

DINING AND NIGHTLIFE

CUISINE RUNS MILD TO WILD, BUT ALWAYS FRESH AND TASTY

The same way Belize creates a melting pot of cultures, its restaurants create a melting pot of cuisines. Maya, mestizo, Garinagu, Creole, Chinese, Indian, and Lebanese flavors all season the melange. Creative chefs fuse traditional dishes with local Caribbean fruits like papaya and mango, to produce new flavors, aromas, and zest.

Seafood caught this morning becomes ceviche served tonight. Citric juice “cooks” the ceviche, often served with tortilla chips as an appetizer. The fresh local specialty mixes diced lobster, shrimp, or conch together with onions, peppers, tomatoes, and spices.

For an indulgent-yet-affordable entrée, order Caribbean lobster with melted butter. Placencia celebrates lobster festival each June on the first weekend of lobster season. Caye Caulker fetes the critters in July.

Belizean staples include conch, shrimp, fish, chicken, beef, and pork. Popular “stew chicken” gets spiked with habanero peppers and served with rice and beans. Thick conch soup, in a base of coconut milk, treats the palate to something unique. “Cow foot” soup results from a hearty broth of carrots, onions, garlic, cassava, and other veggies, cooked with a cow’s hoof.

Influenced by Mexican and Maya cultures, tasty dishes in northern districts include *escabeche*, a tangy clear onion soup with chicken; mole (MO-lay), a spicy chocolate sauce made for chicken or pork; and *chilmole*, a dinner soup with black *recado* (mestizo seasoning), chicken, potatoes, and boiled eggs. In southern districts, Garinagu culture produces unique dishes such as *sere*, a fish chowder based on coconut milk. Hearty meals cost as little as US\$2.50.

Wedged between deep blue sea and rich green jungle, Belize makes a picturesque backdrop for its lavish cuisines. Plus the dining dollar stretches pretty far here, whether seaside or in the jungle, air-conditioned or alfresco,

Belize City buffet or outer-caye barbecue. Larger restaurants in the hotels serve international cuisine, including excellent meats. Visitors with a taste for home can even find pizza, burgers, and fries.

Nightlife in Belize City revolves around the Princess Casino, with hundreds of Vegas-style gaming machines, tables, and shows, plus separate disco, bars, theaters, and bowling alley. Nearby clubs and resorts have happy hours and live bands. On Ambergris Caye, the Jaguar's Temple, Barefoot Iguana, Fido's Courtyard, and Tacklebox feature live entertainment. In San Ignacio, check out the Stork Club in the San Ignacio Hotel. Dangriga is the source of punta, a uniquely Belizean shuffling of feet with plenty of motion below the waist.

Advertised restaurants are listed below. While this index does not include all restaurants, more appear in the Belize Tourism Industry Association directory in this book. Subject to change, prices are shown here in US dollars, although usually shown on menus in Belizean dollars. Some restaurants add a service charge to the bill, so remember to check. Most accept major cards.

AMBERGRIS CAYE

Blue Water Grill. Sunbreeze Hotel. 226-3347. One of the best in town serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner on the beach. Enjoy wood-fired pizza, sushi on Tuesday and Thursday, and fresh seafood with an Asian fusion. Try the creative Belizean snook with black bean topping. Opens 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., \$10-25. Reservations are recommended.

Buena Vista. Captain Morgan's Retreat. 226-2207. Five-star dining overlooks the sea. Healthy or traditional, award-winning chefs create meals under the stars, with themed evenings, live music, beers, wines, and liquors. Opens for breakfast 6:30 to 10:30 a.m., lunch 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and dinner 6:00 to 10:00 p.m.; \$20-30. Reservations are recommended.

Casa Picasso. 226-4507. The style leader offers tapas, pastas, homemade sauces, fresh seafood, and a large dessert menu. Laid-back lounge with hip music and nightly happy hour makes a perfect spot to linger over a martini or glass of wine. Opens Monday to Saturday 5:30 to 11:00 p.m., \$4-12. Reservations are recommended.

Celi's. San Pedro Holiday Hotel. 226-2014. Try the grouper with cheddar cheese, beer batter, and a Caribbean view. Lunch 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., dinner 5:30 to 9:00 p.m., Wednesday beach barbecue with live music 6:30

p.m.; \$17-25. Celi's Deli serves johnny cakes with cheese, *panades*, and *garnaches*. Desserts include key lime pie and cheesecake.

Luna and la Habana. Journey's End Resort. 226-2173. Trendy seafront *palapa* serves "palm tree cuisine," a fusion of Caribbean and Central American fare with lobster, steak, fish, veggies, and decadent desserts.

Martini/cigar/internet bar feels like Hemingway's Cuba. Opens for breakfast and lunch 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and dinner 4:30 to 10:00 p.m.; \$10-30. Call for transportation.

Palmilla. Victoria House. 226-2067. Choose AC elegance or dining under the stars. Sample the work of executive chef Amy Knox, winner of Taste of Belize in 2003 and 2005. A tantalizing bar menu goes from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Opens for breakfast 6:30 to 9:00 a.m., lunch noon to 2:00 p.m., and dinner 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. \$20. Dinner reservations are recommended.

Ramon's Village. 226-2071. Enjoy fresh seafood in Cajun, oriental, and Belizean dishes. Come for beach barbecues and Sunday buffet. Dine inside or out on palm-shaded seaside verandas, with entertainment at the Purple Parrot. Opens for breakfast 6 to 10 a.m., lunch 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., dinner 6 to 10 p.m., and Sunday buffet 7 to 11 a.m.; \$12-20.

Rico's. Banyan Bay Villas. 226-3739. Enjoy spectacular views of the reef and Caribbean during sunrise breakfasts, beach and poolside luncheons, and romantic steak, seafood, and lobster dinners. Walk 15 minutes from San Pedro. Opens 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., \$16-44.

BELIZE CITY

Belize R Us. 225-9158. Wine and dine under the stars overlooking the historic Belize River or enjoy AC inside. Features Belizean and international cuisines. Opens 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., with jazz happy hour on Friday, \$6-18.

Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza. 223-2302. The disco features pulsating punta, reggae, soca, Latin, and calypso music to accompany the bold sunsets. Happy hour starts poolside at 7 p.m. on Friday, lasts until 11 p.m., and sometimes includes a live steel-drum band.

Calypso. Princess Hotel. 223-2670/72. Sip a tropical drink in the Caribbean breeze. Seaside dining features seafood, soups, and salads, from Belizean to international cuisines. Opens Sunday to Thursday 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 11 p.m., \$10-18.

Harbour View. 223-6420. Enjoy fine dining, AC or alfresco, overlooking Belize Harbour. Sip exotic cocktails. Savor entrées merging East, West, and Belizean. Opens Monday to Friday for lunch 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and dinner 5:00 to 10:00 p.m. (to 11:00 p.m. Thursday and Friday), and Saturday and Sunday for dinner 5:00 to 11:00 p.m., \$5-25.

Maruba. Maskall Village. 322-2199. In an elegant, open-air, thatched pavilion, a gourmet menu features nouveau jungle cuisine, with lobster, fish, and local delicacies, plus fine liqueurs, wines, and Champagnes. Enjoy fresh tropical fruits and drinks. Opens 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., \$5.00-22.50. Reservations are recommended.

Princess Hotel & Casino. 223-2670/72. Play slots, blackjack, roulette, and poker. Russian dancers perform at 10:30 p.m., and a free buffet appears at midnight. Opens noon to 4 a.m. Monday to Thursday, and 8 to 4 a.m. Friday to Sunday. Dance at Club Charisma, featuring a disc jockey Thursday to Saturday 10 p.m. to 3 a.m., with a US\$5 cover. Vogue Bar & Lounge sometimes features a band. Theaters show first-run films. A game arcade has bowling. Also find a Corozal Free Zone location and a San Ignacio Hotel location.

Radisson Fort George. 223-3333. A popular happy hour with live music poolside — the international place to see and be seen — starts Friday at 5 p.m.

Sea View. Princess Hotel. 223-2670/72. Daily buffet themes — Italian, Mexican, Asian, Caribbean, and Belizean — come with Caribbean views. An a-la-carte menu features local, Caribbean, and international dishes. Get 24-hour room service. Opens for breakfast 6:00 to 9:00 a.m., lunch noon to 2:30 p.m., and dinner 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.; \$10 buffet.

St. George's Dining Room. Radisson Fort George. 223-3333. Elegant atmosphere, fine wines, fresh seafood, and American favorites include breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Try themed and holiday buffets. Enjoy Sunday brunch and group events. Get a kids' menu. Call ahead for birthdays. Opens for breakfast 6:30 to 10:00 a.m., lunch 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., dinner 6:00 to 10:00 p.m., and Sunday brunch 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; \$10-28.

Smokey Mermaid. The Great House. 223-4759. Start at the friendly bar. Then dine alfresco in the courtyard under big shady trees, or inside with AC. Enjoy seafood, chicken, pork, or beef, smoked or grilled, plus fresh fruit and veggies. Choose from daily specials and an extensive wine list. Come Friday for happy hour. Opens 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., \$10-25.

Stonegrill. Radisson Fort George. 223-3333. Informal poolside restaurant serves meals on a hot volcanic stone, cooked to perfection at the table — an exotic, healthy style of dining. Adds no fats or oils, yet food comes out seasoned and tender. Opens 11:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., \$12.

The Victorian Room. Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza. 223-2302. One of the best in Belize offers succulent seafood, jerk pork, and Belizean chicken, plus T-bones, rib eyes, and filet mignons. Themes include Italian, Mexican (complete with mariachis), American, Caribbean, and Belizean. Try the lunch buffet Monday to Friday. Opens 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., \$14-23.

CAYE CAULKER

Rasta Pasta Rainforest Café. 206-0356. Friendly seafront café with a great bar specializes in chicken, seafood, pasta, and vegetarian; no beef or pork. Sample Genesis in the Jungle spices. Try the conch fritters and huge burritos. Taste the coconut-chocolate-chip macaroons or cheesecake for dessert, or Egg McRastas for breakfast, with turkey-ham, bacon, or sausage. Opens 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursday to Tuesday, closed Wednesday, \$4-20.

COROZAL

Casa Blanca. 423-1018. Enjoy Belizean and international foods, tropical drinks, local and imported beer, stocked bar, fresh salads, appetizers, soups, seafood, and meat specialties. Get low-calorie veggie plates on request. Eat breakfast and lunch under a *palapa* by the sea. Sample the banana splits and homemade desserts. Opens 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., \$5-20.

Rainforest. Corozal Bay Inn. 402-0078. Dine in a jungle, surrounded by tropical fish and rainforest sounds. Or overlook Corozal Bay and the swimming pool. Cocktails, fine wines, and Champagne complement local and international specialties. Live music plays poolside many weekends. Opens 11 a.m. to midnight, bar until 2 a.m. weekends, \$4-25.

Vista del Sol. Tony's Inn & Beach Resort. 422-2055. Dine seaside in an elegant atmosphere great for visitors, private dining, and special occasions. Experience popular breakfast of homemade pancakes and The Belizean. Opens for breakfast 7 to 11 a.m., \$4-10.

Y-Not Grill. Tony's Inn & Beach Resort. 422-2055. Find romantic seaside dining on the deck or in the sand. Menu includes fajitas, conch ceviche, nachos, pork chops, barbeque ribs, and tropical drinks. Opens weekdays 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., weekends 11 a.m. to midnight, \$3-15.

DANGRIGA & HOPKINS

Beaches & Dreams. Hopkins. 523-7259. Beachfront dining features Caribbean, Mexican, and continental cuisines, with fresh seafood, beef and pork tenderloin, chicken, pizza, burgers, and vegetarian selections. Order fine wines, liquors, or juices. Watch satellite TV. Opens 7 a.m., \$9-19. Reservations are recommended. Transportation is available.

Hamanasi. Hopkins. 520-7073. Enjoy beachfront seafood, pastas, light meals, and desserts. Breads and pastries are baked daily. Cozy bar with comfortable couches serves fine wines, Champagne, spirits, and fresh juices. Dine indoors or out. Opens 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 to 10 p.m., \$7-20.

Jaguar Reef Lodge. Hopkins. 520-7040. Open-air restaurant and bar provides elegant, relaxed dining by the sea. Order fresh seafood, homemade breads, local vegetables, and regional desserts. Imbibe tropical fruit drinks, local beer, and spirits. Opens for breakfast 7:00 to 9:00 a.m., lunch noon to 2:00 p.m., dinner 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.; \$9-\$20.

Pleasure Cove Lodge. Hopkins. 520-7089. Savor breakfast, lunch, and dinner overlooking the Caribbean, indoors or out. Local and international cuisines include curried shrimp, breaded pork, ginger beef, papaya jerk fish, crêpes Suzette, baked bananas, and fresh fruits. Choose from beer, wine, and cocktails. Opens 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., \$10.00-17.50.

Pelican Beach. Dangriga. 522-2044. Beachfront breakfast, lunch, and dinner, indoors or out, features a living coral reef aquarium. Try home-style grilled fish burgers, lunch soups, and three-course dinners. Menu changes daily, with a choice of soup or salad, meat or seafood, dessert, and coffee. Opens 7:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., \$10-15.

MOUNTAIN PINE RIDGE

Blancaneaux Lodge. 523-3878/523-4250. Francis Ford Coppola's family recipes star in a menu emphasizing fresh produce grown on the property. Indulge on authentic Italian cuisine, seafood, wood-oven pizza, and local specialties. Opens for breakfast 7 to 10 a.m., lunch noon to 4 p.m., and dinner 7 to 9 p.m.; \$12-25.

ORANGE WALK

Bushy's Place. Lamanai Outpost Lodge. 223-3578. Relax and enjoy Belizean and European meals in a comfortable jungle dining room and bar, overlooking New River Lagoon. Request vegetarian and special diets, or

choose from two main-course choices offered at dinner. Opens 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; \$15 lunch, \$25 dinner. Reservations are required.

PLACENCIA

Capriccio. The Placencia Hotel and Residences. 520-4110. AC restaurant and bar serves international cuisine with a great Caribbean flair. Enjoy a fine mix of Italian dishes with local Belizean fare, including full pizza menu, bar snacks, drinks, nightly dinner specials, and large international wine cellar. 6:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., \$8-37. Free pick-up in Placencia for parties of four.

Crow's Nest Café. South Waters Resort. 523-3308. Embrace the nautical theme of this open-air thatched-roof restaurant, with a view of Placencia Bay. Sip iced drinks at the ship's bar. Try the shipyard special for breakfast, shipyard hoagie for lunch, and dinner menu offering seafood, meat, and vegetarian dishes. \$6-9.

Habanero Mexican Café. Robert's Grove Marina. 523-3565. View Placencia Lagoon over zesty Mexican cuisine and the best margaritas in Belize. Serves lunch, dinner, and appetizers perfect for sunsets and late nights. Opens noon to closing, \$11-15. Reservations are required.

The Oar House. Nautical Inn Resort. Seine Bight. 523-3595. Enjoy seaside AC dining, with seafood and local Belizean dishes, including homemade soup and rolls, salad, main course, and dessert. Wednesday features a beach barbeque with Garifuna dancers and coconut bowling. Opens for breakfast, lunch, and dinner 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; \$17-25. Reservations are required.

One Eyed Jack's. Calico Jack's Village. 520-8103. Listen to great music as the smiling staff serves Belizean dishes, tasty appetizers, and drinks. Enjoy an evening stroll on the pier. View the stars from a hammock stretched over lapping waves. Opens in season 6 to 9 a.m., noon to 2 p.m., and 5 to 9 p.m.; \$15-30.

Palm Terrace. The Placencia Hotel and Residences. 520-4110. Feel cool Caribbean breezes while dining on the veranda, ordering blended drinks, bar specials, and full lunches and dinners. Opens 6:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., \$8-36. Free pick-up in Placencia for parties of four.

Robert's Grove. 523-3565. Seaside dining on international and Belizean cuisines feature US NY steak, lamb chops, prime rib, and fresh lobster. Baking is done on premises. Join the Saturday poolside barbeque with local band. Opens for breakfast 7:00 to 10:00 a.m., lunch noon to 2:00 p.m., dinner (one seating) 7:30 p.m.; \$25. Reservations are required.

Rum Point Inn. 523-3239. Have a cold beer or glass of wine while enjoying delicious continental, Italian, and Belizean dishes. Opens 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., \$25. Reservations are recommended.

Turtle Inn Beach Grill. 523-3244. Try traditional family recipes prepared in an Italian wood-burning oven. Select the open-air dining room or a candlelit table at water's edge. Enjoy a cocktail or wine from the exclusive Niobium-Coppola collection. Reservations are advised. Opens 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., \$15-30.

PUNTA GORDA

Hickatee Cottages. Punta Gorda. 620-6993. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served in a jungle, home cooked with love and ingredients grown on the owners' farm. Opens every weekend for breakfast 7 to 9 a.m., lunch noon to 2 p.m., and dinner 6 to 10 p.m.; \$7.50-15.00. Make reservations for weekdays.

The Lodge at Big Falls. Big Falls. 614-2888. Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisines feature spicy roast lamb, chicken in tomato and honey sauce, and fresh local fish fillets. Non-residents should make reservations 24 hours in advance: reservation@thelodgeatbigfalls.com. Three-course menu \$24.

Sea Front. 722-2716. Overlooking the Gulf of Honduras, choose seafood, vegetarian, and meat specialties. Try breakfast. Get first-class service at dinners and buffets. Catering and packed lunches are prepared for groups, conferences, and camping. Opens 7:00 to 9:30 a.m.

SAN IGNACIO

Chaa Creek. 824-2037. Enjoy open-air dining under a *palapa*. Traditional oil lamps provide romantic lighting for regional cuisine. Opens for breakfast 7:00 to 9:30 a.m., lunch 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and dinner 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.; \$8-26. Reservations are required.

Chiclero Camp Resort. 222-4262. Perched above Cahal Pech Hill, provides panoramic views of San Ignacio below, and specializes in Belizean and American cuisines. Opens 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., \$4-15.

Maya Mountain Lodge. Mountain Pine Ridge. 824-2164. The tropical cuisine here uses local ingredients, served with flair. Ask about dinner specials. Diners bring their own alcoholic beverages. Opens 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., \$16 plus tax. Credit cards accepted. Reservations are required.

Running W Steak House. San Ignacio Resort. 824-2125. The specialty here is beef, fresh from the family ranch, plus delicious desserts, including warm coconut cream pie. Once hosted a luncheon for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Opens Sunday to Thursday 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday to Saturday 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.; \$7.50-12.50.

The Stork Club. San Ignacio Resort. 824-2125. Made of exotic Belizean woods, restaurant and bar have a comfy decor of Cayo antiques. Try Maya steak, shrimp, or conch ceviche. Get snacks and two-for-one local drinks Friday 6 to 8 p.m. Make a bid for stardom on karaoke night, Thursday at 9 p.m., followed by a disc jockey spinning top-40 hits midnight to 2 a.m. Opens 11 a.m., \$3-7.

Windy Hill Restaurant. 824-2017. Cathedral ceiling, thatched roof, hanging plants, and mahogany furniture set the atmosphere for the inviting menu. Opens for breakfast 7:00 to 9:30 a.m., lunch noon to 2:00 p.m., and dinner 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.; \$8-17.

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