

The Culture & Cuisine of the Maya Yucatan & Campeche

Nov 28 - Dec 07 2012 (9 nights)



Summary

In its third year, the **Festival Kooben** is organized by Merida's celebrated **Chef Roberto Solis** from restaurant, Nectar and **Chef Luis Barocio**, Director of Merida's *Escuela Culinaria del Sureste* (Culinary School of the Southeast). Additionally, each night during the Festival, a special dinner will be presented by other leading chefs from Mexico, including: **Alejandro Ruiz** from Casa Oaxaca and many others. We will embark on fascinating excursions to meet farmers, fishermen, and ranchers to better understand and appreciate the farm to table relationships and supply chain of uniquely Yucatecan ingredients. Visitors will travel to the Gulf Coast region to see where baby octopus is farmed, and they will visit a Yucatecan family to discover the traditional pit cooking style called *pib*. The culinary traditions of Yucatan are like none other! Visit Yucatan & Campeche to learn about the unique cuisine of the Maya people!

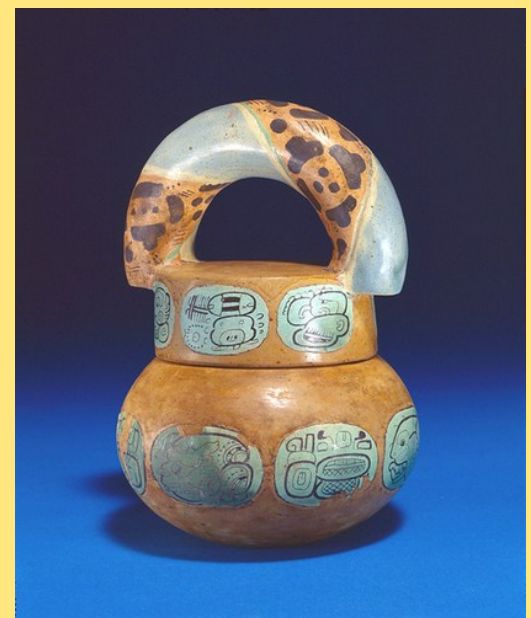


Trip Includes:

- Accommodations
- Expert Guides and/or Academics
- Comfortable / Secure Transportation
- Welcome and Farewell Dinners
- Breakfasts
- Meals according to itinerary
- Water on Van/Coach
- Airport Transfers
- Entry Fees

Program Highlights

- Learn about traditional Yucatecan ingredients and dishes of the Maya!
- Participate in a cooking class to learn to make regional dishes from Yucatan, such as cochinita pibil & sikil pak!
- Explore markets in Merida to learn of the variety of ingredients used in the famous recados or dry rubs, used in many dishes of the region
- Discover contemporary Yucatecan cuisine with some of its greatest interpreters, such as Mario Espinosa!
- Visit ancient Maya sites, such as Ek Balam, Uxmal and Edzna to learn about the Maya people and civilization in the pre-Hispanic period
- Travel to Rio Lagartos for a day of immersion in nature to witness the Greater Flamingo feeding grounds.
- Enjoy excursions to a village called Sucila to participate in a local "Vaqueria", regional country dance & music. We visit a local rancher, Wilmer, who specializes in goat and cows milk cheeses.
- Savor traditional and contemporary Yucatecan dishes at the Festival Kooben Dinners!
- Travel to Campeche City to learn about this walled city, known for its famous pirates!
- Visit the fishing community of Champoton to eat delicious seafood there!



Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1: Wednesday, Nov. 28, Arrive **Merida**, Enjoy Welcome Dinner at **Hacienda Mizne** (Overnight Merida)(D)

Day 2: Thursday, Nov. 29, **Market & Cooking Class, Introduction to Yucatecan Cuisine**. Learn about recados (dry rubs), achiote, chaya, pork, turkey, Maya Traditions, pib cooking. Today, we enjoy a breakfast presentation on the History of Yucatecan Cuisine and what makes it so unique in Mexico. We will learn about the key ingredients used in these regional dishes, and we will learn about some of the famous Yucatecan dishes & cuisine. We will take a guided visit to the market to continue our explorations of the ingredients. Then, we take our ingredients & enjoy a cooking class where we will make some delicious Yucatecan food. We enjoy our meal together. At night, we enjoy a special **Kooben Festival Dinner!** (Overnight Merida) (B,L,D)

Day 3: Friday, Nov. 30, **Pib in Izamal & Cenotes de Cuzama**. Today we visit the Golden City of Izamal, to learn about its history and tour this charming town. We visit a local Mayan family, who will demonstrate the "pib" underground, pit technique of cooking and we will enjoy a pib pollo, almost like a tamale or chicken pot pie! This method is how cooking was done in the pre-Hispanic era and endures to this day! After lunch, we visit (and swim in) the refreshing waters of **Cenotes of Cuzama**. We learn why cenotes and caves were and are considered sacred portals to the underworld. Tonight we enjoy our second special **Kooben Festival Dinner** (Overnight Merida)(B,L,D)

Day 4: Saturday, December 1, Morning visit to **Museum of Anthropology, Comida at a Hacienda with the Kooben Festival**. Renowned Chef, Mario Espinosa will prepare his dazzling new Yucatecan cuisine in a gorgeous Hacienda setting! Returning to Merida, we will enjoy cocktails & antojitos at charming **Rosas & Xocolate** on the Terrace, and we will learn to make simple but delicious dips: dip xcatic from the xcatic chile & sikil pak from pumpkin seeds! (Overnight Merida) (B,L)

Day 5: Sunday, December 2, Today we travel east to attend a traditional **Vaqueria in Sucila**. Here, we are hosted by Wilmer and his family, who will take us to his ranch to see the goats/sheep and cerdo pelon pigs. Wilmer makes delicious cheeses, which we will enjoy! From here, we visit the surreal setting of the pink salt flats called, **Las Coloradas**. It is a setting that combines pink ocean, white salt mounds and redish pink flamingos. It's breathtaking. (Overnight San Felipe)(B,L)

Day 6: Monday, December 3, Today we visit the flamingos at **Rio Lagartos**. We tour the mangroves and lagoons by boat to see where the Greater Flamingo feed. They are majestic creatures. After our nature excursion, we travel to visit the Maya site of Ek Balam, where we see some of the most amazing High Relief Stucco in the region. We make a stop in **Valladolid** for lunch before we transfer to transfer to **Uxmal**, after settling in to our Lodge setting, we are led in an ancient balché ceremony, before walking across the street to see the mystical Light & Sound Show at Uxmal, where we learn who the ancient god, Chac was! The rest of our evening is free! (Overnight Uxmal) (B,L)

Day 7: Tuesday, December 4, Today we will experience breakfast prepared in Maya 'hut'. We enjoy eggs with chaya (like spinach). After breakfast, we will be among the first to arrive for a our visit to one of the most stunning of the Classic Era Maya sites in the Puuc Region: **Uxmal**. After we learn about the exquisite art & architecture of this site, we return to the Lodge to see a pib demo and enjoy our afternoon relaxing by the pool. Later in the afternoon, we visit **The Cacao Museum**, followed by enjoying our pib dinner at the Lodge! (Overnight Uxmal) (B,D)

Day 8: Wednesday, December 5, Today we transfer to **Campeche** with strategic stops in **Pomuch** for "pan de Pomuch", and **Becal** for jipijapa straw hats! Arriving in **Campeche City**, we enjoy a walking tour of this UNESCO World Heritage City, characterized by Land & Sea walls. We pay a visit to the exquisite Fort & Museum, **Fuerte San Miguel**, followed by a lovely meal overlooking the Gulf of Mexico at **Faro del Moro**. Later at night, we enjoy cocktails & antojitos at **Hotel Don Gustavo**. (Overnight Campeche)(B,L)

Day 9, Thursday, December 6, Today we travel to **Champoton and Edzna**. Our excursion to Champoton is to see this fishing community and to tour the Champoton River, where the bird viewing is outstanding. We enjoy the famous "cocteles" shrimp and seafood cocktails, overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. Returning to Campeche, we make an important stop to visit the Chennes site of the Maya: **Edzna**. After our guided tour of Edzna, we return to Campeche City and rest up before we enjoy a fun Farewell Dinner at **Los Portales de San Francisco**. (Overnight Campeche) (B,L,D)

Day 10, Friday, December 7, Transfer to Merida for flights home.



Transportation: Licensed, insured, comfortable and safe vans or coaches



Hotels: Charming & Centrally Located properties in Merida, Uxamal, Campeche



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