

REVUE

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December 2014
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Guatemalan
Celebrations

A woman in traditional Guatemalan attire, including a tall, colorful, braided headdress and a vibrant, patterned blouse, is carrying a large, ornate floral arrangement. The arrangement is composed of various flowers, including red and yellow roses, pink and white carnations, and yellow daisies. The woman is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background shows other people in similar traditional attire, suggesting a cultural celebration or festival. The setting appears to be an indoor space with large windows, possibly a church or a community hall.



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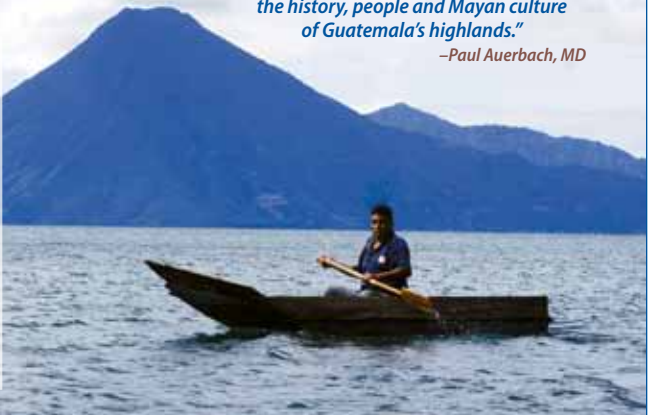
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Celebrating Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception PHOTO BY KERSTIN SABENE

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photo contest:

Celebrations in Guatemala

All of the Dec. entrants can be seen at fb.com/revuemagazine. Here are the winners

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PHOTOGRAPHERS it's time to gear up for the
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ON THE COVER

Día de San Cristóbal
by Marco Ortiz

1st place by judges vote in
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PHOTO BY MERCEDES MEJICANOS

La Chapetona

— Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

text and photos by Kerstin Sabene

It was Sunday, Dec. 8 in La Antigua Guatemala, a magical day I would not soon forget. Friends and I had boarded a brightly colored chicken bus that was headed a few kilometers southwest along the Escuintla road to the neighboring town of Ciudad Vieja, literally Old City. I have had wonderful experiences riding on chicken buses in Guatemala before but today seemed especially remarkable. The atmosphere was festive and friendly and many of the locals were dressed up in their finest and most colorful outfits.

We were on our way to an annual procession honoring the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, one of the oldest processions chronicled in the history of Guatemala, dating back more than 400 years. The Rezado — as the procession is known — comes on the heels of the burning of the devil -- La quema del Diablo — when in cities throughout Guatemala, the devil is burned in effigy at the stroke of 6 p.m. on Dec. 7. Its purpose is to get rid of any bad spirits that might interfere with the celebration of the Christmas season, which officially begins with the rezado or Procession of the

“One of the oldest processions chronicled in the history of Guatemala, dating back more than 400 years...”

Virgin of the Immaculate Conception in which we were about to take part.

Our filled-to-capacity chicken bus had just barely navigated a tight turn on a street near Ciudad Vieja’s huge central park. We jumped off in eager anticipation of what we were about to witness. I meandered a bit until I came upon La Concepcion Church where I stood awestruck in front of its impressive stucco façade.



Unlike the solemn processions of Holy Week, the procession of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception occurs in a more festive environment. There were carnival rides, enticing food stands, live music and dancing with creative costumes and colorful floats. The streets were bursting with activity as beautiful children dressed as cherubs and fairies boarded dozens of intricately decorated floats. Some children were dressed up as red devils with blond wigs.





Others danced in the streets, wearing hand-crafted masks made to look as if they were elderly.

“*La Chapetona* is the nickname Guatemalans affectionately use to refer to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception,” explained Ignacio Ochoa, director of the Nahual Foundation, a think tank by and for indigenous people of the Americas. *Chapetona* is essentially a reference to those who emigrated from Spain or Europe to Latin America during colonial times. In 1527, the Spaniards founded their first capital of Guatemala in Ciudad Vieja, where they immediately became known as *chapetones* because of their distinctive accent.

The revered statue of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, or “Image” as it is referred to by locals, was brought to Guatemala from Seville, Spain at the end of the 16th century by Franciscan Friar Antonio Tineo. “It is a very beautiful statue that moved multitudes of believers to devote themselves to the Marian figure,” said Walter Ortiz, a longtime resident and chronicler for Ciudad Vieja. To this day, the original statue maintains a place of honor perched high above the altar in the town’s well-restored La Concepción Church. For the Dec. 8 procession, a beautifully recreated replica of the original statue of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception is placed on a float (anda).

“Another sacred tradition,” explained Ortiz “is that

this replica stays in the home of one of Ciudad Vieja’s residents for an entire year.” The *Hermanidad*, a committee organized by the priest of the church to preside over religious activities, decides who will keep the replica each year. Residents must submit a letter to them explaining why they would like to have the replica in their home and the *Hermanidad* has a drawing, choosing a letter at random. “As you can imagine, this is a great honor,” said Ortiz.

“I remember when my grandmother took me to the procession,” recounts Mercedes Mejicanos, who has lived in Ciudad Vieja her entire life. “Now I take my own children, and I still feel a great sense of respect for the tradition and love for the Virgin,” she added.


Ortiz went on to explain that while the tradition of decorating the floats and dress has changed substantially over the years, the feeling of the people toward the Virgin has not. “We don’t regard the procession as touristic or folkloric but rather as a manifestation of great faith that the people in Ciudad Vieja still have toward the Virgin. People here clearly love her.” 



PHOTO BY MERCEDES MEJICANOS

NAVIDAD 2013



Mayan Family Christmas Baskets

by Katy Morris

Since its inception Mayan Families has facilitated the education of thousands of students through its cornerstone Student Sponsorship Program, distributed microloans, installed water filtration systems and fuel-efficient stoves, built schools, homes and community centers, hosted medical and dental clinics and rescued and sterilized homeless animals. Its holistic approach to providing emergency assistance while promoting sustainable community development aims to combat the alarmingly high rate of illiteracy, chronic malnourishment and crushing poverty that

plague many communities dotting the shores of Lake Atitlán.

“Every day we see families struggling to get by, and the suffering they face is often accentuated when the holiday season comes,” explains Sharon Smart-Poage, co-founder of Mayan Families.

“Guatemala is a place where tradition is very much alive, especially in the Mayan culture. On Christmas Eve, it is customary to make and share tamales with your family – a tradition that dates back to ancient times.”

Each year, Mayan Families raises funds to distribute hundreds of

Christmas tamale baskets to the families it works with, providing them with a nutritious meal during what should be a joyous celebratory time for all.

“It all started a few years ago when we heard that a brother and sister, enrolled in our Student Sponsorship Program, were going door to door at midnight on Christmas Eve, hoping that a kind family would offer them a tamale. We found out that their single mother was unable to afford the simple ingredients to make even one. We were immediately compelled to do something to help this family and others during this festive time of year,” Sharon said.

Yearly, hundreds of families in rural Guatemala are unable to afford this special, culturally rich holiday meal. And the problem is only getting worse due to continually rising food prices across Guatemala as a result of this year’s prolonged drought.

In 2006, Mayan Families received enough donations to distribute 215 Christmas tamale baskets. The next year, some 400 baskets were given out, and each year the total has been growing. To date over 10,000 low-income families have enjoyed a Merry Christmas through Mayan Families’ efforts.

Each basket (plastic that families can reuse) is filled with nutritious ingredients, perfect for

...continued page 36

“Every day we see families struggling to get by, and the suffering they face is often accentuated when the holiday season comes.”



Roads to Adventure

text/photos by
Capt. Thor Janson
NAVIGATOR / EXPLORER
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KUKULCÁN

THE SOVEREIGN PLUMED SERPENT AND MAYAN COSMOLOGY

Long, long ago, an extraordinary man arrived on the Caribbean shore of Mesoamerica. According to legend he was tall, bearded and of light complexion. He left an indelible mark on all the indigenous people of the region. They called him Lord Quetzal Serpent. Tradition tells us that he came from afar to bring a civilizing influence to Mesoamerica, including improvements in everything from arts and music to agriculture, astronomy and architecture.

Of all the world's ancient cultures those of Mesoamerica continue to be among the most mysterious and misunderstood. Scholars are not in agreement about who Quetzal Serpent actually was, and what confuses the issue even more is the fact that many leaders and preists named themselves after him until Quetzal Serpent became a kind of title designating and setting apart the high priest and potentate. The original name was translated into the many languages of the region: Quetzalcoatl, Guk' Umatz, Kuku-

lcán and others, all literally meaning quetzal serpent. Since the time of the Olmec the iconic symbolism of the winged serpent is ubiquitous. The exact meaning is lost in time but it would seem that the mythical imagery suggests the power of the original teacher to elevate the mentality of humans and point them toward the heavenly realms where peace and order prevail. Such that many researchers have described Quetzal Serpent as a kind of "christ" who walked in the Americas. It is interesting to note among Mormons it is a widely held belief that Quetzal Serpent actually was Jesus Christ, who came to Mesoamerica after fulfilling his mission in Israel. ...continued page 70

Tradition tells us that he came from afar to bring a civilizing influence to Mesoamerica, including improvements in everything

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DECEMBER 2014 GUIDE TO CULTURE AND UPCOMING EVENTS

COMPILED BY MERCEDES MEJICANOS

2 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK: *ConstruCasa* provides dignified & basic housing, construction of community and health centers & through alliances with partner organizations supports health, education and social work initiatives. See article, pg. 82. Suggested donation Q25, all which goes directly to the NGO. Info. & reservations, tels: 7832-1919. Rainbow Café, 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**

2 Tues., 8pm, through Sat., 6th — PHOTOGRAPHY: Expo-sale, *Mujer indígena* by María José Godoy. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, **Guatemala City**

3 Wed., 6:30pm — ART: *Recuerdos, raíces y flores*. Galería del Centro Fundación G&T Continental, 5a av. 12-38, z. 1, **Guatemala City**

4 Thurs., 4pm — (Spanish) CONFERENCE: *Jorge Ubico y su tiempo* by Carlos Sabino. Q30/Q15 students & guides Q15. Casa Popenoe, 6a calle oriente #16, **La Antigua**

4 Thurs., 5pm — EVENT: (Cocktail) *Galactic Gold Jade*, a collection of *Images in Jade from the Mayan Sky*; also featuring a 14-min. presentation, *Starry Maya Night, a Maya View of the Universe*, by archaeologist Mary Lou Ridinger. See article, pg. 78. Casa Concepción, 4a calle oriente #32, **La Antigua** ▼



4 Thurs., 7pm — PHOTOGRAPHY: Monthly photo contest, info@club-fotografico.org/ & www.clubfotografico.org Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, **Guatemala City**

5 Friday, 7pm — DINNER: The American Society of Guatemala will hold its annual Christmas dinner, musical entertainment. Tickets, Q180 p/p. Info., ticket purchase, contact society President Luther Rankin, luther.rankin@gmail.com) Club Guatemala, 7a av. 12-75 calle, z. 1, **Guatemala City**

6 Sat., & Sun., 7th, 10am-4pm — ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR: *Arte en la Calle*, a fabulous event for the whole family, shop for a cause (sales benefit CasaSito): unique Christmas gifts, art, plus interactive art and children's art activities. Delicious food (Kid's Restaurant) and drinks will be available at a sidewalk café. See article, pg. 68. Info: amigosdelarteantigua@gmail.com; casasisito.org; and (facebook) Amigos del Arte. Palace of the Captains General, **La Antigua** ▼



7 Sun., 2pm — CULTURAL EVENT: Celebration honoring the Virgen de Concepción, a parade of floats (Convite) leaves the cathedral and travels through **Ciudad Vieja, Sacatepéquez** (5 kms from La Antigua). See article, pg. 18. ▼



7 Sun., 6pm — QUEMA DEL DIABLO (Burn the devil): A ceremony that banishes evil spirits and cleanses the way for Christmas celebrations. Live music. Barrio de la Concepción, 4a calle oriente, **La Antigua & countryside** ▼



9 Tues, 7:30pm — CONCERT: *Handel's Messiah* & favorite Christmas carols, (National Theatre, **Guatemala City**); **Wed., 10th, 7:30pm** (Casa Santo Domingo, **La Antigua**) Q300, Q125 & Q60 (National Theatre); Q400, Q250 (Antigua). Tickets, Joyeria del Ángel & Casa Santo Domingo, Antigua) & TodoTicket (National Theatre).

8 Mon. — CELEBRATION: Cultural and religious events honoring the *Virgen de Concepción*, See article, pg. 18. **Ciudad Vieja, Sacatepéquez** ▼



9 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK: *Ecofiltro: Changing the cycle*. Ninety percent of rivers and streams in Guatemala are contaminated. Wells, springs, tap water ... it's not a good water source unless it's clean. The best way to make water filtration a sustainable solution, and not just a charitable gift, is to help people secure filters for the rest of their lives. Our philosophy of development solves the water crisis by using sustainable materials in a sustainable manner, including funding and labor, reducing the need for people to rely on long-distance aid and resources from overseas. Every effort is made to make the materials, funds, labor, and resources in country, from factory to filter. Suggested donation Q25, all which goes directly to the NGO. Info. & reservations, tels: 7832 1919. Rainbow Café, 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**

9 Tues., 6:30pm — ART: *El ángel particular de Efraín Recinos*, holographic sculpture by José Toledo Ordóñez. Galería del Centro Fundación G&T Continental, 5a av. 12-38, z. 1, **Guatemala City**

9 Tues., 7pm — CHRISTMAS MUSIC: *La música Navideña en el mundo* by Ensemble EnCanto, directed by Massimo Pezzutti. Instituto Italiano de Cultura, 16 calle 2-55, z. 10, **Guatemala City**

10 Wed., 5pm — ART: *De imágenes híbridas y retratos mezclados* by Luis González Palma. Panza Verde (tel: 7955-8282), 5a av. sur #19, **La Antigua** ▼



10 Wed., 6pm — (English) PRESENTATION: *Antigua: Behind the Walls* with Elizabeth Bell. Enjoy a one-hour slide show of Antigua and its heritage with vintage & contemporary photographs collected over the past 40 years, accompanied by Elizabeth Bell's expert narration. Proceeds benefit educational programs in Antigua. Q30p/p. Questions encouraged. Autographed books available. Join us at Hotel Sor Juana, 4a calle oriente #45, **La Antigua**



11 Thurs., 6:30pm — ART: *Proyecciones*, three series of oil paintings by Michelle Wagner Castillo. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, **Guatemala City** ▼



12 Fri. — DIA 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 & countrywide** ▼



13 Sat., 6pm —MUSIC: *Christmas Concert*, Amenizara el coro "Nucleo San Judas Tadeo" del sistema de orquestas de Guatemala. Pastorela y pesebre en vivo, Bazaar, Santa Claus and his elfs, Tamales & Ponche. Calle del Arco, **La Antigua**

... more calendar on page 30

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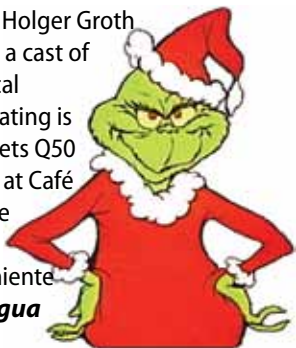
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13 Sat., 5pm & 7pm; Sun. 14th, 2pm & 4pm — (Spanish/English) THEATER: Welcome to Who-cotango! *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* with Jesper Holger Groth Nielsen and a cast of talented local children. Seating is limited, tickets Q50 p/p on sale at Café Teatro inside El Sitio, 5a calle poniente #5, **La Antigua**



14 Sun., 11:30am — CONCERT: *Divine Countenance*, baroque music by Ensemble de Raíz, Marduk Serano (voice) & Santiago Álvarez, harpsichordist performing 17th century sacred Italian and French compositions. This event benefits Música en las Aldeas that provides music and voice education to underprivileged youth in Antigua and its surrounding villages. Donation, Q100; tickets on sale at Mamma's Restaurante, 4a calle oriente #5 or at the door the morning of the concert. Info: 5698-8698; musicaenlasaldeas@gmail.com; FB, ArteAntigua Música en las Aldeas. Sala Quiroa, Hotel Museo Casa Santo Domingo, **La Antigua**

14 Sun., 7pm-9pm — MOVIE NIGHT: Kick off the season under the stars with wine, popcorn and a movie shown on a surround sound 8' big screen TV. Impact Hub Antigua, 1a av. norte #12, **La Antigua**

15 Mon., evening — POSADAS: Traditional processions that begin nine days before Christmas; each evening statues of Joseph and Mary are carried through the streets, looking for refuge. The group sings traditional songs along the way. Treats, típica food and hot beverages, like poché, are served to invited guests at the home offering a safe haven to the posada. **Countrywide**

Beginning the second week of December — *Wings for Dreaming*: Galería Panza Verde has created a free public art project with participating businesses displaying an interpretation of *Wings* as a background for your own picture taking. Donation boxes are at every location should you wish to make a contribution to a specified local NGO. We encourage you to visit these sites and share your pictures via social media using #wingsfordreaming #LaAntiguaGuatemala. Location of *Wings*, check out the map by downloading AntiguaLive app or visit www.antigualive.net **La Antigua**



16 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK: *Manos Abiertas*, integrated women's health clinic and natural birth centers. Since 2008, over 2,000 women have received gynecological and obstetric services, pediatric care, midwifery available. Suggested donation Q25, all which goes directly to the NGO. Info. & reservations, tels: 7832 1919. Rainbow Café, 7a av. sur #08, **La Antigua**

17 Wed., 4pm — POSADA: Christmas carols, ponche, hot chocolate. Traditional Christmas food for sale. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, **Guatemala City**

18 Thurs., 6pm-8pm — PIZZA PARTY: Make your own masterpiece and bake in a wood-burning oven. Impact Hub Antigua, 1a av. norte #12, **La Antigua**

23 Tues., 5:30pm — DANCE: Performed by indigenous children from Nuevo Amanecer (New Dawn), a charity dedicated to helping more than 30 children in San Andrés Itzapa. Its programs focus on health, education and preserving local traditions, including language and dance which is being lost at an alarming rate. Enjoy the show and learn more about this project! Suggested donation Q25, all goes directly to the NGO. Info., & reserv., tel: 7832-1919. Rainbow Café, 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**

24 Wed. — CHRISTMAS EVE: Last minute holiday preparations, gift wrapping and cooking traditional food, like tamales negros and colorados, and beverages like ponche; **10pm** — *Christmas Mass* (Misa de Gallo) in all churches; **midnight** — 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 Thurs. — CHRISTMAS DAY: Traditionally a quiet day, with the exception of firecrackers and bombas booming midday. **Countrywide**

27 Sat., 9pm — PRE NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY: Back to the 80s & 90s! Dress up for the occasion and get a special treat! Live music with *Todo Santos*. Special offers on drinks and more! Info. & reservations, tels: 7832 1919. Rainbow Café, 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**

31 Wed. — NEW YEAR'S EVE: Celebrations galore with firecrackers, bombas, fireworks, music and cheer ... HAPPY NEW YEAR! **Countrywide**



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THROUGHOUT THE MONTH on page 66

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Yet throughout the holiday season there are many who experience pressure to feel a specific way or to do certain things. There may be extra expectations from family and friends that chip away at your inner peace during a time that is meant to inspire. Perhaps, too, there is a sense of the New Year and a nostalgic gaze at the ending of another.

Regardless of outside pressures and demands attempting to mani-

fest within your peace-filled world of the holiday spirit, take a moment to count your blessings.

This is not the typical saying thank you for the many people, events and actions in our lives this past year. It is the recognition that beyond the myths and lore, and drama that the world stage may try to conjure, we are always ever present to discover the gifts that are before us—if we simply start counting them.

To get your personal count started why not consider the beauty of Antigua's central park, adorned with spectacular Christmas lights and brimming with the signs of the season. From there allow yourself to be amazed at the multitude of ruins, churches and monasteries, which



**2014
Spirit**
by
Sri Ram Kaa
& Kira Raa

hold secrets of a time gone by. Imagine the excitement of colonial Antigua of yesteryear and how it must have glistened with evening lamplights and warm holiday cheer.

Why not include blessings for the traditional foods of the season that always add a festive cheer. Discover the taste of Guatemalan ponche, sipped from a clay mug (try it both hot or cold). Allow it to stir within you the reminiscent glow of childhood wonder as you dig through your mug, discovering and tasting the myriad fruits and spices.

Here is the catch: As you go through this process you will realize that it is really not about counting your blessings at all. Instead it is the realization that you are to here to celebrate your season of light ... the sun is shining brightly and the volcanoes are ever standing like sentinels, watching over this beautiful valley. The air is carrying the energy of renewal and as we let go of our counting, we embrace simply being!

As we close 2014, offering our perspective of Antigua in REVUE we wish you, one and all, the happiest of holidays! **R**

Sri and Kira are the owners of TOSA La Laguna Boutique Hotel & Spa at Lake Atitlan and best-selling authors and radio show hosts. www.TOSASPA.com and www.SriandKiraRadio.com



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Entry in the Revue Photo Contest Dec. "Arbol Gallo" by David Figueroa



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Many years ago I resolved never to bother with New Year's resolutions, and I've stuck with it ever since. —Dave Beard



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Third Place by judges vote in the REVUE PHOTO CONTEST, Dec. "Recordando en familia a nuestros seres queridos" by Luis Antonio Ortiz. Prize: Q50



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2nd PLACE by judges vote in the REVUE PHOTO CONTEST, Dec. "Giant kites at the ready" by Carlos Villegas. Prize: Q100

Mayan Family Christmas Baskets cont. from page 20




making hearty Christmas tamales, including a whole chicken, vegetables, fruit, sugar, fortified cereal, black beans, pasta, a block of drinking chocolate (the traditional accompaniment to the tamale on Christmas Eve) and a special packet of Christmas cookies. Enough to feed a family of 10.

Not only does Mayan Families make Christmas-time special for needy families, it also distributes food baskets on Mother's Day, Father's Day and during Semana Santa.

"We are honored to be able to help those who need

it most, especially during holidays. The daily hardship most rural Guatemalans face is difficult to bear, so to offer these food baskets on special occasions is heartwarming for all involved," says Sharon's husband and Mayan Families co-founder, Dwight Poage.

In addition to holiday food basket distributions, Mayan Families also aims to promote ongoing, sustainable food security through its community garden project. Currently piloted at the small, hillside village of San Antonio Palopó, the program involves nearly 30 women (all of whom are mothers of students attending the Mayan Families preschool nutrition center) who are learning the basics of organic vegetable gardening. Although the project is still in its initial stage, we hope that these women can one day plant their own gardens to feed their families and with a good crop eventually sell in the local market. 

- If you are interested in donating a Christmas tamale basket to a family in need, please visit www.mayanfamilies.org
- Mayan Families is a 501(3)(c) registered nonprofit organization.
- More information, contact Katy Morris: katy@mayanfamilies.org



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Entry in the Revue Photo Contest: Dec.
"Bailando el torito" by Josué Leonardo Samol Navichoc

Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities have crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



Guatemala Insight

by Elizabeth Bell
AUTHOR/HISTORIAN

Guatemala's most famous nun is Sor Juana de Maldonado y Paz (1598-1668), who lived at the Convento of La Concepción (La Antigua Guatemala). Ironically, very little "real" information is known about her although there is quite a bit written about her. We find her mentioned in the English Dominican Friar Thomas Gage's "A New Survey of the West Indies" (London, 1648), which has been referred to as part of the Black Legend. Known as *La Leyenda Negra*, it is a style of historical writing that demonizes the Spanish Empire, its people and its culture. For centuries, in fact, it was believed that Thomas Gage "invented" her for this purpose. With very little written about her, Sor Juana may have fallen into centuries of misinformation about her...until now.

The illusive Sor Juana is also mentioned in a number of other historical references, including José Milla y Vidaure's "Los Nazarenos"

Sor Juana de Maldonado y Paz



(1867), Maximo Soto Hall's "La Reclusa" (1938) and many other publications, including Dra. Luz Mendez de la Vega's "La amada y perseguida Sor Juana de Maldonado y Paz" (2002). Verle Annis in his "The Architecture of Antigua Guatemala 1543-1772" (1968) describes her living in the area where the Museo de Semana Santa is today, but recent archaeological studies by the National Council for the Protection of Antigua show that her residence was not at that particular location — perhaps where Hotel Sor Juana is today — but with no documentation, that also remains part of the mystery about her!

As Guatemalan historian Coralía

Anchisi de Rodríguez points out, "What is myth and what is reality?"

Coralía believes that Sor Juana was possibly born in Spain, as her father, Juan Maldonado y Paz, arrived in Guatemala with his second wife in 1609. There was a complaint presented to the Inquisition in 1613 where, due to her exquisite beauty, she posed for a painting of Santa Lucía so she was in Santiago de Guatemala (now La Antigua) at that time.

Life in the convent was a sense of community. It was quite common for women who did not marry to join a convent and their dowry gave them sustainability. They lived a rigorous life, taking care of educating children

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Christmas ... is not an eternal event at all, but a piece of one's home that one carries in one's heart. —Freya Stark

Christmas, children, is not a date. It is a state of mind. —Mary Ellen Chase

He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree. —Roy L. Smith

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and praying, but at La Concepción, many of the nuns had their own apartments with kitchens and servants (much like they would at home). It was like a city inside a city at La Concepción, as it was the largest convent in the colonial capital. Sor Juana became mother superior in 1665, was re-elected in 1668 and died shortly after.

She is fascinating and it is fascinating that historians and townspeople are bringing her back to life. 

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—Dr. Seuss, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!"

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To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy,
is to have the real spirit of Christmas. —Calvin Coolidge

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Christmas is a necessity. There has to be at least one day of the year to remind us that we're here for something else besides ourselves. —Eric Sevareid

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In the old days, it was not called the Holiday Season; the Christians called it 'Christmas' and went to church; the Jews called it 'Hanukkah' and went to synagogue; the atheists went to parties and drank. People passing each other on the street would say 'Merry Christmas!' or 'Happy Hanukkah!' or (to the atheists) 'Look out for the wall!'

—Dave Barry

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Christmas gift suggestions: To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect. —Oren Arnold

My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others. Come to think of it, why do we have to wait for Christmas to do that? —Bob Hope




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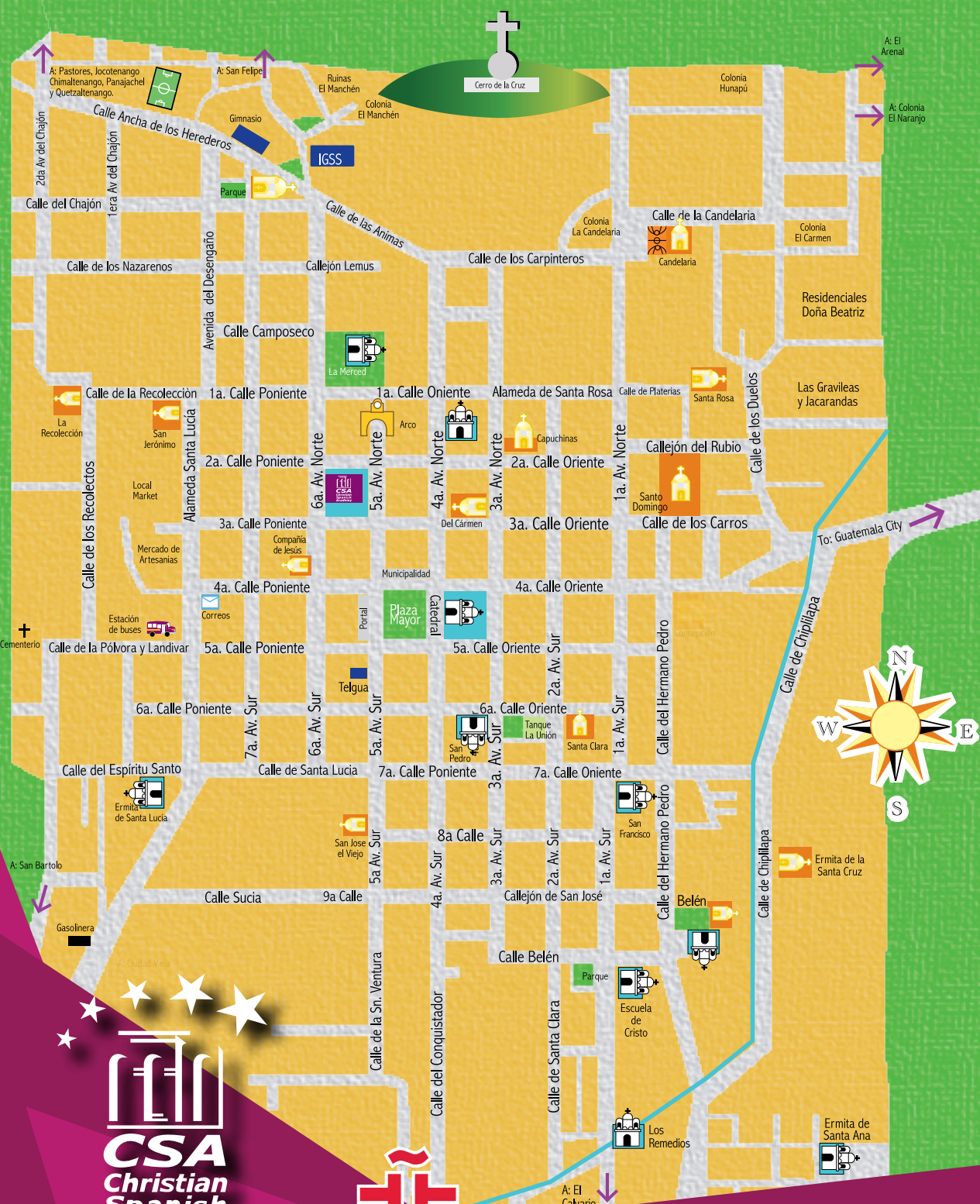
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Fire and Clay

Setting out to hike to a spectacular waterfall in Chilasco, Baja Verpaz, a ceramics artist from La Antigua Guatemala found herself stuck in the mud. Making her trip during a lull in the latest rainy season, she was knee deep in it. But something caught her knowing eye. This wasn't just mud, this was rich earthen clay — and having worked with clay all

her life, this particular clay made her stop and take notice. She scooped it up with her hand and felt its perfect consistency. This clay would be ideal for making art.

This artist has a friend in Siggy Bataille Holbik, proprietor of Casa de los Gigantes in La Antigua Guatemala, which sells handmade crafts from around Guatemala. Siggy works with a group of women from Chilasco — the very place with this special clay. The women, however, don't work with clay; they work with pine needles to produce baskets and art. Would the women be interested in using this clay to produce a new form of art? Siggy and her friend held a small meeting with the local women to find out.

"She scooped it up with her hand and felt its perfect consistency. This clay would be ideal for making art."

The women eagerly agreed to learn and, with the cooperation of Kyramik Studio and Siggy guiding the process, these industrious women went to work.

After the meeting, the women went out to look for the clay and hurried back with what they found. The ceramics artist examined each sample to determine which would work the best. Once the clay was selected the women were invited back to learn how to work it. The women took to the clay instantly, almost as if they were born with the talent. Mixing clay to the familiar consistency of masa (dough) — like the dough they mix for the family's tortillas — they began by making small clay tortillas. Each woman amassed a quantity of little tortillas and then progressed to the next technique: bolitas (little balls). As each bolita was finished, the women set it aside to have a small hole made in each. Now they had beads with which to make jewelry.

To make them wearable, the worked clay pieces must be fired to temper the material and give it

...continued page 80



WORKING THE CLAY (PHOTO BY SIGGY BATAILLE)

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—Jim Carrey

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Festive Guatemalan Tamales



Tamales are a cultural ritual. In Guatemala, people traditionally make and eat them twice every week of the year. Fancy tamales are for special occasions, such as Christmas and other religious celebrations. Tamales are at the core of the Mayan diet. They used to be more exotic and contained only ingredients native to the land. Today they combine Mayan and Old World flavors and traditions.

All tamales are tasty, hearty packages of dough and meat or vegetables and sauce steamed in natural leaves. Guatemalan tamales come in many varieties and differ from region to region. They may be small, medium or large. Some are steamed in banana and masha leaves and others in green or dried corn husks or güisquil (a type of chayote squash) leaves. The smaller and simpler tamales serve as snacks or accompaniments to a spicy stew. The larger ones serve as one-dish meals.

Tamales can include a great array of ingredients. They may be savory or sweet, mild or spicy. They can be made of corn masa dough, of rice and corn masa dough, of fresh corn dough, or of corn masa and potato dough. The dough preparation and ingredients differ from tamale to tamale. The presentation, fillings and colors vary widely. ...cont. next page



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Guatemalan Tamales cont. from previous page

Tamales *colorados* (red tamales) and *paches* (potato tamales) are the most common and largest tamales in Guatemala. Tamales colorados are Guatemala's national dish. In Guatemala City, many people eat them every Saturday. They eat *paches* every Thursday. Tamale vendors place a red light outside their *casa* or *tienda* (home neighborhood store) to signal to passersby that they have tamales for sale. Guatemalan tamales are delicate treats with a velvety texture containing a saucy and meaty core.

To serve tamales at home, Guatemalans discard the outer layer of leaves. They clip the innermost layer or fold it inside out and around the edges of the plate. A lime wedge is always the garnish. Guatemalans love to sprinkle lime juice on tamales colorados and *paches*—and on many other foods—right before eating them. *Pan francés* (French bread, Guatemalan style) often accompanies the tamale. A cup of hot Guatemalan chocolate or *ponche de frutas* (hot fruit punch) is the perfect drink pairing.

Every time I visit Guatemala, I look forward to eating tamales colorados. My sister taste-tests tamales made throughout her neighborhood's *tiendas*, tamale houses and grocery stores to determine which ones are the best. Within Guatemala, there are variations in taste and ingredients from maker to maker. My tamales contain more meat and garnishes than most commercially made

tamales in Guatemala, as this is the way my family likes them. Tamales colorados in Guatemala are usually wrapped in just banana and mashán leaves and tied with *cibaque* (a natural fiber), as leaves are abundant and foil is expensive. *Tamales Navideños* (Christmas tamales) and *tamales negros* (black tamales) are a Christmas dish. Black tamales are made with sweet mole sauce, turkey, chicken or pork, garnished with prunes, raisins and almonds. Christmas tamales are elevated to a festive status with garnishes.

Making Christmas tamales is not hard. It just takes a few helping hands and it is a way to celebrate with friends and family during such a joyful time.

Happy Holidays!

GUATEMALAN CHRISTMAS

TAMALES

RECIPE

Makes 8 rectangular tamales

1 batch recado (recipe below)

Masa (dough):

2 cups instant corn masa flour

4 cups fat-free, low-sodium chicken stock

6-7 ounces (3/4-7/8) cup all-vegetable shortening (no trans fat)

Kosher salt (taste before adding salt as the chicken stock contains salt)

8 8x11-inch pieces banana leaves, wiped on both sides with a damp cloth

8 14x11-inch pieces aluminum foil

Relleno (filling)

8 3x2-inch pieces pork loin, seasoned with salt and pepper

8 3x2-inch pieces boneless, skinless chicken thighs, seasoned with salt and pepper

16 jarred roasted red bell pepper strips (1/2 inch wide)

8 Spanish olives stuffed with pimientos

Adorno (garnish)

1 to 2 limes cut in wedges or slices

Make the sauce and set it aside.

In the bowl of a mixer with a paddle attachment, combine the flour with the stock to make soft, moist dough. Add the shortening and fluff the dough for 3 minutes at medium speed. Taste and adjust the salt, if needed. (Alternatively, put the ingredients in a deep bowl and beat vigorously with a wooden spoon for 3 to 5 minutes)

Transfer the dough to a skillet and cook it on the stovetop at low heat, stirring constantly with a whisk to keep it from forming lumps and from sticking to the skillet until the dough is ready. The dough is ready when the whisk starts leaving tracks and the dough starts lifting from the edges, about 15 minutes. Let the dough cool slightly. Divide the dough into 8 equal portions. ...continued next page

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Guatemalan Tamales cont. from previous page

For each tamale, lay 1 piece of banana leaf (matte side up) on top of 1 piece of foil. Place 1 dough portion on the banana leaf and foil. Take 1 piece each of pork and chicken, 2 pepper strips, 1 olive, and push them gently into the dough. Top with the sauce divided equally. Wrap the tamale and seal it tightly. Bring together the edges of the 2 longer parts of the foil and make 3 small folds beginning at the top. Then press the foil and leaves flat, from the outside in, to hold the ingredients in the center. Make 3 small folds in the unsealed foil edges, folding inward toward the tamale to seal it tightly.

Fill a deep pot with 2 1/2 quarts of water. Place all tamales vertically in a steamer basket and put the basket in the pot. Bring the water to a boil, cover the pot, and adjust the heat to medium-low. Steam the tamales until they are cooked (about 1 1/2 hours). When the tamales are done, the doughy should hold the shape of the package and should be shiny and slightly translucent, not opaque.

Serve the tamales garnished with the lime wedges or slices.



SAUCE FOR TAMALES COLORADOS

(SEE PHOTO)

Makes about 2 cups

- 1 cup quartered roma tomatoes (about 2 large tomatoes)
- 1/2 cup husked, quartered tomatillos (3-4 large tomatillos)
- 1/2 cup chopped, seeded bell pepper
- 1 small yellow onion, cut into thick slices
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1 guaque (guajillo) chili, seeded
- 1/2 zambo (mulato) chili, seeded

- 1/2 pasa (ancho) chili, seeded
- 1 tablespoon ground pan-roasted pumpkin seeds
- 1 tablespoon pan-roasted sesame seeds
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 1/2 to 2 teaspoons ground achiote dissolved in a little water

Sazón (seasonings)

- 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoons ground canela (Ceylon cinnamon)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Heat a skillet for 2 minutes over medium heat, then add the vegetables. Dry pan roast them until they are charred all over and mushy (about 8 minutes). Keep a close eye. ...continued on following page

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Guatemalan Tamales cont. from previous page

Separately, dry pan roast the chilis over medium heat (3 to 5 minutes). Watch, as they burn easily. Soak the roasted chilis in 1 cup of very hot water for 10 minutes.

Dry pan roast the seeds over medium heat (3 to 5 minutes). As well, they burn easily. Grind the seeds with a coffee mill or a small food processor.

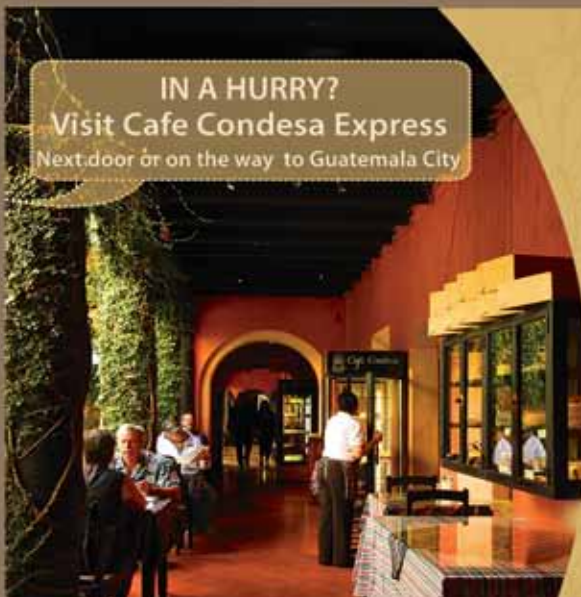
Combine all the roasted vegetables with the soaked chilis and 1/4 cup of the soaking water and puree in a blender to a fine consistency. The sauce should look smooth and velvety.

Heat the oil in a medium saucepan and add the puree, achiote liquid, seeds and seasonings. Lower the heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Taste and adjust seasonings, if needed. The sauce should be bright orange and should have the consistency of spaghetti sauce. If it is too thin, cook it a little longer. **R**

Amalia Moreno-Damgaard is a Chef and author of "Amalia's Guatemalan Kitchen: Gourmet Cuisine with a Cultural Flair" which has won 9 international awards (AmaliaLLC.com and Artemis Edinter)



Entry in the
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I have no way of knowing how people really feel, but the vast majority of those I meet couldn't be nicer. Every once in a while someone barks at me. My New Year's resolution is not to bark back. —Tucker Carlson

I believe that if life gives you lemons, you should make lemonade... And try to find somebody whose life has given them vodka, and have a party. —Ron White



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There was the little boy who approached Santa in a department store with a long list of requests. He wanted a bicycle and a sled, a chemical set, a cowboy suit, a set of trains, a baseball glove and roller skates. "That's a pretty long list," Santa said sternly. "I'll have to check in my book and see if you were a good boy." "No, no," the youngster said quickly. "Never mind checking. I'll just take the roller skates."



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The Night before Navidad

Twas 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?

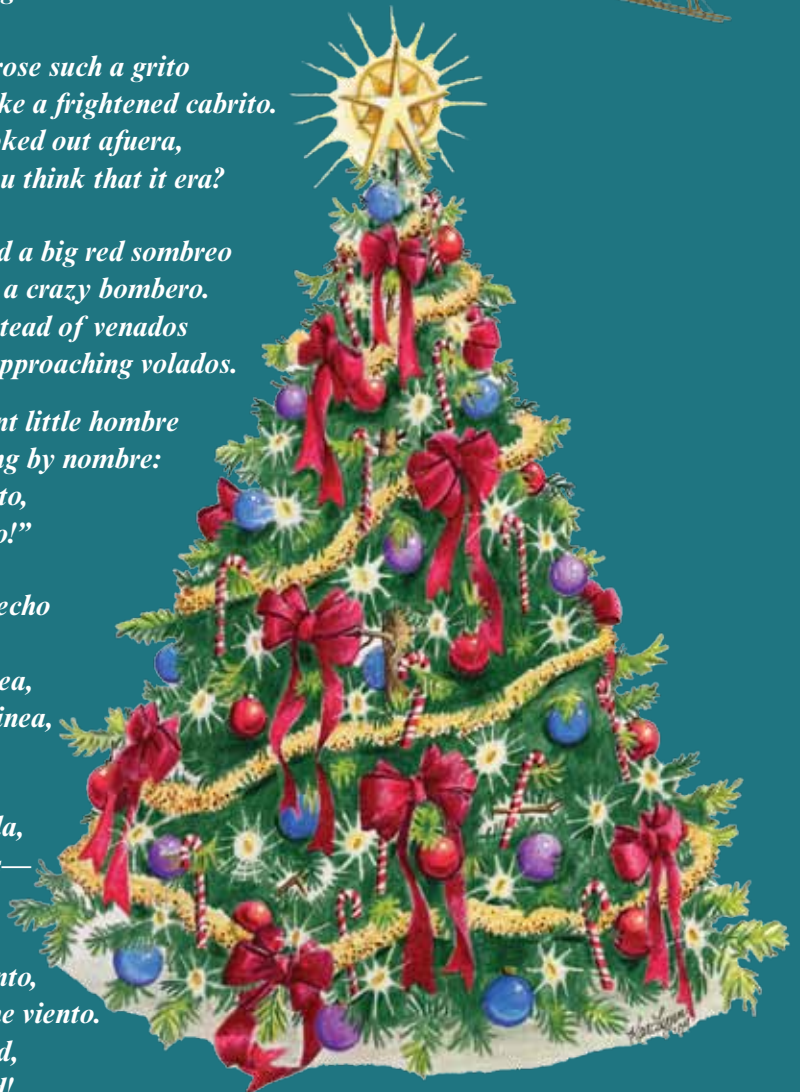
Saint Nick in a sleigh and a big red sombrero
Came dashing along like a crazy bombero.
And pulling his sleigh instead of venados
Were eight little burros approaching volados.

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!





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 —Alice Roosevelt Longworth

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 and let every new year find you a better man.
 —Benjamin Franklin

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DATEBOOK cont. from page 30

ART through Sun., 14th — *Latir* by Andrea Castillo & *La Memoria del Círculo* by Ricardo Castillo. La Antigua Galería de Arte, 4a calle oriente #15, **La Antigua**



THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

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

Mondays, 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**

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Amigos del Arte began with Mary Waggener, formerly of La Peña de Sol Latino, and her friend, Judy Sadlier, founder of the Guatemala NGO Network, who joined together to justify their art addiction by sponsoring an arts and crafts festival.

Alice Lee, founder of CasaSito, and Linda ("super chef") Champagne, coordinator of the Antigua Gourmet Club, became part of the steering committee and organized weekly workshops with 10 to 30 artists and craft-makers participating.

All the crafts and art made in the workshops will be donated. Friends have also donated hand-made items.

One hundred percent of these proceeds will go to CasaSito, a local NGO that helps children living in poverty to attend school, receive quality instruction, and obtain the skills they need to improve their lives.

Renowned Guatemalan artists have also donated their work and will show and sell their art with 50 percent of the proceeds going to CasaSito. Great artists such as Victor Hugo Valenzuela will be painting at the festival, which includes interactive art and children's art activities. Delicious food and drinks will be available at a sidewalk café.

Don't miss **Arte en la Calle from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 6 and 7 at the Palace of the Captains General.** Enjoy the ambi-



ance, buy some unique Christmas gifts or art to add beauty to your home and know that you have given a child the gift of education. **R**

For more information or to donate to CasaSito email amigosdelarteantigua@gmail.com or visit casasito.org. Go to Amigos del Arte on Facebook to learn more.



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Modern archaeological research concludes that the civilizations of Mexico and Central America were in many ways superior to those of their conquerors. The Maya had a system of astronomical calculation highly advanced over Medieval Europe, as was their system of arithmetic and time-keeping chronology (calendar). A thousand years before the Catholic authorities admitted that the Earth is a sphere the Maya had already been building their pyramids taking into consideration the Earth's curvature.

Edmond Bordeaux Szekely, a philologist and historian, conducted extensive research into the origin and meaning of these pre-Columbian cultures. First, they were all the final result of Neolithic migrations, which ventured out from the regions of Samaria and Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley. Second, they had a world view essentially the same as the ancient Persians. The predecessors of the Aztec, Toltec and Maya believed that everything in the universe, including life



and human consciousness, is the outcome of the fight between the two cosmic principals of life and death.

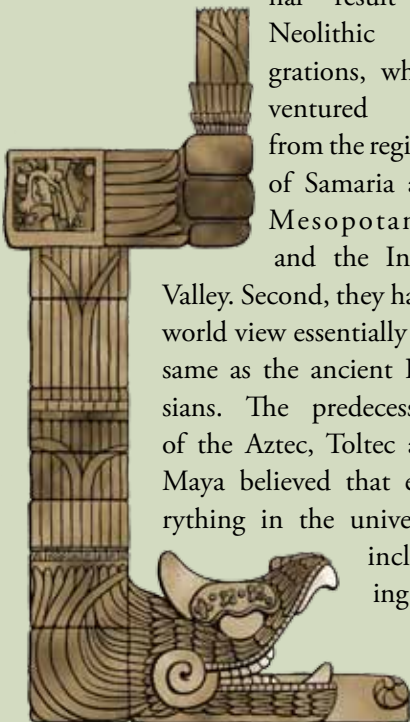
According to Szekely, the Toltec symbolized life in the physical form of Quetzalcoatl, represented by the plumed or feathered serpent. He was considered to be the source of all good, of all things belonging to life. The opposite principal was Tezcatlipoca, whose symbol was the jaguar or tiger, and he represented death, hatred, destruction and war. These two symbols were the two focal points of an ellipse and the whole

Toltec pictographic system revolved around them.

The ancient Toltec believed that man belongs to both kingdoms; his thoughts, words and deeds can shift back and forth between them. When they are in harmony with life, they belong to Quetzalcoatl. But when they are correlated with negations and things pertaining to death, they belong to Tezcatlipoca. The Toltec held that nearly everything in nature is similarly divided: All good things being in Quetzalcoatl's realm, and all evil things in Tezcatlipoca's.

Szekely also confirmed that there are many more pyramids in Mexico and Central America than in any other region in the world. And in every pyramid, whether Maya, Aztec or Toltec, the symbols of the feathered serpent and the jaguar will invariably be found. The pyramids were not, as is maintained by most archaeologists, simply temples, tombs or monuments. These structures were used as stages for the play-

...continued following page



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Kukulkan cont. from previous page

ing out of cosmic rituals designed to convey deep meaning and truth. The pyramids were symbols of the triumph of levity over gravity, of the ascension of man from the kingdom of Tezcatlipoca, the dark underworld of death, step by step, up to the light and wisdom of Quetzalcoatl, the Evening Star, high above the Earth, where spirit is finally freed from matter.

The rituals, which were conducted on the steps of the pyramid, combined an ancient knowledge of philosophy, astronomy, psychology and social organization. They were performed by priests in beautiful costumes, who each played the part of different forces found in nature. The populace stood or sat around the base of the pyramid during the performance.

The steps were composed of a grid of squares: 11 squares by 9 and then in multiples. Two teams of 10 would assemble. One, composed of the deathly priests of Tezcatlipoca who occupied the higher steps, prepared

to force man down.

The priests of Quetzalcoatl, representing the forces of life, took the lower steps, hoping to raise man higher. Lowest on the steps, the first player on the winged-serpent team was Malinalli, the Aztec word for grass. Because grass grows year after year and is the interface among the life-giving elements of air, water, soil and sunshine, Malinalli was chosen to symbolize the ever-renewing force of life.

Opposite and above Malinalli was Miquitli, the skull, representing death. The next player up the steps was Quetzalcoatl himself. Across from him stood Cipactli, the crocodile, symbolizing idleness, the antithesis of creativity. In this way all 20 priests were paired off against each other. And between the two sides, standing at the head of Quetzalcoatl's team, was Tla, the symbol of man, who could choose

to fight his way up the steps to reach the top and access to the Evening Star, or be overtaken by the forces of hatred, idleness, greed, violence and ignorance and fall lower and lower on the steps, ending in death.

This cosmic ritual served to instruct the population about the ironclad law of cause and effect, and represented—in a way even children could understand—that man lives in a universe governed by absolute law. It taught that by doing good, the individual could rise up toward the stars, but doing bad would invariably propel one down into the darkness of the underworld.

The people were encouraged to apply these principals to their daily lives and thereby maintain an orderly and peaceful society. Later the ritual was transferred to the flat surface of a ball court, gradually degenerating into a mere display of athletic prowess and bloody sacrifice.

By 900 A.D. the Mayan and Toltec civilizations had declined into a period of decadence typified by the widespread abuse of narcotic drugs and alcohol and the prevalence of human ...continued page 84





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Q & A



“IRA 101” for U.S. Expats

An individual retirement account is a tax-smart investment vehicle that nearly everyone should consider. Money invested grows tax-deferred, and is often deductible on your tax return. Without hesitation, we can say that tax deferral is truly an amazing feature that fuels the growth of your retirement fund.

Although making contributions to an IRA seems like a no-brainer, it’s a bit more complicated for U.S. expats. That is because many U.S. expats utilize the foreign earned income exclusion (FEIE) when filing their tax returns. With the FEIE, U.S. expats can exclude almost \$100,000 in income earned while working abroad. The

upside is that most expats do not owe any income tax. However, the downside is that it often eliminates the ability to contribute to an IRA—recall that one needs taxable earned income.

In certain situations, there are ways around the restriction. For example, if both spouses are working abroad, then it may be advantageous to claim the FEIE on the income of the high-earning spouse, and not the other. Also, if one earns more than the FEIE amount, then contributing to an IRA may be possible. Unfortunately, many U.S.-based tax accountants advise their clients incorrectly on this subject (with negative consequences).

The Roth IRA

With a traditional IRA, the amount contributed is tax deductible. Taxes are paid later on when a person takes a distribution (withdrawal). With a Roth IRA, it works the opposite way. Contributions are not tax deductible; however, distributions are tax-free.

Which is the better investment vehicle? The answer is that it really depends on an individual’s circumstances. The Roth IRA does offer greater flexibility (e.g., when distributions can be made without penalties, no mandatory withdrawal at age 70½, no age limit on contributions), and therefore, may make a lot of sense for many expats. Perhaps the best advice is to invest in both the traditional and Roth IRA. [®]

Traditional IRA - Basics You Should Know

Maximum Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lesser of taxable earned income or \$5,500 (for 2014 tax year) • If over age 50, additional catchup contribution of \$1000
Age Limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can contribute until 70½
Tax Deductibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully tax deductible (if not participating in an employer retirement fund)

If you would like to submit a tax-related question, please email:
info@holaexpat.com.

Responses are provided by John Ohe (IRS-authorized enrolled agent), who resides in Antigua.

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.



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But can one still make resolutions when one is over forty?
I live according to twenty-year-old habits. —Andre Gide

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GALACTIC JADE

But where are the artifacts?

In June 1987 Andy Duncan and Chico Zuniga were exploring for jade in Guatemala's Motagua River Valley area. They were using geological maps and notes given to Mary Lou Ridinger by archaeologist Ed Shook that documented his 40 years of exploration in Guatemala. Andy had a degree in geology from Macalester College in Minnesota and later went on to get a degree in environmental studies from the University of Michigan. He and Chico had spent weeks in the field, hiking, camping and eventually finding jade boulders near the Motagua River near Sanarate, in the department of Progreso.

Some of the boulders were of a material that had a visual aspect usually referred to as Olmec Blue. The other material was dark green or almost black with metallic flecks.

Both sets of samples were examined by Jay and Mary Lou

Ridinger. Mary Lou discarded the black material because she felt that if it was indeed jade — “Where were the artifacts from this jade?” A tool or a work of art?

The set of rock samples were sent to the Ridingers' jade-carving factory, and employees verified that indeed, “It cuts like jade ... and it feels like jade.”

Next the samples were sent to the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) for analysis. The results concluded that the material was “jadeite jade, with numerous metallic inclusions.”

The Ridingers had additional samples of this jade cut and polished and gave them to family members for Christmas presents in 1987. The gifts came with a request: a contest to name this exquisite jade! They came up with “Starry Night,” “Golden

Night,” “Milky Way,” Starburst,” “Moon Dust,” and other entries, but the winner turned out to be “Galactic Jade,” proposed by Mary Lou's sister, Christina.

So where was the literature on this particular jade? Where were the artifacts? Angela Ridinger, Jay's daughter, found a book written about Marco Polo's travels in China and a quote from his journal. He describes “dark green jade veined with gold” in the rivers around the Kingdom of Khotan, where nephrite jade is found today in Xin Jiang province, China.

Jay wanted to find out what metals made this Galactic Jade so special. He sent a sample to David Hargett, who was working at the GIA laboratory in New York City. Hargett took it to metallurgical lab for analysis: 75 percent of the metal inclusions were pyrite, but there were also inclusions of gold, silver, platinum and three other metals. In a follow up he visited Guatemala, photographed Galactic Jade and published an article in 1990 about it in GIA's *Gems and Gemology* magazine.

In 1991 the Ridingers finally found the answer to their question, “Where were the artifacts?” An elderly gentleman in Bethesda, Maryland, a Mr. R., had read Hargett's article. He asked Hargett to have Jay call him, which Jay did. He said: “I have the answer to the mystery about your jade samples, but I'm an old man, I can't travel any more, and if you come to my home, I'll tell you what



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you want to know.” Jay flew to Washington, D.C.

Mr. R. explained that he used to go to Guatemala and his favorite haunt was Panajachel. He liked to wander around and pick up rocks. He would frequent markets in Sololá and Chichicastenango and buy dark jade stone celts/axes very cheaply. He built up quite a collection. He had a small stone saw in his basement. He sawed into one of the black jade celts and discovered bright shiny flecks of gold and silver.

Metal is much softer than the jade and over hundreds of years it oxidizes

off the surface. He polished the new surface and it looked beautiful, probably the way it looked when it was new, 1,000 years ago. Not all the black jade celts revealed metallic flecks, but many did.

The mystery was solved ... the jade artifacts were there all along, but to see them, you would have to polish the surface. Museums artifacts are never tampered with, cutting and polishing would not be allowed.

Thanks to Mr. R., a private collector with a curiosity streak, they now have their answer! 



Datebook Listing: 4 Thurs., 5pm — EVENT: Galactic Gold Jade, showcasing the collection Images in Jade from the Mayan Sky; also featuring a 14-minute presentation by archaeologist Mary Lou Ridinger, Starry Maya Night, a Maya View of the Universe. Casa Concepción, 4a calle oriente #32, La Antigua.



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How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.

—George Washington Carver

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Fire and Clay cont. from page 46

its durability. The firing produced beautiful color variations, making each and every piece unique. As finishing work was carefully applied, the true beauty of the pieces emerged. The smoky blackness from the charred coals swirled together with the rich earthen browns and reds to produce a silky, smooth jewel. You marvel at how something so simple can at once be so beautiful.

You can find the finished pieces in La Antigua at Casa de los Gigantes, 7a calle oriente #18, across the street from the San Francisco Church. Called Tacto, the jewelry line includes gorgeous earthen earrings and attractive necklaces creatively strung together with bolitas. The jewelry line truly lives up to its slogan, “Hacemos de la tierra una joya.” (We make a jewel from the earth). 

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Houses in construction in Chutinamit

Rebuilding Chutinamit

by Bonnie Baguley

I imagine everything you own being washed downhill by a moving mass of mud and water.

Imagine your whole community being wiped off the top of that hill.

www.construcasa.org and Facebook:
www.facebook.com/construcasa

This was the case in 2010 in the village of Chutinamit near beautiful Lake Atitlán, Guatemala. Tropical Storm Agatha hit the community of 22 families, destroying homes and washing away possessions, leaving the government no choice but to render the land unsafe for habitation. The 22 homeless families were forced to move 3 kilometers downhill toward the town of San Andres Sematabaj. They were given tents to live in until help arrived and they could begin to rebuild their homes.

Help has come in small doses from various organizations, but the families' living situations have remained the same: one-room tents and makeshift, extended rooms made of tin or plastic sheet-

ing. All the families share latrines and *temescals*, a traditional Mayan cleansing spa, with a designated bathing schedule for each family. Many families share kitchens with two or three other families.

“The conditions we lived in in our village were much better than what we live in now,” said Ricarda Atanasia Tol Barreno, the president of the community's development council. “It is difficult to think back on that now and how we used to live (compared to our current situation).”

This year, the families finally received word from the government that they'd be given an allotment of property in their current location on which they could build. In

...continued following page



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Rebuilding Chutinamit


coordination with our partner organization, Mil Milagros, and a group of generous donors from the U.S., we began construction of one-room, one-bathroom homes for each of the 22 families.

“We have had a lot of help over the years, but until now, no one has provided solid plans to rebuild our entire community,” said Manuel Mendez Xon, another member of the development council. “We are very thankful to finally be rebuilding our homes.”

The project is Construa Casa’s biggest housing initiative to date. Construction began in July and the first stage (22 houses) was finished in October. The second stage begins in January, phase two and three adds second and third rooms to each home as well as a school house.



Excited families gather around a newly finished house.

“We have all suffered together, but we are so fortunate that now we will prosper together,” said Tomasa Calel, also a member of the development council. 

Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle,
and the life of the candle will not be shortened.

Happiness never decreases by being shared.

—Buddha


For last year’s words belong to last year’s language.
And next year’s words await another voice. And to make
an end is to make a beginning. —T. S. Eliot

Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the
delusions of our childhood days, recall to the old man
the pleasures of his youth, and transport the traveler back
to his own fireside and quiet home! —Charles Dickens

New Year’s Resolution: To tolerate fools more gladly,
provided this does not encourage them to take up
more of my time. —James Agate

Kukulkan cont. from page 72

torture and sacrifice. The great pyramids of the cities of Tikal, Copán, Palenque and CalakMool were now used for ritualized self-mutilation and as altars for ripping the still-beating hearts out of innumerable captives.

Increasing political strife between the distinct city-states worsened into warring while citizens suffered from food shortages brought on by a failing agricultural system, the result of centuries of intensive cultivation of corn, which eroded and depleted the soil. It was not long before the great Mayan Empire collapsed. In a few years the temples were overgrown by the jungle. And so, it would seem, Tezcatlipoca had won. But high up in a remote forgotten cloud forest Kukul waits patiently for the day when once again he would be seen by man and heralded as the symbol of life triumphing over death. 





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Roberto and his son, Brandon, almost ready to go home.

Ingrid and Roberto desperately wanted a child, but year after year, they'd known only the despair of repeated miscarriages. But in 2013, after Ingrid's pregnancy held for six months, then seven, and the baby began kicking and wriggling inside her, the couple could finally allow themselves to hope. That hope quickly turned to fear, however, when in January 2014, the baby arrived far too early. At only 33 weeks and 1.7 pounds, baby Brandon's tiny lungs and muscles weren't ready for the world outside his mother's womb. Just a few years ago, many low birth-weight babies in Guatemala like Brandon died shortly after birth, even in modern neonatal care centers. But Ingrid and Roberto's baby would have a fighting chance because

A Life Giving Savings Account — The Banco de Leche Humana

of a healing liquid as old as motherhood itself: human breast milk.

Brandon had the good fortune to be born in La Antigua Guatemala's Hospital Nacional Pedro Bethancourt, where Dr. Miguel Ángel Soto Galindo, chief of the Department of Pediatrics, founded the first milk bank in Central America, Banco de Leche Humana, in 2008. Banco de Leche Humana provides pasteurized human breast milk to high-risk and low birth-weight babies whose mothers can't supply all the breast milk they need.

"Mother's milk is important. [It] not only provides food for the baby, it also carries important medicine," said Marion Kolbe, master of applied



Dr. Miguel Ángel Soto Galindo, chief of the Department of Pediatrics.

"Mother's milk is important. It not only provides food for the baby, it also carries important medicine."

nutrition and dietetics for the Banco de Leche Humana. According to La Leche League International, human breast milk contains antibodies against specific pathogens, seems to have both antibacterial and antiviral properties, and protects infants on a molecular level.

The Banco de Leche began saving lives almost from the moment it opened. "[This hospital has] a nearly 12 percent rate of premature births, and before the bank one or two infants died every month of infections and necrotizing enterocolitis," Soto Galindo explained. "Now, with the Banco de Leche Humana, we have almost six years without one death from necrotizing enterocolitis. We have eliminated that illness here." The milk bank has also virtually eliminated newborn deaths from in

...continued page 100





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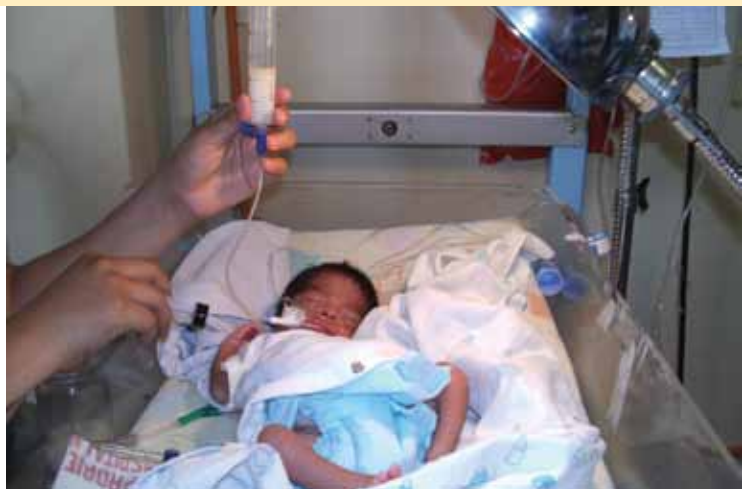
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A Life Giving Savings Account cont. from page 92

fections and pneumonias at the hospital, except among the tiniest of preemies, according to Soto Galindo.


Soto Galindo originally introduced a human milk initiative in the National Hospital in 1983, but despite reducing infant deaths, the project closed due to the possibility of HIV passing through the milk. He later traveled to Brazil to learn a successful pasteurization technique that prevented HIV from passing through the milk, and began his quest to implement a human milk bank in Guatemala. After nine years of lobbying Guatemala's government for approval, with support from the Lion's Club of Antigua, Soto Galindo opened the Banco de Leche Humana at the Hospital Nacional on March 10, 2008.

The Banco de Leche Humana allows mothers to donate milk for their own babies and others. Donations are voluntary and mothers are never paid for milk, but they receive benefits like education and consultations. Mothers donate at the hospital or pump their milk at home to be collected by a driver. The bank collects a minimum of 50-70 liters of milk per month, which it then pasteurizes, tests and codes for characteristics such as number of calories (ranging from 300-1,200 per liter) and calcium levels before freezing. The frozen milk can be stored for six months; it's always used quickly.



The Banco de Leche Humana also educates mothers, in hospital and the community, about breastfeeding. “Our first priority is that mothers know, from their very first prenatal consultation, that the very best food for human babies is human mothers’ milk,” said Kolbe.

Guatemala now has 10 Bancos de Leche, and groups trained in Antigua have started banks in El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica. “My mission for the future is that every hospital in Guatemala will have a milk bank, that we will lower the level of infant mortality, and that we will lower the level of malnutrition,” Soto Galindo said.

And what about baby Brandon? Complications from the difficult delivery prevented Ingrid from traveling to the hospital after her release, but Roberto visited the baby every day, carrying Ingrid's pumped breast milk with him. Once Brandon grew strong enough to use a preemie “kangaroo” pouch for skin-to-skin contact, Roberto carried his tiny son around the ward on his chest. After five weeks in the hospital, Brandon reached five pounds and finally went home. Next month, a healthy, happy Brandon and his parents will celebrate his first birthday. “He’s big! He’s really big!” said Laura Pereira, secretary for the Banco de Leche, excitedly holding her hands wide apart to show how much he’s grown. “And he’s just so beautiful!” 



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1 Hectare = 1.43 manzanas	1 mt ² = 1.431 vr ²
.....
1 Acre = 43,560 ft ²	1 Vara = 32.9 inches
1 Acre = .4047 hectare	1 Yard = 36 inches (3ft)
1 Acre = 4047 mt ²	1 Meter = 39.37 inches
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EUROPEAN INVESTORS are looking to acquire land/property in the Lake Atitlán area. Owners or agents please call: 5598-5677. **INVERSIONISTAS EUROPEOS** buscan terrenos/casa en el área del Lago de Atitlán. Propietarios o agentes por favor contáctenos al teléfono: 5598-5677.

Somehow, not only for Christmas,
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others,
Is the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend in blessing,
The poor and lonely and sad,
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Returns to you glad.
—John Greenleaf Whittier

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Christmas waves a magic wand over this world,
and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful.
—Norman Vincent Peale

Christmas is a season for kindling the fire for hospitality
in the hall, the genial flame of charity in the heart.
—Washington Irving



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Niños con Bendición

Founded in 2006 by Lesbi Chávez and her husband, Juventino Guaran, the Niños con Bendición program takes place in the couple's home in San Antonio Aguas Calientes, where they welcome approximately 30 children six days a week.

The goal is to provide the children sponsorship for schooling, marimba and dance lessons, tutoring in English and computers, general homework help, a hot meal and some medical and dental services.

Juventino and Lesbi realize that the children need a good education to help break the cycle of poverty within their families. The couple recently turned their own living room into a library for the children with a

number of inspirational books that will encourage the children to reach for their dreams.

While the main focus is on education, the program also strengthens cultural ties by teaching marimba and dance. The children perform cultural dances for visitors while wearing traditional clothing, and then take part in making corn tortillas to be shared by everyone.

Lesbi and Juventino plan to build a youth center to accommodate their growing group, which has doubled over the past two years with many more families wanting to enroll their children. An architect has drawn up plans and fundraising has begun. Juventino, a carpenter, will complete

much of the work and will hire local tradesmen for other tasks. Volunteers will help too.

What came to the couple as a dream has become a wonderful program that has helped many children and families. With continued sponsorship and donations, their newest dream will also become a reality. In fact, the first phase of construction will begin in January 2015. **R**

For further information and to meet the children, visit www.ninosconbendicion.com or Niños con Bendición on Facebook. To attend a performance or sponsor a child, contact Marcia at marciat@sympatico.ca or Mary at msebastianphotography@yahoo.com. (English) Lesbi (502) 4303-7837 or childrenwithblessing@gmail.com (Spanish) or Corinne corinnehone@hotmail.com (English or Spanish).

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Work hard for what you want because it won't come to you without a fight. You have to be strong and courageous and know that you can do anything you put your mind to. If somebody puts you down or criticizes you, just keep on believing in yourself and turn it into something positive.

—Leah LaBelle

Let's be naughty and save Santa the trip.

—Gary Allan

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REVUE PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS, Dec: Celebrations in Guatemala

2nd Place by popular vote, "Volando como barrilete" www.tonovaldes.com. Prize: Q100



Celebrations

Colors, sounds, aromas, flavors, touches, Guatemala hits all the senses with intensity throughout the year, but the holiday season brings near-overload. Prepare to take it all in, as it's a celebratory time of overwhelming sensory experiences for both locals and visitors.

From fireworks in the skies to delicate colors of Nativity scenes to the intense shades of blooming poinsettias and bougainvillea spilling over walls, the sights this month are saturated with brightly lighted sunshine and soft evening lights.

Green pine needles, red ribbons, golden pastries, market fruits and vegetables, the colors seem especially vivid in this month of joy. The bells, the singing, the marimba, the choirs, bring happy musical sound. And of course there's the booms, bangs, bombs of mortars and pyrotechnics, heard around our streets all year but becoming wildly explosive while welcoming Christmas and the New Year. Wonderful sounds of celebrating, but none more delightful than the laughter of boys and girls at happy holiday celebrations.

Celebration tastes range from thick, rich chocolate to hearty stews, sweet pastries, traditional candies and punches.



PHOTO BY EDGAR E. LÓPEZ FRANCO

“The best touches of all come with a child’s hand taking yours, a friend’s hug and a lover’s embrace.”

“Enjoy every celebration this month and all year as Guatemalans do...”

Mouthwatering flavors pour from every kitchen, savory baking, sweet and sour sauces and drinks. Forget the few pounds to be gained from enjoying the tastes of the holidays, as there is always the New Year for dieting.

The smells of these celebrations mix from the pleasant to the pungent, the foods to gunpowder, the rose blossoms and woody greenery. Perfumes are in the air, especially natural ones from chimneys, from bouquets of roses, from oceanside salt air to jungle mustiness.

And of course celebrations bring the touch of lips against cheeks, the warmth of crackling fireplaces, the comfort of a scarf on a cool night of caroling. The best touches of all come with a child's hand taking yours, a friend's hug and a lover's embrace.

Enjoy every celebration this month and all year as Guatemalans do: with exuberant, noisy, brilliant, tasty pleasure. **R**

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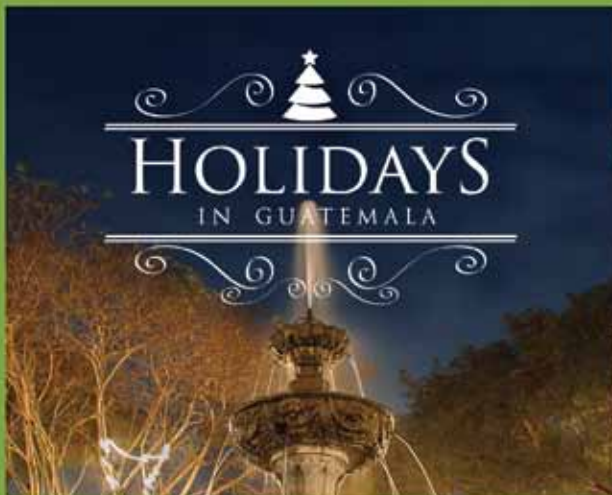


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