



Mark and Denise's Somewhat Useful Cozumel Restaurant Reviews

*We borrowed some of this from the
www.mxtravel.com/cozumel/cozumel_restaurants.html
website with the balance from our friends on the island and our personal experience.*

Denise and I have not been to every restaurant that has been reviewed, but this offers the most comprehensive review we have seen. **Where we have eaten and/or have confirmable opinions from our trusted friends, we have put our comments *in italics*.**

Be sure to look at our restaurant review book on the coffee table and leave your comments for the next person. Tell us what was good or bad. Add a date so everyone will know how current the information is. If a place has closed or moved, please note this on these pages.

Denise enjoys a good meal on the island and lobster is her favorite meal. Mark thinks seafood, burgers and beer are three of the major food groups. While on the island, he compares soft tacos, chimichangas and seafood dishes to the rest of the places he has been.

Thirsty? A simple "tip". Most of the places have people on the sidewalks "hawking" their establishment. We admire their ingenuity and perseverance. However, if you pause/hesitate while the menu and then ask for 2 for 1 drinks, most of them will provide that or a free drink (beer or tequila). Just ask. If you order 1 drink you get 2 drinks. Order 2 get 4.

We've had this happen once and we want to alert you that the menu price includes tax. It's the law. If a 10-15% tax is added to your bill, bring it to their attention and ask for it to be removed. If you get don't get satisfaction, take it out of the tip. Prices listed are for food only. Some places add the tip to your bill. It is called the "propina". Be sure to check for this as well.

Preamble

The island offers a surprising number of very good restaurants. Many do a respectable job with Caesar Salad, grills and anything flaming. If you don't mind venturing a few blocks out of the tourist district and know where to look, you can still find inexpensive "real Mexican" restaurants with "safe" kitchens where you can enjoy a \$4-\$6 meal.

Where we can remember if the places have air conditioning, we have noted "A/C". Some A/C places offer a mix of enclosed A/C and outdoor seating. Otherwise most places are open air (and most have ceiling fans.) Not a big deal except on the hottest and most humid of days. Keep in mind that thunderstorms do occur. If a place is busy and you sit out in the open, you could be wet in short order.

If you are looking for our beach bar reviews, check out our separate beach reviews that are also on our website.. These are in no real order....that would just be too easy. (Save a tree, print this on two sided paper it's a lot of pages.)

Inexpensive Restaurants

Most of the inexpensive meals you will find might be "local" places and they typically don't market to tourists. However, they are happy to have you as their guests.

- **El Candela**, at the corner of Calle 6 and Ave. 5, does a big take away business and has a good number of 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 \$45 pesos, 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 but usually includes a chicken cutlet stuffed with ham and cheese, the same pork in tomato sauce recipe that we've always loved at La Choza plus one or two others.

Candela is open for breakfast and lunch and closed on Sunday. We've had lunch there and the fish and chicken tacos were excellent! Be sure to ask for their homemade picante salsa. It's not very spicy and it is excellent. A very quaint place to eat with indoor and outdoor covered seating. \$5-6 pp.

- **El Coffee**-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 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

- **El Clasico** is a ways back in town. It serves seafood tacos and tortas. Edwin and Gracie are the owners and they opened in the fall of 2008. Try the shrimp ceviche. They are only open from 7 AM to 3 PM. El Clasico is located across the street from San Jose del Mar Church. 40th Avenida between Calle 29 and Calle 13 Sur. It is a bit off the beaten path. San Miguel. Directions: Turn left at the light at Calle 11 at by Margaritaville and go until you come to first little roundabout/stoplight. There is a Bank on the right and Chevy dealership on the left. Turn right at the bank. Follow that though next light and several blocks until you see another new car dealership on your right. Turn left and follow it until you get to 40. The church is not obvious as they are under construction. Clasico is located two buildings from the corner and on your right. You can ask anyone you see where entrance for the church is and the restaurant is right across from that. Nothing fancy in line of food selection. It is your typical local place and very new so they are still coming up with choices. Extremely clean!

- **Chilango's** We know of two restaurants in Cozumel that go by the name Chilango's, the word used to describe someone who is a native of Mexico City. The first is one of the few food stalls you will find gringos eating at in Cozumel. It's a yellow structure located near the baseball park on the corner of 30th close to the fruit stands and is open only for dinner. Your server will flatten and cook your tortilla shells after you order. There usually is a choice of six to eight mixtures to stuff them with. There will likely be chicken, pork, beef, potato, fish and usually a cactus mixture. Prices for each item are less than US \$1 and you have to be real hungry to eat three of them. If you want beer, you'll have to bring your own. Be prepared to try your Spanish or be ready to point at what you want.

- **Chilango's** The second Chilango's we know is a Cocina Economica, which literally translates to "Cheap Kitchen." Cocina Economicas are usually inexpensive restaurants that serve a plate lunch, most often at a communal table in the kitchen or living room of a residence. If you look, you can find quite a few of this style restaurant all over Cozumel.

We've eaten in several Concina Economicas in town and in our opinion, Chilango's is the best we've tried in Cozumel. As is typical, you'll find long dining tables in the entry room of this home on Ave. 10 between Calles 15 & 13. It isn't hard to find; just look for the sign on top of the house painted on a surf board. Don't worry if you've never been to a Concina Economica. Just walk in, find a seat and they will bring you lunch. The food here is real home cooking and the people you find there are very nice. It's open only for lunch.

We still haven't made it to either one, but people rave about the food.

- **Cocina Mexicana** is located on the central square near the front of the Hotel Lopez. If you walk down the south side of the square, this is one of the places where the waiters

stand out front and try to wave you in. Lunch specials usually include a choice of soups and entrées served with rice and a delightful fresh fruit flavored water (liquada) for about US \$4.

- **Cocos-** Has closed.
- **Coffelia's** is a really cute breakfast and lunch restaurant with seating in a pleasant garden on Calle 5 less than a block from the waterfront. We've had scrambled eggs with bacon and the house quiche and both were good as was the jamica (hibiscus flower) drink. They had a really nice chipotle (smoked jalapeno) sauce on the table that went well with both the eggs and the quiche. Good service, nice atmosphere and well prepared food.

We've had breakfast here, which was quite good. What we liked the most though was the beautiful outdoor garden setting. You could spend a couple of hours here sipping coffee and doing nothing.

- **Corona Sports Bar** is run by Roger and Aggie. They used to be located on 5th, just south of the square. In the summer of 2009, they moved and re-opened next to Casa Denis on the SE corner of the square. Their new location is about 200 yards from the old one inside of Plaza California. Same concept, inside garden patio, pool table, ping pong, live bands, food until 2 AM, Wi-Fi, etc. It's a good place to catch a game or late night drinking establishment. We have not eaten there, but it was always a stop for a cold one.
- **Costa Brava Restaurant** is located on Calle 7 about a block off the waterfront. It's nothing fancy but is a good inexpensive choice for breakfast, lunch or dinner. We've only eaten breakfast there, but it was good and reasonably priced. It is considered a Cozumel landmark. It is directly behind Casa Mexicana Hotel, one half block off of the waterfront. The lobster is supposed to be good and relatively inexpensive compared to the other places around town.
- **Johnny Bravo's Tacqueria** is located on Ave 15 just south of Santiago's Grill. For long time visitors, it's in the same location as the old El Fiesta Taco from years ago. The prices are a little higher here than at Serra's but the food is very good. They don't offer al pastor but do have a good tasting steak taco and very good frijoles charos (black bean soup). The best deal is probably the sampler platter (enough for 2) or the half platter, which was enough for a meal for one person at about \$45 pesos. The owner (Juan aka Johnny) is very personable and helpful. *We've been told that this has closed, but have not personally confirmed.*

- **El Laurel** Probably the cheapest lunch you will find in Cozumel is at El Laurel on 11th near the Ave. 30 circle. This is really a small store with a Spanish newsstand and a deli counter in the back. Our favorite order is the empanadas, which are on display at the front counter. You can choose from bean (frijoles), potato (papas), chicken (pollo) or beef (stake). Three or four empanadas (at a cost of about US\$1.00-\$1.50 total) should be enough for lunch. Flavored chips are 3 to 4 pesos.

- **3 Patitos Empandas** Another good choice for a real cheap lunch is 3 Patitos Empandas at the corner of Ave 30 and Calle 15. As you might imagine, pretty much the only items on the menu are fried empanadas. They usually have chicken, beef (hamburger meat), cheese, potato and bean. Of those, the beef is our least favorite. You can get your order to go or eat standing at the front counter. The food is nothing fancy but is definitely worth the price. A lunch of 4 empandas and a Coke before the tip is about \$20 pesos or about \$2 USD per person. Before making big plans to eat there you may want to double check on their hours of operation. On one attempted visit a few months ago, we found them closed at 12:30pm on a Saturday.

- **El Pique Taco House** is located cross the street from the Francisco Market on 30th Ave. between Benito Juarez y Calle 2 Norte and has an extensive menu with lots of dishes other than tacos and a wide assortment of beverages including jamaica, horchata, water, soft drinks and beer. There is a nice sized garden area in the back where you can dine. It serves some of the best tacos on the island, as well as an excellent frijoles dish. Dinner for two is about \$10. Look for the yellow menu board and colors. This is a local's place so it doesn't open until around 7:00 PM and closes around midnight. *Our US friends really like this place, but we have not eaten there yet.*

- **El Serra** At some point during your stay, you should have dinner at a real tacqueria. Our favorite is El Serra located on Ave 30 not too far (and across the street) from Ace Hardware. It is one of those hole in the wall places with inexpensive prices and good food that people who don't venture far off of the oceanfront don't think exists in Cozumel. The Tacos al Pastor con piña (grilled marinated pork with a slice of pineapple) at about 40 cents each and frijoles charos (bean soup) are both excellent. Other items we've tried and liked were the chuleta con queso taco (smoked pork chop with cheese) and the al pastor torta (grilled marinated pork sandwich.) If you visit Serra's be sure to take advantage of the new patio seating, which makes for a much cooler dining experience away from the open cooking fires. Four to six tacos and a bowl of soup make a good meal for \$3-\$4. *Like most tacquerias, this place opens after dark and will usually be hopping late into the night. While they do not serve beer, you can bring your own if you want.*

- **El Perro Verde** (The Green Dog) is located on Avenida 15 between Calle 1 and Roasada Salas. Look for the papier-mâché canine greeting you above the doorway. They offer a home-made vegetarian menu. As well as an artistic sense of humor and good food, this

eco-eatery offers a space to relax and make new friends. The Mexican and Spanish owners offer a range of healthy snacks, meals and drinks.

- **El Perro** offers fresh fruit juices, shakes, teas and coffees are available to go with your meal. Vegetarian Hamburger with salad, \$5.50; Sandwich of the Day, \$3.00; Special Garden Salad, \$4.50; Fresh fruit drinks, from \$2.50; Chai, \$2.50; Coffee, \$2.00. El Perro Verde is open Monday to Saturday, 9am to 4pm.
- **Triunfo Rotiseria** Up and down Ave. 30 you will see a number of take out grilled chicken (pollo asada) places. The food is good and very reasonably priced. While the side dishes vary, it usually comes with corn tortillas, pickled onions or cabbage and at some places, (some pretty awful canned) spaghetti. On our last visit, a whole chicken with the sides was \$60 pesos or less than \$6 USD. There are multiple locations on every block of Ave. 30 that offer a similar product but one of the better ones is the Triunfo Rotiseria at Calle 8 Norte and 30th where you can watch the chickens pop and sizzle as they turn over an outdoor wood fire. If you're planning an afternoon at the beach, consider picking up lunch to go on your way out of town.
- **Pollo Caribe** Another chicken place with an added attraction is Pollo Caribe, also on Ave 30 across the street from El Serra's Taquira. At Pollo Caribe they not only sell chicken, the menu also includes grilled ribs sold by the kilo. The orders here come with rice, pickled onions, salsa and corn tortillas. An order of $\frac{1}{2}$ kilo or roughly a pound makes a large meal for something like \$50 to \$60 pesos. In general, we find the ribs there to be "pretty good." On occasion there is a tendency for them to be slightly overcooked and as a result, a bit on the dry side but just as often, we find them perfectly cooked.
- **El Torito**, On Avenida 65 between Calles 17 & 19. They serve hash browns and good eggs benedict with a sauce that isn't exactly hollandaise, but still tasty.
- **Camerones Dorado** *They make delicious shrimp tacos and tortas. The breaded shrimp are put on either a tortilla for the little tacos or a sandwich roll for a torta. They are topped with a little mayonnaise and sliced onion. This is really delicious, and the prices are quite reasonable. 15 pesos each for each shrimp taco (start with 2 or 3 and you can always order more) and tortas are 39 pesos each. The breaded shrimp are put on either a tortilla for the little tacos or a sandwich roll for a torta. They are topped with a little mayonnaise and sliced onion. Really delicious, and the prices are quite reasonable. The shrimp tacos and a soft drink will set you back \$5.50.*

Camerones 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. If you are beach hopping and not hitting the beach bars for lunch, this is a great place to order your meal at the start of your trip and stick them in one of our coolers for later in the day as they are good cold. (If you are McGyver,

take some foil with you and throw them on the motor to heat them up. Yeah, you know who you are.) I've had the tortas several times while diving the east side. They have plenty of outdoor covered seating. This is a very good cheap eats place. They do not sell beer. \$4-6 pp.

- **Los Villas Dorados** was one of our favorite spots. It's right on the town square, so it appears a little touristy. All of the Mexican dishes are delicious and reasonably priced. We've been going so often for so long that the waiters remember us and always say "Welcome Home!" when they see us again. The chimichangas and fajitas were really good, but when we were there in January, 2007, the chimichanga recipe had changed. It wasn't as good as it had been and the portion was smaller. It's still on our list of places to eat though. We still go there, but the love affair of "gotta go" is gone. \$5-8 pp. AC if you want to eat inside-but why? Sabino is an excellent waiter.
- **El Foco** On Ave. 5 just south of Pro Dive, El Foco serves inexpensive light meals, and while you might not think so on first impression, a clean kitchen. Try the El Foco Special Taco. Decent portions of food. The place isn't fancy and you'd be tempted to walk past it as all the "sharpie" graffiti on the wall makes it look "dirty". This is as good as or better than Otate's and with larger portions. Our meals in April & August, 2009 were excellent. Denise and I had the El Foco Special Taco (two people could split this if you are light eaters.) Service was good. \$4-9 pp.
- **Casa Herradura** is an open air place on the east side of 30th between Calles 17 and 19. The woman speaks fairly good English and is very pleasant. The pizza menu is pretty basic, with about 10 toppings and 3 sizes; large, medium and small. The price for a large four toppings, 2 meat and 2 vegetable was 85 pesos. The pizza flavor was similar to what we enjoy at home as well. Soft drinks are about 10 pesos. Bring your own beer. They only serve pizza from 5 PM-10:30 PM. At lunch time from 12:30 PM - 4 PM, they serve comida corrida for 50 pesos or a medium portion for 30 pesos. They make 5 different meals from which to choose and, of course, they serve a bowl of soup to start.
- **Henry's Grille:** This is this is a charming, locally owned burger joint on Avenida 1 Sur between 80 and 85. The place is on the right about a block or so down. The building is very nicely designed and the outdoor garden is very nice.

They have about 10 different burgers in different sizes (the small is plenty big but the 250g is for those BIG appetites). Veggie burgers are on the menu, too. Burgers are cooked to order and the fries have a nice cajun spice. Very fair prices averaging 65 pesos for burger and fries, plus 10 pesos for the drink. Atmosphere is lovely with nice lit gardens. They have added a super steak menu. For those of you who don't speak Spanish....the owners speak great English so no problem. They also serve steaks. The buns were so soft, they almost fell apart in our hands. They were waiting on their beer license in February, 2009.

If you want beer, bring your own or buy some at the store across the street until they get their license.

- **El Mercado** Another spot the brave might try a food stand is the row of stalls beside the "El Mercado" or Town Market located on Ave. 25 and Rosado Salas. You'll get a meat entree with rice and beans and a beverage (try the papaya water drink) for US\$3-4.
- **Los Moros del Morito** A good choice for a relatively inexpensive Mexican restaurant is Los Moros del Morito on Ave. 35 near Calle 3 Sur. Try the garlic soup (with or without a raw egg), pollo Hawaiiano (Hawaiian Chicken) or the cochinta pibil (slow roasted pork) tacos. The sandia (watermelon) and melone (cantaloupe) water drinks are treats as are the plantaino fritas (fried bananas) with cream. This is not to be confused with El Moro reviewed below.
- **Midori**, a sushi restaurant, is located on Rosado Salas between 15 and 20 Avenidas, on the south side of the street. It is on the 2nd floor, above Sadcom, the computer store.
- **Michoacan's** An evening visit to Michoacan's ice cream is a local tradition in Cozumel. There is one located on Ave 20 near 1st and another closer to the downtown square. We've sampled several varieties including pineapple (more of a sorbet than ice cream), chocolate and mamay; a tropical fruit that looks like it has cantaloupe skin but an oblong shape. It isn't Ben and Jerry's but it is more than decent and reasonably priced. A medium cup, which would equal two large scoops, was \$14 pesos.
- **El Moro** You might not be able 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 of the "Big Conch" circle on 65th. It is located on Ave 75 Bis between Calle 2 and Calle 4.

Everything on the menu is good, especially the seafood and the hand written specials. It's owned by relatives of the owners of Los Morros Del Morrito and offers a similar menu. To be perfectly honest, this place used to be cheaper before it was discovered by tourists but it's still a good experience.

It's true that it's hard to find. I think we drove around for about an hour looking for it...and the island just isn't that big! We've eaten there 4-5 times. It is not a fancy place. There is no air conditioning, but the food was great and the service was very friendly. The sign last time we were there was painted very high on the building and we were looking low for it. 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 the photos and you may recognize some of the Hollywood stars who have eaten there.

If you happen to catch/spear any fish, they will offer recommendations for cooking it for you. All you need to do beforehand is scale and gut your fish. We did this on our 1/09 trip and it was excellent! \$5-10 pp.

- **Nando's Hotdogs** 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. Cheese or regular wrapped in bacon with sautéed sweet onions, ketchup, mayo, mustard on a warm toasted bun. It does not get much better than that. You can order how you like. Run into the store and grab a couple soda's and you have dinner for 2 for less than 8 bucks. The best hotdogs in the world!
- **Otate's** We had eaten there before but a friend turned my wife onto the vegetable burrito at Otate's on Ave 15. She said it was one of the best vegetarian meals she had ever eaten. Not a single bean or grain of rice could be found in the burrito. Rather it was filled with sautéed and grilled vegetables and topped with a mild cheese. She liked it so much we made a 2nd trip there on another night. On our first trip I had the posole soup chock full of hominy, pork, chicken, onions, tomato, garlic, cilantro and who knows what else.

We eat there all the time. 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- it was excellent! Denise had the veggie burrito. She thought it was good, but a little light on the veggies. We saw a person next to us eating the posole soup. I ordered one. It is a meal in itself. Simply slide all the ingredients they bring with the soup in the bowl. Very tasty! Try the Tacos al Pastor with pineapple-tasty!. Dinner and 1 beer each- \$13 for two! \$4-8 pp.

- **Parroquia** is upstairs behind the Central Plaza church on Ave. 10. The chicken in mole sauce and soupa de lima are good choices here. This is a hang out for the local food & beverage service crowd and is open quite late.
- **Pescaderia San Carlos** If you look real close, you can find the name of San Carlos across the bottom of the front wall but in all likelihood, the first thing that will catch your eye when you arrive at this restaurant will be the word PESCADERIA in blue. Regardless of what you call it, this is a great little fish place back in the neighborhoods. They sell a lot of to go orders of both cooked and fresh fish but in back are a couple tables where you can dine in. The conch ceviche is usually very fresh and a single serving at \$40 pesos is an ample appetizer for a table of 6. A plate lunch with a fillet entrée is \$45-\$50 pesos. A whole fried fish for one starts at around \$60 pesos but can go higher depending on the weight. If you want, you can walk into the open kitchen and pick your fish out of the cooler. If more than one person wants the whole fried fish, pick out a larger one and share. The species of fish will vary depending on what they caught that

day but if available, try the hog fish. Given the location, you'll probably be pleasantly surprised to find that English is spoken here. The easiest way to get to San Carlos is to drive east out Calle 11 past 30 and take a left onto Ave. 50 Bis. That will be the second Ave. 50 (bis) you come to. San Carlos is on the right between A.R. Salas and Calle 3. Open 9AM to 5PM.

This place gets rave reviews by everyone who wants a "local's" experience. We still haven't made it there yet.

- **Plaza Leza** is the restaurant right next door to Cocina Mexicana and offers a similar Mexican menu. But to tell you the truth, it bugs us that every time we walk by this place we have to tell these guys three different ways that we don't want to eat a meal with them at that very moment. As a result, we find we rarely think of going there when we are ready to eat.

What he said applies to us as well. Our friends tell us the food is good. They serve breakfast.

- **Sabores Loncheria** Another very good place to try homemade Yucatan cuisine and the chance to walk through someone's living room is Sabores Loncheria located in a yellow house on Ave. 5 between Calles 3 & 5. They don't speak much English here but everyone is very friendly. Everything on the menu is good. Ask to 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's a changing menu but usually you'll have a choice of 5 entrees. The meal comes with soup and an iced pitcher of jimaica (hibiscus flower tea.) All for a total of \$40 pesos. Desserts are an extra \$10 pesos.

Another place people talk about in terms of being good cheap eats.

- **Spearfishing with Leo**- *Leo is not a restaurant, but if you go spearfishing with him by boat, take him up on the offer to have him cook your catch on the grille at a beach. It is excellent and there is nothing like eating a fish that was just planning his day a few moments earlier- I bet this wasn't in his plans! www.SpearFishingToday.com (Tell him Mark from Nah Ha sent you.)*
- **Sushi n Go**, another sushi restaurant is on Calle 11 (aka Andres Quintana Roo Avenida) one block from the waterfront, north side of the street.
- **Taqueria el Sitio** on 2nd Street, between Avenida 5 & 10 across from the taxi headquarters. Excellent fish tacos. Smallish tortillas, with mountainous piles of hot pescado. 10 pesos each and well worth it. Get there early, they close around 12:30pm or whenever they're done cooking....Fish is fried in a large cast iron pot on open flames!!! As local as you can get.

- **Thai Noodle Bar** The owners of Rock N Java have opened another restaurant on Calle 11 between RE Melgar and Avenida 5th South. It is next to the new Neptuno's. The food prices range from \$40 pesos to \$90 pesos and the menu sounds refreshing and delicious. 1pm - 10pm. Closed on Sundays.
- **Tiki-Tok** *It is North of the square by a couple of blocks on Melgar. It is on the second floor, next to the old cinema. At night, they have live bands. Toward the ocean, the tables and chairs are "in the sand". Very clean and it looks like your typical beach bar. Service was very good. We had chicken and fish tacos for lunch in July, 2009.. Both were good but maybe a little pricey for what you got at \$10-11/pp. The view of the ocean is excellent!*
- **Toro's Place** *Another place you'd probably walk right past and not give it a second thought. It is near McDonald's on Ave. Melgar and is an open air restaurant on the second floor. We had lunch and a couple of beers in April, 2009. We had an order of tacos. It was good, but not knock your socks off great as some websites claim. Great views of the water and very clean. A good alternative lunch place with a view if you are looking for something different than in the square.*
- **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. Great beef and chicken dishes from Monterey area. Cost of food is between 50 and 75 pesos per person. Menus are in Spanish at this time. 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.

- **Woody's** *This opened up at the end of December, 2008. It is located on the NE corner of the square, behind the 7-11 Store on 5th.. For those that know Cozumel, this is the old location of Baby Reef. Emphasis is on fresh bar food-not frozen. It is owned by one of the former bartenders of Kelley's, Greg and the former co-owner of Scuba Shack, Roberto. Cold beer-\$1.50*

Moderate-Priced Restaurants

- **Albinos** *We've driven past this place numerous times, but never stopped it's a bit off the beaten path and not within walking distance of the town square on 20th Avenida between Calles 10 and 12 Norte. Quite honestly, it looks like a tree house with the 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 have amazing*

bacon wrapped shrimp with bechamel sauce. They also close at 8pm so for a relaxed evening, 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.) They also serve lobster but we didn't try it as it was out of season when we were there.

- **Abuelo Gerardo**, just north of the Catholic Church at 10th Avenida and 2 Norte. This is another family run restaurant on Cozumel. El Abuelo Gerado is Spanish for Grandfather Gerard, the patriarch. Service is from early morning to late at night. They have open-air indoor and garden seating. Lobster meals are in the high teens. Avoid paying in dollars or, as in most establishments, you will pay a much higher price due to the exchange rates.

We're definitely not food snobs and we are polite and gracious at all the places we eat. We had heard we would get warm service, a congenial atmosphere and good food at reasonable prices. A local friend questioned our decision to go there for dinner, but we told him we were dead set on trying it based on recommendations of other locals.

We arrived about 8:40 PM to a nearly empty restaurant. Our waiter was gruff and seemed more interested in looking outdoors for something down the street. Ten minutes later, our drinks arrived. Denise ordered the lobster "as you like it" and I ordered the grouper filet "as you like it" and asked for it to be cooked "a la Vera Cruz". Our waiter (Denise said he was the "Soup Nazi") told me I couldn't get it cooked that way. He recommended the garlic and butter and I concurred. He harrumphed again and left. I was getting a bad vibe about this place...

The meal was unceremoniously placed on our table and the waiter disappeared. Denise had two small lobster tails and I had three small grouper filets. We found them underneath the pile of French fries we didn't know we ordered. We were expecting rice and vegetables, not fries. (We have later learned this is a substitution they make, but don't tell you.) It was late and we were hungry. I finally caught the waiter's eye and requested ketchup. A few minutes later he brought me an empty bottle of ketchup-it held enough for two fries. Another five minutes passed and I scored a second bottle that almost had enough for both of us. Denise liked her lobster. It was pretty obvious that the three filets had been cooked at different times as the third filet was dry and had a different taste. My food was average at best. The fries were standard fare.

To top it off, our waiter added his tip ("propina") to the check. In speaking with other people who frequently visit the island, their experience has mirrored ours. I wish we had known this beforehand. We love to support the locals, but sadly it isn't worth the risk of having a bad meal on your vacation. Maybe it is a better place for lunch than dinner? We'll probably not take that chance either.

- **Ambar** *A nice looking bar with outdoor and indoor dining located just south of the square on 5th. We haven't eaten there, but the reviews we have heard from friends are good. Cheap beer (\$1) if you want to sit on the plaza and people watch. A/C inside. Occasional bands at night.*
- **La Choza** *For authentic home style Mexican cuisine try La Choza, a restaurant featuring interesting soups, condiments, nightly specials and what we think is the best flan in Cozumel. The price of your entree at lunch and dinner includes a choice of soups. If you visit here for lunch, ask about the daily specials. Prices for the unadvertised lunch specials will be significantly cheaper than similar meals on the menu but your waiter won't mention them unless you ask. Lunch and dinner favorites are the pork in tomato sauce and seafood either grilled or Vera Cruz style. La Choza serves the best beef fajitas in Cozumel and great margaritas. This place is a good choice for breakfast too.*

When they were at the old location, we would almost always eat there at least once or twice with every visit to the island. The food is simple, but wonderfully prepared. Denise gets the garlic shrimp, which is awesome. Mark likes the Vera Cruz fish and fajitas. The margaritas are huge and potent...be careful. The noodle soup is very good and HOT. Some of our friends, poo-poo this place as being a bit touristy, but we eat there late at night and disagree with them. \$6-15pp

A fire moved them from the corner of 10th. They are still on 10th and about 25 yards from their old location between Avenida Rosado Salas and Calle 3. We have to admit, we miss the ambience of the old place. The new place seems too sterile and too big. It is also a lot noisier due to the hard ceilings vs. the old thatch roof. We ate there in 1/09 and it just didn't seem the same as the old laid back "see and be seen" joint. The food is still very good and judging by the crowds others agree. No A/C, but they have ceiling fans.

- **Jeannie's Waffle House** *moved from the front of the Vista Del Mar Hotel to the waterfront behind the Aquario Restaurant at the corner of Ave. R. Melgar and Ave. 11. While bi-lingual menus are available and the staff speaks some English, your waiter will give you a menu "book" with pictures of each dish so if you can't make yourself understood in either Spanish or English, you can just point at the picture of what you want. In addition to doing a pretty good job with the usual breakfast fare, it offers a decent in-house bakery.*

Another Cozumel tradition. We've lost track of how many breakfasts we've had here. 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. It is one of our favorite morning spots if we have nothing to do but watch the world go by. We used to consider this a cheap eats place, but the prices have bumped up a bit

since the new location opened. (Gotta pay the oceanfront rent!) They are now open for breakfast lunch and dinner. They have bands on some nights. A/C and outdoor seating.

- **Kinta** opened in December, 2007, and is on Avenida 5 between Calles 2 and 4, across from Zermatt's bakery and ISIS a few doors down. The chef, Chris Wallenta, is from Guido's (see above) with training from the French Culinary school of Manhattan, New York. It is Mexican Bistro menu. Mexican food with a modern fusion twist and modern, upscale interior. The setting is very nice and small bistro like. It is NON-smoking. 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. The black bean soup is delicious. We had the chili relleno and the Pescado ala Kinta. Both excellent. When Chris learned we were there for Denise's birthday, he surprised her with a desert for two. You can't go wrong here! \$8-15 pp w/o appetizer.

They have garden seating which is our favorite place. If the weather is "iffy" eat inside as the garden has limited canopy protection from rain. Closed on Mondays. Reservations are recommended if you want garden seating and don't want to wait. They have a small bar if you want to wait. AC.

Tell Chris that Mark and Denise from Nah Ha sent you and you will know you are among friends! Look for the "house cat" lurking in the bushes.

- **Kelley's** If you're missing home, stop by Kelley's. Gene Kelley (yep, that's his real name) is the owner and is always there. There is usually a game on and the beers are always flowing. He has satellite TV and is more than happy to change it to your game. There are numerous flat panel TV's at the bar. (Motto: "If you're drinking, you can watch anything you want.") It's a very popular place with the Americans who live there. The food is good, but people really go there for the socializing and to catch their team on TV. All the US barflies hang out there at some point. They are located on 10th between 1st and Rosado Salas (south of the square). You need to stop here for a beer if nothing else. There may be live bands on the weekends. There are coupons for a free cold one in this binder. The ribs and fish & chips are good.

If there is an important game on that is not picked up on the 180+ channels we get, Kelley's will have it on. The black cat is named Misha.

- **La Casa de Morena** Another one of our favorite places. Pescado a la Vera Cruz is fantastic. They offer covered and garden seating. The coconut shrimp is also very good. But be very careful with their salsa. It's made with habaneros. Need I say more? They take credit cards. Located on 10th between 3rd and 5th Sur. \$8-15pp
- **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 (after 7 PM) they built themselves. The pizza's are said to be for one, but if you are light eaters, two can split one. This is the former location of Bianca and Georgini's. You'll catch Bianca making sure everything is perfect. If you like your crust crunchy, you need to tell them. It's a great place to order a bucket of beers and watch people walk by. Of note, during dinner hours they may require you to order food. 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 \$6-10 pp.

- **Carlos N Charlies/Senor Frogs** *Simply put, this is where the cruise ship people go. We've never eaten there for no other reason that it is packed with cruise ship people who are a bit boisterous. One of the owners of Nah Ha is the manager/owner there. A good late night dance place if the island is crowded. Located Rafael Melgar near the downtown cruise ship pier. Write down 5 songs you want to hear and give the DJ a couple of bucks and he'll play them for you-especially if the place is dead. We threw our own drunken dance party there one night....a party of four! The music upstairs at the Frog's rocks a little harder on the weekend and is more of a dance place. When CnC's closes, the Frog picks up the slack. A/C*
- **Casa Denis** is a small 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 on the mall, a half block east and a half block south of the central square right across from the entrance to the Cozumel Flea Market. In our opinion, this is a much better choice for lunch or dinner than either Plaza Leza or Cocina Mexicana, the other on-the-square restaurants listed earlier in this document. One word of caution - while the food costs here are reasonable, a large margarita will run you about \$60 pesos.

This is Cozumel's most famous restaurant probably because Jackie Onassis ate here. Of course, she's dead now, so that doesn't speak well of the food, I guess. ;-) Its menu is Mexican and we've always had a good meal there. It is on our "must eat" list on almost every trip. All of our many meals have been great. Mention their website and you will get a free drink with dinner. (www.casadenis.com) This is also a good lunch place. \$8-18pp.

- **Chi** is a Chinese restaurant open on Cozumel's beautiful waterfront. The locals and visitors rave about it on internet forums. Chi is owned by a long-time Cozumel restaurateur, and some elements and menu items of local favorite Sam's Wok were brought to Chi. The new location is probably one of the best views on the waterfront, and a prime place to watch the carnival Parade. The service is very attentive. The owners personally thank everyone as they leave the restaurant. Located on Melgar at Calle 3 on the second floor above Pizza Hut. *We've heard reviews both good and bad about this place, but we have never been there. A/C*

- **El Capi Navegante** If you eat there frequently, on occasion you may get an excellent meal but it has a tendency to be inconsistent. As you might expect from this place's name, the menu is primarily seafood. On a good night, the conch ceviche, Caesar salad and Octopus Mexican style are all recommended. On a bad night, you'll wish you had eaten somewhere else. El Capi is located on Ave 10 near Calle 3.

The lobster thermidor is very good when it is good. Other times it is just average. This used to be one of our favorite restaurants, but when we were hit up for a time share while seated and eating, I was done with it! I agree with the above review, the food can be a bit spotty on the quality side, but when it is good, it is good! The timeshare Denise described was solved with a simple, no. It was odd, though. A/C

- **Las Palmeras Restaurant** is on the central square across from the ferry pier and because everyone knows it, a good place to meet at as in "I'll meet you at 8 at Las Palmeras." Insist on a street side table. The mariachi band is not the best in the world but is sincere. The food is decent and considering the location, really not badly overpriced (at least not on the menu.) However, be sure to check your written bill carefully as the waiters sometimes attempt to tell you how much you owe without providing a written check and/or overcharge on the bill they provide you and try to pocket the difference. This is another good place to try the Cochinta Pibil. Unless you're really hungry, a single order of the fresh fruit is enough for two at breakfast.

This is the place to go and watch the world go by, literally. It is situated across the street from the people ferry pier and is on one of the busiest corners in town. A nice place to toss back a few and veg out. The food is average. Surprisingly, a lot of vacationing Mexican nationals eat here. I would have thought it was too touristy for them.

- **Ernesto's Fajita Factory** You'll find a good version of Texas style fajitas at Ernesto's Fajita Factory. While the downtown location on Ave. R. Melgar is now closed, there is still one in the south hotel district near the Casa Del Mar. The portions are large but not cheap by local standards. On the other hand, daily breakfast specials here are a good deal.

A landmark in Cozumel. We've never eaten there, but other people swear by it. It has been rebuilt since Wilma.

- **French Quarter** The traditional Louisiana cuisine at The French Quarter offers another nice change of pace from Mexican food. It's located on Ave. 5 about a block south of the central square. The bar area here is usually a good spot to watch games from back home. Telephone at 872 6321.

The owners are from Louisiana and are said to know how to do Cajun and Creole. That used to be true. We have had several wonderful meals there. However, on our last visit in April,

2007, we were disappointed. The chicken fried steak was good. However, my e'toufee had no flavor, no spice and the andouille sausage was a sliced hotdog. Yes, a hotdog! It's no longer on our list. Other people love this place. The upstairs seating provides a nice breeze, as well as a pretty view. A nice cigar type bar is downstairs with a nice selection of alcohol. In the back of the review binder is a discount coupon for French Quarter. \$8-15pp

- **La Veranda (formerly D'Pub)** 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. You won't be disappointed.*
- **Le Chef** On Avenida 5 at the intersection of Calle 5 Sur. (If coming down Melgar, turn at the McDonalds and go 1 block. Simply one of the best new finds in a long time on our 11/07 trip. The food was excellent! Indoor dining only, very artsy with XM Chill in the background. Denise had the ravioli, I had the personal sized chicken Caesar pizza. It kicked Guido's pizza in the butt. We'll definitely be back. A/C \$8-15pp.
- **La Mission** is another good Mexican restaurant that has unadvertised inexpensive lunch specials that you won't know about unless you specifically ask about them. For dinner, the shrimp entrees are good as are the traditional Mexican dishes including flan and the flaming coffees. Both the original location on Ave. B. Juarez and the one on Ave. A.R. Salas next to La Choza have been closed but there is a new location on Calle 3 less than a block off the waterfront.

Another island landmark. It used to be one of our favorites when we first starting going to the island. Since then, we have found so many other great restaurants, it has fallen off our list-not for any reason except there are just so many great places. To get the same food at a lower price, visit La Parilla Mission on 30th. (reviewed in this article)

- **La Nueva Mission II** The prices at La Nueva Mission II fall somewhere between moderate and expensive category but we list it here with the other Mission location to avoid confusion. Beto Miranda, the owner of both Missions and a long time Cozumel restaurateur has opened this place at his beautiful mission style home just off of Ave. B. Juarez & Ave. 55. Tables wrap around the veranda of the hacienda and spill out onto the lawn. The downstairs of the home is open for dinner guests to have a look around. Towards the back of the property Beto keeps his pet monkey and two African lions in cages. Some may find the housing conditions of the animals offensive but others see the same thing and find it an amazing sight. The menu includes all the standard Mexican favorites and the service is usually very good. You're paying a little extra for the atmosphere but for a special occasion, it is probably worth it.

We ate there a couple of times when we didn't venture deep into the town. The food was good, but has fallen off of our list for no other reason that we support places off the beaten path. To get the same food at a lower price, visit La Parilla Mission on 30th. (reviewed in this article)

- **HC de Monterrey-** You'll find it on Ave. 5 Sur between Calle 9 and 9 Bis. at the dead end near the cemetery. This south of the square. They are open every day for lunch and dinner, from 1pm to 10pm.

The service is very quick. Normally the word "tender" is not something you think of when you think of arrachera, but HC de Monterrey is a great restaurant on Cozumel where you can find arrachera that is not only tender, but also delicious, and the prices are quite reasonable. The "arrachera national" includes arrachera (seasoned skirt steak) and they will grill it and serve it to your order...rare, medium or well done. Even well done, this beef is very tender. Along with that you can have your choice of a grilled onion (cebolla) or a baked potato (papa). They have a sauce for your meat and provide sour cream with garlic for your baked potato. The cost is 115 pesos which at the current local exchange rate is about \$10 U.S.

- **La Parilla Mission-** *Owned by the same people that own the touristy La Mission on Melgar, this is a less commercial version of the same, but with simpler décor. We ate there 1/22/08. We were a large group of people and they took care of us and split the checks. The food was good and the quantities were perfect. The breakfasts are really good and inexpensive (\$2.50). There are 5-6 breakfast choices and it's really good. Lunch/Dinner are great as well. They do a huge take-out business. Lots and lots of people coming in and taking out food in to-go boxes and many more stacked up on the counter. They have home delivery.*

Americans and locals can be found here. \$6-10 pp for dinner. Located on Avenida 30 between Calles 2 & 4 on the west side of the road.

- **Pizza Rolandi-** They were on the island a few years back and closed. It was a great place for a pizza. The old Rolandi location became Guido's. Pizza Rolandi is scheduled to open in early middle late (?) 2009 in the former ANSU location on the waterfront. They are located on Melgar at the intersection of Calle 11, near Margaritaville. If you have ever eaten at Rolandi's in Playa or Isla Mujeres, you too will be excited. This is a classy, yet homey restaurant, specializing in seafood and Italian dishes. Rolandi's is a perfect combo of Guido's and Primas. Very fair prices and good sized portions.

Visit the upstairs Tequila 1.5 patio out back over the water for a really lovely view with neat seating arrangements. Club music plays over the speakers. AC

- **Puerto Abrigo Restaurant** This is the marina just North of town and easy walking distance from Nah Ha. It opened in summer of '09. It is a second floor palapa bar with a commanding view of the marina. This is a good place to rub elbows with the locals and fishing enthusiasts. It would also be a good place for the spouse to wait and see what the "great fisherman" has brought home for dinner. It features a big screen TV, live and recorded music and stays open till 11pm. It is closed on Monday.

Entradas/appetizers range from 60-160 pesos. They have guacamole, quesadillas, cheese, fish or chicken fingers, coconut shrimp with a tropical salsa is the one for 160 pesos. Seafood ranges from 80 pesos for the octopus coctel (pulpo), to 160 pesos for mixed sea food ceviche. The rest of the menu ranges from 60 pesos for tuna sandwich to 110 pesos for chicken fajitas. Other menu items included burgers, tacos and burritos. They have a full bar. (Bacardi 35 pesos, Absolute 50 pesos, Buchanan's whisky 80 pesos, Beer 20 pesos. The menu is in Spanish, so it helps to know a little Spanglish.

- **Sonora Grill** features steaks and seafood. While flavorful, the steaks are "Mexican Style" and a bit chewy for American taste. The soupa de lima, beef kabob, beefsteak tacos and lobster (at about \$13 the last time we ate there) are all good. Located between Ave 10 & 15 on Ave. B. Juarez.

Another one of our old favorites. It has seating upstairs and is nicely decorated with traditional Mexican décor. The lobster tail is also very good, but smaller than Prima's was. They offer a very good club sandwich for breakfast. When we were there in January, 2007 we had a decent meal (I thought), but Denise was unimpressed and said we should take it off the list. I still like the food and the upstairs seating, but what do I know? I'm just a guy!

- **Acuario Restaurant** (now where **Margaritaville** is) Acuario was destroyed by Hurricane Wilma and has been replaced by Margaritaville. Sorry, we won't be reviewing Margaritaville-too touristy for us. We did hear the margaritas were the worst on the island! Go figure. They occasionally have live bands. The outdoor seating in the rear is a pleasant place to go at night for a drink. You need to really like Jimmy Buffet music if you go here. Hey, wait a minute....Buffet music/Margaritaville? Is there a connection? Hmmm.
- **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 beach area. To date, the only meals we've eaten there are breakfast but we've heard it is a decent choice for lunch or dinner as well. 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 power walk from Nah Ha and is about 2 blocks south of the airport road on Melgar. See a piece of art on the wall you like? Buy it. Some of the artwork in Nah Ha was bought in

the museum. It is a great place to start the day. More Cozumel "business" gets accomplished here than you can imagine.

- **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.

Our absolute favorite place for breakfast, but we've had a great lunch there too. Everything is so fresh and wonderfully prepared. You really can't go wrong with anything you order. Another local's favorite. If you are a vegetarian, this is a good place to go. If you are throwing a party, they can cater it for you. They have free wireless internet and a book exchange. (Leave 2, take 1 is their rule of thumb.) Leave your change in the Cozumel Animal Shelter donation box by the door. They really need your help. (A/C) \$5-8 pp for breakfast.

- **The Coffee Bean** not only has the requisite coffee offerings; it also offers an excellent selection of very well prepared home made deserts and a good if limited selection of lunch specials. It is located on Calle 3 near the Pizza Hut a few blocks south of the central square and is very popular with locals and tourists alike. A good place to get your breakfast and caffeine fix if you are an anti-Starbucks person. The pies are good, too.
- The **Diamond Bakery & Restaurant** near the pharmacy on the corner of Ave 15 also offers excellent deserts as well as good sandwiches.
- **La Canalla**. For a short while this used to be called the Red Door. It is on Melgar just across from the passenger ferry pier and on the second floor. It's near the Hard Rock Café. It is now owned by a local Mexican. We haven't eaten there since the change of ownership but have been told the steaks were good.
- **Asian Garden** The Chinese Restaurant Asian Garden located on the Ave. 5 mall next to the downtown Banamex is another recent closure. But if you're getting tired of tacos, there is still an Oriental alternative in Cozumel. The same owners have opened Sams Wok in the palapa mall across the road from Puerto Maya (cruise ship pier) just south of the El Cid La Ceiba Hotel. Our understanding is that the location was picked to cater more to cruise ship crews than to tourists. We haven't tried the new location yet but found the original Asian Garden a bit more expensive than the typical Chinese back home and while it wasn't the best Chinese meal we've ever had, the food was actually pretty good.
- **El Turix** is located on the square in front of the Corpus Christi Church on Calle 17 Sur between Ave. 20 & 25. The owners of El Turix, Rafael and Maruca, treat their guests to a home style Yucatan cuisine with preparations and dishes not found in very many other

local restaurants. While the menu has recently changed and the price of eating there has risen, the food is still very good. If offered on the evening you go there, this is an excellent place to try conchinita pibil, pork that is slow roasted in banana leaves producing a consistency and flavor that is somewhat similar to North Carolina style bar-b-que. Another featured dish is zodobachoy, a tamalé stuffed with ground pumpkin seeds and wrapped in chaya, a locally grown green similar to grape leaf. The deserts here are also excellent. If available, the coconut pie is not to be missed. The kitchen in this place is spotless, the service friendly and the food is good.

Expensive Restaurants

It was good while it lasted but one of the casualties of Hurricane Wilma was the very well regarded restaurant Mesa 17. The former owners/chef decided to move back to the States and the restaurant is no more. Hopefully, another good restaurant will find the space next door to El Turix on the Corpus Christi Square on Calle 17 Sur between Ave. 20 & 25 formally occupied by Mesa 17 and before that, La Cocay.

- **Sorrisi-** A new Italian place with gelato ice cream and a coffee shop. The opening reviews were less than great. Located on Calle 3 Sur, $\frac{1}{2}$ block off of Melgar. Perhaps it needed more time to mature and get over the new restaurant hurdle.

It was remodeled in October of '07 while the streets were being redone. I think they made it a bit smaller as far as seating goes. The local ex-pats were excited about it re-opening. We ate there in January '08. 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. Update 8/09- Some of the reviews we have read recently have been less than stellar. A/C. \$12-20pp

- **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, but 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.
- **Especias-** This is a 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. 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. We enjoy the balcony when the weather is nice. Located on Calle 3 between Aves. 5 & 10. Meals are in the \$10-20 pp. Try the bacon wrapped shrimp....numbingly good.

Mention you learned about Especias on Trip Advisor or have the Can-Do map on you and Adrian, will give you a free bottle of wine with dinner.

- **Guido's Pizza-** formally known as Pizza Rolandi, 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.

This is another old favorite of ours. Sit in the pretty courtyard if you go. It is located to the left of the kitchen. Don't forget to look for the restaurant cat. (It might be hanging out in the tree right next to you.) The puff garlic "bread" is wonderful and light. It is basically what they use as their pizza crust with garlic butter spread all over it. Our favorite pizza is the Margarita that almost serves two (\$15). The meals here will satisfy without stuffing you. It is also a nice lunch place. While we enjoy the environment, if you want a good wood fired pizza, try Bianca's on the square- it costs a lot less. \$8-15 pp. A/C in the front.

We took some grouper we caught for them to cook. For \$10pp they cooked the most incredible meal we have had. I'm guessing if I had let them have some of the fish, the meal would have been cheaper. Denise eats lunch there all the time with her friends. Their former chef opened Kinta and is reviewed elsewhere.

- **Le Bistro (formerly La Lobsteria)** A romantic place for dinner in one of the oldest structures on the island. Candlelit with indoor and outdoor seating. Absolutely delightful, inside and out! This new intimate little treasure has charming thatched roof and casual decor. Lobsteria offers delicious food, reasonable prices, fine service and romantic candlelight atmosphere. Menu is varied, but seafood is the highlight. Located on the SE corner of Calle 5th and 7 Sur, a several blocks south of the square.

We have not eaten there since it re-opened. This has been "re-opened" by the owner of Le Chef as Le Bistro. Prices for four people with a good amount of libations are in the \$120 total range. Reviews have been mixed for dinner. It has become a decent breakfast place for about \$6/person with really good coffee.

- **Manati** was located in a very small old wooden building on the corner of Calle 8 and Ave. 10. It closed in August, 2008.
- **ANSU** has closed and will re-open as Pizza Rolandi but was still not open in August, 2009.

- **Pancho's Backyard** is a part of the Cinco Soles retail store on the north end of Ave. Rafael Melgar. It is the site of one of the oldest tourist hotels in Cozumel that catered to wealthy Mexican Nationals from the mainland before Cozumel was discovered by gringos. The area that is now the restaurant was formally the hotel lobby and it is a lovely setting. The food is very good and offers some interesting modern twists on standard Mexican dishes but at a higher price than most other Mexican restaurants in town.

We ate here once about ten years ago and were not impressed. It does have a beautiful setting for dining. We found it to be a bit touristy and overpriced for what you got. Other people really like it. Maybe we'll give it another try on another visit?

- At **Pepe's Grill** the local seafood and steaks are recommended. This is the nicest salad bar in town and can be eaten without worry of picking up a stomach problem. Try to sit upstairs by a window. Sometimes this place is a little pretentious but the food is good. A reservation during the busy seasons and holidays is not a bad idea. It is located on the waterfront on the corner of Ave. Rafael Melgar and Salas. Telephone 872-0213.

We ate here once a long time ago. The steak was tough and chewy, but the waterfront view was wonderful. Dark wood and totally enclosed and air conditioned. Other people have disagreed with our review of this landmark restaurant. The salad bar looks impressive. A/C

- At **The Lobster House** you can pick out your own lobster and pay for it by weight. If you don't eat lobster, don't bother visiting this place because that's just about all there is on the menu. It is located 2.5 miles north of the center of town across the street from Hotel Playa Azul.

This place is close to Nah Ha (decent walking distance) and is an intimate, little restaurant. Pretty much the only thing you can order here is lobster. The waiter brings out a few lobster tails of varying sizes and prices and you pick out which one you want. We enjoyed this place, but one thing we remember is that it was so dark in there, we had a hard time seeing what we were eating. It was tied for the best lobster in town with la Lobsteria. However, recent reviews (Fall '07) from friends have been spotty. This can be an expensive place to eat as you pick your lobster and they weigh it for you. Sides are rice, carrots and cucumbers. The owner's brother runs the seafood restaurant attached to it (to the right as you face it) and he serves more than lobster. It has gotten good reviews.

- **Prima** One of Denise's favorite places to get lobster tail. It's large and succulent and she has to get her fix every time we go. If you like it hot and spicy, try the Lobster Fra Diablo...make sure you have plenty of water/beer to wash it down with. The lobster alfredo is good as well and very rich. Compared to the rest of the island, it is expensive. Tell the manager, Juan Carlos, we sent you. He's the bigger guy wandering around to

make sure you are happy. Reviews from our friends have been a bit less than stellar recently, but our meals have been good. \$8-20pp.

Prima Update: We left this review in our book simply because we know some of you wanted to look for Prima. Sadly, Prima closed on May 15th, 2009. It is the end of a Cozumel favorite. Wynston/Prima's Too will take over the menu of Prima but it is more formal dining and is not "come as you are".

- **Wynston's/Prima's Too** Near Chedraui's and on the top of the tower of the el Cantil Norte condo. Very good food at expensive prices. Don't expect to get out for less than \$25-30 pp plus drinks. A great skyline view and some of the seating is outdoors. Dress is a bit more than cut off shorts and flip flops but long pants are not required.

The Wynston is also known as Prima's Too, has all the ingredients of an informal elegance and relaxed dining property. Ambiance, décor and the table settings allow you to relax and enjoy your evening in air conditioned comfort. Good selection of wines. The menu offers of seafood, beef, veal, lamb, pasta and chicken dishes. They feature home made breads, ice creams and desserts. The bar offers more than 100 kinds of martinis (try the chocolate one for dessert). The Wynston is open daily from 4:30 pm for cocktails and dinner, until closing.

We've been told the Prima menu was moved to Wynston's. Let's hope so as Wynston's is one of the most expensive restaurants on the island. They had a bunch of signs on the ground floor of the building in August '09, so I assume they might be struggling a little bit with the "upscale" dress dining concept. A/C

www.thewynston.com Phone: 987-869-1517

Where else but in Cozumel would American fast food be considered "expensive". If you have to...you can find **McDonald's**, **Subway**, and **Domino's** on Ave. Rafael Melgar. Most of the ingredients are imported from the States, which does help ensure a reasonable facsimile of the food but also contributes to prices that are quite a bit higher than what you find back home. A new Burger King is being built further in town and it even has a drive through!

*The **Dairy Queen** that was next to Morgan's on the square has gone to that big blizzard in the sky.*

***Dominos** will deliver to Nah Ha if you crave an American style pizza. A thin and crispy large pizza with three toppings is about \$19 US and delivered in about 30 minutes.*

***Pizza Hut** also delivers to Nah Ha, but we find it easier to go by there and order carry out. It is on Calle 3 Sur, just off of Melgar by 100'.*

The Punta Langosta shopping center at the cruise ship pier near downtown is home to a large number of chain restaurants. We've never eaten in any of the Punta Langosta locations of

these restaurants but we've heard that typically, prices will be higher than you would find in a U.S. location of the same chain. Eateries at Punta Langosta include: **TGIF, Shokumi Sushi, Subway, Burger King, Mama Roma's, Senor Frog's, Carlos 'N Charlie's, Starbucks and Baskin Robbins.**