

The Eye

Beach, Village + Urban Living in Oaxaca

August, 2017

Issue 70

FREE

The Food Issue



#17

LA PLAYA



People who can vacation anywhere in the world always seem to choose to return to Huatulco. With more than 30 stunning beaches in the area, it's no surprise that while our guests might have the world at their fingertips, time and time again they choose to have the sands of Montecito between their toes. **Learn more about our villas or schedule a private tour at montecito.mx.**

THE REASONS ARE ENDLESS. montecito.mx



MONTECITO
BEACH VILLAGE



Editor's Letter

"A soup like this is not the work of one man. It is the result of a constantly refined tradition. There are nearly a thousand years of history in this soup."

Willa Cather, 'Death Comes for the Archbishop' (1927)

Welcome to our August Food Issue!

Food! Is there anything more basic and necessary to each of us. I love food because I love stories - pick any ingredient, trace its journey and you will have the story of the world.

Take for instance this month's cover of ice pops, maybe to you they are popsicles or maybe they are paletas. Most of us in Canada and the US grew up with popsicles. Foodie folklore has it that the popsicle was invented by 11-year old Frank Epperson in 1905 when he accidentally left a glass of powdered soda and water with a mixing stick in it on his porch during a cold night. It seems like such an obvious thing but we need to remember that home freezers weren't even introduced onto the market until 1913. When Epperson's popsicle was patented and marketed in 1923 just 35% of American homes even had electricity! The double stick popsicle most of us grew up with was introduced during the depression as a gimmick to give customers more for their money. I loved that feeling of breaking a popsicle on the edge of the counter or a doorframe- the thump thump sound is such a strong memory. The two-stick variety was discontinued in 1986 after moms complained it was too messy.



If you grew up in Mexico then you have definitely had your share of paletas. There are a lot of theories about their origins. One explanation is that in the early 1820s when Mexico declared independence, Spain's monopoly on ice and the sky-high taxes on it were over. Common folks could afford it and were able to experiment, adding fresh fruit to create something delicious and practical for beating the heat. It is generally accepted that the first commercial paletas originated in the town of Tocuambo, Michoacán by Ignacio Alcázar, his brother Luis and their friend Agustín Andrade. They started 'La Michoacana' and in 1946 they opened their first *paletería* in Mexico City. The three then sold franchises to all their friends and relatives and it is estimated there are now over 12,000 locations throughout Mexico! A statue of a paleta is at the heart of Tocuambo as it is the paleta business which brought so much prosperity to the small town.

So what did you eat today?

See you next month,

Jane

Huatulco's Best Ice Cream and Paletas



Open Daily
10:00AM - 10:00PM

Chacah and Bugambilia,
La Crucecita, Huatulco

The Eye is a monthly all-English magazine that is distributed throughout the state of Oaxaca. It can be found for FREE at hotels, restaurants and community hot spots.

Should you wish to receive copies, advertise or submit some writing or photography please send us an email.

This magazine is made possible by the advertisers so please thank them when you use their services.

Eye Team

Editor: Jane Bauer

Copy Editor: Deborah Van Hoewyk

Web Goddess: Erin Vig

Writers: Jane Bauer, Jan Chaiken, Marcia Chaiken, Brooke Gazer, Carole Reedy, Alvin Starkman, Deborah Van Hoewyk, Kary Vannice

Cover Photo: Svitlana Tereshchenko

Photography/Art:

Distribution: Renee Biernacki

Layout: Jane Bauer

Advertising Manager: Giselda Vanegas Bustamente

Opinions and words are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of The Eye.

We welcome submissions and input.

To get involved send us an email.

TheEyeHuatulco@gmail.com

Visit Us Online

www.TheEyeHuatulco.com

In This Issue

Encuentro de Cocineros

By Brooke Gazer

Page 6

Foodies Are Flocking To Peru: The Man Behind It All

By Carole Reedy

Page 8

Bite, The Eye's New Food Magazine

By Jane Bauer

Page 9

Food Waste

By Kary Vannice

Page 10

Top 5 Oaxacan Ingredients

By Jane Bauer

Page 11

"I feel like Mexican tonight!"

By Deborah Van Hoewyk

Page 12

Recipes- Chintextle, Sopa de Lima

By Deborah Van Hoewyk

Page 14

La caXona del Chef

By Marcia Chaiken and Jan Chaiken

Page 14

For the Love of Mezcal:

Debunking Methanol Myths

By Alvin Starkman, M.A., J.D.

Page 16

EDITORIAL PAGE 3

EVENTS CALENDAR PAGE 18

In Oaxaca City, The Eye is now available at Amate Books.

www.TheEyeHuatulco.com

The Eye 4





Meet Our Team of Professionals

Hector Cisneros

Leah Guzmán

Brent May

Erin May

Lindsay Harder

WE SELL REAL ESTATE | SERVING HUATULCO AND THE OAXACA COAST



NEW LISTING

Tangolunda

Development Land #22010
Contact for Pricing
9.37 Acres / 408157.2 ft2 of premium land in hotel zone. View, beach, marina, lagoon.



FOR SALE

East Oaxaca

5 Hectares of Rural Land #20090
Contact for Pricing
Ideal location for eco themed development or hotel. Surf break, lagoon views, beach, & mountains.



NEW LISTING

Mirador Chahue

Rare Beach Lot #20036
Contact for Pricing
37994.6 ft2 of natural land, adobe home, 2 rental apt, beach access.



FOR SALE

Tangolunda

Arrocito Penthouse #17196
\$569,000 USD
Dramatic Ocean views, 2 bdr, 2 bth with 2778 ft2 of living space including a roof top terrace.



NOW SOLD

Arrocito

Cosmo Condo \$499,000 USD
2 bdr, 2 bth, dramatic ocean view, resort amenities.



NOW SOLD

La Bocana

Bocana House #21022
\$375,000 USD
2 bdr, 4, bth, roof top, large court yard, steps to beach.



FOR SALE

Chahue Beach

Casa Anita Condo #16308
\$329,000 USD
2 bdr, 2 bth, Central location, ocean view, award winning Chahue beach, high ceilings.



FOR SALE

Arrocito

Cosmo Penthouse #10641
\$319,000 USD
2 bdr, 2 bth, ocean view, beach access, multiple pools, restaurant, gym, gardens.



NOW SOLD

La Entrega

Barlovento #19525
\$289,000 USD
3 bdr, 3, bth, bay views, 2 pools, paddle & snorkel from your Secret Beach



NEW LISTING

Sector O

Poolside Paradise House #14173
\$258,000 USD
3 bdr home in Sector O with pool and large backyard, great for entertaining.



FOR SALE

Salchi

Beach House #15633
\$249,000 USD
2 bdr, 2 bth, mexican style, white sand, friendly country living 20 mins to airport.



FOR SALE

Conejos

Dream Lot #18907
\$225,000 USD
92570 ft2 in prestigious Conejos with 270 degrees ocean views.



FOR SALE

Puerto Angel

Viewpoint Condo #16591
\$179,000 USD
2 bdr, 3 bth, dramatic ocean views, direct pool access, laid-back beach villages.



NOW SOLD

Marina Chahue

Marina Park Plaza Condo #13117
\$155,000 USD
2 bdr, 2 bth, mountain view, close to everything.



FOR SALE

Santa Cruz

Hacienda Real Condo #20926
\$129,000 USD
2 bdr, 2 bth, private corner condo, short walk to beach, small development.



FOR SALE

La Cruccecita

3 Bedroom Downtown #19681
\$83,900 USD
3 bdr, 2 bth, with solid wood cabinets, pool. Walk to everything in La Cruccecita.

FULL SERVICE REAL ESTATE SOLUTIONS

VACATION RENTALS | PROPERTY MANAGEMENT | RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

MX (+52.1) 958.587.4543 www.BaysideHuatulco.com info@BaysideHuatulco.com

Visit us at Marina Park Plaza. Blvd. Benito Juarez, Local 6, / Manzana 3 / Lote 1 / Sector L / Huatulco Mexico

Encuentro de Cocineros

By Brooke Gazer

One of my favorite events in our small seaside resort is the “Encuentro de Cocineros Huatulco” (meeting of cooks). On the last Sunday of each month, restaurants and a few independent chefs come together to offer a taste of what they do best. The chefs choose a different theme each month and Huatulco’s residents and visitors are invited to come and sample their creations. You could be treated to a wide selection of pastas, or you might sample tamales... and who knew there could be so many different fillings?

The idea for this event came about when five chefs had a friendly competition over who could make the best shrimp cocktail. The winner of this challenge is not important, but it was so much fun that they wanted to do it again. It occurred to them that this would be an excellent way to raise money for charity and “Encuentro de Cocineros Huatulco” was born.

Participants are primarily from hotels and restaurants, but private individuals are also welcome and some of my favorite dishes have been prepared in someone's home kitchen. Each participant prepares and donates enough food for fifty or more samples and is given space to serve it at one of several long tables. Contributors bring their own serving dishes, and frequently decorate their space according to the theme.

This event is held in the park in Santa Cruz and tickets are sold on location. In exchange for 100 pesos you get a plate, a fork, and chits for five tastes. Some may be quite generous and on occasion I only used four chits. Before food is served, guests wander among the tables decked with culinary treats to see what is being offered and decide which one they'll sample first.

A portion of each gastronomic delight is artistically displayed on a plate as if it were to be served in a restaurant. Food to be served might be kept warm in covered steam trays, in giant pottery bowls, or prepared right on site, making the air heavy with delicious aromas wafting from various tables. At 2:30 it's a mad rush as everyone forms lines to fill their plates!

Long tables are set up among the trees so that people can sit, enjoy their lunch and socialize. The event is well attended by both expats and Mexican nationals, creating a great intercultural experience as everyone mixes together. In addition to great food, various musicians also donate their time and skill, adding a festive ambiance to the afternoon.

The first event was held in April of 2015, and each month supports a different charity in the Huatulco region. Depending on the cause, the theme, and the season; attendance can vary significantly. Obviously in the winter there are more expats in residence, however in May this year, 25 cooks served about 400 people while in June fifteen cooks catered to about 200 guests.



All the money raised at the event goes toward a charity which has been designated the previous month. Once all the food is served, various groups and organizations can state their cause and apply for sponsorship. The cooks themselves vote on which group will benefit the following month as well as what the next theme will be. July benefitted the Asociación de Mujeres de Huatulco (the Huatulco Women's Association). These women sell tostadas at various locations, including at the organic market in Santa Cruz. Their mission is to assist poor women, often single women with children in villages around Huatulco. They needed 30,000 pesos to purchase a new tostada making machine and I hope they reached their goal. At the time of publication, the theme for August had not been determined, but no doubt it will be something tasty.

Brooke Gazer operates Agua Azul la Villa, an oceanview B&B in Huatulco.

www.baguaazul.com



www.dreamhomes.mx

Marina Park Plaza, Tel. 011 (52) (958) 105 1814
info@DreamHomes.mx

MEZCAL

Educational Excursions of Oaxaca TM/MR

WHILE IN THE STATE CAPITAL, LEARN ABOUT THIS CENTURY'S MOST COVETED SPIRIT BY SPENDING A DAY WITH RECOGNIZED AUTHORITY ALVIN STARKMAN. VISIT RURAL ARTISANAL DISTILLERIES (PALENQUES) USING BOTH ANCESTRAL CLAY POT AND TRADITIONAL COPPER STILL. FOR NOVICES AND AFICIONADOS ALIKE. SAMPLE THROUGHOUT YOUR EXCURSION WITH NO OBLIGATION TO BUY.

WWW.MEZCALEDUCATIONALTOURS.COM
MEZCALEDUCATIONALTOURS@HOTMAIL.COM



Tel: 958 581 0025
www.ecospa.com



Discover Peace and Traquility

LiVe

By Liluzza and Jeza

Nail Salon
Hands & Feet

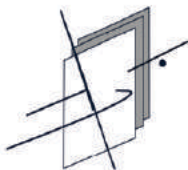


Plaza Coyula no. 4
Santa Cruz Huatulco (atrás de Banamex)
tel. 958 100 9998
facebook: Live by Liluzza & Jeza Nail Salon



Marina Chahue,
Huatulco
Tel. 958 105 1671
Cel. 958 100 7339
Closed Mondays

www.cafejuanitamexico.com



OAXACA
NOTARY OFFICE 115

We are empowered by the Government to:

- Formalize deeds
- Provide foreign investment services
- Create Mexican companies
- Provide Real Estate consulting

We also assist with:

- Issuance of property insurance policies
- Immigration services
- Translations & Interpreting

"The legal security of your investment is our number one responsibility"

HUATULCO - PUERTO ESCONDIDO



Enrique López Salinas
NOTARY PUBLIC & ATTORNEY AT LAW



J. Enrique López Leca
FOREIGN INVESTMENT SPECIALIST



Foodies Are Flocking To Peru: The Man Behind It All

By Carole Reedy

Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley aren't the only popular attractions in Peru these days. The country that boasts 3,000 potato varieties is fast becoming a food and restaurant destination.

The food

Everywhere you travel in Peru you experience the freshest ingredients. There's an abundance of fruits and vegetables as well as an array of meats, including alpaca, guinea pig, and veal. Potatoes and rice and/or quinoa accompany most meals. Fish and seafood are available everywhere and there's chocolate in abundance, chocolate the locals boast has won worldwide recognition and awards. In addition to the sumptuous Peruvian specialties, in the cities you'll find other cuisines such as Italian, Indian, Chinese, and Thai. There isn't a dietary restriction that can't be resolved here. The challenge lies with making your choices at each meal.

Let's hone in on the most popular of the Peruvian dishes. Although potatoes accompany many meals, you can also order them as a main dish or appetizer. My favorite is *papa a la Huancaína*, boiled potatoes in a creamy yellow pepper sauce. There's also a potato stuffed with meat, appropriately called *papa rellena*.

Some travelers have a problem ordering alpaca after seeing the fluffy white animals in the wild. If you can overcome emotion, you'll enjoy a tasty meat similar to beef. Others feel the same way about guinea pig, remembering them as childhood pets while facing them on the menu. (An aside here about the guinea pig: There is a painting of the Last Supper in a church in Cusco in which the main dish at the center of the table is guinea pig.)

Veal is also an excellent choice, as is fish, especially the sea bass, readily available on most menus and quite apparently fresh that day. For the most part, the food in Peru is not spicy, but be sure to verify with your waiter as there are a few *chiles* that can challenge the tastebuds.

The most famous of drinks is, of course, the *pisco sour*. *Pisco* itself is a brandy produced in Peru and Chile, developed by Spanish settlers to replace the brandy imported from Spain. Sip carefully if you're not accustomed to it. It's a strong liquor, but quite tasty when made into the sour drink. You'll see a variety of *pisco* drinks on menus, my favorite the one made with the sweet orange-colored fruit *maracuya*.

Another popular drink is *coca* tea, which you enjoy preventively for altitude sickness. Doctors and locals alike recommend you drink it in the mornings, though not in the evenings as it may keep you awake. There are small amounts of cocaine in the tea so don't carry any home with you.



The man: Gastón Acurio

Peruvian cuisine has recently undergone a transformation due to the emergence of one man: Gastón Acurio. His fresh take on Peruvian food now reaches a worldwide audience.

Acurio was born in Lima, Peru, where he started out studying law. He continued his studies in Madrid, but after visiting the restaurant of Juan Mari Arzak he left his dreams of the law behind for those of the kitchen. At the *Cordon Bleu*, he studied French cuisine and it is there that he met his future wife and business partner Astrid. They returned to Peru, bringing with them ideas for a French restaurant, but soon after decided to recreate Peruvian dishes and menus.

It all began in 1994 with the restaurant that shares their names, *Astrid y Gastón*, an avant-garde Peruvian eatery that reflects the Acurios' commitment to quality and creativity. For several years in a row, it has appeared on the food industry list "The World's 50 Best Restaurants."

In addition to *Astrid y Gastón* they've created several other restaurants. To name a few and describe them in the words of the founders: "*Tanta* is Peruvian homemade food in a familiar and cozy environment; *Chicha* is a vindication of Peruvian regional cuisine in a warm and *haute cuisine* environment; *La Mar* is a *cervicheria*; *Papacho's* is an organic and artisanal cuisine proposal, where anything is 'burgerable'."

During my recent visit, I visited four of these restaurants in four different cities. In each, the food was creatively presented, fresh, the environment comfortable, and the staff attentive and friendly.

At this writing, Gaston has opened 34 restaurants in 11 countries, all dedicated to the Peruvian *comida*. Lima boasts the most, of course, with 18; Arequipa and Cusco house two each; and cities outside Peru include Barcelona, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Chicago, Ciudad de Panama, Madrid, Mexico D.F., Miami, and San Francisco, among others.

What's the attraction that brings Gaston and Astrid such success and results in seating thousands of people daily in their locations? It began with a desire to recreate basic Peruvian dishes using the freshest ingredients in a pleasant presentation served in an ambiance of comfort with the best service (service throughout Peru in all sectors is the best in the world).

Let me cite a few examples: the popular guinea pig in Peru is usually served whole, while Acurio serves it in a crispy Peking-duck style, either as an appetizer or main course. Clever combinations occur in pasta dishes, such as artichoke ravioli or ravioli filled with veal. Common foods such as soups and tacos are transformed into sumptuous plates with surprise ingredients.

A vegetarian's delight, spinach cannoli, tasted unlike any I'd ever had. The spinach was deep deep green, so fresh and flavorful I felt I was tasting spinach for the first time. This, I think, is Gaston's secret: the food you eat tastes unlike anything you have known before, whether it's a new food for you, like guinea pig, or an old standard, such as beef or pasta. The simplest vanilla ice cream in Gaston's hands tastes like a cloud from heaven.



Hi 'The Eye' Readers!

I am so psyched to tell you about our new food magazine 'Bite!' 'The Eye' just put out its 70th issue and over the years we have had such a great response to the articles which focus on real information by real people and not the puff-advertorial pieces we see in a lot of tourist-area magazines. We aim to explore the positive and often-overlooked aspects of Mexico and to enhance people's appreciation of what a culturally fascinating and beautiful place this country is.

While I love that every August is our Food Issue – one issue a year is hardly enough to even scratch the surface of all the interesting food happenings, customs, and traditions of Oaxaca.

'Bite' will be bigger, glossier, have restaurant listings with practical information such as hours of operation and whether they accept credit cards and delicious information about mouth-watering experiences you won't want to miss!

Like 'The Eye', 'Bite' will be distributed for FREE in the best restaurants and hotels and of course, we will have an online version so you can keep up even when you aren't on holiday.

Look for the Fall Edition of 'Bite' in October!

Cheers,

Jane

**Contact us if you are interested in
advertising opportunities:
TheEyeHuatulco@gmail.com**

Food Waste

By Kary Vannice

I'm going to tell you what I hope is a shocking statistic:

In Mexico, 37% of all food produced in-country goes to waste. That equates to over 10 million tons of food each year!

Let me put that into a more quantifiable and important context. That's enough food to feed seven million Mexicans yearly.

Before you start wondering what's wrong with Mexico, let me assure you, Mexico is not alone in this. Globally, nearly one-third of all food produced is never consumed.

"Food waste," according to the UN, is: "losses resulting from the decision to discard food that still has value and is mainly associated with the conduct of the wholesalers and retailers, retail food services, and consumers."

When experts calculate food waste in terms of US dollars wasted or lost, in so-called "first world" countries the number is \$680 Billion! In developing countries, like Mexico, that number is less than half, \$310 Billion, but still a huge number.

With so much talk these days about food insecurity, world hunger and failing economies, how can so much food be finding its way into landfills, and one would hope, compost piles?

The answer is, of course, complex and multifaceted. The problem is so large that to get a true handle on it, researchers analyze waste at each stage of the food value chain - production, post harvest, storage and transportation and then, of course, consumer and post-consumer waste.

Starting at the source, on farms and ranches, miscalculation of what crops are in demand leads to fruits and vegetables rotting in the fields, and other products, like cow's milk, for example, being poured down the drain. Consumer demand drives production, that's a given. If there's no demand, what's a farmer to do?

But there's another aspect of consumer demand that contributes to a vast percentage of good, eatable foods being dumped - aesthetics. Let's face it, we're pretty picky about how our food looks, especially in developed countries. Nowadays, a carrot that grows two "legs" is never going to see the light of day in a supermarket. Nor is a crooked cucumber or an ugly apple, no matter how tasty they may be.



20% of food bought by consumers is wasted

In developing countries like Mexico, as much as 15% of all fruit and vegetables never makes it off the farm. Nearly another 24% is lost in the process of getting food into the hands of the consumer.

Interestingly, food waste at the consumer level is four times higher in developed countries than it is in developing countries, 28% compared to 7%. Some have the luxury of waste. The problem is, many more do not.

According to the World Bank, 53% of Mexico's population is living on less than \$2/day, while close to 24% of those are living on less than \$1/day. Poverty equals food insecurity; most of these people cannot meet their basic nutritional needs for some or all of the year. In Mexico, at least 10% of the population in every state suffers from food insecurity.

It's not that there's not enough food produced to feed the majority of the poor, it's that too much food goes to waste. So what's the solution? Well, the solution is as complex and multifaceted as the problem of how the waste occurs in the first place.

However, the good news is Mexico coming up with encouraging solutions in many diverse sectors. The first of which, and arguably the most important, is legislation.

In April, Mexico City law makers passed the Altruistic Food Donation Act. This law makes it legal to donate food that is considered "waste" by some, but desperately needed by others. It aims to support both public and private organizations working together to reduce food waste while feeding the hungry. And, this legislation goes a step further, instituting punishment for those who destroy or throw away food still fit for human consumption.

Back in March of 2012, Mexico City officials came up with the ingenious idea of exchanging recyclable trash for food at local farmer's markets. The project is called *Mercado de Trueque* (The Barter Market). Buyers bring in paper, cardboard, aluminum cans, plastics, glass, etc. and exchange them for vouchers (that look very much like money) to spend on fruits and vegetables grown by local producers.

This effort has been wildly successful in Mexico City and is reducing landfill waste on two fronts, recyclables and food that would not otherwise be bought and sold. It also means that consumers don't need to have actual money to "buy" the food they need.

Top 5 Oaxacan Ingredients

By Jane Bauer

Beyond policies and legislation, innovation also plays a role in the war on food waste. Last year, Forbes magazine ran an article about a food-tech start-up in Monterrey, Mexico, headed by two young Mexican men in their 20's who are using science to turn food waste into usable products to put back into the food value chain. Their first big product, a powder made from the seeds, pulp and peels of discarded mangoes; the powder acts as an emulsifier that can replace up to 50% of eggs and fat in baked goods. It can also be used as a substitute for sugar, pectin and anti-foaming agents in jams and jellies, and even serve as a texturizer and natural preservative in sausages and other processed meats. This is significant because in Mexico more than 54% of mangos go to waste!

Another technological innovation just starting to be used in Mexico is an IT platform called FarmIT used by farmers to manage not only their farms, but the entire food value chain from seed to fork, vastly reducing food waste at every stage along the chain.

Individuals, like you, can also play a role in minimizing food waste. Be willing to buy less than perfect looking produce from local farmers. Be more conscientious when you order food in a restaurant or buy food in stores, so you don't end up throwing as much food out. Donate food you won't or can't eat. You can always look for ways to become an activist in your area to reduce food waste on a larger scale.

You may wonder if any of this could actually have an impact on such a large scale-problem. The data indicate the answer is "yes." In June 2013, The World Resources Institute released a paper estimating that if food waste was cut in half, from 24% to 12% worldwide, by 2050 we would have saved 22% of the food needed to feed the world's population. That's a pretty significant number for simply saving something that was bound for the waste bin.

I love to cook and these are my top 5 Oaxacan ingredients and my favorite ways to use them!

1. Masa: More than just for tortillas! I love corn masa dumplings in mole de olla, the texture is similar to a matzoh ball dumpling. They are often called 'chochoyotes' and unlike matzoh contain a good amount of pork fat (*asiento*).



2. Huitlacoche: While these corn smut mushrooms are often pureed to a paste and used in omelets and empanadas, my favorite way to eat them is sauteed whole and fresh, with guajillo chile and almonds. I like to serve them on toasted baguette and topped with queso fresco for a yummy appetizer. Don't use canned huitlacoche- it will make you think you don't like it.)



3. Hoja Santa (Latin name Piper auritum): This fragrant leaf is a key ingredient in mole Amarillo, lending an anise flavor to the silky sauce. However, the leaf is also a great addition to salads or on sandwiches instead of lettuce.



4. Chapulines: Grasshoppers are a kitschy delicacy to try when you are in Oaxaca. They come roasted with salt and chile and are a common snack at sporting events. I like to use the chapulines in salad dressing. Blend a handful of chapulines with olive oil, honey, and salt until you get the desired consistency. Adds complex smoky and yeasty flavor to your favorite veggies.



5. Nopales: This slimy cactus is incredibly versatile and healthy. For a quick immune-booster add raw nopal (spines removed) to your favorite smoothie. They are also great roasted or sauteed and added to scrambled eggs or used as a quiche or empanada filling.



Jane Bauer leads cooking classes at Chiles&Chocolate Cooking School where she shares her love of Oaxacan cooking and history.

www.HuatulcoCookingClasses.com

These are some of the most discarded products per year in Mexico, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.*

Guava: 57.73%
Cow's milk: 57.14%
Mango: 54.54%
Fish and sardines: 54.07%
Avocado: 53.97%
Green banana: 53.76%
Nopal: 53.26%
Rice: 46.87%
Cucumber: 45.46%

*Source - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4655e.pdf>

ZAACHILA BOATS
Bay Excursion and Sports Fishing

Enjoy the Pacific Coast with
friends and family!
Full and Half day
excursions!

Cel (228) 110 5605
marejadadefondo@outlook.com



“I feel like Mexican tonight!”

By Deborah Van Hoewyk

The sun is going down. There's nothing in the fridge. “I feel like Mexican,” say millions of Americans and Canadians, and their desire is readily satisfied by any number of chain restaurants offering what customers perceive to be south-of-the-border cuisine. However, when folks actually arrive in Mexico, and “Mexican” is all there is to be had, they're often confused about what they find on their plates.

That confusion is due to, on the one hand, many north-of-the-border Mexican restaurants serving one or another version of “Tex-Mex”—i.e., NOT Mexican—food, and on the other, Mexican food changing sharply from one region to another. *Enchiladas potosinas* (from San Luis Potosí—red chile tortillas folded like empanadas and stuffed with tomatoes, *queso cotija*, jalapeños, and onion) are nothing like the Yucatecan version, *papadzules*, filled with hardboiled eggs and sitting in a pumpkinseed sauce, topped with roasted tomato sauce.

The Food of Northern Mexico

Baja California, Sonora, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas

“El Norte,” or “Norteño,” is so large, it serves everything from the seafoods of Baja, Sonora, and Sinaloa—think *aguachile* (pretty hot ceviche), *cahuamanta* (skate stew), *campechana Sinaloense* (Sinaloa's mixed seafood in a distinctive sauce)—to roasted ranch meats—*carne asada* (usually grilled beef), *arrachera* (marinated skirt steak, often the meat in *fajitas*), *machaca* (shredded meat, traditionally dried and rehydrated for cooking, it's usually beef but sometimes pork) *chilorio* (pulled pork, available canned in supermarkets), and *cabrito* (roast goat kid, said to originate in the Jewish cuisine of Monterrey's first Europeans).

Climate and topography in ever-so-sandy Baja make it Mexico's wine-producing region, but the area also serves food that would be familiar in California—tempura-battered fish tacos, seafood cocktails. The margarita and Caesar salad come from Baja, and Spanish *paella* is appears on many menus.

Sonora gave us burritos, so beloved north of the border.

Durango's *barbacoa* is usually prepared in the traditional way, by steaming meats wrapped in banana or cactus over a heat source at the bottom of a deep pit (see “Barbacoa: The REAL Mexico,” by Kathy Taylor [April 2012, www.theeyehuatulco.com/2012/04/01/barbacoa-the-real-mexico/]).

Ranchers turn their abundance of milk into a wide assortment of cheeses, including Chihuahua's *queso menonita*, which melts better than most other Mexican cheeses, and *queso fresco*, a feta-like cheese.



Northwest Pacific Coast

Nayarit, Jalisco, and Colima

The Pacific Coast of Mexico starting opposite Baja California Sur and heading towards Acapulco provides loads of seafood; the fish includes tuna, marlin, amberjack, sailfish, swordfish, black sea bass, and porgy; shrimp and octopus produce signature seafood dishes.

This area also boasts ideal growing conditions for fruits, vegetables, and grains, not to mention livestock. If you visit the region's leading center of cuisine (culture, too), Guadalajara, you'll find *birria*, a regionally spiced meat-and-chile stew (usually made of mutton or goat, but could be prepared with pork or beef). Just west of Guadalajara, Tonalá is the place to get wonderful *pozole*, the broth soup that contains hominy and chicken, turkey, or pork, plus a variety of garnishes. At Los Gallos in Huatulco, it arrives with bowls of shredded lettuce, various herbs, sliced radishes.

If you long for French dip, try *torta ahogada* (literally, a “drowning sandwich”). Take a *bolillo*, fill it with crispy fried pork, throw in onions, radishes, avocados, and chiles, and pour a tomato (mild) or chile de arbol sauce (much hotter) over it. *Tortas ahogadas* can be made with chicken, cheese, or beans as well.

Production of tequila—true tequila must come from places legally designated to use the name—centers around Jalisco.

West-Central Mexico

Michoacán, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, Querétaro

For those who drive from the north to Oaxaca Juárez or Huatulco, it also includes the gloriously desolate, cactus- and yucca-laden *altiplano* (also known as the Bajío) that lies between the eastern and western ranges of the Sierra Madre. The first Spanish colonists settled on the *altiplano* with their imports of rice, pork, and European spices. Indigenous cooking had been largely vegetarian and the key “grain” was corn—so this is where you will find the first use of rice, most likely in *morisqueta*, a sausage and rice dish served with a tomato-based sauce. *Morisqueta* often includes beans as well, and it can arrive on the table topped with cheese. *Chilayo* is a stew of pork ribs in a spicy *guajillo* sauce, topped with tomatillo salsa and served with *morisqueta* rice (usually minus the sausages). The *altiplano* also serves *churipo*, a stew of beef, cabbage, onion, chiles, and *xoconostle* (a sour cactus fruit).

Carnitas, or deep-fried pieces of pork, probably originated in Michoacán, which is also home to the city of Cotija, which produces *cotija* cheese, perhaps the best known of the *quesos frescos*.

And here, too, is where milk-based desserts got started. *Cajeta*, or caramel made from goat's milk, is the flavor of *dulce de leche* (as in the divine Häagen Dasz ice cream). *Chongos zamoranos* (cinnamon-flavored milk curds) is so popular it comes in cans, but apparently home-made is way better!

Central Mexico

Mexico City (CDMX), México, Morelos, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo

The Mexico City area sports a lot of haute cuisine offering upscale versions of regional specialties, but you can still find plenty of excellent regional cooking in the area. Although there is an ongoing dispute between the states of Puebla and Oaxaca (occasionally Tlaxcala chimes in) about just where *mole* originated, there are plenty of these quintessentially Mexican sauces to go around, and they can be very different. They go by color (red, black, green, yellow, white, pink), by where they come from—e.g., *mole poblano* from Puebla (the one that always includes chocolate), sometimes by the ingredient they're made to cover, etc., etc. And then there's always guaca—mole!

The other famous dish from Puebla is *chiles en nogada*, a striking red-white-and-green combination of chiles stuffed with picadillo (spicy ground meat), covered with a walnut sauce and snowy white crema adorned with pomegranate seeds. Puebla also serves up *cemitas*, sandwiches filled with beef *milanesa* (available in the supermarket), *panela* cheese, onions, *salsa roja*, and avocado, and seasoned with *pápalo*, an herb described as being halfway between cilantro and arugula.

Mexico on the Gulf

Veracruz, Tabasco

The Gulf states offer a cuisine influenced by not just indigenous Mexico and Europe, but by the Creole mix of Afro-Cuban influences from the cities that circle the Gulf of Mexico—New Orleans, San Juan, Havana, Cartagena, and maybe a bit of Caracas. Vanilla is native to this area, as is *hoja santa*, or Mexican pepperleaf, which is also called “root beer plant” for its sarsaparilla/root beer flavor.

This is a great fruit-growing area, with pineapple plantations lining the coast of Vera Cruz, citrus fruits, papayas, *mameys*, and *zapotes*. Bananas and plantains (both of African origin), yucca, and sweet potatoes grow easily here.

Tabasco sauce does indeed come from Tabasco, and is used with the many kinds of seafood caught and served in the state; *huachinango a la Veracruzana* (red snapper Veracruz-style) is the region's signature seafood dish—the fish is bathed in light tomato sauce seasoned with onions, capers, olives, sweet peppers, and citrus juice. Although most recipes use lime juice to season the fish, the best *huachinango* I ever ate added Seville orange juice (*naranja agria*, “sour orange”) to the toppings.

The Yucatán Peninsula

Campeche, Yucatán, Quintana Roo

Like the Gulf coast states, the food here is influenced by Caribbean tastes, with some strains of Asian and Middle Eastern cuisines. *Achiote* (annatto seed) colors a lot of Yucatecan food, and gives it a gentle nutmeg-pepper flavor. It also forms the basis of *recados*, mixtures of seasonings formed into pastes; *recados* in turn season one of the regions most famous dishes, *cochinita pibil*—piglet cooked in pit.

Yucatecan cooking also makes great use of tropical fruits: small Mexican plums, tamarind, mamey, and those bitter oranges; *sopa de lima* (chicken-lime soup) gets its heat from habaneros, a gentle spicing from cinnamon and cloves, and some crunch from fried tortilla chips.

The Southern Pacific Coast

Guererro, Oaxaca, Chiapas

Mountainous topography in the area has created isolated valleys that have helped preserve indigenous cultures and their cuisines. Guerrero is perhaps most geographically varied; chefs at coastal resorts (Acapulco, Zihuatanejo) concentrate on “internationalizing”/upsaling local dishes, while the microclimates in the ascending Sierra Madres create very different food systems. The corn-based street food of Chilpancingo, the capital, gets rave reviews from food writer Karen Hursh Graber: “Vegetable quesadillas, filled with squash, corn, squash blossoms and epazote; sweet, fresh corn tamales known as *elotamales*; wonderfully spiced pork tamales, fragrant with allspice and cloves; sweet *gorditas* flavored with cinnamon and *piloncillo* [unrefined cane sugar].”



Oaxaca lays claim to seven varieties of mole: *negro* (black), *rojo* (red), *coloradita* (sort of red, really brown), *verde* (green), *amarillo* (yellow), followed by *chichilo* (a smoky flavor) and *manchamantel* (“stain the tablecloth,” features a red chorizo and all its grease, cut by the fresh sweetness of plantains and pineapple). Oaxaca also features crisply fried *chapulines* (grasshoppers), both as a snack and in various dishes. Be sure to bring some dental floss for use in the restroom afterwards! Oaxaca also created *tlayudas*, those big flat charred tortillas topped with whatever you like.

Chiapas could be described as serving food as straightforward as its politics, which are based on preserving indigenous rights and heritage. Its cuisine makes good use of black beans, and produces very hot chiles, although the latter are more often put on the table as a condiment rather than an essential ingredient in a dish. Chiapas produces beef, pork, and chicken in the highlands, and everyone eats vegetables, even in meat and cheese dishes. Restaurants in San Cristobal de las Casas, the cultural center of the state, serve Spanish-influenced dishes using cured meats (hams and sausages), and a wide variety of tamales from its indigenous heritage.

Try them out!

This review of Mexico's infinitely varied cuisine is woefully inadequate, omitting many classic dishes. And while you'll get a chance to try specialties from many regions, not just Oaxaca, in your time here, there is nothing like the taste of a dish created by the people who have made it for generations upon generations. Get out, go places in Mexico you never thought you would, ask questions, EAT!!!

**Contact Us
to Advertise!**

**Contactenos
para Anunciarse!**

TheEyeHuatulco@gmail.com

CHINTEXTLE (Smoked chili paste)



This a relatively quick recipe for a Oaxacan smoked chile paste that can be used as a semi-dry rub for roasting or grilling meats, poultry, or fish. Any left-over paste can be stored in the freezer for up to six months.

Ingredients

- 1 small-to-medium garlic bulb
- 6 smoked dried chilies, e.g., guajillos or pasillas
- ¼ pound dried shrimp
- 6 avocado leaves
- ½ cup sweet fruit vinegar (apple cider or pineapple)
- ½ cup olive oil
- Sea salt to taste

Preparing ingredients

1. Toast the un-peeled garlic cloves on a comal (cast iron skillet is fine) over medium heat, turning frequently, until cloves are blackened slightly and the clove is soft, which will take 10-15 minutes depending on the size of the clove. Let the cloves cool, then peel.
2. Preheat broiler, put chiles on a flat surface (e.g., small cookie sheet), place on top rack and broil for about 5 minutes, turning frequently. Remove and set aside.
3. Move broiler rack down one level, put dried shrimp on the flat sheet, and broil for no more than 2 minutes, turning frequently. Remove and set aside.
4. Toast avocado leaves on the comal over low heat for 2-3 minutes, turning once or twice—the leaves will get somewhat shiny.

Making the paste

1. Put the garlic, chiles, shrimp, and avocado leaves into a food processor or blender and process until thoroughly combined.
2. With the processor running, add the vinegar and enough of the oil to make a spreadable paste.
3. Season with salt to taste.

The paste can be varied by adding pepitas (dry-roasted pumpkin seeds) or nuts (almonds or pecans); the paste can be extended by adding cooked black beans. Add any additional ingredients to the food processor (blender) before adding the vinegar and oil.

One way to use *chintextle* is to lightly coat a roasting pan or casserole with olive oil, add a layer of vertically sliced onions and put chicken thighs on top. Then thoroughly coat the chicken with the *chintextle*, cover and roast until chicken is just tender when pierced with a sharp knife or skewer. Remove cover and continue roasting until *chintextle* coating has just started to dry out.

SOPA DE LIMA (Chicken-lime soup)



Even though it's usually served hot in the hot Yucatecan climate, the lime flavor keeps this soup refreshing. The **lime** is supposed to be "bitter lime" (*citrus limetta*), which you can approximate with sour (Seville) orange plus regular lime, or regular lime with grapefruit zest soaked in it. This recipe makes 6 servings.

Ingredients

- 9 cups chicken broth
- 6 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 1 medium red onion, roughly chopped
- 6 cloves of garlic minced
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground allspice
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 scallions cut into 1/4 inch pieces
- 1 large fresh green chile (choose your level of heat)
- 2 large tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 6 bitter limes juiced
- ½ whole lime
- ½ cup cilantro, chopped

Crispy tortilla chips for garnish.

Making the soup

1. Put the chicken broth in a stock pot and add the chicken thighs, red onion garlic, oregano, salt, pepper, thyme, and allspice to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until the juice of the chicken runs clear (15 to 20 minutes).
2. Remove the chicken thighs to a cutting board and shred into bite-sized strips; return to the simmering pot.
3. Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the chopped scallions and green chile and sauté, stirring continuously, until tender (5 minutes).
4. Add the chopped tomatoes and continue cooking/stirring until tomatoes are soft (5 minutes).
5. Pour the vegetable mixture into the soup pot, stir, and season with salt to taste.
6. When the soup returns to a simmer, add the lime juice and the half a lime. Stir again and let simmer for about 10 minutes.
7. Remove soup from stove, take out the half-lime.
8. Just before serving, stir in the chopped cilantro and sprinkle with tortilla chips.

La caXona del Chef

By Marcia Chaiken and Jan Chaiken

Some people come to the Oaxacan beaches to swim. Some to snorkel or dive. Others to simply relax. But one activity almost all visitors share is tasting the wonderful food.

There are so many restaurants to sample, but one question that few people even think about is where does this supply of chefs come from? Even the most casual tourist quickly learns that many talented chefs arrive in Oaxaca from distant cities and countries - Montreal, Argentina, Austria, France and Italy to name just a few. But the vast majority of restaurants serve traditional Mexican food, and scores of chefs and sous chefs are needed to staff them. Fortunately, Chef Nestor Roman realized the need for training young local people for those positions and started a cooking school, La caXona del Chef.

Our first contact with the school and students took place a few years ago when friends who frequently join us at top-notch places for comida (mid-day dinner) decided that we should try the dishes prepared by the La caXona students. We were, to say the least, a bit suspicious when they led us through a small door in a metal fence located behind one of the bus stations in Huatulco. The plastic chairs and tables, and the arrangement of serving dishes sitting out in the heat on a buffet table did not alleviate our misgivings.

But we quickly realized that the cold dishes were surrounded by ice and the hot dishes were brought out from the kitchen as we were ready for them. Everything was sparkling clean, the aromas were wonderful, and when we began to taste the dishes, they were perfect. Trepidation gave way to greed. We ate so much that we barely had room for the creamy flan; but after one taste we made room for the entire dessert. We were prepared to forget about the other places we normally chose for comida and just go to this one, but soon after our visit, Chef Nestor stopped serving the general public the students' creations.

Our next visit to the school, last winter, was prompted by our friend Edith, who is a language teacher (Spanish, French and English). Chef Nestor had decided that it would be advantageous for the students to learn English along with culinary skills. Edith was their English teacher, and she asked us to put together a group of native English speakers who would attend a cooking demonstration where the students could have a chance to practice their English.



She told us the students were practicing using English to describe the food they had prepared and were willing to try to answer questions we might have about the preparation. She asked us to speak to them only in English.

Pulling together the native English speakers to be at the school at a specific time was like herding cats, and convincing them to just use English was not much easier. Some people got very lost trying to find the location and then the door in the metal fence. A couple of people who had agreed to come decided not to. And all of us, except for one person who spoke little Spanish, kept lapsing into Spanish. But once the formal activities began, the afternoon was absolutely delightful.

Each student introduced her- or himself, told us where they were from (most very local) and their age (ranging from late teens to late twenties). They then demonstrated cooking various dishes, describing the ingredients as they went along. And then, one student who had lived in the US for a short while and had the firmest grasp on English invited us to sample the dishes and ask any questions.

Ask questions we did, but we quickly realized that many of the students who charmingly used English to introduce themselves and describe their preparations had absolutely no idea of what was being asked. Part of the problem was the variety of English accents we presented – accents from coast to coast and north to deep south. Another problem was full mouths– the food was so good that rather than just sample we unabashedly stuffed. One question they all learned to understand was, “May I please try more ...guacamole, salsa, sope, tostada, tortilla, quesadilla.” They were so delighted with our enthusiasm that they seemed willing to keep cooking as we “sampled” more and more. Chef Nestor graciously stepped back and let the students take over. Only when one of the guests asked the ingredients in a delicious green sauce did he come forward and tell us that the sauce was a secret recipe known only to graduates of La caXona del Chef.

Chef Nestor caters many events in the area, including an onsite dinner for large groups followed by folkloric dancing. If you are interested, you can find more information at: www.casareyes.com.mx

For the Love of Mezcal: Debunking Methanol Myths

By Alvin Starkman, M.A., J.D.

When trying to understand the relationship between the Mexican agave-based spirit mezcal, and methanol poisoning, it's hard to separate fact from fiction from fear-mongering. One finds lay literature without references backing up claims and allegations regarding the likelihood of hangovers, headaches and much more serious effects (blindness and death); it's cloaked in words including "likely" and "probably." And it ignores aspartame.

Introduction

Is it appropriate to equate mezcal, which has been produced essentially safely and without incident by families in Oaxaca for generations, with American moonshine and deaths due to deliberately adulterating a spirit for purely profit motive, with concoctions created by naive youth, or with third-world country reports where ignorance of safe spirit production results in imprudent means of production or the use of equipment which contaminates? The alarmists draw their data from such sources.

For a quarter century I've been drinking mezcal sold at small, family owned artisanal distilleries without incident. And so have my friends and compadres, hundreds of thousands of villagers who patronize their neighborhood producers, and more recently visitors to Oaxaca anxious to sample and take home at an accessible price quality they cannot find at their local bars or retailers.

To augment my understanding I rely on online sources such as International Center for Alcohol Policies, UPI, Methanol Institute, National Institute of Health / U.S. National Library of Medicine, World Health Organization, as well as my social anthropology background. My Darwinian academic training led me to an Internet search enabling me to prove a reasonable hypothesis, and put into perspective the tall tales I'd been reading --- that mezcal not certified by a regulatory agency is fake, illegitimate, results in hangovers, and may even lead to blindness or death from methanol poisoning. Have imbibers been extremely lucky all these years, decades and perhaps even millennia?

Just as early Zapotec natives learned to dye with the cochineal insect, and presumably through trial and error that the mineral alum served as the best mordent, it is suggested that the Spanish and indigenous peoples of Mexico similarly learned how to distill safely. Wool dyed red with cochineal dramatically faded from the sun or washing, until a reliable fixer was found; and likely hundreds of years ago both natives and Spanish succumbed to unwise distillation practices, until they learned to remove methanol from the spirit, and distill using clay, copper and other "safe" metal compounds.



Methanol Explained

Our bodies contain methanol, from eating fruits and vegetables. It is absorbed through the gastrointestinal tract and the skin, and by inhalation. It is metabolized in the liver, converted to formaldehyde and then to formic acid. As a building block for many biological molecules, formate is essential for survival. On the other hand, high levels of formate buildup after excessive methanol intake can cause toxicity. Methanol is considered a cumulative poison due to the low rate of excretion once absorbed.

Methanol is used for industrial and automotive purposes: antifreeze, canned heating sources, copy machine fluids, de-icing liquids, fuel additives, paint remover, shellac, and windshield wiper fluid. This is known as denatured alcohol. Government actually dictates the inclusion of high levels of methanol in such products, wanting to ensure that the public buys its liquor (in which levels of methanol are controlled, as opposed to other alcohols), in order to maintain healthy tax revenue.

But Government rules do not prevent consumption of denatured alcohol or its being used to fortify other beverages. The literature on non-commercial alcohol, which is sometimes referred to as unrecorded alcohol, cites these "surrogates" or non-beverage alcohols as one of three categories of drinks which potentially create health risks. They are drunk alone (i.e. the classic skid row cases) and used as "cocktails" when they are added for example to fruit juices. The other two are "counterfeit" products and illicit mass-produced drinks, and traditional drinks produced for home consumption or limited local trade (licit or illicit). Artisanal mezcal falls into the second part of this third category. So yes, there is the *possibility* of health problems arising as a consequence of consuming mezcal with higher than "safe" levels of methanol.

Health Risks in Mexico and Internationally

In central Mexico, much more than anything else, the singular health problem related to mezcal and other traditional alcohol consumption is alcoholism resulting in liver cirrhosis. In an article centering on global methanol poisoning outbreaks, World Health Organization cited examples of adulterated, counterfeit and informally produced spirits in Cambodia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Libya, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Turkey and Uganda. Mexico is conspicuously absent from the list.



An article analyzing the quantification of selected volatile constituents in the Mexican spirits sotol, bacanora, tequila and mezcal, while methanol was the most problematic compound and at times the samples taken were far above the levels recommended by international as well as national standards, two points are particularly noteworthy: methanol levels were not of toxicological relevance, and other legally obtained drinks such as German fruit spirits were found to have significantly higher methanol levels.

In "Noncommercial Alcohol: Understanding the Informal Market," International Center for Alcohol Policies reported that much of the perceived health risk stems from patterns of drinking such as chronic consumption and bingeing, use of low quality ingredients, adulteration, and lack of control during production or storage. In Russia and other republics in the former Soviet Union, samogon is cheap and easy to make using household equipment. Kenya's poor fortify their grain spirit, chang'aa, with surrogates. Brazil's national drink cachaca or pinga is sometimes fortified using industrial alcohols, some of which are noted above.

What about the United States' renowned moonshine, typically made using corn mash as the main ingredient? Poorly produced moonshine is contaminated mainly from materials used in still construction, such as employing car radiators as condensers (caked glycol from the antifreeze or lead from the connections). In addition, methanol can be added to the spirits to increase strength and improve profits.

The 1994 report of poisoning from ingesting mezcal produced in the state of Morelos cites the spirit having been deliberately spiked with methanol. It is suggested that this was an aberration, though of course noteworthy. Somewhat surprisingly there was relatively little reported about the incidents, and they have not to my knowledge received attention in the broader English literature centering upon methanol poisoning. Here in Oaxaca an unscrupulous distiller might get away with it once, but never again; villagers have their own way of meting out justice.

As suggested, methanol is not the only potentially harmful constituent. Lead as well as other toxic metals can poison not only as a consequence of employing unsuitable distillation equipment but also through the use of a contaminated water source. Volatile compounds such as acetaldehyde can be produced due to fault in production technology or microbiological spoilage. There have been occurrences of fruit and sugarcane spirits containing the carcinogen urethane.

When is Methanol Safe?

What is the safe maximum level of methanol ingestion? In 1981 aspartame was approved for dry goods, and two years later for carbonated beverages. It is made up of three chemicals: aspartic acid, phenylalanine, and 10% is methanol. The absorption of methanol into the body is sped up when "free methanol" is ingested, and this form of the chemical is created from aspartame when it is heated to above 86 degrees Fahrenheit (i.e. when making sugar-free Jello). In 1993 the FDA approved aspartame as an ingredient in numerous food items that would normally be heated to above that temperature.

The EPA recommends consumption of no more than 7.8 grams of methanol daily. While the amount of aspartame in a diet soda can vary, it has been reported that a single can produces 20 mg of methanol in the body. It is no wonder that aspartame accounts for over 75% of the adverse reactions to food additives reported to the FDA. Chronic illnesses can be triggered or worsened by ingesting aspartame. The range of afflictions reported is alarming.

The current regulation for the maximum amount of methanol in mezcal is .3 of a gram per 100 ml. It is an arbitrary standard. Query how much mezcal one must ingest to reach the EPA maximum limit of methanol of 7.8 grams daily. The FDA states that as much as .5 of a gram per day of methanol is safe in an adult's diet. Should the Mexican standard be higher, or lower?

No wonder the study referenced earlier identifying volatile constituents in Mexican spirits did not find toxicological relevance in the face of analyzing samples far above recommended levels.

Conclusion

Confusion exists in the literature regarding recommended maximum methanol levels and when health risks kick in, both dealing specifically with Mexican spirits, and where they are noted merely tangentially or not at all. However there is consistency:

1. There is a paucity of reliable research and literature stemming in part from the fact that statistics regarding non-commercial spirits are essentially non-existent for various reasons (i.e. unrecorded since no precise reliable quantitative figures exist);
2. There is a lack of collaboration between local authorities, NGOs and international experts;
3. Methanol poisoning is relatively rare in circumstances where traditional, safe distillation processes that have been passed down through generations are practiced (i.e. throughout Mexico, current United States moonshine operations, etc.; subject to 1., above);
4. There are umpteen other reasons why there are health risks associated with both licit and illicit spirit production;
5. There is a concern that strict government controls encourage the consumption of non-commercial or informally sold alcohol and increase harm;
6. Quality artisanal non-commercial traditional spirits are essentially safe, both aside from and notwithstanding the issue of methanol;
7. They often constitute an important part of local culture, often with ceremonial significance (i.e. consumed in a plethora of rite of passage events), and provide a source of national pride.

Aside from my Darwinian suggestion that the days of dangerous mezcal production have long passed, and acknowledging the issue of still construction, it is noteworthy that almost all artisanal distilleries in Oaxaca consist of either copper alembics or similar production equipment made in equally standardized and carefully monitored factories; or clay pots. In both cases they are essentially free of harmful levels of compounds.

If there is a lesson to be learned, it is perhaps that one should never drink artisanal mezcal, commercial or otherwise, while consuming government authorized products containing aspartame.

Alvin Starkman operates Mezcal Educational Excursions of Oaxaca (www.mezcaleducationaltours.com), a registered trademark. He is authorized by the Mexican government to teach about the culture of mezcal and pre-Hispanic beverages.

Calendar

Full Moon
August 7th



On the Coast Recurring Events:

AA Meetings:

English AA 6pm, Puerto Escondido Cafecito Rinconada, Every Thursday

English Al-Anon 4:30pm, Puerto Escondido Cafecito Rinconada, Every Saturday

Weekly Markets

Pochutla Market- Every Monday

August

Saturday, August 5th

Huatulco's Organic Market Santa Cruz 8am-2pm

Saturday, August 19th

Huatulco's Organic Market Santa Cruz 8am-2pm

Sunday, August 27th

Encuentro de Cocineros - Local cooks gather with sample dishes to raise money for local charities. 2pm Santa Cruz 100 pesos

Oaxaca City Recurring Events:

AA Meetings (English)

Daily - Monday and Thursday - 7 pm

Also Saturday at 1 pm - All 12 step groups welcome. 518 Colon

Religious Services

Holy Trinity Anglican Episcopal Church Sundays 11 am

Crespo 211 (between Morelos and Matamoros)

Liturgy followed by coffee hour. Information 951-514-3799

Religious Society of Quaker Friends Meeting, Saturdays 10 am Free. All are welcome. For more information and location, contact: janynelyons@hotmail.com

Weekly Markets

Etla Market, Every Wednesday

Tlacolula Market, Every Sunday

Biking

Oaxaca is More Beautiful on a Bicycle, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday - 9 to 10:30 pm Free, Meet in front of Santo Domingo Church

Rental bicycles available at Mundo Ceiba, Quintana Roo 2011

You must bring a passport or Oaxacan credentials. They have tandems, too!

Ethnobotanical Garden Tours in English

Weekly - Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday - 11 am \$100 pesos. Entrance Reforma and Constitución.

Bridge

Tuesday Bridge Game at Oaxaca Lending Library, Pino Suarez 519, \$20 pesos, no partner necessary, starting at 1:00PM

Garden Club

Monthly - 1st Wednesday Free

The Oaxaca Garden Club is dedicated to: learning, sharing and education about gardening, agriculture and nature, primarily in Oaxaca. To receive the monthly notices of activities, send an email to oaxaca.garden.club@gmail.com

Hiking

Weekly - Tuesday & Friday 9 am - November thru March Minimal cost for transportation. Hoofing It In Oaxaca (<http://www.hoofingitinoaxaca.com/>) is a program of weekly hikes for adventurous gringos who hanker to explore this part of Mexico on foot. Reservations required.

Tour to Teotitlán del Valle

Weekly - Thursday and Saturday - 9 to 5 pm \$750 pesos

Instituto Cultural Oaxaca, Av. Benito Juárez 909

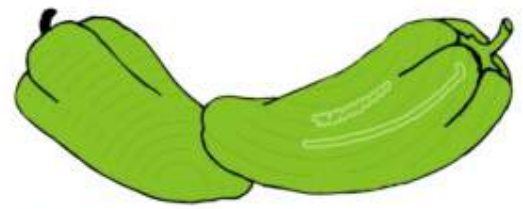
Travel, Learn, Fight Poverty. Fundación En Via (www.envia.org/)



Chiles & Chocolate

Cooking Classes

Huatulco, Oaxaca



The best way to learn about a culture is through its food.

CLASS DESCRIPTIONS



TUESDAY- By the Sea

- Ceviche
- Oven Roasted Shrimp Seasoned
- Baja-style Fish Tacos
- Shrimp Mousse
- Michelada with Clamato

WEDNESDAY- Mama's Kitchen

- Black Mole- This is the most exquisite and complicated Mexican salsa.
- Yellow Mole
- served with Rice and Chicken
- Mezcal Margarita

THURSDAY-Fiesta- Perfect recipes for your next party!

- Poblano and Nopales Emapanadas
- Jicama Salad
- Beef Tamales in Corn Husk
- Rum Horchata

FRIDAY- Street Food- A great intro to Mexican Food.

- Salsas
- Handmade Tortillas
- 2 types of soft tacos fillings
- Sopes
- Tlayudas
- Jamaica Margaritas

Chiles&Chocolate Cooking Classes offer a delicious culinary and cultural experience that explore a variety of Southern Mexican cuisine. Our hands-on classes ensure you will leave prepared to recreate the dishes when you get home.

- Small Groups
- Hands-on
- Instruction in English
- Recipe Manual
- Free Gift Bag
- Lunch and Drinks Included
- All classes start at 9:30am
- Transportation Included



Cost: \$85 USD per person
 Cooking Classes are 3-4 hours
 Zimatán, Huatulco

Tel. 958 105 1671 Cel. 958 100 7339
chiles.chocolate@yahoo.com

VILLAGE TO TABLE DINNERS

Join us for a culinary adventure into local ingredients with an 8-course dinner held at our Chiles&Chocolate Cooking School.

Transportation, Dinner & Drinks Included.

Fridays from 5:30pm to 9:00pm

Info: chiles.chocolate@yahoo.com

Cell 958 100 7339

*Our team
can make your
dream
... a reality.*



FULL SERVICE REAL ESTATE SOLUTIONS

VACATION RENTALS | PROPERTY MANAGEMENT | RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE



Hector Cisneros | Leah Guzmán | Brent May | Erin May | Lindsay Harder



BAYSIDE
REAL ESTATE
Huatulco, Mexico



OWN
MEXICO

MX (+52.1) 958.587.4543 info@BaysideHuatulco.com www.BaysideHuatulco.com

Visit our office in Marina Park Plaza on Boulevard Benito Juarez, Chahue, Huatulco.