



Best Restaurants in

# CENTRAL AMERICA



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# Best Restaurants in BELICE



## Jungle Farm

If you have only one dining splurge in Southern Belize, the restaurant at Belcampo is not a bad place to do it. The location, high on a jungle hilltop, is superb and the restaurant is a delight with its large, open deck, expansive views and attentive service. Food is expertly prepared with a farm-to-table philosophy combining uniquely Belizean and international flavors.

## Hidden Treasure

Living up to its name, Hidden Treasure is a gorgeous open-air restaurant set in an out-of-the-way residential neighborhood (follow the signs from Coconut Dr). Lit by candles, the beautiful bamboo and hardwood dining room is the perfect setting for a romantic dinner, which might feature almond-crusted grouper, snapper wrapped in a banana leaf, or spare ribs marinated in a Garifuna spice rub.

## Guava Limb Cafe

One of San Ignacio's newest and trendiest restaurants, boutique Guava Limb is set in an adorable turquoise two-story building with a serene outdoor garden area. Fresh organic ingredients are sourced from the owners' farm or local providers to create an eclectic international menu that might include Indonesian gado gado, Thai chicken and lettuce wraps, or Hawaiian teriyaki chicken burgers.

## Robin's Kitchen

At his simple, small roadside restaurant south of town, Jamaican BBQ king Robin prepares the best jerk chicken and fish this side of Kingston. Dishes are spicy without overbearing the subtle flavors, and his sauces are also to die for. If you catch your own fish, Robin will prepare it for you any way you like and will only charge for sides.

## Running W Steakhouse

One of San Ignacio's top dining splurges, this restaurant at the San Ignacio Resort Hotel is named for the owner's Running W ranch that supplies most of the best meat in western Belize. Steaks are a specialty, including the signature Maya steak, but there's also a wide range of thoughtfully prepared international and Belizean dishes.

## Habaneros

Caulker's 'hottest' restaurant, named for the habanero chili, is located in a brightly painted clapboard house in the center of town. Here chefs prepare gourmet international food, combining fresh seafood, meat and vegetables with insanely delicious sauces and flavors. Wash it down with a fine wine or a jug of sangria.

## Mojo Lounge & Bartique

Since opening in 2013 little Mojo has made a big name for itself with an imaginative menu, fresh local ingredients, impressive cocktails and the ultimate in cozy lounge vibe. From 5pm till 6pm it's happy hour, so get in early and grab a space on the balcony for half-price cocktails and starters.

## Maya Beach Bistro

Maya Beach Hotel's popular bistro is a veritable Placencia landmark, offering excellent international dishes using fresh local ingredients. This is the restaurant where folks who run the restaurants in town come to eat seafood and coconut chowder, lobster bread pudding or cacao pork on their days off. The waterfront view is fine, service is friendly and you can swim in the small pool or off the pier.

\* Information based on [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)





# Best Restaurants in GUATEMALA



## La Cocina de Señora Pu

This tiny hole-in-the-wall eatery serves up excellent 'modernized' versions of classic Maya dishes. The menu is impressively wide – featuring beef, chicken, pork, duck, turkey, pigeon, rabbit, fish and shrimp – considering it's all done on a four-burner stove in front of your eyes and the flavors are delicious and sometimes surprising.

## Café de Imeri

Interesting breakfasts, soups and pastas. The list of sandwiches is impressive and there's a beautiful little courtyard area out the back.

## Ambia

As the prices may suggest, this is some of the city's finest dining, with a wide-ranging menu offering some good fusion dishes and leaning heavily on Asian influences. The presentation is fantastic and the ambiance superb. On balmy nights, the outdoor courtyard-lounge area is the place to be.

## Puerto Barrios

Puerto Barrios specializes in tasty prawn and fish dishes and is awash in nautical themes: paintings of buccaneers, portholes for windows and a large compass by the door. If you're having trouble finding it, just look for the big pirate ship in which it is housed.

## Árbol de la Vida

Zona 10's best vegetarian restaurant opens up for early breakfasts and offers a wide menu with tasty soups and mains featuring veg-friendly goodies such as tofu and quinoa.

## Tamarindos

A chic and delicious Asian-Italian restaurant with a Guatemalan twist. There's an inspiring range of salads on offer and some very good Japanese and Thai-inspired dishes. The decor is stylish and the service prompt but friendly.

## Kacao

ESet under a thatched palapa roof with a soft marimba soundtrack, this is Zona 10's best comida típica (regional food) restaurant. The atmosphere and food are both outstanding.

## Altuna

This large and classy restaurant has the atmosphere of a private club. It has tables in several rooms that open to a skylit patio. The specialties are seafood and Spanish dishes; service is both professional and welcoming.

\* Information based on [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)



# Best Restaurants in EL SALVADOR



## El Sopón Típico

Simple, fresh and delicious local food is the order of the day at this famous típico restaurant on a busy corner beside Galerías Escalón. Winning dishes include marisco en crema and sopa de chorizo, but it's hard to fault much. The popular yuca dishes come out at night as families arrive en masse.

## El Cafe de Don Pedro

The pinchos (skewered meat and vegetables) and breakfast specials are the highlights of this 24-hour family-run restaurant with four branches across the city. The Roosevelt branch features bubbly waitstaff, ample parking and dirt-cheap beer.

## Rustico Bistro

Rustico rivals any burger place in the world as far as we're concerned. The bread is chunky and fresh and the meat must weigh half a cow. Try the pulled-pork sandwiches with tamarindo sauce and wash it all down with a jar of fruit juice.

## Mile Time

Faux-meat never tasted so good. The full gamut of Asian and Western vegetarian dishes is served at this impressive restaurant in Escalón. The empanada en sopa agripicante (US\$7) is divine, and the dessert menu is extensive.

## Beto's

Colonia Escalón is the place to be seen lingering over crustaceans, and Beto's has the perfect mix of lunchtime work crowd and Salvadoran elite dining on anything that moves under the sea. Service is disarmingly good.

## Pupusería La Ceiba

Named after the port town in Honduras, this place is totally Salvadoran. A plate of these pupusas can solve your problems.

## Típicos Margoth

While service is not always as margoth (bubbly and extroverted) as advertised, this self-serve family-run restaurant is a tasty initiation into Salvadoran cuisine. The antojitos (small dishes) are a good place to start; finish with plátanos (plantain) and cinnamon cream.

## Café Maquilishuat

Named after the pinkish national tree of El Salvador, this típico train is a very clean and reliable option. The menu changes daily through the local staples, with plenty of vegetarian options.

\* Information based on [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)



# Best Restaurants in HONDURAS



## Carivida Club Café

It's obvious just from looking at this sleek addition to the seafront that this sophisticated beach lounge is offering something very different to the competition: low lighting, minimalist decor, contemporary wooden furniture – and no headache-inducing music to talk over. It feels almost surreal after any time spent traveling in Honduras. Food is excellent, cocktails are strong and the vibe is cool.

## Ki'bec Café

This friendly place is about as bohemian as Ceiba gets, with a civilized and artsy feel, welcoming staff and organic coffee. The filling breakfasts are the best in town (the chilaquiles are a real treat), while the rest of the menu is classic Honduran. There's a book exchange, a little terrace and an air-conditioned interior with paintings and mismatched decor.

## Roatán Oasis

A total revolution in the limited food scene of Roatán, the gorgeous Oasis is all about seasonal and locally sourced produce, and may be one of the few places in Honduras where you can find oysters. Come in good time for the three-course set meal it features many of the menu's standout dishes.

## Café San Rafael

This smart cafe serves organic coffee grown at the finca (ranch) of the same name, though it's most famous locally for the various cheeses produced here (platters L120 to L500). Breakfasts (L180) are a filling splurge, while the toasted sandwiches (try the excellent steak and provolone) are a great lunch option. The whole place is gorgeous, overlooking a beautifully maintained lawn, and service is friendly.

## Hacienda San Lucas

Set on farmland overlooking the town and archaeological site, this wonderful place has some of the best food in the region; the romance of dining by candlelight in the restored farmhouse can't really be exaggerated. Cuisine draws heavily on traditional ingredients and techniques and comes accompanied by fine South American wines. Reservations should be made two days in advance.

## Ricardo's

Right on the Parque Central, this classy restaurant offers the best view in town from its terrace tables and its myriad atmospheric dining rooms bursting with curios and character. It's quite pricey, but the set lunch is excellent value, and the seafood and grilled meats are of a surprisingly high standard.

## Galeano Cafe

This very hip cafe rocks both an industrial and upcycling look, with brushed concrete fittings and salvaged wood furniture. It's an absolute lifeline though, as it does great coffee, enormous smoothies served up in glass jars, crepes and panini – try the delicious pero aguacatero – as well as breakfasts and pastries. Upstairs is a terrace and Tegus' hippest clothing store as well.

## Café Paradiso

An intimate, bohemian hangout, this is the place to find Tegus' creative types. The decor (with an excess of curios and lots of paintings) and layout (multiple rooms set off a central covered patio) are unusual. Food-wise, you can snack on a pastry or feast on a filet mignon.

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## Best Restaurants in NICARAGUA



### Casa Ulrich

Local boy and Swiss-trained chef Fred Ulrich has returned to Pearl Lagoon after a long absence working in resorts all over the Americas and has invested in his own hotel and restaurant right by the water. Everything on the menu is top-notch, but make sure to try the tender fillet steaks that arrive at your table on a sizzling platter or the delicate shrimp pasta.

### Galeria Aberdeen

Feeling just a tad too chic for grimy Bluefields, this light-filled, split-level cafe serves real coffee in addition to panini, pasta dishes, salads and other meals you won't find anywhere else. Also has a great selection of desserts and a fridge full of imported beers. The walls are covered with works by local artists and it hosts regular cultural events.

### The Garden Café

This lovely cafe, set on a colonial-style patio around a gorgeous courtyard garden, offers great breakfasts, healthy sandwiches and salads, plus a daily special featuring a traditionally home-cooked Nicaraguan dish (on the day we visited, it was carne tapada, stewed beef cooked with carrots, potatoes and chayote). It also has cocktails, sangria and wine, plus an excellent fair-trade store onsite.

### Pan y Paz

Run by a European couple, this fabulous French bakery specializes in homemade breads. Grab a table on the breezy interior courtyard and choose from a menu of freshly baked pastries and gourmet salads and sandwiches. Later in the day, try the cheese plate; it even has Argentine wines by the glass. An added bonus: the prices are more than fair.

### Habana Libre

Long considered the Corn Islands' best restaurant, this Cuban-run kitchen serves up outstanding plates of fish, shrimp, roast pork and ropa vieja (a Cuban shredded-beef delicacy) on a swank dining patio. But the absolute star of the show is the lobster in jalapeño sauce don't leave the island without trying it.

### Restaurante Faramhi

Close to the airport, this popular restaurant serves easily the best food in town. It's a very Bilwi kind of place: the open-air dining area features seashell light shades, a random disco light and a country music soundtrack. The menu reflects the town's multiethnic roots with typical seafood plates starring alongside an ensemble of good Chinese dishes.

### Borders Coffee

A block back from the river at the eastern edge of town, this fun open-air cafe is a traveler's favorite and is a great place to chill out between activities. The menu is a pleasant change from typical Nica grub with plenty of pasta dishes and veg options. It's also a great place for breakfast.

### La Vita é Bella

This local institution serves up flavorful authentic Italian dishes at low prices in a relaxed bistro atmosphere. The thin-crust pizza is some of the best in Nicaragua and the pasta dishes are also full of flavor. Vegetarians can take their pick from a wide selection of menu items.

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# Best Restaurants in COSTA RICA



## Park Café

At this felicitous fusion of antique shop and French restaurant, Michelin-starred chef Richard Neat offers an exquisite degustation menu featuring smaller sampling plates (Spanish tapas-style) and a carefully curated wine list. The romantic, candlelit courtyard is eclectically decorated with Asian antiques imported by Neat's partner, Louise French. It's near Parque La Sabana's northeast corner

## La Ventanita

La Ventanita refers to the 'little window' at Kelly's house where you place your order. Soon enough, you'll be devouring the best burrito or chifrijo (rice and pinto beans with fried pork and capped with fresh tomato salsa and corn chips) that you've ever had, along with a nutritious and delicious batido (smoothie). It's typical fare with a twist – pulled pork and bacon burritos, for example. Kelly is a wealth of information about the area, so ask away.

## Kapi Kapi Restaurant

While there is some stiff competition for the title of best restaurant in the area, this Californian creation certainly raises the bar. The menu at Kapi Kapi (a traditional greeting of the indigenous Maleku) spans the globe from America to Asia. Pan-Asian-style seafood features prominently; macadamia-nut-crust-mahimahi, lobster ravioli and sugarcane-skewered prawns are all standouts.

## Bromelias del Río

Ensnared in a tropical garden by a mountain stream, this bakery/restaurant wins for its spiked coffee drinks (hot mocha with Baileys and chocolate syrup) and decadent sandwiches, some piled high with lomito (steak), heart of palm, avocado and gravy. Share a main and save room for a sweet crepe for dessert. It's 50m off Hwy 32 at the Santa Elena exit to San Isidro.

## ¿Por Qué No?

Blackberry-and-cream-cheese-stuffed French toast, anyone? (Served with real maple syrup this Canadian-run establishment doesn't mess around.) It's worth making a reservation for lunch or dinner – the creative, well-executed Tico-fusion dishes at this restaurant at the Costa Paraíso hotel, such as blackened catch of the day with mango salsa and pulled pork, represent some of the best eats around here.

## Gingerbread Hotel & Restaurant

Don't miss the chance to eat at one of the best restaurants in northwestern Costa Rica. Chef Eyal is the larger-than-life, New York-trained Israeli chef who turns out transcendent meals from the freshest local fare. Favorites include mushrooms smothered in gravy, blackened tuna salad, and enormous, juicy, grass-fed burgers. It's big food that goes down well. Cash only.

## Benedictus Steakhous

Turn off the highway and drive about 1km up a steep, rough dirt road to arrive at this spectacularly situated steak house (tricky to find in the dark, so arrive before the sun goes down). You'll be rewarded with a gorgeous view, followed by an amazing meal. In addition to the meats, there is heavenly homemade bread, fantastic ceviche and tantalizing desserts.

## La Pecora Nera

If you splurge for a single fancy meal during your trip, do it at this romantic eatery run by Ilario Giannoni. On a lovely, candlelit patio, deftly prepared Italian seafood and pasta dishes are served alongside unusual offerings such as the delicate carpaccio di carambola: transparent slices of starfruit topped with shrimp, tomatoes and balsamic vinaigrette.

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# Best Restaurants in PANAMA



## Donde José

Elevating humble Panamanian staples to haute cuisine, this four-table eatery is Panama's hottest reservation, though overpriced. Chef Jose prepares ñandu beans (native black beans), crisp, tender pork and ñame (an indigenous tuber) in playful, revelatory fashion. Servers have an intimate, casual rapport, though with a cascade of eight courses, they sometimes neglect to describe the dishes, which is key to enjoying the innovation.

## Super Gourmet

Stocking gourmet goods that range from wine to wasabi peas, this is the perfect pre-picnic stop. You can also grab soup, natural juices or a baguette deli sandwich with roasted chicken and peppers, pastrami or three cheeses. For breakfast, eggs on English muffins or arepas hit the spot.

## Mercado de Mariscos

Above a bustling fish market, this unassuming restaurant is the place to get your seafood fix. Come early as service at peak time is painfully slow. Gems include whole fried fish and cavernous bowls of 'Get Up Lazarus' soup (a sure hangover cure).

## Avatar

Serving rich kormas, fragrant rice and complex curries in a swanky piano bar, Avatar is sheer delight for spice enthusiasts. Southern Indian cuisine is the house specialty, though if you want it really hot you will have to insist. On weekdays, lunch is 25% off.

## Madrigal

Pure delight, this upscale eatery from Michelin-starred chef Andrés Madrigal has a fetish for details. Start with sea-bass ceviche (citrus-cured seafood) with coconut foam, slivers of hot pepper and passionfruit mousse and you'll wonder if anything has ever tasted this good. Ropa vieja (shredded beef) is done to perfection and the seafood soup is earthy and satisfying. Great service.

## Masala Indian Cuisine

Nothing complements hot and humid tropical climes quite like a fiery plate of Indian curry and an ice-cold Kingfisher lager. Cozied up with floor pillows and colorful textiles, Masala offers a full complement of traditional dishes from the subcontinent, ranging from tikka masala to lamb vindaloo, with a good selection of vegetarian dishes.

## Maito

With style and pedigree, Maito toys with the classics, folding in everyday Caribbean, Latin and Chinese influences. While results are mixed, it's still worthwhile. Start with a watermelon Waldorf salad. Ribs glazed in passion fruit are tender but lack the crispness of the duck chow mein. Seafood risotto in squid ink proves divine. There's garden seating and impeccable service.

## Sukhi

A casual and cheerful cafe offering lovely – though not the most authentic Southeast Asian food. Portions run small. Start with the fried calamari with ginger-cilantro dipping sauce. Flavors pop in the green-bean green curry, while ladna (noodles in gravy) comes in fragrant beef broth with broccoli rabe. Service is good and the price is right.

\* Information based on [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)





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