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**Entry in the Revue Photo Contest, Dec.**  
"¡Luz!" by Juliana Skaggs Nanne

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<http://www.frommers.com/destinations/guatemala/274612>

<http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/ca/guatemala>: Hosted by the University of Texas Latin American Studies Department, this site houses a vast collection of information about Guatemala.

[www.revuemag.com](http://www.revuemag.com): This is an excellent English-language monthly magazine geared toward tourists and expatriates. The entire magazine, as well as past issues, is available online.

[www.visitguatemala.com](http://www.visitguatemala.com): This is the official site of the Guatemala Tourism Commission (INGUAT). The site is a bit clunky, but if you dig around, you can find some useful info.

[www.xelawho.com](http://www.xelawho.com): A slightly irreverent English-language magazine produced in Quetzaltenango and directed at the town's large population of foreign-language students, this site has honest reviews and a wealth of information.

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# from the publishers

**T**he holiday season in Guatemala is an explosion of lights and colors, the sound of church bells and music, along with the smell of delicious food wafting from kitchens great and small. *Holidays Deliciosas* features traditional meals with inviting aromas and scrumptious flavors. A complimentary article is *Guatemalan Culinary Traditions*. In the *The Gift of Food* readers will discover that the memories of good food can linger long after the last morsels have been eaten. Rounding off the holiday spirit is *Guatemalan Christmas Carols*. Gift giving suggestions can be found in the *4th Annual Trade Fair Trade* and *Tallando Tradiciones*. For some the holidays can be overwhelming, a *Stress-Free Holiday Lift* can be the remedy, and for a lighthearted lesson in a blending of English and Spanish we present *The Night Before Navidad*. The *December Holiday Calendar* comes in handy when planning this month's activities.

Other features include the inside story behind *Site Q: La Corona*; *Música en Las Aldeas* is good news for young musicians; also find out what chewing gum has to do with the outrageous *La Chatona Parades!*

Advice can be garnered from *The Tax Corner* along with *To Give or Not To Give*. *Touch* is the focus of Sensuous Guatemala.

Additional December activities include lectures, films, art shows, concerts, opera, presentations and dance.

We hope you enjoy this month's edition, as always feedback is most appreciated. Stay with us on the Revue Facebook page for updates and the website: [www.revue.gt](http://www.revue.gt) where you can download this edition and previous editions, search articles and view some amazing photography submitted via our monthly *Photo Contest*.

Happy Holidays!

—John & Terry Kovick Biskovich

## **PHOTOGRAPHERS** it's time to gear up for the **11th Annual Revue Photo Issue**

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### ON THE COVER

Guatemalan Nativity Scene  
by  
Rudy A. Girón  
[photos.rudygiron.com](http://photos.rudygiron.com)

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# Christmas Carols in Guatemala

*“When I first viewed the ancient manuscripts in the early 1980s, I was surprised at the beauty of the music and decided to devote efforts to its revival.” —Dr. Dieter Lehnhoff*



Far from modern Christmas carols in English made popular by Bing Crosby and José Feliciano, villancicos are a common poetic and musical form from Spain that date back to the 15th century! Emerging from Spanish medieval dance forms composed of a refrain and stanzas, it evolved in the Spanish New World and were extremely popular beginning in the 16th century through the beginning of the 19th century.

Fray Hernando de Talavera (Queen

Isabel's confessor) began to substitute some Latin responses in masses for Spanish. These were sung by villagers, or villanos, and thus named villancicos. Christmas villancicos are popular at this time of year but villancicos were composed for every liturgical fiesta all year long. They are linked to ancient Arabic poetic forms, zajal or zejel, Gallego cantiga and the Italian balata from the 16th century.

The oldest found to date from the New World are those from the 1590s in the Códices de Huehuetenango—

many of which were written in old style Jakalteko, Chuj and Q'anjob'al. Tomás Pascual, maestro de capilla at San Juan Ixcay between the 1590s and 1635, compiled these, which also include villancicos from Santiago de Guatemala (now La Antigua Guatemala). An enormous number of villancicos were written in Guatemala and incorporated local Mayan languages and instruments. Gaspar Fernández, a Portuguese organist who was maestro de capilla in Santiago de Guatemala from 1599-1606, com-

...continued page 76

Maestros Dieter and Cristina with the Orquesta Millenium



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TAMAL

## Holidays Deliciosas

**T**he holidays bring me closer to home year after year. Home is definitely where the heart is and Guatemala has always been very near and dear to my heart. Typical Guatemalan holiday fare offers inviting aromas and scrumptious flavors that go back thousands of years blending Mayan with colonial Spanish and religious traditions.

Since childhood I grew accustomed to anticipating the celebrations that begin almost as soon as the calendar marks December. Memories of tasty treats lingered in my head counting the days until I could once again savor my favorite foods. Guatemalan holiday food traditions revolve around

religious celebrations that start with **Día de Guadalupe** (Dec. 12) followed by **Las Posadas** (Dec. 15-23), **Christmas Eve** and **Christmas Day**, and the **New Year**, ending with **Three Kings' Day** (Jan. 6).

Día de Guadalupe (Virgin of Guadalupe Day), celebrated around the country but most notably in La Antigua Guatemala; and in Guatemala City at Santuario de la Virgen de Guadalupe is a cultural experience on its own. I have vivid memories of the crowds and sitting on small wooden benches under loosely hung nylon tents enjoying the best street foods ever at stalls near the sanctuary. Buñuelos (pastry puffs with spiced anise syrup), torrijas (raisin-stuffed

buns with spiced syrup), garnachas (tasty tortilla morsels topped with chicken and spicy cabbage slaw), tostadas (crispy corn tortillas topped with guacamole, beans and salsa) and atol de elote (fresh corn hot drink) were sold like hot cakes.

Las Posadas, neighborhood processions reenacting Mary and Joseph's time up to the birth of Christ (nine days representing nine gestation





TAMALITOS



PONCHE

months), is a tradition that came to Latin America from Spain is celebrated very uniquely in each country. In Guatemala, tamales colorados and tamales negros (red chicken or pork tamales in banana leaves and black sweet Christmas rice tamales with mole sauce), ponche (fresh pineapple and dried fruits holiday punch) and chocolate black (Guatemalan hot chocolate) are the traditional foods not only served

at a Las Posadas gathering, but also on Christmas Eve, or Noche Buena. The latter versus Christmas Day weighs heavier on Guatemalans because it is the night Jesus is born. Although the tamale is king because of its cultural relevance (eaten every Saturday of the year), pavo (Guatemalan holiday roasted turkey) is sometimes preferred by Ladinos (mix of Spanish or other European with Mayan ethnicity), along with manzanas, uvas and nueces (apples, red grapes and nuts).

Rosca de reyes or torta de reyes celebrates Epiphany and is a favorite of the young and old on Día de Reyes (Three Kings' Day). The fruitcake resembling a wreath is fun to eat while trying to discover who has landed the piece with little Jesus inside. The lucky "blessed" winner must take his finding to the nearest church on Candlemas Day (Candelaria) on Feb.

2. Legend goes that this tradition of "hiding Jesus" inside the cake ties to the times of Herod who feared the birth of the Messiah and ordered all male babies murdered. Interestingly, in Latin America, Three Kings' Day used to be the day when children received their presents in unison with the presents brought to Jesus by the three Magi!

¡Felices Pascuas y Próspero Año Nuevo! 🍷



PAVO

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amalia Moreno-Damgaard is a native of Guatemala, an award-winning author, chef consultant, Latin food and culture strategist and entrepreneur. Her first cookbook, "Amalia's Guatemalan Kitchen," is the winner of five national and regional awards in the U.S. Amalia is now working on her second book. More info: [www.AmaliaLLC.com](http://www.AmaliaLLC.com)

# SITE Q

## LA CORONA



*It was not even confirmed until 2005 that this little-known site was the famous but mysterious Site Q that archaeologists had speculated about, but did not know where it was located.*

Guatemala is rich in ancient Mayan sites and this magazine has, over the years, covered many of them. Some are famous worldwide. Tourists flock to Tikal, which has been under exploration since 1881. More adventurous visitors venture north of Tikal on the dirt road to Uaxactún, which has been studied since 1916, or nearby Yaxhá, where exploration began in 1904. These—as well as other sites in Guatemala; Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo in Mexico; and Copán in Honduras—have been explored and studied for decades.

“Site Q,” now called La Corona,

or Sak Nikte’, is different. Although it shares a similar history, it is the story of how it was found that makes it unique. It had been a looters’ site. Proper excavations have been going only since 2008, and it was not even confirmed until 2005 that this little-known site was the famous but mysterious Site Q that archaeologists had speculated about, but did not know where it was located.

The hunt for Site Q began in the 1960s because a number of looted Mayan reliefs from an unknown site started coming to international art auctions and were purchased by private collectors in Europe as well as museums. One of the best, showing

a Maya ball player, is in the Chicago Art Institute (photo above); another depicting two women is at the Dallas Museum of Art. The provenance of the items was a mystery. They did not fit any of the then-known sites. A Yale graduate student, Peter Mathews, connected them. They shared the same artistic style, but they did not come from Tikal nor Calakmul ... they must be from a city he called Site Q (in other words, “qué?” — Spanish for “what?”).

Several expeditions in the late 1990s found and investigated La Corona. However, the rough nature of the remaining sculpture and the modest scale of the ...continued page 82



La Corona team. Tomas Barrientos, UVG Director of Archaeology (left) and Marcello Canuto, Director of M.A.R.I., Tulane university (right).

## *Música en Las Aldeas* *Classical Music Education for Antigua's Children*

**L**a Antigua Guatemala does not have a premier institution for providing musical education to children, but Carolina Palomo aims to change that with the opening of a new, non-profit music school, Musica en Las Aldeas.

"For 12 years [children] don't receive any art classes in the public schools," Palomo said. "The idea [of the school] is to give the kids the tools to learn music and perform."

Musica en Las Aldeas began as a traveling program to bring classical music to the aldeas, villages, in the environs of Sacatepéquez. It has now evolved into a burgeoning program for teaching classical music to talented children, regardless of their financial means. While the school is not free, there will be scholarship money to assist those students in need. The funds will be distributed based on individual students' talent.

"If somebody doesn't have money, we'll find a way," Palomo said. She believes that art in general, and especially music, "has the potential to eliminate the differences in [social] classes."

Palomo does not want to simply teach students how to play instruments, however. She and a staff of internationally trained musicians will strive to teach "how music works, how it's put together, because it's a science."

"I think music gives a structure to the mind," Palomo added.

Music schools do not simply spring out of the ground, however. They require cultivation and great care. While Palomo and a professor of music education from Leipzig, Germany have already begun classes for a group of 16 students, and an international board of trustees is assisting in the start-up, a great deal still has to be done.


"It's a big project, and we're hoping to gain a lot of support," Palomo said. The school is currently housed in a temporary location. Palomo and the board are looking for a permanent location, and they are also seeking financial donations and instruments for the school.

To jump-start fundraising for the school, Palomo has organized a **Dec. 15** benefit concert at Hotel Casa Santo Domingo featuring visiting Mexican musicians Santiago Álvarez and Marduk Serrano. Serrano, a baritone vocalist, and Álvarez, a harpsichordist, will perform a program of French and English baroque music, "Noel Barroco," for the Christmas season.

Palomo, who studied music for many years in France, has been organizing concerts for over 10 years in Guatemala, and both Álvarez and Serrano are renowned musicians in Europe. Álvarez has studied in Utrecht, Netherlands and Cataluña,



Spain and he has performed in Germany, Argentina, Spain, Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru and China. Serrano studied music in Mexico and France, where he performs regularly. Serrano has also performed in Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Norway, the United Kingdom, China, Sweden, the United States and Israel.

The concert is being produced with the patronage of the Arte Antigua Project, Hotel Casa Santo Domingo and the Alianza Francesa de Antigua. The concert will be an exceptional musical showcase and will help the development of a top-tier music school Guatemala. Tickets are a minimum Q100 donation and include a glass of wine. Tickets can be purchased at the door or pre-sale at the Alianza Francesa, 2a Avenida sur, No. 25. The concert will begin promptly at 11:30 a.m. Doors open at 11 a.m. Carolina Palomo can be reached at [arteantigua@yahoo.com](mailto:arteantigua@yahoo.com). 





# LA CHATONA

*An annual parade in El Petén honors a young woman who became a legend and one of the most beloved personages for all Peteneros.*

After the collapse of the great Mayan city-states remnant groups of Maya lived in small villages while others migrated north to the Yucatán. The island now known as Flores was occupied by the Itzá Maya fleeing south in 1441 after their center at Mayapan (near today's Mérida, Yucatán) was conquered by the Xiu Maya.

The Itzá Maya named their new home Nojpetén, and soon the island became resplendent with whitewashed pyramids, palaces and thatched-roof residences. The Itzá repelled every attempt the Spanish made to subdue them, and it was not until 1697 that the island was finally conquered. It was the last Mayan kingdom to fall and the last independent and unconquered native kingdom in the Americas to be captured by the European colonizers.

Centuries later mestizo colonists arrived from Mexico and established a few settlements, most notably on

the island of Flores. Then, at the end of the 19th century, they struck green gold in the form of a kind of latex produced by the sapodilla tree, a large tropical evergreen. The Chicago-based Wrigley Company discovered that it could use this latex to make a kind of bonbon that could be chewed for hours, and in no time, in all the cities of the civilized world, people everywhere could be seen chewing in public. Flavored chicle gum became a huge success worldwide and the demand skyrocketed. But this chicle latex is only found in the tropical rainforests of America.

Here is where La Chatona enters our story. The demand for chicle was so great that the hardy Peteneros sent expeditions to set up temporary camps all over the Petén. From these jungle camps the men would spend their days tapping the sapodilla trees, accumulating the latex, and processing it into large white cakes, which would eventually be transported by

mule to Flores, where it would be graded and purchased by Wrigley representatives. There are still old-timers today who can recount stories of how life was in the rough-and-tumble jungle camps. But the most beloved of these stories is that of La Chatona.

You see, in general, women would not go with the men on their jungle expeditions. They stayed home looking after the children. But there was an exception, and stories vary as to where she came from. Some say she came down from Mexico. Some say she came from Belize. But all agree that in the early days of the chicle boom, a young woman began accompanying the men to their chicle camps, and she was known as La Chatona.

She would cook for the men, help keep the camp in order with her efficiency and tidiness and, on Sundays, after a few words of "praise God and pass the mashed yucca," she would sparkle the festivities with her wom-

**“Oh yes,” they said,  
“you really must see  
the parades and take  
some pictures. All  
the men dress up as  
women to honor La  
Chatona!”**

anly presence as a little rum flowed, a little music strummed with the beat of the drum, and the whole crew danced around the campfire.

The men loved Chatona and, of course, in the old days, everything was proper and respectful. In the jungle camps, where sometimes the men would be months away from home, having a young woman present was a delight, a comfort and made their tough life much more bearable. La Chatona became a legend and one of the most beloved personages for all Peteneros.

El Petén has always been distinct from all other Guatemalan provinces, and the Peteneros consider themselves to be a breed apart, cut from a different cloth. They are the hardy pioneers, very independent and proud of their heritage.

All Petén communities have an annual fair on the same day, the **15th of January**, being the celebration day of Our Lord of Esquipulas, the Black Christ. As part of the festivities in Flores, the island's leading families organize a street parade on each of the five days preceding the 15th. And, for nearly 100 years, the parade has featured a rustic, life-sized figure of La

...continued page 68





# Vistas de Guatemala

*Painter John Maxon's first exhibit in Guatemala comes to the Galería Panza Verde in January*

Volcanoes are awesome. Not in the bleach-blonde-California-surfer-way, but in a biblical way, invoking feelings of fear, awe and wonder.

Perhaps you are like me, a lowland dweller who takes these turbulent obelisks for granted by boldly playing house aside one. Imagine, though, that we are residents of Guatemala past. We are farmers, working our land, trying to survive. Video games and infuriating iPhone updates are thousands of years into the future. Our lives are simple. All around us, beautiful peaks stretch as far as there

is land. Elders recount ominous legends of the destruction these peaks can cause. Some have even witnessed the desecration with their own eyes. We pray to the gods that such displays of fire and ash never occur during our lifetime. But secretly, we hope once in our lives to witness the auburn clouds of smoke and rippling heat billow into the blue-black sky.

John Maxon does not exclusively paint volcanoes, nor does he exclusively paint landscapes. But on his first trip to Guatemala last year, the country's natural pyramids visually excited him, as did its colorful peo-

ple. When his show at Galleria Panza Verde opens next month, many of its 20 pieces will reflect his sleeping geological muses with patchworks of flora, fauna and human existence snaking up their torsos. Maxon painted most of these from a hacienda in San Juan del Obispo, just outside of La Antigua Guatemala, and others while traveling through the Highlands.

In his work, Maxon is less concerned with communicating visual reality than he is with evoking emotion through texture and gestural strokes. His visceral use of color is one of the defining ...continued page 76

# FAIR TRADE FAIR

*Happening this month: the fourth annual  
Feria Nacional de Comercio Justo y Solidario*

**M**ore than 55 artistic collectives, associations and craft organizations will gather for the fourth annual *Feria Nacional de Comercio Justo y Solidario* (National Fair of Fair Trade and Solidarity) **Dec. 14 and 15** in La Antigua. The fair will feature fairly traded goods produced by collectives and craft associations from around Guatemala and will seek to raise awareness of social economy as a concept.

"Social economy ... is a whole idea beyond just giving a booth to an organization," Julie Potvin-Lajoie, a member of the organizing committee, said. "We're promoting a fairer economy."

The fair will include textiles, bags, fashion accessories, paintings, coffee, chocolate and honey, among other products.

"Our participation in the fair is very important," Karla Salazar, a member of Mujeres Trabajando Jun-

tas, said. "It is a way to display our product and to give knowledge of how it developed and who benefits from its sale."

Everything sold at the fair has been produced according to basic standards of ethical trade and social economy. This means it has been made without child labor, in relatively safe working conditions, and that the profits will go directly to the artisans. Moreover, everything sold at the fair is of export quality.

"We're very selective on the criteria for the organizations," Potvin-Lajoie said.

While there is a yearly conference in Guatemala about social economy, in the marketplace it is still a new concept for many, according to Potvin-Lajoie. The fair aims to change this by building awareness and supporting organizations that already adhere to fair trade standards.

A major part of building a foundation for fair trade ...continued page 38



# december holiday calendar

**7 Sat., 2pm** — CULTURAL EVENT: A celebration honoring the *Virgen de Concepción* with a parade of floats (con-vite) leaving the cathedral and traveling through **Ciudad Vieja, Sacatepéquez**



**7 Sat., 6pm** — QUEMA DEL DIABLO (Burn the devil): a ceremony that eliminates evil spirits and clears the way for Christmas celebrations. Live music. Barrio de la Concepción, 4a calle oriente, **La Antigua & countrywide**



**8 Sun.** — CELEBRATION: Cultural and religious events honoring the *Virgen de Concepción*, **Ciudad Vieja, Sacatepéquez**



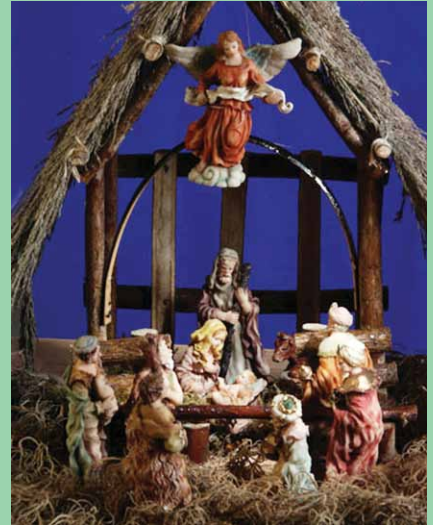
**12 Thurs.** — DÍA DE LA VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE: Children dress in typical clothing in *homage to the Virgen de Guadalupe*. One such procession begins at **3pm** — La Merced church, **La Antigua and throughout the country**



**15 Sun., evening** — POSADAS: traditional processions that begin nine days before Christmas; each evening statues of Joseph and Mary are carried through the streets, looking for a house to stay. The group sings traditional songs on their way. Treats, tipica food and beverages are served to invited guests at the home offering refuge to the posada. **Countrywide**



**24 Tues.** — CHRISTMAS EVE: Last minute holiday preparations, gift wrapping & cooking traditional food and beverages, including tamales negros and colorados & ponche; **10pm** — Christmas Mass (Misa de Gallo) in all churches; **Mid-night** — Fireworks and festivities as families gather to celebrate the birth of Christ. Banks and some businesses close at noon and reopen Dec. 26. **Countrywide**



**25 Wed.** — CHRISTMAS DAY: Traditionally a quiet day, with the exception of firecrackers and bombs BOOMING at noon.

**31 Tues.** — NEW YEAR'S EVE: Celebrations galore with firecrackers and fireworks, music and more! **Countrywide**



# datebook

## DECEMBER 2013 GUIDE TO CULTURE AND UPCOMING EVENTS

COMPILED BY MERCEDES MEJICANOS

**3 Tues., 5:30** — TALK: *MayaPedal*, a Guatemalan NGO based in San Andrés Itzapa MayaPedal supports many community projects in collaboration with local, national and international groups. Pedal power can be harnessed for countless applications which would otherwise require electricity. Bicimaquinas are easy and enjoyable to use, freeing the user from rising energy costs, can be used anywhere, are easy to maintain, produce no pollution and provide healthy exercise. Join in and learn more! Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**

**3 Tues.,** — *Handel's Messiah*: the National Theater, **Guatemala City**; **Wed., 4th** — Casa Santo Domingo, **La Antigua**. See related press release, [www.revue.gt](http://www.revue.gt), Nov. edition, pg. 32.

**4 Wed., 7pm** — (Spanish) PRESENTACIÓN DE LIBRO: La vida y obra de Magda Eunice Sánchez. Galería el Túnel, Plaza Obelisco, 16 calle 1-01, z. 10 Local 11, **Guatemala City**

**5 Thurs., 7pm** — CLASSIC FILMS: *The Ref.* with Dennis Leary, Kevin Spacey and Judy Davis. Free, purchase of food or beverage appreciated. Numa Restaurant, 7a av. norte #16, **La Antigua**

**6 & 20th, Fri.,** — COOKING CLASS: Learn how to cook traditional Guatemalan food. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-4468), 5a calle poniente #15-C, **La Antigua**

**7 Sat, through Fri., 20** — ART: *Santorial*, original European engravings. Salón del Coleccionista, El Attico (tel: 2368-0853), 4a av. 15-45, z. 14, **Guatemala City**

Please submit your DATEBOOK entry for the JAN. 2014 edition by Dec. 10

**7 Sat., 6pm** — *QUEMA DEL DIABLO* (Burn the Devil): See Holiday Calendar, page 22.

**7 Sat., 2pm** — CULTURAL EVENT: A celebration honoring the *Virgen de Concepción*: See Holiday Calendar, page 22.

**8 Sun.** — CELEBRATION: Cultural and religious events honoring the *Virgen de Concepción*: See Holiday Calendar, page 22.

**10 Tues., 5:30pm** — TALK: *Generating Economic Opportunity Through Coffee* presented by Andy Feldman, executive director of As Green As It Gets. Coffee is one of the world's most valuable commodities, and Guatemala produces hundreds of millions of pounds every year. Yet most low acreage coffee farmers remain poor and receive very little for the coffee they produce. Learn about how this NGO works with farmers and cooperatives to help sell their high-quality coffee directly to buyers and consumers, thereby improving the quality of life of their families and communities. As Green As It Gets generates economic opportunity by empowering Guatemalans to build profitable, sustainable businesses. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**

**11 Wed., 6pm** — Presentation: *Antigua: Behind the Walls* with Elizabeth Bell. Enjoy a one-hour presentation through vintage and contemporary photographs collected over the past 40 years, accompanied by Elizabeth Bell's expert narration. Proceeds benefit educational programs in Antigua. Questions encouraged. Autographed books available. Hotel Sor Juana, 4a calle oriente #45, **La Antigua**

**11 Wed., 5pm** — EVENT: *Are you preparing your child for the 21st century?* Join in, exploring your role as a parent or and educator in preparing the next generation for success academically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Highlighting the skills needed and the challenges faced by children today and how progressive education can help is guest speaker Edna Bonilla, MA (Education), PHD (Psychology). She is the founder of The Earth School, a preschool/elementary in Kigali, Rwanda with almost 20 years of experience in education, 15 of those in Montessori. Sponsored by and presented at the Oxford Bilingual Montessori School, 1a av. norte, #35-B (tel: 7832-5969), entrance at the Centro Luterano, **La Antigua**

**12 Thurs.** — DÍA DE LA VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE: See Holiday Calendar, page 22.

**14 Sat., & Sun., 15, 9am-6pm** — *Feria Nacional de Comercio Justo y Solidario*, organized by Centro de Enlaces del Pequeño Productor and Red Alternativa de Intercambio Solidario. Atrium of the Centro de Formacion y de Cooperacion Española, 6a av. norte (between 3a & 4a calles poniente), **La Antigua**. See related article on page 21



**14 Sat., noon-8pm** — EXPO: ART + WATER + LIFE: Ecofiltros have been transformed into painted masterpieces by well-known artists including Arturo Monroy; Sergio Valenzuela, Enrique Cay, Erwin Guillermo, Doniel Espinoza, Pierre Turlin and Pablo Swezey. **5-8pm** — auction, live music, raffles (Q150 per ticket), wine, appetizers and more. Proceeds will help the Ecofiltro:one foundation reach rural communities with clean water through their unique "water for life" program. (Additional info: Ariana Pizzatti at apizzatti@ecofiltro.com) Ecofiltro factory, km. 77, ruta Nacional 14, aldea San Lorenzo El Cubo, **Ciudad Vieja**



**14 Sat., 11:55am** — OPERA FOR ALL: *Falstaff*, the brilliant and last masterpiece by Verdi, directed by Robert Carsen. Live in HD. Q130; Q105/students with carnet. (www.culturales.iga.edu) IGA (tel: 2422-5555), Ruta 1, 4-05, z. 4, **Guatemala City**

**14 Sat., 1pm** — DANCE: Children dancing to marimba music. Free. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-4468), 5a calle poniente #15-C, **La Antigua**

**15 Sun., evening** — POSADAS: traditional processions that begin nine days before Christmas: See Holiday Calendar, page 22.

You can find Revue DateBook online: [www.REVUE.gt](http://www.REVUE.gt)

**15 Sun., 11:30am** — MUSIC: Noel Baroque, music from France and England performed by Maduk Serano (baritone); and Santiago Álvarez (harpsichord) within the Arte Antigua Project, co-sponsored by the Alianza Francesa. Donation Q100 (incl. cocktail), proceeds benefit the School: Music in the Village. Additional info: Carolina Palomo, arte-antigua@yahoo.com Tickets avail. at the Alianza Francesa, 2a av. sur #25, or at the door the morning of the performance (begins promptly at 11:30am). Hotel Casa Santo Domingo (Salon Quiroa), La Antigua. See related article on page 17.



**17 Tues., 5:30pm** — TALK: *Constru Casa-History and Achievements* presented by founders Carolina Van Heerde, Hermona Kadija and Emily Shepherd. In 2014 Constru Casa will be celebrating 10 years helping Guatemalan families who lived in extreme poverty. Constru Casa takes a holistic approach lifting families out of extreme poverty by the provision of dignified and basic housing (over 630 homes to date), the construction of over 60 community and health centers, and through its alliances with partner organizations Constru Casa supports families through health, education and social work initiatives. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**

**19 Thurs., 7pm** — CLASSIC FILMS: *The Wicker Man* with Edward Woodward. Free, purchase of food or beverage appreciated. Numa Restaurant, 7a av. norte #16, **La Antigua**

**21 Sat.** — WINTER SOLSTICE: The longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. Ancient cultures celebrated this night by using fire to coax the sun back to life.

**21 Sat., 5pm** — MUSIC: *Más música, menos violencia*. Mesón Panza Verde proudly presents a unique musical recital by students of Sistema de Orquestas de Guatemala, (SOG). All proceeds support SOG and its programs. Suggested donation, Q150. Info. & reservations, tels: 7955-8282 & 7832-2925. Mesón Panza Verde, 5a av. sur #19, **La Antigua**



**21 Sat., 5pm** — MAYAN CEREMONY: *Winter solstice*. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-4468), 5a calle poniente #15-C, **La Antigua**

**24 Tues.** — CHRISTMAS EVE: See Holiday Calendar, page 22.

**25 Wed.** — CHRISTMAS DAY: See Holiday Calendar, page 22.

**28 Sat.** — DÍA DE LOS INOCENTES (All Fools Day): Watch out for practical jokes by Spanish-speaking people of Iberia and Latin America.

**31 Tues.** — NEW YEAR'S EVE: See Holiday Calendar, page 22.

In literature as in love,  
we are astonished at  
what is chosen by others.  
—Andre Maurois



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Friday 10:30am - 7:30pm  
Sunday 9:30am - 6:30pm



## Museums

### Monthly Films, Lectures & Exhibits

**Cooperación Española** (tel: 7932-3838),  
6a av. norte (between 3a & 4a calle  
poniente), **La Antigua**

**Museo Popol Vuh** (tel: 2338-7937), 6a  
calle final, z. 10, **Guatemala City**

**Museo Ixchel del Traje Indígena** (tel:  
2361-8081) 6a calle final, z. 10, **Guatemala City**

### Tuesday Evening Lecture Series

**Rainbow Café** (tel: 7832-1919),  
7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**

### Theater

**Teatro Dick Smith IGA** (tel: 2422-5555),  
Ruta 1, 4-05, z. 4, **Guatemala City**.

### Monthly Art Exhibitions

**El Attico** (tel: 2368-0853), 4a avenida  
15-45, z. 14, **Guatemala City**

**Galería Panza Verde** (tel: 7832-2925),  
5a av. sur #19, **La Antigua**

**La Antigua Galería de Arte** (7832-2124),  
4a calle oriente #15, **La Antigua**

# THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

**ART:** *Abstract Universe*, a group exhibit by more than 15 national and international artists presenting a full spectrum of work, from pure abstract, to organic, expressionistic and landscape abstracts. ▼



Also: *M@donnas* a solo exhibition by Puerto Rican Artist Patrick McGrath Muñiz showcasing contemporary re-interpretations of Mary, commentary on current global events, consumerism, dependency on technology and environment redolent of satire and good humor. ▼



La Antigua Galería de Arte (tel: 7832-2124), 4a calle oriente #15, **La Antigua**

**ART:** *Dos Garcías: Latin American Fantasy Art, 1940-2013* featuring work by Sergio García Moreno, head illustrator for Filmmation Studios; and Erasmo García, an emerging artist and leader in fantasy art in Guatemala, juxtaposing original comic art. This is a rare opportunity to view or purchase original art from such classic cartoons as He-Man, Fat Albert, Mighty Mouse and Zorro. ¡AyRobot! Comics, 6a av. norte #5 & Calzada Santa Lucía sur #18 (tels: 7832-2023/5488-6550), **La Antigua** ▼



**EXPO:** *Los misterios de la Navidad*, nativity scenes from around the world. Q20; students w/ carnet, Q15. **Through Fri., Dec. 13;** also Mon., Jan., 6 – Sat., Feb., 8, 2014. Casa Mima (tel: 2253-4020), 8a av. 14-12, z. 1, Centro Histórico, **Guatemala City** ▼



**Daily, 2pm & 4pm** — MOVIES: *Las Palmas* (tel: 7832-9734), 6a av. n. #14, **La Antigua**

**Through Jan. 5** — ART: *Compañeros*, Kass & Eric Mencher. Mesón Panza Verde (tel: 7955-8282), 5a av. sur #19, **La Antigua** ▼



**Mondays, 10am & Thursdays at 2:30pm:** Common Hope offers a free 2-hour village tour to learn about its education, health care and housing programs. Departs: fountain, central park; also private tours avail., tel: 7922-6600. Visit [www.commonhope.org](http://www.commonhope.org). **La Antigua**

**Mon., 4:30pm; Tues., 3pm; Wed., 3pm** — DUPLICATE BRIDGE: Asociación Guatemalteca de Bridge. Info., Eva: 7832-4327 or Denni: 2478-1595. Vista Hermosa, z. 15, **Guatemala City**

**Wednesdays, 5pm** — (Spanish) FILMS: Cooperación Española (tel: 7932-3838), 6a av. norte (between 3a & 4a calle poniente), **La Antigua**

**Thurs., 8:30am** — TOUR: Visit Ciudad Vieja, you'll see where many *Niños de Guatemala* families work and live. Also, visit the school built by Niños de Guatemala. Q200/Q100, students. Proceeds benefit Niños de Guatemala projects. [Antigua\\_office@ninosdeguatemala.org](mailto:Antigua_office@ninosdeguatemala.org); tel: 7832-8033. **La Antigua/ Ciudad Vieja**

**2nd & 4th Thursday, 6:30pm** — The *Antigua Curry Club* meets to enjoy delicious Indian food. Visit [www.cernikovsky.com/curry.htm](http://www.cernikovsky.com/curry.htm). A members-only club, limited memberships available. **La Antigua**

...continued page 30

REVUE is not responsible for event cancellations or date/time changes

# La Antigua Galería de Arte

## Ongoing exhibits



Spain: Mary, Madonna by Patrick McGrath Muñiz

"M@donnas" by  
Patrick McGrath Muñiz  
and  
"Abstract Universe"  
A Group Show



Abstract Universe by Ricardo Silva

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# live music

## La Cueva de Panza Verde

tels: 7955-8282, 7832-2925 5a av. sur #19, La Antigua

**Mondays, 8-10pm** — Guest artist. Q35 cover

**Wednesdays, 8-10pm** — Jazz Duo with Lisandro de Leon  
Q35 cover

**Thursdays, 8-10pm** — Buena Vista de Corazón, Ignacio  
Perez on congas and Aniet Gonzáles on flute. Q35 cover

**Fridays, 8-10pm** — Latin Trio, Denis Medina on Cubano  
Tres. Q35 cover

**Saturdays, 5-6:30pm** — Panza Verde Presents a variety of  
musical adventures every Saturday Afternoon at 5 pm. Join  
us for a wonderfully eclectic mixture of Guatemalan and  
Antigua musical artists, each performing in their own style..  
(suggested collaboration Q100)

**Saturdays, 8-10pm** — Sergio Zepeda, Guitarra Lainoameri-  
cana. Q35 cover

**Dec 7:** — Diego Noack  
& Sergio Zepeda, guitar  
and piano, original com-  
positions



**Dec 14:** — Jazz and Blues Concert

## Trova Jazz

tel: 2334-1241 Via 6, 3-55, zona 4, Guatemala City

**Friday Concerts** — Call for schedule: Live music  
Thursdays through Saturdays.



## La Peña de Sol Latino

tel: 7882-4468 5a calle poniente #15-C, La Antigua

**Mondays** — Charlie and his romantic guitar

**Tuesdays** — David; jazz and pop music

**Wednesdays thru Sundays** — 7-10pm: Grupo Sol  
Latino plays Andean music (pan flutes).

**Sunday afternoons** — Special guests play live music



## Fridas

tel: 7832-1296 Calle del Arco #29, La Antigua

**Fridays** — World music.

## Posada de Santiago

tel: 7721-7366

1 km south of Santiago Atitlán, Lake Atitlán

**Every week**, usually on Fridays and Saturdays.  
Check *Gringos of Santiago* on Facebook for details.

### Rainbow Café

tel: 7832-1919 7a av. sur #8, La Antigua Music Nightly from 7:30pm

**Mondays** — Don Jorge: classic latin folk music by candlelight

**Tuesdays** — Pat'za: let this Mexican-Italian singer/song-writer amaze you with her voice and lyrics.

**Wednesdays** — Open Mic Night! Hosted by different musicians; come along and show your skills!

**Thursdays** — Eric Fry: enjoy a great mix of Western and rock music!

**Fridays** — Different guest artists

**Saturdays** — A variety of bands and musicians!

**Sundays** — Kenny Molina, one of Antigua's best loved musicians plays a variety of Latin music that will make you dance!



### Kape Paulinos

tel: 7840-3806 Km 87.5 Carr. Interamericana, Tecpán

**Sundays** — 1 to 4pm: Live marimba band

### Restaurante Personajes

tel: 7832-3758 6a av. norte #6, La Antigua

**18 Thurs., 9pm** — Viento en Contra. Q40

**20 Sat., 9pm** — Los Patanes. Q40, includes a Gallo beer

**Fridays & Saturdays** — 9pm-11:30pm: Rock in English and Spanish. Cover Q20



### Las Palmas

tel: 7832-9734 6a av. norte #14, La Antigua

**Wednesdays & Thursdays** — Bossa, Brazil/North American, sofa rock and boleros with Trujillo, René, Gilberto and Bryan.

**Fridays & Saturdays** — Tropical salsa by Grupo Caribe

**Mondays** — Surprise group



### TRATTORIA LA NONNA

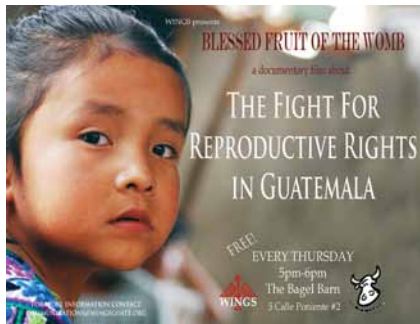
Tel: 7840-4036 Km 86.5, Carretera Interamericana, Tecpán

**Saturdays** — 7pm-10pm: Live music

# live music

## THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

**Thursdays, 5-6pm** — DOCUMENTARY: Wings presents *Blessed Fruit of the Womb: The Fight for Reproductive Rights in Guatemala*. Free. The Bagel Barn, 5a calle poniente #2, **La Antigua** ▼



**Saturdays, 2-4pm** — RUGBY CLUB: Workouts weekly, come and join us. Q15. Info: <http://rugby.com.gt/antigua> Centro Los Luteranos, 1a av. n. #35, **La Antigua**

Entry in the Revue Photo Contest  
"Flor de Pascua" by Nery Racancoj ▼

**Saturdays, 5pm** — MUSIC: A variety of musical adventures every Saturday afternoon. Join us for a wonderfully eclectic mixture of Guatemalan and Antigua musical artists, each performing in their own style. Suggested collaboration Q100. Mesón Panza Verde (tel: 7832-2925), 5a av. sur #19, **La Antigua**

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## PLAN AHEAD

**Jan. 8** — ART: *Vistas de Guatemala*, through March 10. Galería Panza Verde, **La Antigua**. See related article on page 20. ▼



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Congratulations to Tono Valdés on his photograph titled "24 de diciembre a las 12am"  
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# Three Steps for a Stress-Free Holiday Lift

IMAGE BY PHOTOS.RUDYGIRON.COM

How does it get to be the holiday season so quickly each year? It seems as we travel through our life's journey the changes of the seasons appear with a pace that is often challenging to keep up with.

There is an energy that comes forward every December that is frenzied and inescapable. Whether you are in your home country or traveling, there is an unavoidable momentum that invites you to shop, spend money, think about family and feel specific emotions. In fact the holidays often serve up a chaotic blend of excitement, desire, sentimentalism, guilt and other demands. An extraordinary recipe for stress! While

we want to enjoy the season we are often confronting emotions that are contrary to our expectations.

In Guatemala, our housekeeper has been talking about her need to start preparing for Christmas since late September. The traditions here are all-encompassing and worthy of taking in. From processions and decorations to the lovely glow of the twinkle lights in the Parque Central in La Antigua Guatemala, Christmas takes on a special meaning. It is time for families and friends, warm spiced fruit punch and gatherings.

Given the festivities, why would one need to cope with all this scenic harmony? Simply put: It is stressful to meet all of the expectations and de-

mands that come during December.

Holidays are a time of giving gifts...to everyone you know! Our first few years in Guatemala we felt the pressure of being careful to avoid unintentionally forgetting someone during the holiday season. This simple remembrance is often a baked treat or food basket. Easy enough...but did you remember all the people you interact with regularly? Was my gift appropriate? Concern over making a mistake with the list of recipients or the value of the gift given can reduce the joy.

We laugh now as we recognize our self-imposed "stress" over offering sincere appreciation to others.

What we have learned is that it only takes three simple steps to support yourself through the demands

*Sri and Kira have authored several books and are the owners of TOSA La Laguna.  
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of the season. Once we embraced these steps the holiday season became special and filled with the joy that is present for those choosing to embrace it.

So what are those three magical steps?

***Let go of all expectation.***

Simply allow yourself to smile and witness everything that is happening around you without drowning in it. By detaching with a smile you see the bigger pictures and avoid undue pressure. Increase your daily stress-reduction activities, such as walking, stretching or meditative time on a park bench. Releasing expectation is an act of trust; everything has a way of working out...right?

***Plan your time vs. letting your time plan you.***


Recognize your own limitations and set loving boundaries that support your joy and pace. This intentional attitude gives you more available time. Create a schedule for shopping with a few extra gift baskets tucked away in your closet. Planning ahead reduces stress!

***Take time to appreciate the beauty that is around you.***

This is easy to do here in Guatemala where decorating for the holidays is an art form unto itself. Detach and delight in the children walking in a procession, the cacophony of twinkle lights and the countless people who offer a brighter than usual hello. En-

joy the smiles of those who are in the spirit of the holiday as gratitude enters your daily routine.

What is the greatest gift of all? Realizing these three simple steps are valuable for more than just the holidays. The chaos and beauty of the season is training. If we gift ourselves with the ability to integrate these steps into our year-round life experience then we recognize that peace and goodwill originate in our own hearts.

This holiday season we offer our gratitude and stress-free wishes to all who are reading this article and especially to John and Terry for keeping the Revue Magazine such a valuable resource for so many years. 

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—John Glenn

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## Fair Trade Fair cont. from page 21

organizations is encouraging higher prices for hand-crafted products. “The artisans sometimes get twice what they would in the local market,” Potvin-Lajoie said.

To ensure that this happens the organizations sponsoring the fair host a workshop beforehand that focuses on pricing and developing clientele. For many artisans it can be tempting, especially toward the end of market days, to lower their prices drastically to turn over merchandise. The fair aims to counter this by encouraging higher prices overall so that the monetary value of the item reflects the time, skill and resources invested in its production.

The higher earning potential of goods in the fair can have long-term positive effects for artisans and their families. Higher revenue per item allows artisans to produce higher-quality goods by reducing the rate of production. Similarly, greater earnings can benefit the health, happiness and level of educational attainment of families.

“If you’re buying gifts for Christmas, why not go for unique, ethical, quality pieces,” Potvin-Lajoie said. 

Feria Nacional de Comercio Justo y Solidario is organized by Centro de Enlaces del Pequeño Productor and Red Alternativa de Intercambio Solidario. The fair will take place **Dec. 14-15** (9 a.m. to 6 p.m.), in the atrium of the Centro de Formacion y de Cooperacion Española, 6a av. norte (between 3a & 4a calles poniente).

Anyone who criticises me for talking about fair trade is a few pebbles short of a beach. Because everyone should care about it, just like everyone should care about the environment, because we all live here. —Chris Martin



Shoppers browse the fair trade booths

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 —Thomas A. Edison

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## Quemaduras y Cirujano Plástico

Muchos de nuestros pacientes se sorprenden cuando al sufrir una quemadura son referidos para su tratamiento al Cirujano Plástico.

La razón es que la cirugía plástica tiene dos grandes ramas, la rama estética que se ocupa del embellecimiento del cuerpo humano, y la rama reconstructiva, que se ocupa de la recuperación de accidentes, como las quemaduras y sus secuelas.

Las quemaduras son tratadas por el Cirujano Plástico en su fase aguda, proporcionando una nueva cobertura de piel, lo cual se logra otra vez de una nueva cobertura de piel que puede ser con un injerto que es tomar piel de un área para aplicarle en otra área del cuerpo, por ejemplo.

Pero los cirujanos plásticos también nos hacemos cargo de las secuelas y recuperar al paciente de las incapacidades que éstas producen; éstas usualmente pueden ser dificultad en el movimiento de alguna parte del cuerpo, como la flexión o la extensión de una extremidad, por ejemplo.

Para esto se utilizan diversas técnicas que serán aplicadas individualmente para el caso.

Recuerde que su cirujano plástico es un médico especializado y garante del mejor tratamiento que puede realizarse en estos casos.

Cualquier duda puede consultar a la página Asociación Guatemalteca de Cirugía Plástica Estética y Reconstructiva, en Facebook o en sitio web.

— Dr. Edgar Milton Solis L.

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I do not have superior intelligence or faultless looks.  
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I only succeeded because I was still working after everyone  
else went to sleep. —Greg Evans

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should be carried out at once. —Norman Vincent Peale

In nature, there are neither rewards nor punishments;  
there are consequences. —Robert Greene Ingersoll

The greatest achievement was at first, and for a time,  
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# Q & A

*U.S. citizens are subject to U.S. income taxes regardless of where they live and where they make their income. Furthermore, there are special requirements and issues to consider when it comes to tax planning and tax return preparation. Over the next several months, we will be providing a Q&A forum that addresses some of the tax complexities faced by U.S. expats living in Guatemala.*

**Question: How does Obamacare affect U.S. foreign residents?**

U.S. citizens who are technically residents of another country are not affected by Obamacare and its requirement (with tax penalties) to purchase health insurance coverage. Furthermore, a U.S. citizen is also exempt if he or she spends 330 days or more outside the U.S. each year.

On the other hand, Obamacare offers an opportunity to purchase health insurance at reasonable costs. It may now be advantageous for certain expats who maintain a residence in the U.S. to purchase insurance. Early retirees (with no Medicare coverage and low income) are clear beneficiaries. That is because insurance premiums are subject to income levels, which means the government provides subsidies to cover part of your insurance premiums.

**Question: Do I really need to file U.S. taxes?**

In general, if your total income for the year doesn't exceed the standard deduction plus one exemption, then you don't need to file a federal tax

return. Therefore, individuals with income < \$9,750, or married couples filing jointly with income < \$19,500 do not need to file.

The amount of income that you can earn before you are required to file a tax return also depends on the type of income, your age and your filing status. For example, self-employed people usually need to file—the threshold is a meager \$400 in earnings.

While filing taxes may seem less desirable than a trip to the dentist, many expats do not realize there are certain benefits. Take for example, the child tax credit (our next question). Each child could be worth up to \$1,000 each, even if you do not owe any taxes.

**Question: How does the child tax credit work?**

Many expat families with children <17 years of age should take advantage of the child tax credit. As long as earned income is at least \$3,000, there is a good chance you will qualify. In the following table, we provide a simplified example for a family of

four (with two small kids):

Earned income (e.g., wage, business profits) \$40,000

$$\begin{array}{r} \$40,000 \\ - \$27,100 \\ \hline \$12,900 \end{array}$$

**Standard deduction and exemptions**

**Taxable income**


**Tax (10% bracket) = \$1,290**

**We assume no tax has been withheld**

**Child tax credit = \$2,000**

**Check from the IRS = \$710**

Families with much higher income can also take advantage of the child tax credit provided both parents generate income. The trick is to efficiently utilize the foreign earned income exclusion.

Disclaimer: The answers provided in this article are for general information, and should not be construed as personal tax advice. Tax laws and regulations change frequently, and their application can vary widely based on the specific facts and circumstances involved. 

*If you would like to submit a tax-related question, please email: [antiguataxes@gmail.com](mailto:antiguataxes@gmail.com). Responses are provided by John Ohe, an IRS Enrolled Agent, who resides in La Antigua Guatemala.*



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## Food for Thought

by  
Shannon McCullough  
CULINARY PROFESSIONAL



IMAGE BY PHOTOS.RUDYGIRON.COM

# HOLIDAYS AND THE GIFT OF FOOD


It is the season of holiday celebrations with family, friends and new acquaintances. We all have memories which evoke personal family holiday traditions that sometimes last a lifetime. It is my belief that as children we form expectations of what makes a joyful Christmas. Unquestionably, as children we were more focused on the gifts under the tree rather than the food that had taken days to prepare. As adults, for some of us, it is the food that brings back memories that we hold dear. It is personally my favorite time of the year.

For myself, the expectation of receiving gifts has long passed many years ago. I, by far, enjoy giving. I always make food gifts for loved ones, neighbors, friends and the less fortunate. A homemade food gift is also perfect


year-round, but somehow during the holidays it deepens the meaning of giving and brings joy to those who receive them. I remember when and why I began giving loaves of homemade breads, jams or cookies wrapped in clear cellophane, with colorful ribbons and a handwritten card. I was in my mid-20s and it was what I could afford at the time. What I did not expect at the time were the reactions of those who received them. Everyone appreciated them because they were unique and handmade with love.

...continued page 92


*Shannon McCullough is a writer living in La Antigua Guatemala. He is currently writing a book on cooking and entertaining in Guatemala.*





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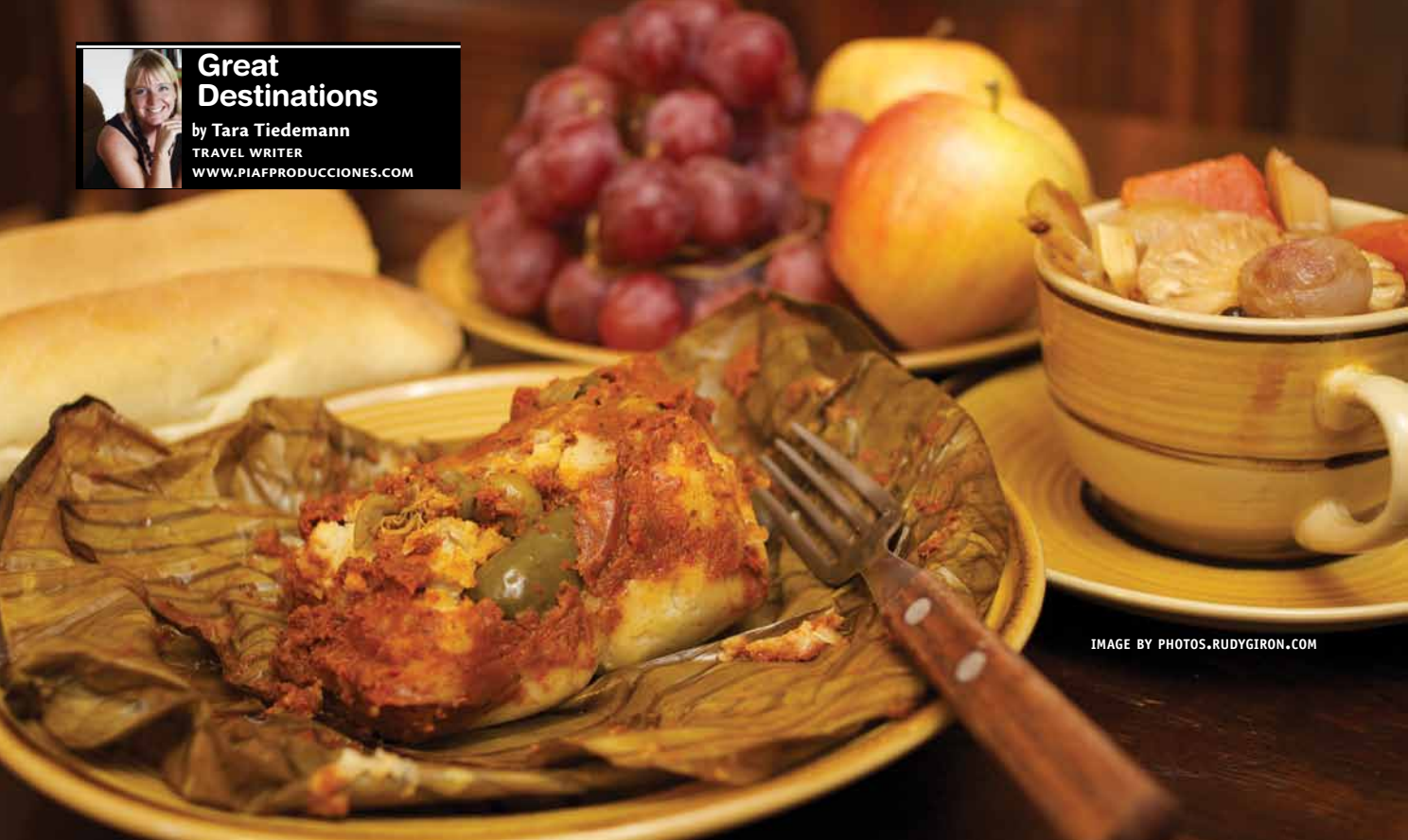


IMAGE BY PHOTOS.RUDYGIRON.COM

# GUATEMALAN CULINARY TRADITIONS

**T**he holidays always inspire mouth-watering visions of your favorite childhood treats. Whether it is Grandma's homemade fudge or the honey-glazed, spiral-cut ham—everyone has his or her favorites. Many visitors are curious if Guatemala has any traditional dishes prepared especially for the holidays and that answer is a resounding yes! Three classics this time of year are tamales, ponche and hot chocolate.

If you're in Guatemala around Christmastime, chances are that you'll be invited to try a tamal. At first when most people think of a tamal, they think of a firmer, drier variety more common in Mexico.

However, Guatemalan tamales are a bit different. Every Guatemalan family has its own recipe and the flavors vary a bit across the different regions. The base can either be cornmeal, rice or potatoes. If they are the potato variety, they are then referred to as paches. The base is ground and cooked down into a thick paste in a large pot, by stirring constantly. The center of the tamal is filled with a tomato-based sauce called a recado. This is prepared by roasting tomatoes, onion, garlic and a variety of sweet chilies. Then toasted sesame and pumpkin seeds are added and the whole thing is blended smooth. To assemble, a large green banana leaf is used as the casing, onto which

a large spoonful of the base is placed, then some sauce, and finally a piece of chicken or pork and perhaps a thin strip of spicy chili. It is wrapped just so and placed in a large pot to steam until semi-firm. It is usually accompanied by pan francés (French bread) or pan de molde (store-bought sliced bread). Families traditionally make quantities of these in the hundreds for Christmas Eve or Noche Buena, as it is referred to here. Families gather and travel around the town visiting neighbors and tamales are offered at every stop. By the end of the night, one's tamal intake count can be quite high.

These tasty, savory tamales are usually paired with a sweet hot bev-

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erage, either ponche or chocolate caliente (hot chocolate). Ponche is a unique, pineapple-based drink. Again, each family has its particular recipe and it is prepared by the gallon. The rinds of the pineapple are boiled with water, sugar and cinnamon. Additional fruits, such as sliced apples, dried plums, grapes, raisins, papaya and coconut, can be added, according to the family tradition. The more adventurous sometimes even make an adult version by adding rum or guaro (cane-based aguardiente, most likely Quezalteca). This beverage is perfect on those chilly nights in the Highlands.

Hot chocolate is another option and is one of my personal favorite holiday treats. Do they make the powdered variety here? Oh no—this is the real deal. Guatemala is home to one of the rare microclimates where the fussy cacao tree thrives and thus the powdered version pales in comparison. You can buy blocks of drinking chocolate from a specialty store, such as Fernando's or the Choco Museo in Antigua or Chocolatería Doña Pancha or Café La Luna in Quetzaltenango. These drinking-chocolate blocks come prepared with sugar so making the drink is easy. Just boil a carafe of water or milk and drop the block in. Stir, stir, stir—dissolving the chocolate and voila—you have the richest hot chocolate you've ever tasted. You can also mix it up by adding chili, cinnamon or vanilla.


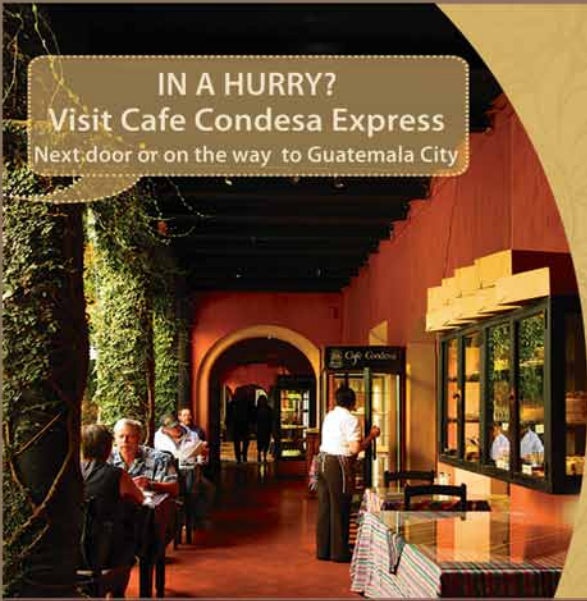
Enjoy this holiday season and be sure to sample something new if you are visiting, or indulge in the family tradition if you call Guatemala home. Each region of Guatemala has its favorite dishes and treats so have fun tasting your way around the country. How high will your tamale count be this year? 

IMAGE BY PHOTOS.RUDYGIRON.COM





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I want my children to have all the things I couldn't afford.  
Then I want to move in with them. —Phyllis Diller

What contemptible scoundrel has stolen  
the cork to my lunch? —W. Clement Stone



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Solution  
to this  
month's  
Cruci-Word  
page 72

1	D	2	E	3	F	4	O	5	R	6	M	7	I	8	D	9	A	10	D
10	E	L	E	F	A	N	T	E											R
11	L	E	A	F	Y									G					E
12	I	M			S	13	O	14	M	15	B	16	R	I	A				
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29	T	R	E	N	C	30	I	L	L	A	R								
31	E	Y	E	S	O	C	K	E	T	S									

I used to think that the brain was the most wonderful organ  
in my body. Then I realized who was telling me this.  
—Emo Phillips

I urge you to please notice when you are happy,  
and exclaim or murmur or think at some point, 'If this  
isn't nice, I don't know what is.' —Kurt Vonnegut



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—Robert Fulghum

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## La Chatona cont. from page 19

Chatona, which is carried through the polychrome streets as the crowd circumnavigates the island.

I had never heard of La Chatona until a few years ago when I happened to be in the Petén in early January, and, while hobnobbing with the locals, someone mentioned the Chatona Parade. “Oh yes,” they said, “you really must see the parades and take some pictures. All the men dress up as women to honor La Chatona!” All the men dress up like women? So, although I usually avoid crowds, preferring the tranquility of the forest, I was determined to be in Flores for the parades.

I arrived on the morning of the 12th and inquired as to when the parade would begin. No one knew exactly but they directed me to the house of the family sponsoring the day’s event. When I got there I found the women helping the boys and men with their costumes, applying

makeup and in general transforming the guys into girls. Spirits were high and everyone present seemed exceedingly amused by all the gaiety.

By 10 a.m. a crowd had amassed outside the house. Around 10:30 the doors were thrown open, pickups with sound systems cranked up the carnival music, and the outlandishly dressed “ladies” burst into the street accompanied by the crowd’s whoops and peals of laughter. Obviously part of the event is to see what boy or man can appear in the most ridiculous costume.

One might ask, why is it so funny when men dress up like women? The answer is, and forgive me, ladies, but women, with their makeup, hairdos and high heels, are funny! Of course, it is all just a show, to charm the boys and get them to chase the girls. But when men dress up with all a woman’s elaborate accoutrements it just accentuates silliness of it all.


By now the street was packed with merry-makers and everyone was in maximum partying mood. Men dispensed rum from gallon bottles, and, as the parade progressed slowly around the island, stops were made in front of the houses of prominent citizens where beer and treats were freely dispensed, with shouts of approval for the most outlandish costumes.

Everyone was dancing and living it up. Everyone was welcoming, and I was encouraged to take all the photos that I wanted. The

few tourists present were having the time of their lives. Suddenly, two big men wearing cocktail dresses took hold of my arms, and before I knew what was happening they leaned me back while another guy was pouring a glass of rum down my gullet. I felt obliged to receive their blessing but after a few gulps I pushed them away ... they immediately differed to my wishes. At other stops I was taken by the hand and pulled into the wild dance mayhem. If you’ve never boogied with a couple big fat guys in sequined party dresses, you just don’t know what you’re missing! Oh yes! It’s all in good fun!

The Chatona Parade takes place every morning and evening during the week preceding the main festival day on Jan. 15. No one knows the exact time the parades will begin, you just have to be there. The evening events usually begin just before dusk and continue into the night and, as might be expected, the night parade gets even wilder.

It must be said that the men at times get a little bit risqué, but this is their culture. The parades commemorate life in the jungle camps and especially the memory of their beloved Chatona. For the Peteneros this is a family-friendly street party, and all are welcome.

If you like to have fun and party with the locals, if you love carnivals as much as I do, and if you want to take part in one of the world’s funniest and outlandish events, then be there, on the island of Flores, from Jan. 10-15. 





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The work an unknown good man has done is like  
a vein of water flowing hidden underground,  
secretly making the ground green. —Thomas Carlyle

We look forward to the time when the Power of Love  
will replace the Love of Power. Then will our world know  
the blessings of peace. —William Ewart Gladstone



**Honorable Mention by judges vote in the REVUE PHOTO CONTEST, Dec.**

"Reflejos de Navidad" by Javier Álvarez Vassaux. All entries can be seen at [www.REVUE.gt](http://www.REVUE.gt)

## Spitters, Scratchers, & Snappers

PET Q's & A's  
by Cynthia Burski, DVM

### Holiday Health Hazards



Here's a quick review of the most common holiday season PET HEALTH HAZARDS

**Bones** can lodge in the throat, stomach and intestinal tract. In addition, when your pets are not used to eating fats, gravies and poultry skin, these foods may cause severe gastrointestinal problems.

**Holiday plants:** Poinsettia and mistletoe are both very toxic if eaten.

**Electrical cords:** Holiday lighting provides more electrical cords for kittens and puppies to chew on. Make sure all cords are in good condition and out of reach of your pets.

**Pine needles:** Ingested pine needles can puncture an animal's intestines.

**Sweets:** Holiday candy—particularly pure chocolate, which contains theobromine—can be hazardous or **even fatal if eaten by your pet.**

**Alcohol:** Keep alcoholic beverages out of reach, they can be extremely dangerous to your pet's health if consumed.

**Ornaments:** Sharp or breakable ornaments should be kept well out of reach of curious paws.

**Tinsel, yarn and ribbon:** Linear foreign bodies can become stuck in an animals' intestinal tract, causing a blockage or perforation of the intestinal wall.

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### TURKEY CHOICE

Heart of Palm, Artichoke and Tomato Salad.

Turkey Stuffed with Beef and Dried Fruits,  
Cranberry Sauce, Baked Mashed Sweet Potatoes  
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Caramelized Pears with Rosemary.

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# bilingual “cruci-word”

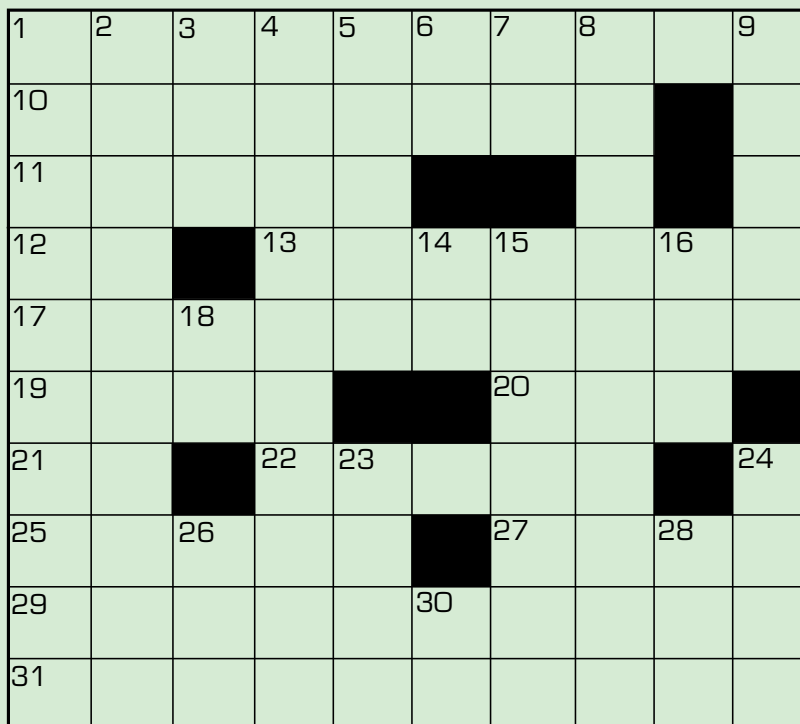
CRUCIGRAMA = CROSSWORD

Translate the Clue to the Opposite Language (Spanish/English)

(Feel free to use the dictionary—the main idea here is to learn new words)

## DOWN

1. Draftsman
2. Fundamental
3. Ugly
4. Temporadas Bajas
5. Seda artificial
6. Manganese (abr)
7. Le, Lo, La
8. Que degrada
9. Pavor
14. Magnesio (abr)
15. “Alce azul”
16. Seguros (abr)
18. Nosotros
23. Disgust
24. Peñascos
26. Abeja
28. Roedor
30. Sufijo Adjectival  
o Sustantivo



Puzzle by Michael Hopkins

SOLUTION ON PAGE 66

## ACROSS

- |                    |                      |                               |                         |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Malformation    | 13. Gloomy, Somber   | 21. A, En                     | 27. River in Spain      |
| 10. Massive Mammal | 17. Región de EE.UU. | 22. He repairs,<br>stabalizes | 29. To Braid            |
| 11. Frondoso       | 19. Bulrush          | 25. Turnips                   | 31. Cuencas de los ojos |
| 12. Soy            | 20. You (abr)        |                               |                         |

## Useful Expressions THANKS TO LANGUAGEREALM.COM

sabelotodo / know it all  
sacar los colores a alguien / make someone blush  
sacar pecho / brag; show off  
salir adelante / to get ahead  
salir de marcha / go out partying  
ser de bronce / be rigid; be inflexible

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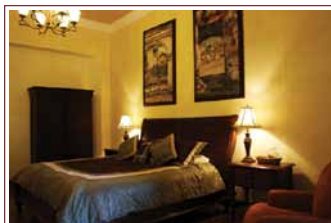


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His lack of education is more than compensated for by his keenly developed moral bankruptcy.  
—Woody Allen

The world is so dreadfully managed, one hardly knows to whom to complain. —Ronald Firbank

If you don't decide what your life is about, it defaults to what you spend your days doing. —Robert Brault,



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Only one shopping day left 'til tomorrow.  
—Barbara Springer

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# TALLANDO TRADICIONES

Carrying on the craft of wood carving



“I learned my craft from watching my dad. I think I have it in my blood,” Ramos Rodrigo of Tallando Tradiciones said when asked about how he started his career as an artisan. Out of seven children in his family, he is the only of his brothers and sisters to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a wood carver.

Tallando Tradiciones is an artisan group that was born out of a family tradition. Rodrigo began painting the figures that his father carved at the age of 6, and he learned to carve them himself when he turned 12. Rodrigo’s father learned the same craft as a child from his father, and Rodrigo is proud to carry on the family tradition.

Rodrigo still remembers the first piece that he created. “It was a nativity scene and I still have it. I keep it

in order to remember how far I have come as an artisan,” he explained.

The group works with various types of wood found locally, but cedar is Rodrigo’s favorite. Tallando Tradiciones carves traditional nativity scenes of various shapes and sizes. Rodrigo enjoys the fact that he can paint the traditional dress of his people on his figures, helping to keep this tradition alive.


It takes three to four days to make each piece. After finding a good piece of wood, the artisans have to let it dry thoroughly. Then they carve the figure and sand it once. Next they add a sealer and sand it again to ensure that the figure has a smooth surface. Finally they paint it, bringing the figure to life.

“My favorite part of my craft is painting the figures and giving them their unique character,” Rodrigo said. “Carving is the most challenging part

for me, but I enjoy the challenge of trying to do it better every time.”

Rodrigo is married (no children yet.) He and his wife have made Tallando Tradiciones a family business and she helps him paint the figures.

Rodrigo dreams of one day starting his own store in his community in the Highlands of Guatemala and making enough money to build a house for his family.

Rodrigo is lucky because he was able to get an education and actually holds a degree as an accountant. However, he prefers to spend his time doing his craft. “I am proud that I am able to do something that is valuable for my community and culture, and I love what I do,” he said. 

*The wood products made by Tallando Tradiciones can be found in La Antigua at Casa de los Gigantes, 7a calle oriente #18, across the street from the San Francisco Church.*



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## Christmas Carols cont. from page 12

posed villancicos in Portuguese, Tlaxcaltec and pseudo-African dialects.

Villancicos were promoted by Hermano Pedro de Betancur (1626-67), now a saint, who also promoted Christmas posadas and nativity scenes in Guatemala, following the steps of St. Francis of Assisi. Villancicos are sung during these. Beginning on **Dec. 16** at the various churches, they go from house to house each night, and return to the same church for Christmas Eve. Organized by special church and family groups, the followers carry a turtle shell, chinchines and candle lanterns. Anyone may join along the way as they carry figures of the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph to various houses. Different villancicos are sung each evening—depending on that day's liturgical theme. Some popular villancicos include *Campana sobre campana*, *El niño del tambor*, *A la ro ro niño*, *Pero mira como beben los peces en el río*, *Cancion del tamborilero*, *Madre de nuestra alegría* and *Venid Pastorcillos*, to mention just a few.

As Dr. Dieter Lehnoff points out in his book, "Creación Musical en Guatemala," villancicos are designed to incorporate the faithful so they may identify emotionally with each theme. These are dramatical and semi-dramatical and refer to stories and specific peoples. Musical instruments such as harps, guitars, flutes, chirimías and organs began to accompany these cancionetas during the 17th century as local instruments were also incorporated with local languages.

Lehnoff, the expert on Guatemalan music, almost single handedly began preservation efforts of colonial musical materials when he "rescued" old musical books from Santa Eulalia and the old archives throughout Guatemala to transcribe them. These include works from Santiago de Guatemala by musicians who composed magnificent pieces! Some were composed by chapel masters (maestro de capillas) at the Cathedral in Santiago in different renaissance and baroque styles. Manuel José de Quirós and Rafael Antonio Castellanos are some of the most renowned in Guatemala. In the December 2008 *Revue*, Lehnoff noted, "When I first viewed the ancient manuscripts in the early 1980s, I was surprised at the beauty of the music and decided to devote efforts to its revival. Thus, many long-forgotten works could come to life again, enchanting present-day audiences with their serene beauty as they did the dwellers of the city four centuries ago."

Accompanied by Cristina Altamira-Lehnoff's extraordinary voice, Dieter and Cristina just released their new CD "200 Años de la Sociedad Filarmónica de Guatemala" with two villancicos by José Escolástico Andriano that are sung today. Cristina points out that the songs *Tortuga de Pascua*, *el Pavo* and *Nochebuena* are featured in their CD, "Melodías Inolvidables." These make for great Christmas presents and are available in local bookstores!



## Art Exhibit

cont. from page 20


qualities of his work. Maxon explains, "When I'm using colors, it's joy. Joy for living. It's a gratitude for what I have as an artist and what I can express in that way." With this collection, he captures the affecting essence of Guatemalan colors most tourists romanticize long after suitcases cases are unpacked—sanguine reds, aquamarine blues and toasted ochres.

Maxon feels drawn to Panza Verde and its intimate gallery space for his debut show in Guatemala. The space feels warm and inviting, the viewer drawn into the space and the work. Galería Panza Verde has been displaying both Guatemalan and international artists for over 14 years, and is excited to host Maxon's show, *Vistas de Guatemala*.

Maxon's career has been long and prolific. He studied painting and sculpture at San Jose State University and later at the University of California, Davis. He has studied under Howard Brodie, Roy DeForest and William T. Wiley. In addition to his work as a painter, he is an adjunct professor at Cabrillo College in California, where he continues the tra-



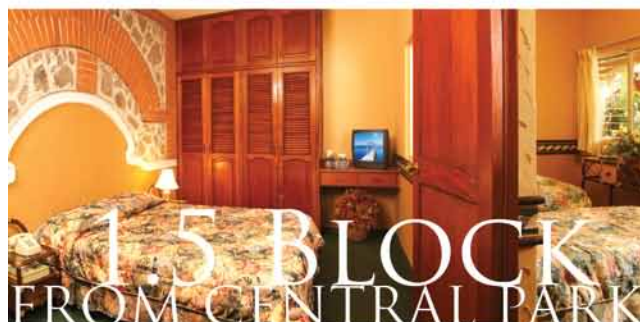
dition of mentorship, working with young artists exploring styles and mediums.

What excites Maxon beyond his own creative process is the communication and connection fostered with his audience. "For me, it's fun to do pieces that allow people to be pulled in, because someone is actually participating in the viewing. The artist does the work, but they still need the viewer to communicate. When the viewer gets that kind of connection to the work, that is the place where the artist can feel they've been successful." He is excited at the possibilities to foster new connections with this show. 



The show, *Vistas de Guatemala*, will open at the Galería Panza Verde **Jan. 8** and will be on display until March 10. (See DateBook for details).

*Natalie Rose is a freelance writer based in La Antigua, Guatemala and New York City. When in town, she resides on a volcano. (Thankfully, it's dormant.)*



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**FOUR LIFE LESSONS from Maya Angelou:**

"I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he/she handles these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights."

"I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw some things back."

"I've learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision."

"I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one."



**Honorable Mention by popular vote in the REVUE PHOTO CONTEST, Dec.**

Congratulations to Geovin Morales on his photograph titled "En honor a la Virgen de Concepción"

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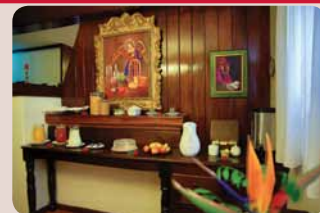
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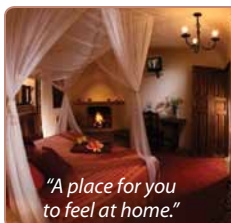


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—Confucius



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A staircase riser found in 2012

## SITE Q cont. from page 16

site's architecture did not provide enough information to connect it to the detailed and well-preserved looted pieces that had entered the antique market 30 years earlier.

Marcello Canuto, at the time a Yale professor, now head of the Middle America Research Institute at Tulane University, is a man much like Indiana Jones, with similar looks of the famous adventurer, and like Indiana, he divides his time between work in a university building, full of Mayan artifacts, and exploration deep in the jungle. In New Orleans he described to me how he was accidentally able to provide a final piece to the Site Q puzzle, confirming in 2005 that La Corona is indeed Site Q.

Canuto was finishing his archaeological work in Honduras, looking for somewhere to direct his energies. He received an invitation to visit and map La Corona. He found himself, for the first time, deep in the Guatemalan jungle, with students and a cook to make a five-day survey. La Corona is 85 kilometers from Flores by helicopter, but with a 4-WD vehicle, the trip

can take up to eight hours.


They did as planned, exploring, taking measurements. Several fell sick, including the epigrapher. (Canuto said that pasta, after four days in the jungle without refrigeration, can be very bad for your stomach.)

The last day on site, Canuto went to the top of one of the pyramids to set up a GPS device to take readings to complete the map. He said that under thick tree canopy, with a weak signal, the GPS can take 10-15 minutes to get a reading, so he went for a walk while waiting. He found a trench, something the looters dug 40 years earlier. As he followed the trench, it turned into a tunnel. Lacking any tools, he used his hands to wipe soil from the walls (Indiana Jones again) and at the end of the tunnel he found a solid stone. He wiped the stone and saw that it was covered with Mayan writing. He rushed to rouse his epigrapher (with the upset stomach) saying, "This is worth your while!"

They realized the stone had a his-

tory of the comings and goings at the Sak Nikte' court. Although they did not have permission to dig, they had a satellite phone and called the relevant authorities to ask to remove the item for fear of it being stolen.

Since 2008, after La Corona was clearly connected with all the pieces now in the world museums as Site Q, work has been going on every year led by Canuto of Tulane and Tomás Barrientos, director of the Archaeology Department at the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala.

In April 2012 they discovered a row of 12 staircase risers (see photo) with many different scenes, plus others that the looters discarded for being less than perfect, unsellable on the market. These panels tell about political events in the area and, amazingly, one mentions 4 Ahau 3 K'ank'in, the date of the December 2012 "end of the world" solstice Baktun 13. The La Corona Project has already repatriated to Guatemala several of the looted pieces. A few are on display at the Museum of Archaeology near the Guatemala City airport. 

*Some of Guatemala's many Mayan sites are easily accessible, and visiting some remote sites is not impossible. The author has visited most of the easily accessible sites over the past 30 years. In the last three years, he organized helicopter trips to El Mirador (see [www.cernikovsky.com/Mirador.htm](http://www.cernikovsky.com/Mirador.htm)); bus trips to the amazing Tak'alik Ab'aj (see REVUE Dec. 2012 and [www.cernikovsky.com/Takalik/2012.htm](http://www.cernikovsky.com/Takalik/2012.htm)); and a heli-trip to La Corona (see [www.cernikovsky.com/LaCorona.htm](http://www.cernikovsky.com/LaCorona.htm)). On each trip, everyone gave a donation to each project. Do not try to visit remote sites without permission; you could be turned away. Visiting La Corona is ONLY possible if accompanied by project directors or members. Over time much more of Guatemala's incredible Mayan past will become accessible in museums and on site.*

  
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**2nd PLACE by popular vote**

"Faroles Navideños" by Emilio Vasquez Robles  
Prize: Carved Jade Paper Weight from **Jades Xibalbá**.

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**2nd PLACE by judges vote**

"Navidad en la capital" by Holger Tobuschat.  
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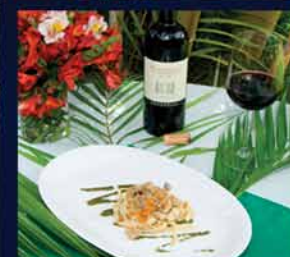
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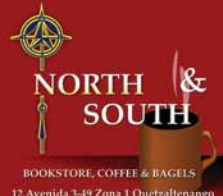
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They say it is better to be poor and happy than rich and miserable, but how about a compromise, like moderately rich and just moody? — Princess Diana

I've been married to a communist and a fascist, and neither would take out the garbage.  
—Zsa Zsa Gabor



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A great swindle of our time is the assumption that science has made religion obsolete. All science has damaged is the story of Adam and Eve and the story of Jonah and the Whale. Everything else holds up pretty well, particularly lessons about fairness and gentleness. —Kurt Vonnegut

Animals have these advantages over man: they never hear the clock strike, they die without any idea of death, they have no theologians to instruct them, their last moments are not disturbed by unwelcome and unpleasant ceremonies, their funerals cost them nothing, and no one starts lawsuits over their wills. —Voltaire

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This is my principal objection to life, I think: It is too easy, when alive, to make perfectly horrible mistakes.  
—Kurt Vonnegut



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## The Gift of Food cont. from page 56

To this day I still give food gifts every year around the holidays or as thank you gifts throughout the year. Over the years I have much improved my ability in baking and must admit I use finer ingredients than I did years ago.

As we are in the season of celebrating with friends and family this is a great time of the year to pull out your baking pans and enjoy the smiles of all who receive your delectable food gifts. As in any cultural tradition, Guatemala has a distinct approach to Christmas food. Cookbook author Amalia Moreno-Damgaard has written an informative story on Guatemalan Christmas food on page 14. Why not try your hand at some Christmas tamales? They would make a delicious food gift. Let the freshness of the markets guide your holiday menus and prepare them with love.

This year my personal Christmas intention is to focus on getting food to families in need here in Guatemala. I have only been living in Guatemala for one year. I have never met so many generous people from around the world contributing in some form or another for a better Guatemala. I am surrounded by friends and family who heal the sick, support children and adult education, feed the hungry and care for abused animals. The list is endless, and I am in awe of all of you. It has humbled me and made me a better person.

As everyone is aware, hunger affects thousands of Guatemalan children every day. Researchers at UNICEF have reported that four out of 10 children suffer from chronic malnutrition, which causes learning problems, less productivity and propensity to disease. There are many organizations here in Guatemala that will accept your food donations throughout the year. It is effortless, every time you go grocery shopping, pick up a non-perishable and canned item or two and add it to your cart. After just a few visits to the market you will find that you have collected a considerable amount of food to deliver to a food bank.

Happy Holidays to all! 



On an average day 7 minutes of news happens.  
Yet there are currently three full-time,  
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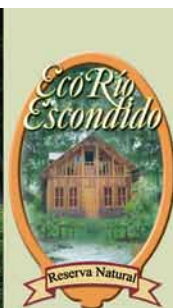
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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**SWEETWATER GROUP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** Meets every Saturday 12 noon & Wed. 12 noon at Hacienda Tijax, Río Dulce, Izabal. Tels: 5902-7825, 5201-5361.

**AA OPEN MEETINGS IN ENGLISH IN ANTIGUA:** Mon. 6-7pm, Discussion. Tues. 6-7pm, Big book. Wed. 12-1pm, Literature study. Thurs. 6-7pm, Steps. All at Doña Luisa's restaurant, 2nd floor rear dining room. 4a calle oriente #12. www.antiguaguatemala-laaa.org Tel: 4735-8955

**CLUB ROTARIO,** Meets every Wednesday 7pm at Porta Hotel Antigua (except last Wed. of the month). Call 7832-7600 <http://www.rotaryantigua.org/>

**PANAJACHEL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP:** Lake Atitlán's English-language church meets Sundays, 9am at member households. Visitors welcome! More info. 7762-1581 (Wayne)

**ST. ALBANS EPISCOPAL CHURCH SERVICE IN ENGLISH,** Formerly St. Marks. Sundays 12:00 noon. Casa Convento Concepción, 4a calle oriente #41. Tel: 2366-0663.

**VIDA REAL TV CHURCH:** Join us for an experience with God. Sundays: Hotel Casa Santo Domingo, auditorium Los Atrios, 8am and 10am; and Hotel Intercontinental, 14 calle 2-51, z. 10, 3rd level, 10am, simultaneous translation. Special program for children.

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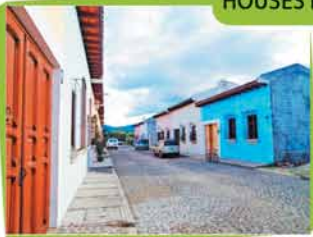
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Karen 55.10.51.33



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—Oliver Wendell Holmes

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## REAL ESTATE: FOR RENT

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the warmth is what keeps you there.  
—Ellie Rodriguez

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*Thinking of giving a pet for Christmas? Please think twice.*

As the holly jolly season is upon us, so is the joy of gift giving. Finding an original gift can sometimes be challenging. What do you give to someone who has it all or who does not care for material gifts? Why not a pet?

Nothing would have made me happier when I was a child than to receive a pet for Christmas; the idea of a furry bundle of joy coming out of a box under the Christmas tree was my description of a perfect Christmas. (It might still be!) I'm sure my parents did not share that sentiment.


Owning a pet is a responsibility. Whether it's for five, 10 or 15 years, the owner needs to be ready to care for that animal, to provide not only the basic care of feeding, exercise and attention but also be able to afford

routine medical expenses as well as the unexpected, often-urgent medical expenses. Consider also that even if that person is a stupendous animal lover, she or he might want to choose the pet they are going to spend the next 10 years with. They might have criteria that you are unaware of, or have always had very active animals but with their current life style would choose a different temperament. What if you are not even choosing the right species? Getting a pet should never be a surprise.

Lastly, the holidays are probably the least favorable season to get a pet. It is hectic enough with all the shopping, cooking, decorations and visiting, making time for a new pet requires time and patience to get adjusted to his new family—it could be a recipe for disaster.

So, before giving into your impulse of giving a pet to somebody for Christmas, please consider these options:

- **Give a gift certificate covering the adoption fee for a later use**
- **Sponsor an animal in their name. Many organizations offer that option.**
- **Make a donation to a rescue and rehabilitation center in their name**
- **If the gift is for a child, commit to bring him/her to volunteer at a shelter/sanctuary.**

If this does not convince you, visit a shelter a couple of months after Christmas, you will understand that receiving a pet for Christmas usually does not end up being a lifetime commitment. 

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# TOUCH



IMAGE BY PHOTOS.RUDYGIRON.COM

**W**e've badly neglected touch as we've written these monthly comments about experiencing the five senses in this marvelous land. We see the colorful countryside, gardens and weavings. We hear the church bells, the fire-crackers, and student bands drumming in the streets. We smell the coffee and chocolate aromas, and we taste the fresh foods from farms and markets around us. But especially in this season of family and friends, we remember the pleasures of touch.

The smooth touch of polished jade and hand-worked leathers, the rougher touch of wool blankets wo-

ven by the men of Momostenango, the warm touch of sandy beaches along both coasts, the cool touch of mists off the lakes and foam off ocean waves.

A dog's licks on a hand, cats rubbing affectionately along a leg, a bird's feather touching us as it floats down from above, a horse's flanks against the rider's thighs. The warmth from a fireplace in the cool December night, the hard touch of a wooden pew in church and the soft touch of grass in the little park outside, the harsh touch from the *tuk-tuk* seat as you're bounced along our cobblestone streets, and the lush touch of a soft down pillow as you

snuggle into it for the night touch memories for both visitors and residents in our country.

Remember touching the intricate embroidery of an elegant native scarf or belt, the feel of the handiwork in *huipil* blouses and colorful shawls. Remember the touch of a sleekly-carved wooden jaguar figure, the touch of a smooth bronze casting, the touch of varnished woods.

But return to family and friends for the special touches of this season, the handshakes, the *abrazos*, the hugs. A baby's tender skin, a child's soft hand against your cheek. Touch, equal to the other senses, for us to enjoy. 🍷

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# The Night before Navidad

***T**was the night before Christmas and all through the casa,  
Not a creature was stirring — Caramba! ¿Que pasa?  
Los niños were tucked away in their camas,  
Some in long underwear, some in pijamas,*

*While hanging the stockings with mucho cuidado  
In hopes that old Santa would feel obligado  
To bring all the children, both buenos and malos,  
A nice batch of dulces and other regalos-*

*Outside in the yard there arose such a grito  
That I jumped to my feet like a frightened cabrito.  
I ran to the window and looked out afuera,  
And who in the world do you think that it era?*

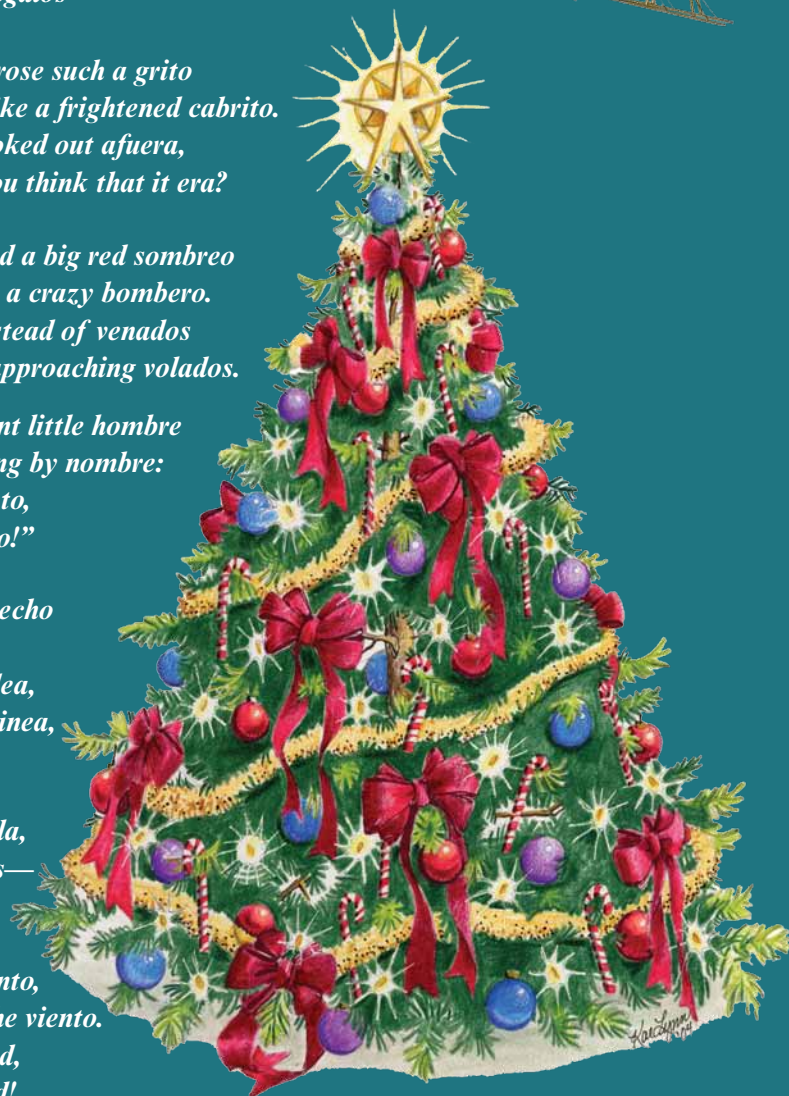
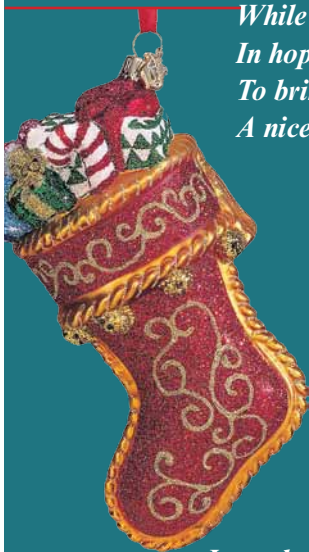
*Saint Nick in a sleigh and a big red sombrero  
Came dashing along like a crazy bombero.  
And pulling his sleigh instead of venados  
Were eight little burros approaching volados.*

*I watched as they came and this quaint little hombre  
Was shouting and whistling and calling by nombre:  
“Ay Pancho, ay Pepe, ay Cuco, ay Beto,  
Ay Chato, ay Chopo, Macuco y Nieto!”*

*Then standing erect with his hands on his pecho  
He flew to the top of our very own techo.  
With his round little belly like a bowl of jalea,  
He struggled to squeeze down our old chimenea,*

*Then huffing and puffing at last in our sala,  
With soot smeared all over his red suit de gala,  
He filled all the stockings with lovely regalos—  
For none of the niños had been very malos.*

*Then chuckling aloud, seeming very contento,  
He turned like a flash and was gone like the viento.  
And I heard him exclaim, and this is verdad,  
Merry Christmas to all, and Feliz Navidad!*



*The willful spanglishization of a classic ([www.autobahn.org](http://www.autobahn.org))*

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