

# Fogon Cooking: A true taste of Belize



FREE



# From the Editor *Tamara Sniffin*



*I didn't want to think about the darkness behind me, or in front of me. It surrounded me like the weight of water, and I knew if I switched my spotlight off for just a moment, I would sink into the dark abyss, feet first, my hands reaching towards the end of the tunnel where no light shone...*

No, this wasn't a nightmare that woke me up drenched in a cold sweat, this was for real, and I was doing my best not to flip out! I was trying to be brave. I was trying to overcome a fear. I was trying to step out of my comfort zone, and wow did I ever! I had casually mentioned before we started our descent into a cave named Xibalba, Mayan for 'place of fear' no less, that I was slightly claustrophobic, especially in total darkness,

but I didn't want to make a big deal about it. I wanted to be game for the adventure of exploring a deep, dark, scary cave.

I knew I was in good hands with Gaia guide (and Facebook/birding friend) Isael, and I was in good company with people who could easily outrun me, leaving me as the sacrificial lamb to the gods of the inner earth. But I was convinced NOT to think about that. Instead, I measured my breathing and focused on the gorgeous landscape of the underworld. Slowly my fears succumbed to a beauty I have never known. Nature's most stunning stone sculptures protruded, flowed, glistened and erupted at every angle imaginable, capturing my wild imagination. Before I knew it, my panic was replaced with wonder, and the sense of adventure overcame my urge to flee. What's this? I was having FUN!

They say, "Life always begins with one step outside of your comfort zone," and I must say that I feel that buzz. Perhaps you will push your comfort limits just a tad while discovering Belize, and leave feeling super alive and ready for more. Take it from me, it's a good step to take while exploring My Beautiful Belize. Welcome!

## ABOUT THE FRONT PAGE:

El Fogon on Ambergris Caye is a family-owned restaurant that established its name with some of the most incredibly flavorful, homestyle cooking prepared on an open fire hearth - the fogon.

Every morning the red flames leap up to blacken large pots filled with chicken, fish, conch, and even deer and gibbon! We were lucky enough to catch some fresh fish being roasted on the open flames - and can only imagine the taste of that particular dish. Visit them on Trigger Fish Street or call 280-2626 for some good eating - like their Belikin beer battered fried chicken, only available on Tuesdays.

## Wolfe's Woofers Mistress



By Dennis Wolfe

"Hello, Mr. Dennis," Juan said. "I believe you know my wife."

I said, "I do. Good morning Doña Dolores."

Juan and his wife took a table close to mine on the deck of the Holiday Hotel and ordered their lunch. Just as they finished their meal a lady who looked like a tourist walked up from the beach and on to the deck. As she passed their table she stopped and gave Juan a big kiss. Then she continued her way through the hotel and out the front door.

Dolores was dumbfounded but not for long.

"Who was that put...put...put...?"

She sounded like a scooter with a bad muffler.

"Who was that woman?" she finally managed to ask.

"Mi amor! Mi amor! Don't get vexed," Juan said. "I can explain."

"Start explaining fast," Dolores said. "Before I go find her and punch her up."

"She's my mistress."

Dolores was so angry her face was turning a bright purple.

"Remember when I needed a boat to start the fishing business?" Juan said.

"This is the lady that gave me the money for it."

"What?"

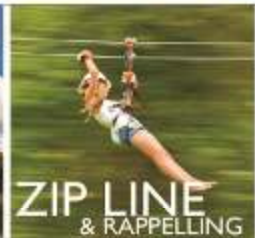
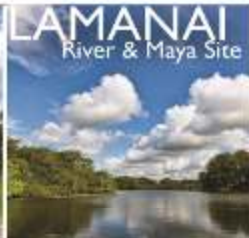
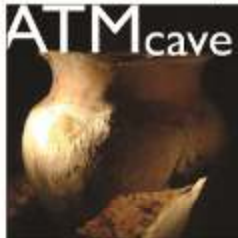
"Yeh. She gave me the money for the down payment on our house and she pays the tuition for Juanito's school. Think about this, too before you go punching her up. She's only here one month every year."

As Dolores sat there in shock, Vernon stepped out on the deck with a lovely lady on his arm. The lady was definitely not Yolanda, his wife.

"Juan, who is that woman with Vernon?" Dolores asked.

"That's his mistress."

Dolores said, "Ours is prettier."



# IN THIS ISSUE:

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**Lobster season draws to a close:** Oh lobster! We shall miss thee come February 15<sup>th</sup>! P. 12

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**Fogon cooking:** Preparing a meal over an open flame somehow tastes so much better. Try our escabeche recipe. P. 14

## Where in Belize...

*This was so easy -  
but we couldn't  
resist sharing!*

*This tree grows  
through an  
abandoned vehicle  
inside the  
Cockscomb Basin  
in the Stann Creek  
District*



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 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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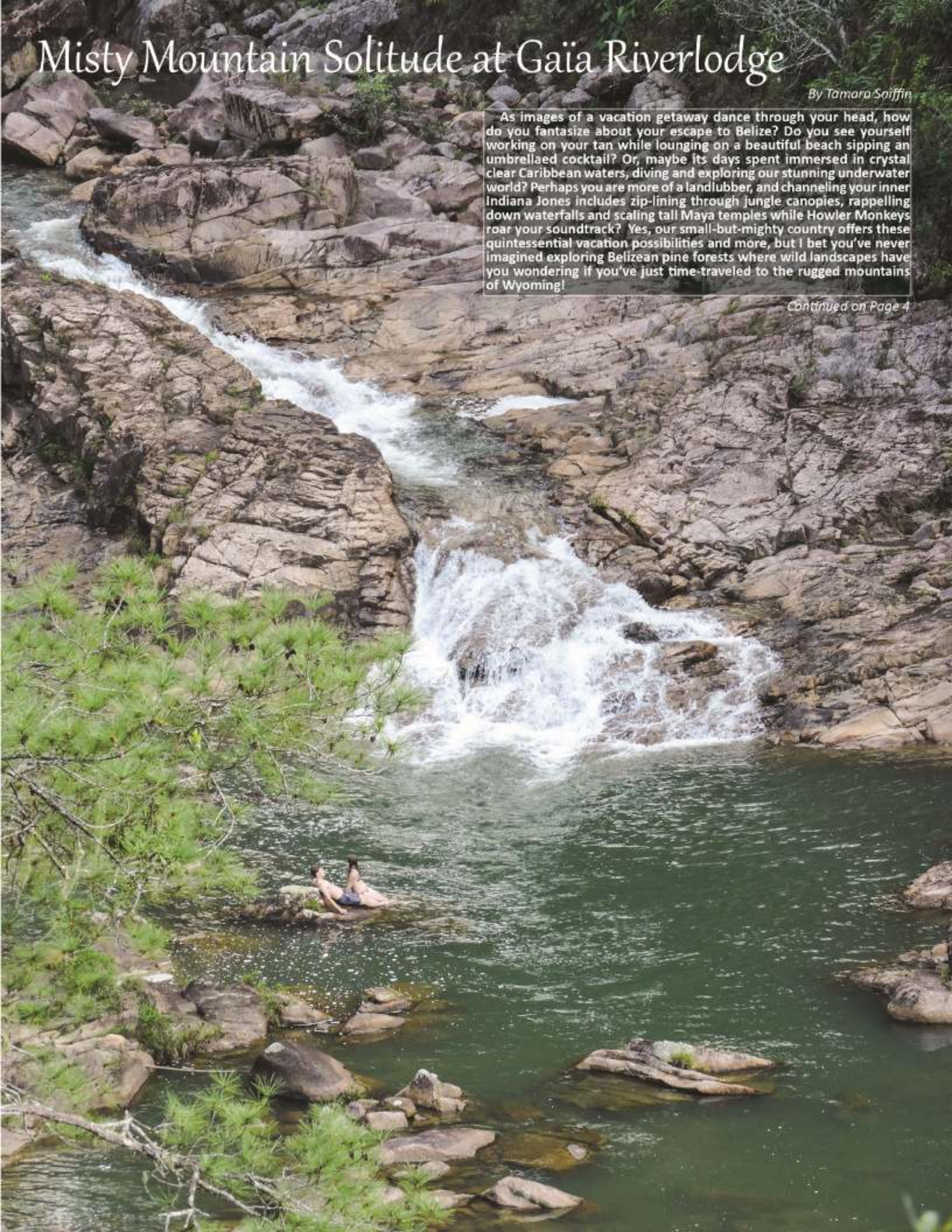


# Misty Mountain Solitude at Gaia Riverlodge

By Tamara Sniffin

As images of a vacation getaway dance through your head, how do you fantasize about your escape to Belize? Do you see yourself working on your tan while lounging on a beautiful beach sipping an umbrellaed cocktail? Or, maybe its days spent immersed in crystal clear Caribbean waters, diving and exploring our stunning underwater world? Perhaps you are more of a landlubber, and channeling your inner Indiana Jones includes zip-lining through jungle canopies, rappelling down waterfalls and scaling tall Maya temples while Howler Monkeys roar your soundtrack? Yes, our small-but-mighty country offers these quintessential vacation possibilities and more, but I bet you've never imagined exploring Belizean pine forests where wild landscapes have you wondering if you've just time-traveled to the rugged mountains of Wyoming!

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# Solitude at Gaia Riverlodge

Continued from Page 3

The Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve is nestled within the Cayo District of south-central Belize. Covering an expanse of more than 106 thousand acres, the reserve is primarily pine forest with its fair share of broadleaf forest and grassland areas. Replete with majestic waterfalls, rumbling rivers, vast cave systems, misty mountains and amazing creatures large and small, this area is the perfect playground for those who love the serenity of nature and have a thirst for adventure. With so much to see and do, where do you rest your weary body after an exhilarating day of exploration? There are a handful of resort properties within the reserve, each exceptional in their unique way, but one that stands alone in stellar location and hospitality is the one and only Gaia Riverlodge.

Perched above a breathtaking view of the dramatic Five Sisters Waterfalls, this intimate resort is a lush compound of thatched cabañas and suites that offer your choice of garden, mountain, waterfall or riverside views. Charming and warm, the rooms have expansive vistas, delicious beds topped with netted canopies and fluffy duvets when the mountain air has a chill, and every creature comfort is met with thoughtful attention. Add the dull thunder of the waterfalls below, paired with birdsong and the buzz of the surrounding forest, and the stage is set for enjoying nature at her finest. Only in the main lodge can you connect to the internet; there is no place for televisions or phones in this wild abode. Here you disconnect from the troubles of the 'real' world, and as you unplug, you are gently persuaded to linger in the lull of the forest.

When you're not busy relaxing,



adventure awaits you at your doorstep. The first thing to explore? The Five Sisters Waterfalls that you have admired from the terraced levels of the main lodge above. Depending on how active you want to be, you can add the steep stairway to the riverbed to your daily workout regime or opt to take the little tram that the nice people at Gaia have installed for the less motivated (like me) or unable guests. At the base of the waterfalls lies an expansive pool, complete with a sandy beach, gazebo, lounge chairs and thatched shade where you can bask in the sun and enjoy a cool swim. With trails along the river, there's plenty

of areas to explore and other natural pools to swim in a while being one with the wild.

Other adventures that originate on-site include mountain biking, hiking, early morning jungle walks, birding, and even a nocturnal rainforest walk. Our most ambitious activity? A guided hike and exploration of the nearby Xibalba cave. According to my handy-dandy Fitbit, throughout the five hours, we covered close to five miles and logged more than 12,000 steps. Along the way, our very knowledgeable guide Isael Mai stops and points out plants and insects of interest. From the cohune palm where the heart

of the plant is a delicacy, to small trails worn through the forest by busy leaf-cutting ants to admiring large termite nests that look like big brown warts growing on trees, it is a fascinating trek. Isael even invites us to eat a termite, claiming they taste like mint! My comadre Mary is brave enough to sample one, and she agrees they'd make a delicious Mojito - ha!

Once we reach the entrance of the cave, we don helmets, headlamps, and flashlights as we take a short ladder into the dark abyss. I have to admit I'm intimidated by the idea of the enclosed space,

Continued on Page 5

  
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# Solitude at Gaia Riverlodge

Continued from Page 4



but decide to brave it anyway. Inside Isael tells us about the ancient Maya and how they revered the mysterious caves. Along the way we see pottery shards from deep within the massive cave where stalactites and stalagmites meet, forming impressive natural columns and expansive ceilings sparkle with glitter-like minerals. Back we go into total darkness, sometimes squeezing through tight places, almost a quarter mile. It's an exhilarating and even scary adventure, but amazing and worth overcoming any fears you may have! On our return to the lodge, Little Vaqueros Falls invites us to swim, but the cool temperatures and light rain finds us looking for a warm shower instead.

Continued on Page 6



## Belizean Arts

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Open Daily - Deep Inside Fido's Courtyard  
Barrier Reef Drive, San Pedro, Ambergris Caye - [facebook.com/belizeanarts.sanpedro](#)

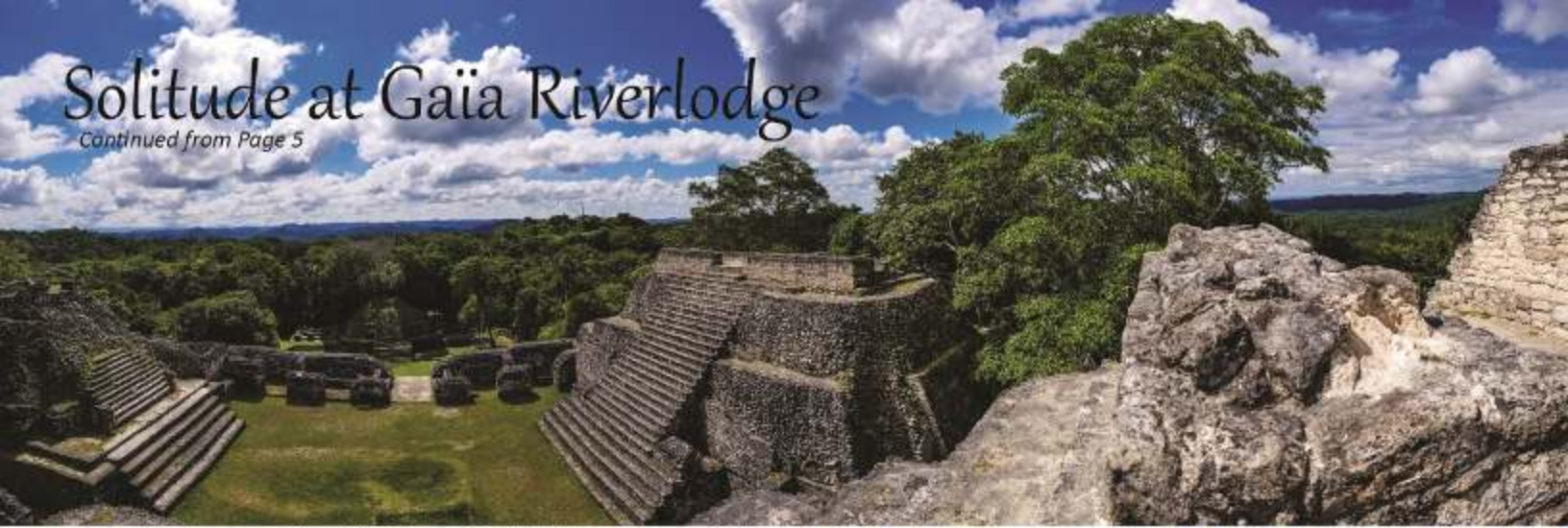
Paintings Jewelry Decor Crafts





# Solitude at Gaia Riverlodge

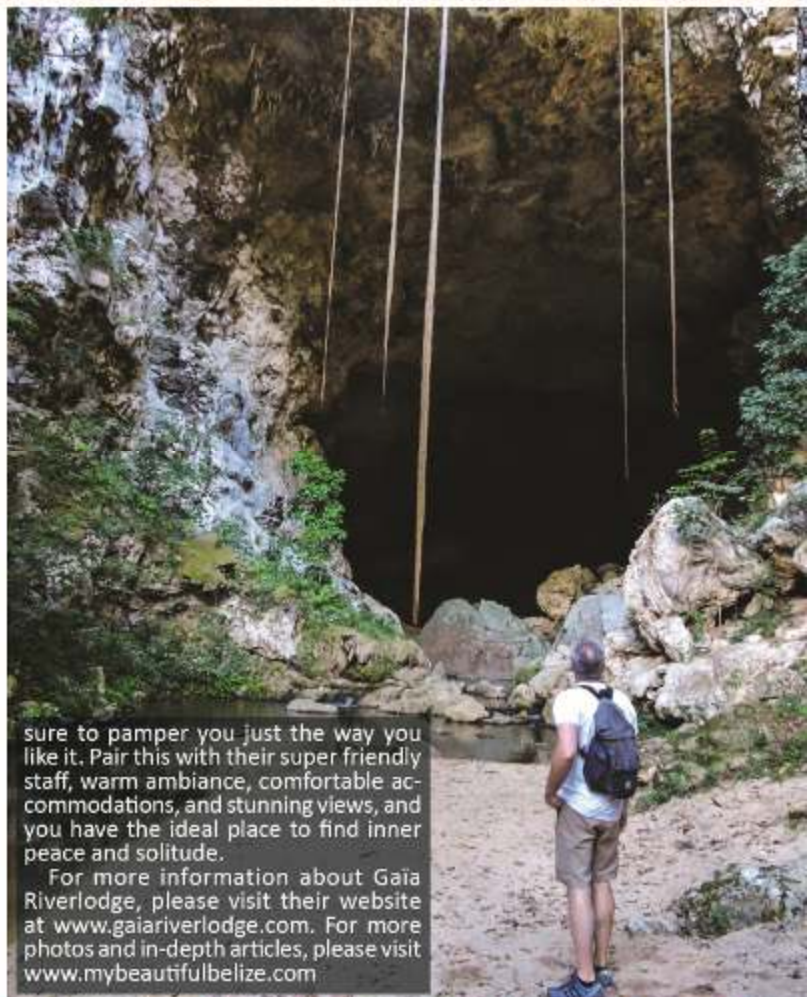
Continued from Page 5



On another day we venture off-site in our Crystal Auto rental car and drive to the Caracol Archeological Site. It is an all-day expedition over rough dirt roads deep with potholes and mud. We spend hours exploring Caracol while Howler Monkeys growl in the treetops. It is the largest Maya site in Belize, and we are breathless when we top the Caana pyramid. The panoramas from the top are worth the effort it takes to scale the massive structure! On our way back, we explore the impressive Rio Frio cave (right) and enjoy a superb picnic lunch packed by our friends at Gaia. It's a perfect day indeed.

After you've spent a day exploring unknown territory you are sure to have a mighty thirst and a hearty appetite. Bartender/hero Derby at the main lodge is happy to mix up cold libations like refreshing ginger Mojitos, specialty Martinis or cocktails made with tropical fruit juices, yum! When its time to eat, meals can be either be enjoyed on one of the outside terraces or inside the lodge. With much of the vegetables sourced from their own garden, breakfast, lunch, and dinner are full of fresh flavors, and their menu is mindful of those who prefer meatless dishes. There's something for everyone, one-night I enjoy a delicious Eggplant Parmigiana while the next I devour some of the best tenderloin steak I've had in Belize.

From archeological sites to ziplining, cave-tubing, horseback riding, cave exploration, and river tours, Gaia Riverlodge offers countless tours and activities. If you're looking for a little down time, their spa treatments are



sure to pamper you just the way you like it. Pair this with their super friendly staff, warm ambiance, comfortable accommodations, and stunning views, and you have the ideal place to find inner peace and solitude.

For more information about Gaia Riverlodge, please visit their website at [www.gaiariverlodge.com](http://www.gaiariverlodge.com). For more photos and in-depth articles, please visit [www.mybeautifulbelize.com](http://www.mybeautifulbelize.com)

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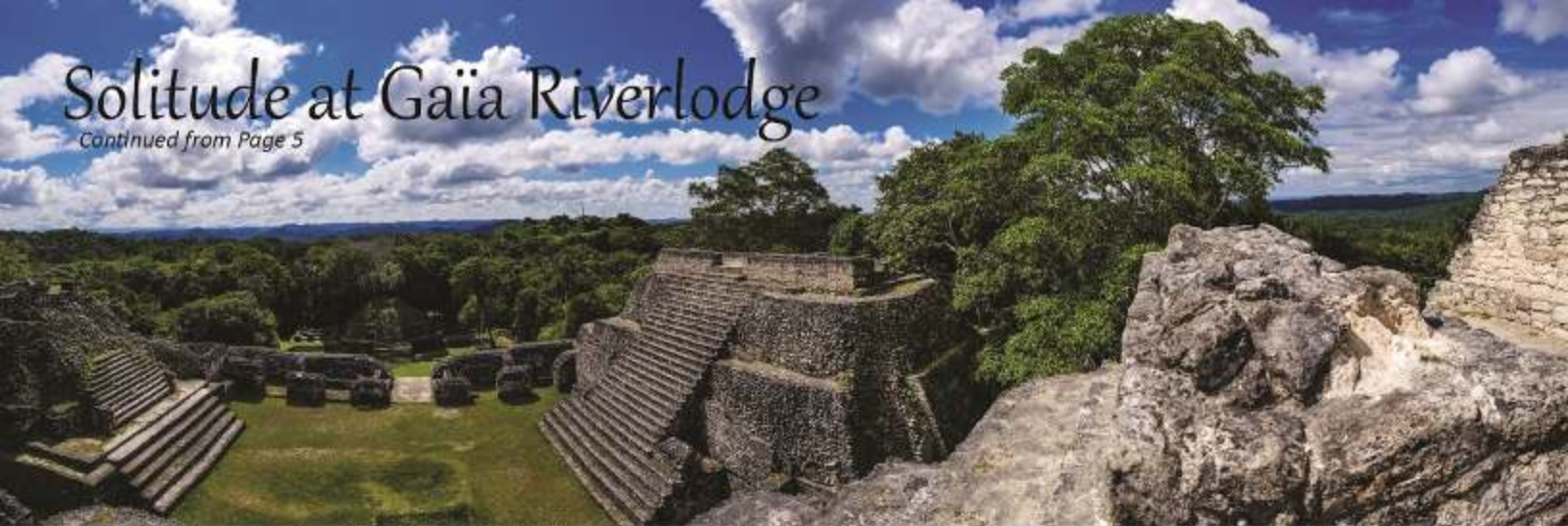
Conveniently located upstairs, of an old building, on a back street, on an island in Central America.

**Come Find Us!**



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Continued from Page 5



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Conveniently located upstairs, of an old building, on a back street, on an island in Central America.

Come Find Us!



# North Ambergris Caye

©2018, Map not to scale



## 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.



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**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



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**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

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## SuDoku Time! Answers on Page 8

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









## EATS & TREATS



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**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

**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.

**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 Japanese 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

**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. Reservations Recommended (501) 206-2441. [www.blackorchidrestaurant.com](http://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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**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](mailto:info@gettransfers.com).

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



# A Taste of Nature: Gaia Riverlodge serves up fresh eats

"E'le'lah ki yete he'. Ka tza'hik - yan a pa'tik u tikin tah - wah ma pa'tik u tikin tah, ma'a ki' ku ho'k'o." Mr. Samuel Mai was instructing me on how to fry up water spinach with eggs. I was nibbling away at a leaf he'd plucked from the vine climbing up its trellis, while he explained that the spinach had to cook down, till it was 'dry' (tikin), then, and only then, should you add the eggs - otherwise, it's not good or tasty. Oh, and yes, he was telling me this in our native Yucatec Mayan as he gave me a tour of the beautiful garden at Gaia Riverlodge in the Mountain Pine Ridge.

Returning home is one of the few experiences that gives me complete and utter joy. I totally forget about the 'real' world as I immerse myself wholly into enjoying the fresh mountain air, eating the freshest of produce while both listening to, and speaking, my beloved Mayan language. Mr. Sam had greeted us as we arrived at Gaia, immediately recognizing me and thus he addressed me in our native language from the get-go. I was thrilled, as I never get a chance to dust off my linguistics on the island, and they say practice makes perfect. Then I learned that he oversaw the garden from which 60%-75% of the resort's food came from.

Thus, I took a walk-through rows and trellises, learning about each different plant, tasting what he handed me, without question. From Cuban mint to spearmint and the standard, to peppery arugula and mustard greens, kale, lettuce and my very own sweet pepper - I was having a salad for breakfast and didn't even know it! I crunched happily away at the snap peas, regular peas, string beans (of varying colors), and even tasted sorrel/wild hibiscus. I held firm against radishes and celery (my most hated veggies). My envious eyes practically watered at the green soursop, starfruit, oranges, grapefruits and mango blossoms. I almost cried seeing the pineapples lying on their side, having fallen victim to bird attacks. All along the way, Mr. Sam explained the organic process of keeping the plants growing and thriving, without using chemical fertilizers. He showed me fruiting lime trees that he worked on hybridizing - their fruit growing in beautiful bunches and soon ready for that salad dressing - or to give the Mojito its classic tang.

Every meal we ate at Gaia during our three-night stay was full of flavor and bright with fresh vegetables and fruits. From a platter of fresh fruit to start off breakfast, with a side of gorgeous, fresh-squeezed orange juice, to some of the crunchiest, tastiest sautéed vegetables accompanying our meats and starches, we were in foodie heaven. Being in the Cayo District, where fruits and vegetables grow in abundance, it's no surprise that every meal at Gaia is literally farm to table! We certainly savored every bite.

By Mary Gonzalez





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## Kidtopia: An exceptional child care option for vacationing families!

By Janelle Cowo

Vacationing as a family is always fun. Not only do you introduce your kids to a new country with a different culture, but you bond with your loved ones while escaping your normal routine. Belize is a great destination for family vacations, offering adventures for persons of all ages, be it on land or sea.

Of course, parents deserve some alone time while on vacation too! Romantic dinners, a couple's massage on the beach – there are ways to rekindle with your partner and disconnect from everything else! However, unless your nanny tagged along – or grandma and grandpa also came on vacation with you – getting that much deserved escape can be difficult.



If you find yourself vacationing on Ambergris Caye, there is a great option: Kidtopia! The recently opened children's club offers a safe and fun option for parents to drop off their precious ones for an hour or two. Complete with playground area, arts and crafts station, kitchen, mini library, and video game station, Kidtopia offers a place for your children to just be kids and time to be with other children as well. With fun themed activities such as slime making and martial arts training, children will have a blast.

Kidtopia is located on the second floor of Sancas Realty Plaza (Unit #13) on Coconut Drive, downtown San Pedro Town. For just \$20bz an hour, children ages 4 to 14 can be creative, entertained and catered to. Kidtopia opens Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10AM-7PM, and on Sundays from 12PM-5PM. For more information about Kidtopia you can call 633-2228, follow them on Facebook and Instagram, or email them at [kidtopiabelize@gmail.com](mailto:kidtopiabelize@gmail.com).



## Kiss Your Lobster Goodbye

By Tamara Sniffin

With the end of lobster season right around the corner, I can't help but find it a tad ironic that Valentine's Day marks the final day for lobster love. It's no wonder that sappy poetry and professions of undying love come to mind when this bittersweet time of year comes around. "So long my tasty morsel, my plate is empty without you!"

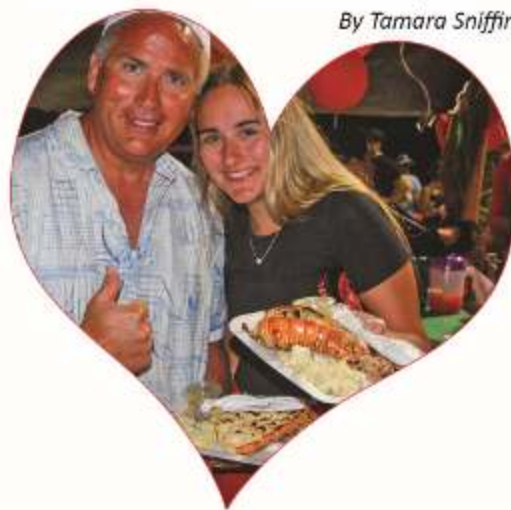
For the lucky lobster the closed season coincides with their reproductive season, how apropos! Maybe we should send them off with champagne and romantic music? This is a critical time for populations to recuperate strengthen and recover, so we say, "Go forth and multiply young longostas!"

As we all know, interrupting crustacean copulation is just plain rude, so please keep in mind that eating lobster between February 15th and June 15th is a big no no. Without this protection, these populations would most certainly disappear within our area, not only having a detrimental effect on our marine ecosystem but diminishing the livelihood of local fisherfolk and culinary tourism.

That said, we end this public awareness message with a poem, penned a few years ago by then-islanders Sharon Metcalfe and Cassidy Brown.

### Ode to The Lobster

O Poseidon! What hath your salty waters reared?  
A creature whom the sea stars rightly feared,  
With pincers sharper than a rosebuds thorns,  
And shell so red it surely should have horns.  
Our cages gently sway on ocean floors,  
To welcome little lobsters in their doors.  
The true king of crustaceans he must be,  
To have the poet down on bended knee.  
The crab, the conch, the mussels can't compare,  
To ocean waters ruled with lobster flair.  
And when I know he's mine, my hearts a-flutter;  
I long to dip his flesh in garlic butter.  
Whether he was boiled, baked, or steamed,  
He tasted even sweeter than I'd dreamed.  
To duel those mighty claws, it is a risk  
Rewarded by a feast of creamy bisque.  
This tender dish no mortal can refuse,  
When skillful chef adopts him as his muse.  
His crimson crusted shield, my soft-shelled heart,  
Will break if they are ever forced to part.  
So thanks be to the lobster- small and strong-  
Your season is too short, the wait too long



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## Choose your adventure at Iguana Juan's

By Mary Gonzalez



With several weekly and monthly events, Iguana Juan's Restaurant and Bar on Back Street welcomes you to enjoy food, drinks, yoga, music, a combination of it all, and more!

Their delicious Reggae Brunch is offered every Saturday, from 11AM – 2PM. With the smooth grooves of Melody Man Escobar playing in the background, you can indulge in a fabulous island brunch, which comes with a variety of tasty options. For \$30BZ, you get a freshly squeezed juice, coffee, assorted breads

basket and your choice of a yummy entree!

Perhaps the ABC - Apple, Bacon and Cheddar on a French Toast Panini, served with Potato Hash pulls at your hunger strings, or what about the Quiche Du Jour with a side of fresh fruit? The Cinnamon Stuffed French Toast sounds decadent too – with strawberry cream cheese and bananas, a side of bacon and maple syrup? Um, yes please! But they don't stop there, you can also have a Breakfast Quesadilla – a warm flour tortilla is stuffed with eggs, bacon, peppers, onions and cheese, then topped with avocado and pico de gallo and sour cream. Talk about a hearty option. If you're watching your diet, you can try Juan's Country Salad, which is still satisfying with seasoned potatoes, shredded cheese and avocado topping mixed greens with a mix of tomatoes, onions, grilled corn and black bean salsa. Of course, you can go for the Continental: yogurt, granola and tropical fruit, because, GOALS!

Sundays are for Yoga and Mimosas. I don't know about you, but I think this is genius! Learning the graceful art of balancing one's mimosa glass whilst in the tree pose sounds like a fun idea! Technically, that's not how it actually works at Iguana Juan's – the yoga class (all levels are welcome) is guided by Shannon Reeder (owner extraordinaire), and then mimosas follow. That sounds fantastic, actually! \$25BZ gets you a yoga class and your first mimosa. Class starts at 9:30am and lasts an hour – mimosas follow, and that timing is up to you!

If bubbly isn't your thing, perhaps tequila is? In that case, come sit next to me, my new best friend! Iguana Juan's hosts a Tequila 101 every Thursday at 5PM-6PM, wherein you learn a bit more about the Mexican liquor. What's the difference between Blanco, Reposado and Añejo? Beyond the margarita, what else can you make with tequila? What's with that worm in some tequila bottles? Get these answers and more. Tequila 101 is \$50BZ for the class, including three tequilas, light bites and your choice of a tequila cocktail.

Iguana Juan's is located on Back Street (Angel Coral St), next to Superbuy and of course you can find them on social media.



## Parades, Dancing, and Colorful Paints: This is how we celebrate!



By Janelle Cowie

Keeping the tradition alive, plans for the El Gran Carnaval de San Pedro are already underway! The usual celebration to usher in the Lenten Season has been extended to five days of cultural fun, music, and dance.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 2nd for the start of the festivities with the first ever Carnaval Parade. Starting at 5PM, colorfully decorated floats with a trail of dancers will parade down town core as they make their way to Central Park for the annual Carnaval Fiesta. "What to expect at the fiesta?" – Delicious local food, ice cold drinks and cocktails and the best live entertainment in town!

Carnaval festivities continue with three days of unadulterated revelry. The traditional painting starts at 1PM on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday within Barrier Reef Drive and the adjacent beach. Also making their debut will be the several groups of comparsas dancers who for the past year have been perfecting their songs and dance routines especially for the 2019 Carnaval.

Closing off El Gran Carnaval will be the burning of Juan Carnaval on Wednesday, March 6th at 7PM. Gather along the beach in front of Central Park and be witness to the reading of the Last Will and Testament of Juan Carnaval, the infamous womanizer.

Please note that there are some rules and regulations upheld during the celebrations: It is recommended that only children paint on Sunday. NO painting of comparsa participants, properties, signs, vehicles, and people in uniform or coming from work; no oil paint or spray paint; no bottle squeezers will be allowed; no throwing of eggs or use of rotten eggs; painters are asked to respect tourists unless they want to participate. The painting zones are: beach front from Ruby's Hotel to the cemetery area and Barrier Reef Drive. Non-painters are recommended to avoid the painting zones. Barrier Reef Drive will be closed to all vehicular traffic, and no parking will be allowed on either Barrier Reef Drive or Pescador Drive between 1PM to 7PM on all Carnaval days. For more information about Carnaval be sure to check out our website at [www.mybeautifulbelize.com](http://www.mybeautifulbelize.com).



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



# Fire hearth cooking – a Belizean love affair! By Janelle Cowo

There is just something about food cooked over an open flame that makes it ten times better for me. Maybe it's the cultural significance, knowing that our grandmothers and great-grandmothers labored outside on the fogon (fire hearths) to provide delicious meals for their families? Or maybe it's that unique smoky taste that can only be achieved from cooking on an open fire? Whatever it may be, fogon cooking has a special place in the hearts (and stomachs) of Belizeans. From our coconut rice and beans to our soups, it's always better when it's cooked this way! One classic favorite is the Escabeche – a savory chicken soup with lots of onions! On a fogon, the chicken is roasted before dunking it into its tart, flavorful broth filled with sweet onions. If you don't have a fire hearth, a good broil will give the chicken that crispy skin so loved in escabeche.



## Ingredients:

- Whole chicken, cut into serving sizes
- 6-8 dried oregano leaves
- 8-10 All-spice seeds
- Vinegar or sour oranges if available
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Chicken consommé
- 6-8 bay leaves
- 3lbs large white onions
- Jalapeño peppers (can be canned but preferably fresh)

## Instructions:

1. Clean chicken by soaking in water and vinegar.

2. Placed in large pot along with salt, pepper and chicken consommé to taste, oregano leaves, all-spice seeds and bay leaves.
3. Add enough water to cover chicken and bring to a boil for about 20 – 25 minutes.
4. While chicken is boiling, peel and cut white onions into rings and set aside.
5. Once chicken is cooked, remove and let cool.
6. Add the cut onions to the chicken broth along with whole jalapenos and vinegar (or the juice of sour oranges) to desired tartness and let simmer.
7. Once the chicken is cool enough to handle, either deep fry in oil, broil in oven, or roast in a grill over open flames.
8. The soup is finished cooking once it is boiling or when the onions are soft to the touch.
9. Serve the onion soup along with a piece of chicken and jalapeno. Best enjoyed while hot with fresh corn tortillas. (Some weird people, like our Associate Editor Mary, prefer it with white rice, but she's a strange one!)



Photos by Clara Albeño

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## Conquering the food bucket list

By Mary Gonzalez

I knew when I put my thoughts to paper, that I'd have to accomplish the goals I set out. When it comes to food, for me it's always, the more the merrier. Until I had to face a plate in the eye...several eyes in fact. Ceviche de Ojitos – aka, ceviche made with conch eyes. Yep. There's video, I ate it, and lived to tell the tale! Thanks to Geraldo Badillo of El Gato Tours, for my first taste. For me, it's an acquired taste – and clearly, I'm not an original San Pedrano because I could live without it quite easily. I posted the video on my Instagram stories (@tlachocolate/@mybeautifulbelize) and had quite a few people messaging me, begging for some, wondering where we got it. I guess it's a San Pedrano thing – ha!

Oh well, on to another item on my list – let's see how I fare!

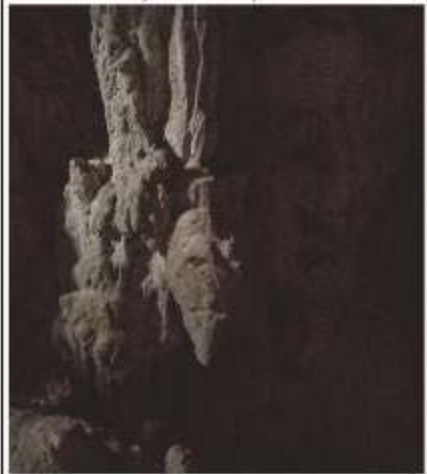
1<sup>st</sup> up: Ceviche de Ojitos!





## 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!



Tell us where you think this particular visage can be found. It's a little terrifyingly haunting, we agree!

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](mailto:hello@mybeautifulbelize.com) and join the fun!

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## February's Calendar of Events

**February 2<sup>nd</sup>** - Groundhog Day Boat Poker Run - Palapa Bar and Grill, San Pedro Town starting at 10:30AM - 5PM  
**February 3<sup>rd</sup>** - Super Bowl Parties!  
 - The Truck Stop, north Ambergris Caye starting at 5:30PM  
 - On the beach at Crazy Canucks beach Bar, San Pedro Town starting at 3PM  
 - Wahoo's Lounge, San Pedro Town starting at 1PM  
 - Kelly McGuire Live for Super Bowl at Palapa Bar and Grill, San Pedro Town starting at 2PM  
 - Chill Super Bowl at Sandbar Beachfront Restaurant and Hostel, San Pedro Town starting from 1PM  
 - Ultimate Challenge at Sidelines Island Pub, San Pedro Town starting at 2PM  
 - Croc's Super Bowl Party at Croc's Sunset Bar, north Ambergris Caye starting at midday

**February 6<sup>th</sup>** - Kelly McGuire's Birthday Bash at Palapa Bar and Grill, San Pedro Town starting at 6PM  
**February 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>** - 16th Annual Placencia Sidewalk Art Festival at main street, Placencia Peninsula starting at 9AM, daily  
**February 9<sup>th</sup>** - Back to Prom at Crazy Canucks Beach Bar, San Pedro Town starting at 7PM  
**February 10<sup>th</sup>** - The Not-So-Newlywed Game at The Truck Stop, north Ambergris Caye starting at 7PM  
**February 10<sup>th</sup>** - Valentine's Cycling Classic starting in San Ignacio Town at 9AM  
**February 16<sup>th</sup>** - Glen Washington in Concert at the Belize Civic Center, Belize City starting at 9PM  
**February 23<sup>rd</sup>** - Street Art Festival at Albert Street, downtown Belize City starting at 9AM  
**March 2<sup>nd</sup>** - First Ever Carnaval Parade and Fiesta at Central Park, San Pedro Town starting at 5PM  
**March 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>** - El Gran Carnaval de San Pedro at Central Park, San Pedro Town starting at 3PM daily





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