shopping, it might seem cool to bring home an exotic memento, but know that items and jewelry made from protected animal products can land you in considerable trouble when going through customs.

## Culinary Curiosity

Part of traveling is the discovery of new foods, and Belize has some delicious ethnic dishes, many which include wild meat and marine life. Belize also has hunting and harvesting seasons for managed wildlife and although culinary exploration is tasty, please be mindful that you are consuming legally harvested marine and game animals within their designated seasons. Reducing the demand for out of season consumption, especially lobster and conch, can help to discourage poaching.




## Archeological Preservation

Belize is blessed with dozens of Maya archeological sites. The more popular sites see a tremendous amount of tourism each year and while exploring you will find roped-off areas or signs prohibiting access. These fragile areas cannot sustain foot traffic or may even be unsafe for passage. By respecting these areas, you not only avoid a potential accident but help preserve ancient history for future generations. At some sites, you may even come across pottery shards and artifacts which can be very exciting! Please notify your guide and by law, taking it home with you can find you in a heap of trouble.

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#### Under the Sea

There's nothing like snorkeling above gorgeous seascapes teeming with colorful fish and corals! While caught up in this underwater world you might forget where your flippered-feet are and it's easy to make the mistake of kicking or standing on coral. This fragile habitat recovers at a slow pace and is essential to the health of its inhabitants. Even as a scuba diver you can inflict accidental damage. Being mindful of your surroundings can help prevent that...and although that pretty shell would make a lovely keepsake, chances are it's someone's home! Take a photo or store it in your memory book instead. Another measure you can take to reduce damage to the reef is to wear coral-safe sunscreen.

#### Fishing

Fisheries stocks are declining globally, and the Belize Fisheries Department is doing its best by implementing seasons and size limits for many commercial species. Sport fishing is regulated, and anglers are required to have a fishing license issued by the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute to better manage the harvests. Licenses can be purchased online at <https://apps.coastalzonebelize.org/>. We are also one of the few Caribbean countries that have a Catch and Release law for Tarpon, Permit, and Bonefish to ensure healthy populations.

Responsible tourism is about making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit. This requires all of us to show our love by taking measures to make tourism more sustainable in even the smallest of ways. While you enjoy Belize trust your guides to help you make the right choices and if you're determined to see our wildlife up close and personal, the Belize Zoo makes for a perfect day trip!

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# A new look personifies the global heartbeat of Matachica

By Tamara Sniffin



I'm not sure how you can improve on perfection, and when I heard Matachica Resort was undergoing a facelift last October I thought, 'But I love you just the way you are!' After a recent visit to this gorgeous beachside resort north of San Pedro Town on Ambergris Caye to check out its new look, there is no doubt Matachica stands alone in style and reputation.

Adorned with countless accolades from the likes of Condé Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure and the New York Times, Matachica is luxurious without the sterile pretense of a high-end resort. On the contrary, the landscapes and décor couldn't be more inviting. Comfort is a high priority at this island gem, and no detail has been overlooked when it comes to intimate surroundings, warm colors, eclectic art, and subtle lighting. Music in the common area is soft with an ethno-euro pulse, and no blaring TV sounds assault the solitude. Thoughtful sitting areas throughout the property encourage guests to relax and enjoy each other's company or cuddle up with a good book in one of their cozy nooks. Of course, their super attentive staff are at the ready whenever needed, and they always greet you like a friend.

So how is it that they managed to make something great even better? New to the property is an expansive

dock that extends over clear blue water towards the white ribbon of the nearby reef. A handful of private umbrellaed seating pods line both sides of the dock where guests can enjoy the sun, sea breeze and peaceful Caribbean view. Wait staff keeps the food and cocktails coming while the day is spent lazing in overstuffed lounging baskets big enough for two.

The guest cabañas have also seen a transformation, from a classic palate of white with color accents to a bold pop of color. Bright with lush tones and soft pastels, tropical murals created by illustrator Cécile Gariépy adorn the room's highest wall at the head of the bed. Using imagery that tells a story, the effect is stunning, with color accents taken from the mural added to other décor within the room. The ambiance is warm and sexy, a perfect island retreat to be shared with the one you love!

I adore outdoor spaces, and perhaps my favorite addition to this wonderful property is their Almond Tree Bar. Creatively utilizing one of the larger trees near their sparkling pool, the new bar surrounds the tree where the expanse of its canopy offers cool shade. Shelves within the trunk display some of their exotic liquors and the space begs for some quality time belied-up to the bamboo bar, making best friends with



one of their talented mixologists. Once again, Matachica has created a setting that you quickly settle into and may never want to leave.

The Matachica management credits the talents of Canadian designers Byron and Dexter Peart for the stunning makeover. Utilizing international furnishings made of natural and even recycled materials at times, the designers perfectly incorporate contemporary and artisanal products to compliment the global vibe of Matachica. With unique

lighting, homeware, fabrics, and décor from Spain, Mexico, Greece, Guatemala and the United Kingdom, the results personify the heartbeat of Matachica.

Located five miles north of San Pedro Town, guests are welcome to dine at their award-winning Mambo Restaurant or enjoy a cocktail at one of their two bars. For more information, please visit their website at [www.matachica.com](http://www.matachica.com).

More photos of their new look online at [www.mybeautifulbelize.com](http://www.mybeautifulbelize.com)



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# December 2018

## December 7<sup>th</sup>

- Belizean Christmas Concert Volume 2 at George Price Center, Belmopan City starting at 7PM.



- 'Mek the Christmas catch you in a Good Mood' event at RF & G Life Insurance Company Limited grounds in Belize City starting at 6PM.

## December 8<sup>th</sup>

- Holiday Lighted Boat Parade starting from Wayo's Bar in San Pedro Town at 7PM.



- The Christmas Story starting at 7PM from Hilltop Court, Belmopan City.

## December 9<sup>th</sup>

- Holiday Party & Tree Lighting Ceremony @ The Truck Stop 5:30 PM - 9 PM - San Pedro



## December 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>

- Creole Bruk-Dong Festival at Battlefield Park in Belize City.

## December 15<sup>th</sup>

- Fashion Fusion 2018 Fashion Show at Belize City Civic Center starting at 6PM.



- 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Ugly Sweater Party at Crazy Canucks in San Pedro Town, starting at 7PM.

- Holiday Craft Fair & Cookie Bake Off at The Truck stop in San Pedro Town, starting at 4PM.

## December 16<sup>th</sup>

- Love FM Christmas Parade starting from Boca Del Rio in San Pedro Town at 7PM.



## December 31<sup>st</sup>

- New Year's Eve Block Party at San Pedro Central Park, San Pedro Town starting at 9PM.



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# Where in Belize...

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 funky cluster along the shore certainly is unique! Do you know where in Belize it is located?*



Join our guessing game by following us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @mybeautifulbelize, using the hashtag #whereinbelize. You can also send us your images of mystery locations to add to our guessing game! Send them to hello@mybeautifulbelize.com and join the fun!

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