



Mark and Denise's Somewhat Useful Cozumel Restaurant Reviews

A "Top Ten" List?

We have not been to every restaurant on the island but we have our favorites. Here is our "Top 10" Cozumel Restaurants by "category". All of these, and many more are reviewed in detail in our "abridged" version of restaurant reviews.

We tell you about these places as we know you will need to come back and stay with us again to visit the next great place to eat.

Night Dining Note: You are in the tropics and many of the outdoor places can prove to be hiding places for mosquitoes. If dining at dusk, you might want to take some bug spray. If you forget or you get bit, ask your waiter for bug spray. The Farmacia at the SE corner of the square sells OFF.

Leisure Breakfast Places

Del Museo is located on the second floor of the Cozumel Museum on Ave. Rafael Melgar and it provides a very nice view of the downtown area. This is another great outdoor place for breakfast and lunch and a favorite with locals. Try the freshly made carrot/orange juice combo. This is a nice morning walk from Nah Ha and is about 2 blocks south of the airport road on Melgar. \$3-6pp

Bucaneros/Cozumel Caribe Club, located about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile North of Nah Ha has an outstanding breakfast. Instead of a short order cook, they have a chef. You get great food and a nice presentation. Try their coconut French toast. Two could easily split this. Your breakfast includes coffee, fresh squeezed juice and a small plate of fresh fruit. They open around 9 AM. Enjoy breakfast with a nice view and then walk it off back to the condo. \$8-10pp

El Coffee (previously the Coffee Bean) is a coffee shop with a nice selection of pastries and homemade quiche. They also serve simple sandwiches for lunch. We like to go there on Sunday mornings when there are no cruise ships and get a cup of

iced mocha (\$40 pesos). We then sit on the sea wall and watch the world pass us by. Located on Calle 3 Sur, $\frac{1}{2}$ block off of Melgar, next to Sorrisi. A/C

Jeannie's Waffle House moved from the front of the Vista Del Mar Hotel to the waterfront at the corner of Ave. R. Melgar and Ave. 11. Since they moved to the waterfront, there is always a wonderful breeze and we tend to linger over yet another cup of coffee. They are known for their waffles, but everything is very good. We used to consider this a cheap eats place, but the prices have bumped up a bit since the new location opened. \$6-9 usd pp

Prima's, is several blocks south of the square and on Melgar in the El Cantil North tower and might have one of the best breakfast deals in town. Just ask for the Local's Menu when you walk in. It is in Spanish, so you will need to understand a little Espanol. They have a choice of about 8 to 10 selections and the price is about \$47 pesos. Expect big portions (and a big cinnamon roll as a bonus on the weekends). Your price includes coffee. For \$12 pesos more you can get juice, including a really good watermelon or orange juice. They open at 7 AM and, located on the top floor have an excellent view. Lunch and dinner meals are considerably more expensive and reviewed in the expensive section of this review.

Rock'n Java serves a very good breakfast and lunch including an broad list of vegetarian meals and homemade deserts. It's located on the waterfront near the main Dive Paradise office -- just north of the Barracuda Hotel. If you are a vegetarian, this is a good place to go. They have free wireless internet and a book exchange. (A/C) \$5-8 usd pp for breakfast.

Cheap Eats/Simple Fare/Lunch/Dinner

El Candela, at the corner of Calle 6 and Ave. 5, does a big take away business but has a few tables under a palapa and a few more inside that usually fill with locals by about 2:00-2:30pm. For a set price of about \$50 pesos for the buffet, you get a choice of soup, a choice from 3 entrées, either rice or spaghetti, a choice of steamed vegetables or new potatoes and unlimited refills on Jamaica, an herbal tea-like cold beverage made from hibiscus flowers. The selection of entrées changes daily. Candela is open for breakfast (good omelets) lunch and now, dinner. Closed on Sunday.

If you would like carry out, from noon until about 4pm they have a small buffet with 3 different entree choices. Then add in the rice, beans and veggies. Take a container for the soup of the day which is also included. They include tortillas and

a small container of killer marinated onions/peppers for \$60 pesos per meal. Saturday is their pulled pork day and is really good for \$70 pesos. Tupperware containers are to the right of the dishwasher.

Cameron Dorado- They make delicious fried shrimp tacos and tortas and the prices are quite reasonable. The shrimp taco are about 15 pesos each (start with 2 or 3 and you can always order more) and the tortas (soft bread sandwich) are 39 pesos each. A shrimp taco meal and a soft drink will set you back \$5. Cameron Dorado is on the right side (south) of the transversal road (Ave. Juarez) about a mile or so East of Ave. 65 (where the big conch shell monument is). They are open Monday through Saturday from 7am to 2:30pm.

La Choza- on 10th between Avenida Rosado Salas and Calle 3 has an unadvertised daily special that is not on the menu. Ask for the comida of the day.

Chi has a take out express buffet open until about 5pm. It's not at their restaurant. Instead, it's right next to the Telmex office. Just turn left at Viva Mexico (on Melgar) and go up 1 1/2 blocks. For \$50 pesos you can choose 2 entrees plus either fried rice or lo mein noodles and a soft drink.

El Chino Marinero is located on the corner of Juarez y Av 25. They have great shrimp tortas and fish tacos (open 7am - 5pm) This is a local's place. It really isn't a restaurant as much as it is a walk up counter with a couple of plastic tables inside. Excellent fried fish tortas and as good as Cameron Dorado's. It is within walking distance from the square. A soft drink and a torta was \$38 pesos in May, 2011. There is no sign on the building. (No beer sold.)

El Foco- On Ave. 5 just south of Pro Dive, El Foco serves inexpensive meals and while you might not think so on first impression, a clean kitchen. Try the El Foco Special Taco-if you are a light eater, two could split this meal. The "Tim" gets good reviews as well. The place isn't fancy and you'd be tempted to walk past it. As good or better than Otate's, with larger portions. \$4-9 pp.

Le Tres Marias is more geared towards locals than tourists and opened in July, 2008. Their website (it is in Spanish) is www.ltmcozumel.com. It is located on 65th avenue just past the Naval Base going south. They serve great beef and chicken dishes from Monterey area. The cost of food is between 50 and 75 pesos per person. Menus are in Spanish. The hours are from 2:00 PM until 11:00 PM, Tuesday through Sunday. The local Americans consider this a new good food (and cheap) find.

La Jarocha opened in late 2009 and is located on 65th. Our first visit was in April of 2010 and we really enjoyed the place. It is easy to find and is a large, clean, open-air palapa style restaurant with parking in front of the restaurant. I had the seafood soup and Denise had the garlic fish fillet. Both were about \$9 each. The soup was very good and a meal in itself. Our neighbors had tacos and tostados. Their cost was lower than ours and they really liked it. I wish I had ordered what they ordered. Best bet-is to stick with the tacos, quesadillas and tostado style meals for a good, cheap (\$4-5) meal.

Nando's Hotdogs- Is on 11th, just in from the intersection of 30th. Also a stand on the corner of 11th and Melgar and Calle 3 with 15? The vendor cart sits out front of Nando's (convenience store) and on the evenings only. This is, quite possibly, the world's best hotdog. Try a cheese or regular dog wrapped in bacon with sautéed sweet onions, ketchup, mayo, mustard on a warm toasted bun. Run into the adjacent store and grab a couple drinks and you have dinner for 2 for less than 8 bucks. We've co-opted the bacon wrapped hot dog for our own decadent cook-outs.

Otate's- We've eaten here more than our share. This is a bit bigger than a cocina economica and an outdoor eating place with a metal roof over the top. (Think old school BBQ shack.) I had the Gringas- they were excellent! Denise had the veggie burrito. She thought it was good, but a little light on the veggies. Try the posole soup. It is a meal in itself. Simply slide all the ingredients they bring with the soup in the bowl. Try the Tacos al Pastor with pineapple-tasty! Dinner and 1 beer each- \$13 for two! \$4-8 usd pp.

Sabores Loncheria is another good place to try homemade Yucatan cuisine and the chance to walk through someone's house to eat. It is located in a yellow house on Ave. 5 between Calles 3 & 5. We ate there for the first time in July of 2010. They speak enough English to get by and everyone is very friendly. Everything on the menu is good. If the weather is good, sit in the garden and you'll be walked through the kitchen where the cook will be glad to lift the lids and show you what's for lunch. It has a changing menu but usually you'll have a choice of several entrees. The meal comes with soup and an iced pitcher of jimaica (hibiscus flower tea.) for a total of \$50-60 pesos pp. Desserts are an extra \$10 pesos.

Moderate-Priced Restaurants/Dinner

Albinos- We drove past this place numerous times, but never stopped. It's a bit off the beaten path from town and not within walking distance of the town square on 20th Avenida between Calles 10 and 12 Norte. It looks like a tree house with a

thatch roof. It is family run and the food is very good. Denise had the coconut shrimp and I had the grouper. Eat on the second floor for a nice breeze. They close at 8pm so for a relaxed evening, it is best to get there at around 6pm latest since they really do CLOSE the doors at 8pm. (They won't kick you out at 8, though.) \$8-15 pp

Casa Denis is a nice place with outside seating and what many consider the best choice for moderately priced dining in the downtown square area. It features a traditional Mexican menu including empanadas, tacos, soups, sandwiches and full dinners. It is located off the mall, a half block east and a half block south of the central square. While the food costs here are reasonable, a large margarita will run you \$60 pesos at Casa Denis. It is on our "must eat" list when we have friends with us. All of our many meals have been great. This is also a good lunch place. Mention their website and they may offer you a free drink. \$8-18pp

El Moro- It will be hard to find El Moro by yourself (and once you get there you'll think you're in the wrong place) so take a cab if you can't read a map. It's in a residential neighborhood off the main road a few blocks north and east of the "Big Conch" circle on 65th. It is located on Ave 75 Bis between Calle 2 and Calle 4. The easiest way to get there is to drive down 65th. Turn east on Calle 4 and then right on Ave 75 Bis. (not 75). There are some hand painted signs located high on the telephone poles directing you to El Moro. Look at their photos and you may recognize some of the Hollywood stars who have eaten there. Prices have gone up recently, but the meals are large enough to take some home for the next day's lunch. \$8-15 pp

MosaiCoz- *The* place on the square to see and be seen. If you want to meet someone for lunch or dinner and you want to kick back, this is the place. In the evening, they offer a tasty wood fired pizza cooked in a brick oven they built themselves. The pizza's are said to be for one, but if you are light eaters, two can split one. It's a great place to order a bucket of beers and watch people walk by. Look for the large umbrella's at the SE corner of the square. If it is raining hard, they may be closed as they have no indoor seating \$7-10 pp.

Special Occasion Restaurants, Upper Price Range

Especias- This is another favorite for us. Adrian, the owner, is always there to greet his guests and make them feel at home. He is a member of the "Casa Denis" family. The menu is small, but there are several specials every night. Try the bacon wrapped shrimp. It is on the second level of a building, so you need to look

for it. It has indoor seating and a small outdoor balcony. Located on Calle 3 between Aves. 5 & 10. Mention the Trip Advisor website or have the Can-Do map with you and Adrian will offer you a free bottle of wine with dinner. Meals are in the \$10-20 pp. Shorts and a polo shirt are fine.

Guido's is located on Ave. Rafael Melgar on the north end of town and while it is not cheap, it is very good. Along with the pizza, they offer a very nice salad, "puff" garlic bread, various Northern Italian specials and homemade sangria. Garden diners find themselves under a canopy of bougainvillea and philodendra vines and are treated to an eclectic mix of recorded music. This is a great choice for a late leisurely lunch. Sit in the courtyard if you go. It is located to the left of the kitchen. Our favorite pizza is the Margarita. The meals here will satisfy without stuffing you. The waiters may seem a bit straight-laced, but they are simply trying to be professionals. \$8-15 pp. Denise eats lunch there all the time with her girlfriends. It is a good "date" place and to see and be seen. Shorts and a polo shirt are fine.

Kinta is on Avenida 5 between Calles 2 and 4 and offers an eating environment that will have you coming back for more. The prices are reasonable, the quality excellent and the wine selection is good. There is a parking lot right across the street or park on the Malecon and walk the block in. They have garden seating which is our favorite place. Tell Chris Wallenta, the owner, that Mark and Denise from Nah Ha sent you and you will know you are among friends! You can't go wrong here. We suggest reservations if you want to eat in the garden and don't want to wait. (987) 869-0544. Shorts and a polo shirt are fine. \$12-20 pp. Non-smoking. Closed on Mondays.

Kondesa has a great location on 5th Avenue, south of the square between Calle 5th and Calle 7. It features more traditional Mexican fare with a modern approach. It is owned by Kris (of Kinta fame) and his brother, Jason, so you know it will be good. Open Tuesday-Sunday, 5:30pm-10:30pm. For reservations call 869-1085. \$120-180 pesos/meal puts it at the upper end of the moderately priced meal, but you can't beat the ambiance. We had dinner there in March and May, 2011 and both were excellent. Jason and Kris have another winner and you won't be disappointed. AC

La Veranda is located 2 blocks from the Main Plaza on Calle 4 Norte between 5 and 10. As the name implies, the outside tables sit on a porch overlooking a nice small garden, which makes a pleasant setting for a cold drink. The food includes influences from all over the Caribbean. La Veranda is owned by Ernesto of local fajita fame. A romantic dinner place for a special occasion. Very good food. \$15-35 pp. Shorts and a polo shirt are fine.

La Cocay Restaurant- On Calle 8 (north of the square), between 10th and 15th on the south side of the street. They moved from Corpus Christi and the magic is still there. This is a special occasion place and it is *the best place* to eat on the island. Covered seating or garden seating is available. Denise had the chicken dish and I had the Wahoo special. They both were the best meals we had had on the island. The weather was pleasant, the wait staff kept our water, bread and drinks full and our meals were cooked perfectly. This is not a cheap dinner by Coz standards, but well worth the \$15-25pp. Shorts and a polo shirt are fine.

Sorrisi- An Italian place with gelato ice cream and a coffee shop. Located on Calle 3 Sur, $\frac{1}{2}$ block off of Melgar. A nice "date" place or special occasion. I thought the food was a bit pricey, but Denise thought it was good. Four people for dinner and a bottle of wine was \$140 with tip. The food was excellent and service was great as well. They also serve Italian ices and gelato. A/C. \$12-25pp w/o drinks. Shorts and a polo shirt are fine.
