

November 2023- January 2024 Vol. 9 #03 FREE

Celebrating the Colorful Cultures of Belize

From the Editor: Tamara Sniffin

Sub Umbra Floreo, "Under the Shade I Flourish"

It seems that for some reason, I'm compelled to confess my afflictions, and more than three years ago, I admitted that I am a thalassophile. Although the condition isn't contagious, I must wear a mask, a snorkel mask, that is. Yes, I am magnetically attracted to the ocean and the



sea, and it's an addiction I care not to cure.

I'm now ready to confess another malady. Hello, my name is Tamara, and I am an umbraphile, meaning shadow lover, one who chases eclipses. In 2017, I was exposed to a contagion, and at that time, instead of needing to wear a mask, I had to wear special glasses! Little did I know that just one dose of a total solar eclipse would be all it took to be hooked for life. There is something so humbling when the sun and moon align to reveal how magnificent our celestial parents are. The light changes to a color I've never seen before, the birds grow quiet, the shadows cast circled images, everything is pure magic.

My husband Ron and I were ecstatic when we learned that the annual solar eclipse would grace our Belizean skies on October 14th. Knowing the impressive astronomical understanding the Maya had of our skies and how much celestial alignment was considered when erecting temples, we knew experiencing the eclipse at an archeological site would be the chance of a lifetime. Witnessing the cosmic event above the Temple of the Sun God Tomb at Altun Ha was stuff movies only imagined. The day was enchanted, one we will never forget, and as the moon darkened the sun, the Belize national motto, Sub Umbra Floreo, meaning "Under the Shade I Flourish" couldn't have been more appropriate. We welcome you to My Beautiful Belize. May you flourish under our cool shade.

About the Front Page:

A young member of the Deer Dance Group in Santa Cruz Village, Toledo District dresses for the occasion. The group performed at the annual Chocolate Festival in May this year at the Uchbenkah Archeological Site in Santa Cruz.

(c) Maximiliano Caal



Where do you Read



for our residents and visitors.

Belize adventure.

Welcome Message

San Pedro Town Mayor

Gualberto "Wally" Nuñez

My name is Wally Nuñez, Mayor of San Pedro Town, and I extend the most

Our island is home to the most heartwarming and welcoming people. We

have a rich and colorful history that captivates every adventurous traveler

that comes our way. Discover the natural beauty of our enchanting island and make lifelong connections as we share Our Island, Our Home.

We invite you to roam the landscape and become part of our story. Our

residents are closer to you like never before. The first phase of our road

improvement project is nearing completion and brought tremendous progress to our town. We are connecting neighborhoods and driving

economic growth to every corner of our island. Take a drive off the beaten

path and have a good time as you meet interesting and beautiful people.

Our council is a young and vibrant team, and we are proud of the accom-

plishments we make every day. We continue to empower our youths

through sports and entrepreneurship. We are expanding the island's public

infrastructure to be up to par with our tourism potential. And, we are de-

veloping innovative partnerships to bring more economic opportunities

Our island is also your home. We invite you to explore our reefs and the

natural landscape. Every experience and memory you make is directly linked to our island's prosperity and we are pleased to be part of your

Our San Pedro Town Council keeps working to make our island accessible

and embracing on each visit. We thank you for the opportunity to be

part of your visitor experience and wish you the most memorable and

heartfelt welcome to the beautiful island of Ambergris Caye.

Germany

After spending a couple of beautiful days on Ambergris Caye, Annette Winkler and Dirk Rhekee later traveled to the glorious island of Langeoog, one of the East Frisian islands along the North Sea coast of their home country in Germany. The water tower behind them dates back to 1909.

New York!

The Mui family recently spent a week in Belize and said it was amazing! Here they are on the last day of summer in Port Washington, New York, USA. From left to right: Annabelle Mui, Annie Kuritzky, and Owen Mui. Have a great picture of you reading My Beautiful Belize? Send it to us at hello@mybeautifulbelize.com to be featured!

My Beautiful Belize, A Visitor's Guide - San Pedro, Ambergris Caye, Belize Page 2

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When the Moon ate the Sun **AT ALTUN HA**

What would be more magical than witnessing this sacred occasion within the jungle embrace of a Maya archaeological site? Let's go to Altun Ha and celebrate at the Temple of the Sun God Tomb!



On Saturday, October 14, 2023, an annular solar eclipse crossed North, Central, and South America. Although it was visible in parts of the United States, Mexico, and many countries in South and Central America, Belize was one of the best places to watch the cosmic occurrence. Here, spectators could literally walk in the footsteps of the ancient Maya, who were renowned for their astronomical expertise. Among the many heavenly events tracked and celebrated by the Maya were eclipses, often commemorating them in their art and monuments. They were feared occasions and interpreted as the struggle of the sun and the moon, day and night, or the good and the bad. Although revered as a bad omen, they also signified closure and a sign of renewal. Story by Tamara Sniffin Eclipse photo at Altun Ha © Jordana Wright https://www.jordanawright.com/

Altun Ha is a Maya site in the Belize District near the Maskall Village, about 30 miles north of Belize City. The most prominent structure is the Temple of the Sun God's Tomb, also known as the Temple of the Masonry Altars. In the Yucatec Maya culture, the Sun God is K'inich Ajaw. The tomb contained the skeleton of an adult male laid to rest in the temple between 600-650 AD. His burial included many offerings, including pieces of jade, shells, and stones. Researchers believe he must have been a priest or king to have had such a fine burial. The most significant find at Altun Ha is the Jade Head, the largest jade Maya artifact ever found. American archeologist Dr. David Pendergast

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Revering the solar eclipse Continued from Page 3

discovered the artifact in 1968 while excavating for the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada. It was in a large tomb under a staircase inside the Sun God's Temple. Its green color resembled life-giving water and the maize (corn) plant, which the Maya religion says the gods used to fashion people. Archaeologists believe the image to be K'inich Ajaw. It features crossed eyes (considered a desirable trait by the ancient Maya), fangs, and the "ahau" glyph on the forehead. The stone weighs 9.75 pounds and is about six inches tall.



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Ambergris Caye, the largest island, takes in approximately 67% of all tourism revenue gathered by the country of Belize. This is due to the colorful and vibrant reef directly paralleling the island, the large variety of restaurants and activities, and the relaxing and welcoming Caribbean nature.

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Rich with respect and admiration for the Maya, we weren't the only ones who migrated like moths to light to experience the eclipse on hallowed ground, and the Institute of Archaeology (NICH) Belize even hosted special events at Altun Ha, Lamanai, and Cerro Maya where they handed out special glasses to stare at the sun safely. At Altun Ha, bus-loads of people from cruise ship tours and countless residents and visitors arrived to behold the celestial event. Groups and families picnicked under shady trees while many climbed the Temple of the Sun God Tomb to get a birds-eye view of the eclipse while overlooking the expansive grounds. Steeped in magical lighting under the darkened sky, the crowd cheered as the eclipse reached the 'ring of fire' phase. Knowing the ancient history of this sacred site was the reason to be there, to imagine the astonishment and wonder of the Maya who bowed and trembled as the moon ate the sun but renewed as they celebrated the sign of closure. We were thoughtful and quiet as we wandered from the site after the sun shone brightly again, feeling revived and hopeful under the Maya sky.





OWNAPIECE OF PARADISE

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Caye International Bank (CIB) is an awardwinning bank located in Ambergris Caye, Belize. We specialize in serving international clients and are committed to providing exceptional service to help our clients achieve their financial goals. Whether you're looking to invest in real estate or buy a home in Belize, we're here to help you every step of the way.

WHAT WE DO?

At CIB, we provide a wide range of financial services to help our clients manage their money and achieve their financial goals. Our services include private and corporate banking, investments, international wire transfers, and mortgage loans for properties in Belize, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama.

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Regarding the stability of Caye, Belize has one of the highest liquidity ratios in the world and has been in business for over 20 years. CIB started off as a mortgage company in 1996 and became an international bank in 2003.

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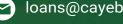


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R E A D I N G R E A D Y BOOKS ABOUT BELIZE FOR ALL AGES

By Tamara Sniffin

Before traveling to Belize or while you are here, reading is a great way to engage in the wonders of all things Belize. There's something to read for all ages, and for young travelers, reading is a great way to introduce them to a new culture and excite them for their next adventure. There are countless books to recommend, but here are a few we have enjoyed. Be you on a plane headed to Belize or enjoying beachside relaxation with a good book, through the pages, you are sure to be entertained while discovering an appreciation for our unique country and culture. Forgot to bring a book? If you are in San Pedro, 12 Belize has a lovely collection for all ages.

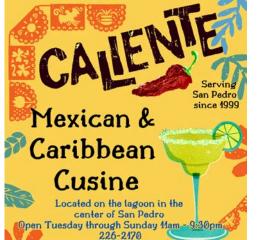
BEER

The Caye Boy series - Jessica Retseck Wigh, illustrated by Andrew Young *Toddler and up*

E AYE DOL

My Beautiful Belize has followed this charming series since 2015. The author, Jessica Retseck Wigh, has been coming to Belize since 2002 and compiled all her memories and experiences of Caye Caulker Village into a series of children's books. In an interview with the author, Wigh explained that she wanted to embrace the basic idea of growing up in Belize. Caye Boy and his brother enjoy the independence of living on an island, and in the series, their adventures include the challenges of kite flying and the fun of exploring the jungle on mainland Belize. Playfully illustrated, these colorful books are sure to entertain your little one.

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Reading Ready Continued from Page 6

Heart of a Jaguar – Marc Talbert

12 years and up

Many years ago, before an adventure to Belize, our preteen son read Heart of a Jaguar. Often an age that is hard to inspire, our son enthusiastically embraced our visits to Maya Archaeological sites after devouring this book about an adolescent Maya and his challenges of the time. His imagination was ignited by the story of young Balam, and standing within the compound of an ancient civilization surrounded by stone temples fueled his interest in a history he may have otherwise found boring. Although the book includes topics such as human sacrifice, the content is sensitively written.

Time and the River – Zee Edgell

Adult reading



Belizean-born American writer Zee Edgell published four novels. In her final book, Time and River, the main character, Leah Lawson, 18, is an enslaved person in mid to late 19th century Belize (the colony of British Honduras wasn't formed until 1862). The story traces her rise in stature to enslaver, continuing the tradition of female protagonists in Edgell's works. In dreaming of a better future, Leah must make some difficult choices. Her life takes drastic turns, changing her from a slave into a mistress and forcing her to take the lives of her family and best

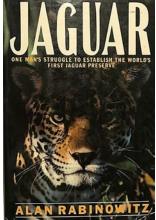
friend into her own hands. The book includes an interesting glossary of the Creole idioms used in the story and weaves the historic Battle of Saint Georges Caye into one of the subplots.

How to Cook a Tapir: A Memoir of Belize - Joan Fry Adult reading

This engaging memoir, including local recipes, recounts the year (1962) when the young author lived with her new, aspiring anthropologist husband in British Honduras (now Belize). Isolated in a remote Kekchi village in southern Belize, the rustic lifestyle she experiences gives appreciation to modern living. Fast friendships with her neighbors help her navigate her new life, from washing clothes in the river, teaching the village children, preparing wild game, and sleeping in hammocks all become a way of life for her. Over time, she learns to appreciate this foreign culture and even fears for their future.

Jaguar: One Man's Struggle To Establish The World's First Jaguar Preserve - Alan Rabinowitz Adult reading

If you are lucky enough to explore mainland Belize or plan to in the future, the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary in the Stann Creek District of south-central Belize is extraordinary. Jaguar dates back to the rustic years of the early 1980s, when zoologist Alan Rabinowitz ventured into the rain forest of Belize, determined to study the little-known jaguar in its natural habitat and to estab-



lish the world's first jaguar preserve. He vividly shares the rewards and challenges of living in the jungle with the Maya within an abandoned logging camp. From bug bites to poisonous snakes and tracking the elusive jaguar, the descriptions of his many hardships are captivating. Dr. Rabinowitz, who passed away in 2018, established the world's first jaguar preserve in Belize's Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary in 1986. He went on to help create seven major protected areas worldwide.



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Lunch, Dinner & Dessert for the whole famil

There are so many places to eat in San Pedro, and exploring new places is always fun. When dining out with the family, having options for both young and old is always nice. Here are some of our recom-

A fun, excellent spot for the whole family, The Factory Sweets Ltd. is a great option for lunch. Enjoy burgers, tacos, and pizzas at this open-air eatery on Coconut Drive. The whole family will love their simple yet tasty menu of classic lunch options. Paired with a zesty cocktail or after meal sweet treat, The Factory Sweets offers comfort food at its best. Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11AM to 9PM, also offering dinner. Black Orchid Restaurant, located 2.5 miles south of San Pedro Town,

is a favorite for fine dining and one of the few restaurants offering a full kids' dinner menu. Black Orchid's service and flavor are key. Their specialty? Seafood, steaks, and pasta! Enjoy a delicious meal with your family in a comfortable ambiance with friendly staff. For those who like to accompany dinner with a glass of wine, Black Orchid has a selection of international wines carefully curated to pair with their food menu. Don't forget to ask about daily specials, as the chef always creates new and exciting dishes. They are open Tuesdays to Saturdays from 3PM to 8:30PM with a daily happy hour from 3PM to 5PM.

by Janelle Gonzalez

Be sure to save room for dessert! Paradice Cream on Coconut Drive is the perfect stop to end a night out with the family. With over 30 flavors of homemade ice cream, this popular spot is a hit for all ages, offering cones, sundaes, shakes, and malts. One of the most popular desserts in the world, enjoying a scoop of my favorite ice cream - butterscotch on a waffle cone - always puts a smile on my face. Paradice Cream offers flavors for everyone, from the classic vanilla and strawberry to exotic flavors like sour sap and seasonal fruits. They are open daily from 11AM to 9:30PM.

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mendations for a day out of eating with the whole family!



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Maruba Beach Klub - Shhhh... Tell everyone not to tell anyone about Secret Beach. Open daily, 9AM - 5PM; Tel: +501-610-3779. E-mail: marubasecretbeach@gmail.com

Happy Island Beach Bar & Grill - Secret Beach's only two-time winner for Lobster Fest 2023! Locally owned and operated, offering a casual upbeat atmosphere, the finest cocktails, and a tasty menu... try our ceviche! Open 9AM to 6PM daily with live music on Sundays. Facebook @ Happy Island Beach Bar and Grill





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Important Information

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.

ACES Wildlife Rescue: Don't take matters into your own hands. Call 623-7920 for wildlife conflicts and rescue.

Al-Anon Meetings: Wednesdays, 5:30PM, SP Catholic Church Hall islabonitaalanon@ yahoo.com

Ambergris Caye Masonic Lodge: ambergriscayemasoniclodge@gmail.com 672-2265 Belize Hotel Association: 223-0669, bha@btl.net

Belize Tourism Board: 227-2419

Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA): 227-5717

Dr. Otto Rodriguez San Pedro Poly-Clinic II: 226-2536

Emergency Veterinarian care: 610-3647

Hope Haven: 226-2333

Island Emergency Services: Certified medical emergency service. Call 615-2998 Narcotics Anonymous: By request at 623-0316.

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

Rotary Club of Ambergris Caye: Join Rotary at our weekly meetings Wednesdays at 11:45am at Sea Salt Restaurant/Alaia Resort. Find us on Facebook!

RRR Response: Emergency response team Call 627-1117

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

San Pedro Police Department: 206-2022

San Pedro Tourist Guide Association: 226-2391

SP Post Office: 206-2260.

SP Town Library: 206-2028





Maxie's Restaurant & Lounge - Offering the perfect blend of Caribbean and Latin American cuisine to give you a taste of some of our favorite flavors. Open Daily 11 AM - 10 PM. Angel Coral Street, Tel: +501 226 3287

Caliente - An island favorite, family-owned and operated restaurant on the lagoon in the center of San Pedro, serving a delicious combination of Mexican and Caribbean cuisine, open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 am - 9:30 pm; TEL: 501-226-2170





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Nauti Crab - Located at Seven Seas Resort, Boca Del Rio. Open Monday to Saturday, 11:30am-11pm, Sunday 9am (for brunch) - 11pm . WhatsApp/phone: 501-670-8001. nauticrabbelize@gmail.com. Check our Facebook or Instagram for daily activities.



SP BTIA Tourism Information Center – Hosted by the Belize Tourism Industry Association San Pedro Chapter, providing information on all things tourism on Ambergris Caye and beyond. On Almond Street, next to the Artisan Market. Open Monday – Saturday, 9am-5pm. Call/WhatsApp 608 2228 or e-mail: spbtiatic@gmail.com



Sandy Toes Beach Bar - Family-owned beach bar in the Boca del Rio Area serving a full menu and cocktails by the sea. TEL: 501-280-0181.

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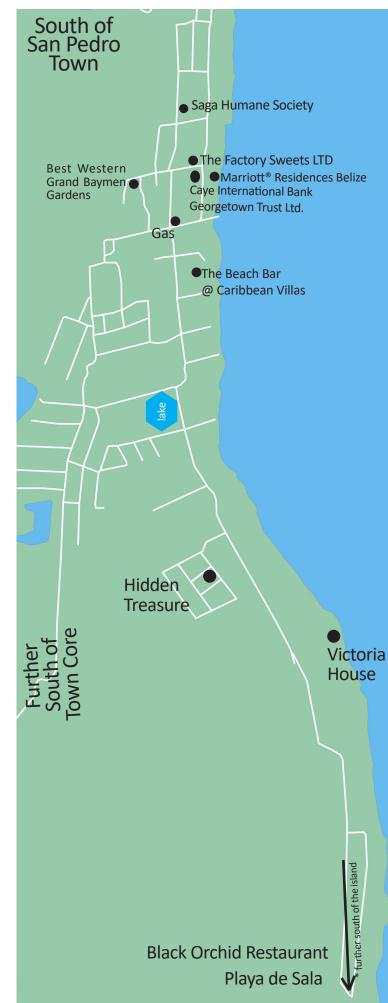
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South Ambergris Caye



The Factory Sweets LTD - The Factory Sweets serves ice cream, sweet treats, and a variety of casual eats. Great for families. Open Tuesday through Sunday, 11am - 9pm; TEL: 501-614-8068

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Hidden Treasure – Tucked away on a back street in the Escalante residential neighborhood south of San Pedro Town, discover fine dining in a rustic yet elegant and romantic setting. Specializing in Latin American and Caribbean Cuisine. Opening Wednesday through Monday from 5pm – 9pm; TEL: 501-226-4111



VICTORIA HOUSE

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Connecting to Southern Belize

The new Coastal Plains Highway is a game-changer

By Tamara Sniffin

The last time I was on the Coastal Highway was in 1999. We rented an Isuzu Trooper in Belize City and planned a family road trip to Placencia. Although warned that the so-called "highway" was in rough shape, as a hardy group from Wyoming where four-wheeling is a way of life, we figured, NO PROBLEM, it's only 36 miles! We could have taken the Hummingbird Highway through the Cayo District instead, which is a longer route, but we were up for an adventure! It will be fun, we said!

So off we went, connecting to the Coastal Highway at La Democracia via the George Price Highway, some 30 miles from Belize City. We discovered that "highway" left room for interpretation. Choked in thick clouds of red-clay dust, dodging potholes, and enduring teeth-rattling washboard surfaces, the six-hour drive was a challenge, and we were happy to intersect with the Hummingbird Highway in Hope Creek. I don't remember much about the surrounding terrain as our attention was focused on the road, and of course, we took the Hummingbird Highway on our way back.

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Fast forward two decades. With tourism growth in southern Belize and Placencia being a key destination, the demand for better access

> to the route, which shortens the course from Belize City to Dangriga by 29 miles, grew. A massive highway renovation began in early 2020. Six new bridges, four additional bridges reconstructed, roundabouts, generous shoulders, and thirty-plus miles of road paved with asphalt later, the Government of Belize inaugurated the renewed Coastal Plain Highway on July 6, 2023.

Continued on Page 17



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The Coastal Plains Highway

Continued from Page 16

So here I was, 24 years later, behind the wheel of a rented car and ready to navigate the new and improved road. I was excited for many reasons. I usually drive a golf cart on Ambergris Caye, so piloting a bonafide vehicle is a novelty. I was eager to experience the new highway and check out the scenery. One would believe that vistas of the sea and shorelines would explain the name of this southern route, and I thought I would miss the gorgeous landscapes you travel through on the Hummingbird Highway when you connect to it in Cayo. Always the owner of a confused name, at least the Coastal Plain Highways is now a legitimate highway in every sense of the word, sans the coastal views.

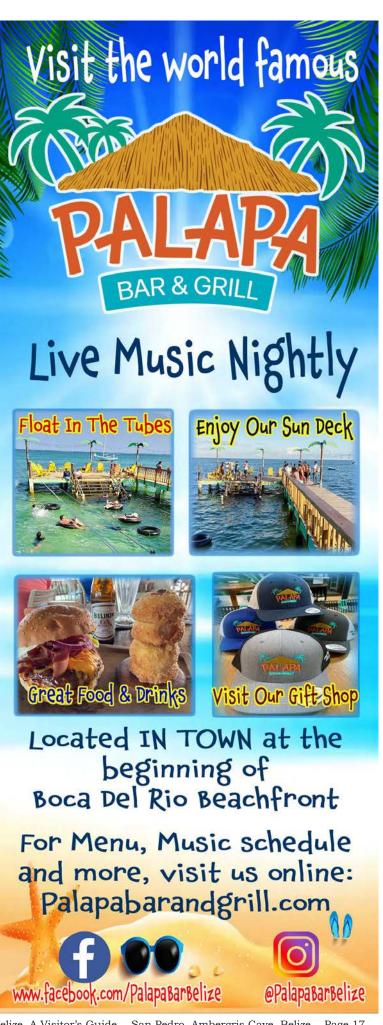
As you traverse the length of this highway, verdant hilltops, and lush scenery expand before you. The road is a dream to drive. Village names and mile markers are painted banners over covered bus stops, and vendors sell seasonal fruits along the way. Lucky for us, that would be mangoes! Signs alerting



drivers about Tapir, Deer, and Jaguar crossings add to the exotic route, and we imagine these striking creatures emerging from the heavy jungle along the way.

The new Coastal Plains Highway is a game-changer for tourists and locals traveling to the southern coast of Belize. Instead of the four-hour route via the Hummingbird Highway, travelers from Belize City can save more than an hour by using this new highway. Driving adventures are a great way to see the country at your own pace, and there is no lack of dramatic landscapes, colorful villages, and scenic panoramas, just remember to keep your eye on the road and watch out for the wildlife!





November 2023 - January 2024

Hudut, the flavor of the Garifuna Culture!

by Janelle Gonzalez

"Wamúa, wanichigu lubá ámuñegü: óundaruni hama nibureintian lun labagaridu Garifuna - Our land, our culture, our future: involving our youth for Garifuna survival." This is the powerful theme in which one of the most vibrant cultures will celebrate its 191st anniversary of arriving at the shores of Belize. Garifuna Settlement Day is celebrated annually on November 19th, a festival of drums and dancing honoring the Garinagu's traditions and culture.

Much pride is placed into the celebration, and there is no better way to keep the Garifuna culture alive than through its food. Garifuna cuisine is full of flavors reflecting this



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history and the land they have cultivated. One of the most popular cultural dishes is Hudut, a delicious soup called Sere combined with plantains and coconut. Served with green and ripe plantains mashed in a traditional mata bowl using a hahna stick, this is a must-try dish in Belize. Feeling adventurous in the kitchen? Try making hudut!

Ingredients:

Two whole fish (Red Snapper preferred) Two cans of coconut milk One whole onion chopped Two minced cloves of garlic 4 Okra, cut into bite-size pieces chopped cilantro, to taste ground oregano, to taste salt, to taste pepper, to taste Four green plantains Two ripe plantains

Directions: Soup (Sere)

1. Clean and cut your fish into halves. Season with salt and black pepper.

2. Fry fish in a skillet with hot oil until golden brown.

3. Combine coconut oregano, cilantro, garlic, okra salt, and black pepper to taste in a pot and bring to a boil.

4. When coconut milk is boiling add fried fish and let it simmer for about 20 minutes. **Side (Hudut)**

1. Peel both green and ripe plantains and boil them in water.

2. Once soft, mash plantains using a large wooden mortar and pestle (a clean glass bottle and a bowl will work, too).

3. Form mashed plantains into a serving-sized balls.

Once complete, serve Sere soup nice and hot, with a side of mashed plantains (hudut), and enjoy!

Fun activities for Garifuna Settlement Day

Garifuna Settlement Day is celebrated countrywide, with the main festivities are concentrated in the cultural capital of Belize, Dangriga Town. In San Pedro Town, the Garinagu community hosts a variety of activities, including live cultural presentations, music, drumming, and food. For more details on the event, visit our *My Beautiful Belize* Calendar of Events online: https://mybeautifulbelize.com/events/

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Celebrating Christmas Traditions in Belize

Christmas and New Years are the most anticipated holidays, with many planning the celebrations far in advance. As a multi-cultural society, the festive end-of-year holidays are celebrated differently in every Belizean household. A feeling of joy, thankfulness, and anticipation fills the air as families come together to celebrate another year gone by

The Creole's Christmas Bram

A Christmas tradition mainly celebrated in the Belize District by the Creole; a Christmas Bram is a form of a party with dancing to "Brokdong" music. "Bramming" is a Creole word for dancing, and this grand celebration brings the entire community together for a night of lively music and plenty of food and drinks. It's a social feast where every community member contributes, from traditional Belizean Christmas dishes like black cake to local wines and a hearty rice and beans meal with all the trimmings.

The Garifuna's "Two Foot Cow" Dance

The Garifuna of Belize celebrate Christmas by incorporating their rich dance traditions. "Cha-Ri-Ka-Na-Ri" (Two-Foot-Cow) dance is a staple at Garinagu Christmas parties. Men don cow-shaped masks with horns and dance to the beat of drums. Like the Jankunu, this dance is created to mock their once enslavers' attire and mannerisms and holds much cultural significance to the Garifuna. Their celebration continues as they share traditional meals and dance the night away.

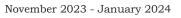
The Maya Deer Dance

Traditionally danced during the Christmas/winter solstice week or during special occasions, the Deer Dance is an important heritage practice of Maya communities and can be traced back to pre-Columbian times, when the deer was a symbol of power and nobility among the Maya people. The dance is believed to have been originally performed as a hunting ritual and was intended to honor the spirits of the animals that were hunted for food.

Deer Dance costumes are designed to represent the deer. The headpiece resembles the head of a deer and may feature antlers made from branches or other natural materials and is often decorated with feathers and beads. Dancers replicate the movements of deer and often perform in groups, with each dancer representing a different aspect of the natural world, such as the sun, moon, or stars. The dance is accompanied by traditional music played on instruments such as maracas, drums, and flutes.







The Mestizo's Las Posadas

The Mestizo culture is rooted in religion; as such, many of the traditions involve celebrating their Catholic faith. Las Posadas is a religious commemoration of the blessed Mary and Joseph's travels on their journey to Bethlehem. The celebration begins on the 15th or 16th of December and concludes on Christmas Eve. On each of the nine nights, a young couple chosen by the community carries the statues representing Mary and Joseph as they visit different houses, asking for posadas or "lodging." Rezadoras (prayer ladies) and cantadoras (ladies singing hymns) accompany them. At each home, one group outside sings, asking for shelter, and those inside refuse them. Traditionally, the posada is offered at the third home. The host family receives the statues and offers traditional treats after reciting the prayers. On Christmas, pastorcitos (shepherds) offer gifts to baby Jesus in the manager, thus completing the nativity scene.

These Christmas traditions have served to keep Belizean cultures alive. While we all have our unique way of celebrating, even if simply lighting a Christmas tree, it's always better when shared with family and friends.



New Year's is a party for all!

Ringing in the New Year on Ambergris Caye is always a ball. Restaurants and bars across town offer special dinners and host countdown parties that go well into the wee hours of the morning. The local Town Council also holds a grand public New Year's party at the Honorable Louis Sylvestre Sporting Complex with live entertainment, food and drink stalls, a midnight countdown and fireworks show, and a DJ to dance into the new year. The celebration is open to all and is a great way to welcome the 2024 island style.



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Shop Authentically Belizean products at 12 Belize by Janelle Gonzalez

Belize's diversity is reflected daily in its people. The way they live and the things they create, our country is brimming with talent and resources. 12 Belize celebrates that talent by selling authentically made-in-Belize products. Every product is uniquely Belizean, from lotions and creams to toys, jewelry, and accessories.

Among their unique products, one stands out the most: their handmade authentic leather handbags and purses. The perfect accessory for any woman, the bags at 12 Belize are timeless and one of a kind, made with locally sourced topgrade leather and carefully crafted for that bold final look. Designed to accommodate a woman's everyday life, 12 Belize's handbags and purses are

stylish yet sensible and come in various designs and sizes, from handheld clutches to large totes. You won't see the same design anywhere else, as Lara, the owner of 12 Belize, creates only a few of each design. A cultural spin to the Barbie trend!

After 64 years, Barbie is still taking the world by storm. With the release of the latest Barbie movie, modern society has redefined what the iconic doll means to everyone. From the classic Barbie to the more body-inclusive Barbie, we have all imaged having a Barbie that looks like us.

And what is more inclusive than a cultural Barbie modeling clothing from the vibrant Garifuna culture? Created by Punta Gorda native Emily Ramires, these beautiful and colorful Barbie outfits are styled after the traditional garments of the Garinagu women. The cute but culturally significant Barbie clothes are a perfect gift for any young girl or an avid Barbie collector. The line is part of Emily's "The Isieni Project," where she aims to bring the Garifuna experience to the broader public through handmade dolls and storybooks. A variety of her products can be found at 12 Belize.

When you buy locally made products, you support small businesses that rely on your purchases to thrive and provide unique products.



Check out 12 Belize's entire catalog of products by visiting their storefront located at the Bridge House in the Boca del Rio Area, open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10AM to 1PM, or visit their website 12belize.com





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