

FEATURES AND LOCAL NEWS

Traveling with Jewish Taste®
Honduras – ‘Corn and Beans, Beans and Corn’

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



Traveling in Honduras? Put all thoughts of finding a kosher restaurant out of your mind. If you keep strictly kosher, this Central American nation will appear on your destination list only after a decision to cook for yourself.

While never large, today's Honduran Jewish population numbers a mere forty to fifty families, distributed between the capital city of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. This reflects the government's refusal of all but a few Jews fleeing the Nazis as well as that assimilation and intermarriage have eroded what Jewish community did develop.

Recently, my family and I traveled to this once stronghold of Mayan civilization to visit our daughter, Elana, a Peace Corps volunteer residing in a remote mountain town. There we lived the third-world lifestyle — no running water or refrigeration and sporadic electricity.

With sanitation wanting, we kept in mind that consumable beverages are only those both bottled and sealed. However,

native fresh produce with skin — oranges, bananas, pineapples, avocados, and mangoes — are perfectly safe and absolutely delicious!

Fish is plentiful near the nation's Caribbean and Pacific coastlines, and eggs, rice, beans, and corn tortillas are national staples to be enjoyed — in fact, you may find yourself eating a form of each at every meal.

But, do steer clear of milk products, especially the national cheese, a grainy, stinky concoction. Also, if you do eat in a restaurant, be forewarned that as with kashrut Hondurans don't understand "vegetarian" either, as in: "Don't want meat? We'll give you pork!"

Later in our Honduran adventure, the legends of buried treasure and tales of a disgruntled ghost who can point you to it, called us to the Island of Roatan, off the nation's east coast: soft, white sand; a gentle breeze wafting through palm trees and bougainvillea; calm, crystalline water in shimmering jewel tones of sapphire, topaz, and emerald.

Drawing the tourist dollar, Roatan is tiny, but boasts the world's second largest coral reef, with the warm, soothing water providing a clear look at under-sea life with dozens of intensely colored fish and various forms of sea vegetation.

Recent pirate activity off the coast of Somalia has thrown cold water on our once-romantic vision of buccaners, but Roatan still reveres its past as a haven for pirates. Many landmarks carry the names of these early island residents and a popular museum highlights Roatan's long sea-bandit history. One sight to see is a life-size statue

of the legendary privateer extraordinaire Henry Morgan that dominates one room.

However, even if you choose not to travel to Honduras, you can revel in its cuisine in your own home. Corn tortillas and beans form the core of a Honduran meal, and while aficionados claim that once you experience homemade tortillas you will never go back to store-bought — local Hispanic markets do carry them.

Baleadas are a burrito-like wrap of beans and cheese; while the ubiquitous Honduran street snack, pupusas, are thick, pan-fried corn pastries stuffed with beans, cheese, meat, or vegetables. Pupusas are often served with curtido, vinegary coleslaw with hints of curry. Mayan corn delicacies include fritas, fried corn cakes served with butter and coarse sugar, and elotes, corn wrapped in banana leaves and boiled for many hours.

At the table, an appetizer of bean and cheese anafres, a cross between fondue and nachos, is served in a chafing dish heated by hot charcoals, and plato tipico, the Honduran "blue plate special," features an array of fried beans, potatoes, rice, and usually meat.

Finish off your meal with a sliced mango or a plate of fried sweet plantains and a cup of sublime Honduran coffee — strong and smooth, with no bitter aftertaste, this is coffee the way it is meant to be, but, if you want something stronger, try the guaro, a popular sugar cane liqueur.

Before you sit down, pop a Guillermo Anderson or Aurelio Martinez disk into the CD player for some authentic Honduran atmosphere.



Anafres over hot coals



The sunset from the Island of Roatan

If you close your eyes, you can almost hear the pirates' parrots calling ...or, maybe those are ghosts telling you where to find buried treasure.

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CHABAD HONORS FIVE, continued from page 1

of the Berkshires.

"You don't have to be Jewish to benefit from Chabad," said Volovik. "Chabad is an organization that seeks to nourish the minds, bodies, and souls of the entire community. The Chabad movement is anything but the exclusive ultra-orthodox Jewish sect that some perceive it to be — we're here for everyone!"

Continued Volovik, "We're here to help solve problems, promote good will, and make life more enjoyable by doing great things."

Volovik related that Chabad offers the community a broad range of practical services, including: marriage counseling; bereavement services; the preparation of food packages for the needy; a Chanukah toy drive; a children's winter camp; prayer services; Jewish study classes; cooking classes; pre-holiday seminars; and community-wide holiday celebrations.

New to the Berkshires is Chabad's "Smile on Seniors," initiative wherein Sara Volovik, who administers Chabad of the Berk-

shires alongside her husband, joins with volunteers to visit the elderly and spend quality time with them.

Smiling warmly, Mrs. Volovik explained, "Chabad believes that no senior should feel alone. It makes me so happy to see them happy."

Reflecting on the upcoming gala, Rabbi Volovik said, "We're going to rock the house, no question about it! We have a lot to celebrate."

Volovik said that in these tough times, when community service programs are being severely cut, Chabad's services are

more widely needed across the community.

"Now is exactly the time," said Rabbi Volovik, "when we need to pull together as a community and reach out to those in need to see how we can make their lives better. So, we will both honor and celebrate the good work that has been done and all the wonderful things yet to come."

For further information and reservations regarding Chabad's "Fifth Anniversary Gala," please call (413) 499-9899 or visit www.jewishberkshires.com.



Ellen and Dr. Paul Silverstein



Dr. Mark Hyman

Honduran at Home: "Pupusas"
A vegetarian version of the hot corn cakes found on the streets of Honduras

Ingredients:

The shell:
2 cups masa harina (available at Mexican or Central American groceries)
1-1/2 cups warm water
3-1/2 teaspoons cumin
Salt to taste

The filling:

6 ounces mozzarella or other mild cheese
1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

- Mix the masa harina, cumin, salt, and water into a soft dough. Add more flour if the dough is too sticky, water if too dry.
- Roll about a half-cup of the dough into a ball. Then flatten it with your hand.
- Put the filling in the center of the circle
- Work the edges up over the filling, completely enclosing the filling.
- Flatten each ball to about 1/2 inch and cook the pupusas in a large hot skillet or on a griddle, coated with cooking spray and a tiny bit of oil, for about 3 minutes per side, or until both sides are lightly browned.
- Serve warm. Serves five.

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