



Mark and Denise's Somewhat Useful Cozumel Restaurant Reviews

A "Top Ten" List?

Denise and I have not been to every restaurant on the island but we have our favorites. Here is an abbreviated Top 10 by "category". All of these are reviewed in detail in the abridged version. We have eaten at all of these places except for Nando's.

Leisure Breakfast Places

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. \$3-6pp

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. \$6-9pp

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

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 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.

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 \$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. Candela is open for breakfast (good omelets) and lunch and closed on Sunday.

Cameron Dorado- They make delicious shrimp tacos and tortas. 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 shrimp tacos 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.

Del Sur, is located on Avenida 5 between Calles 2 and 4, and across from Camillo's and Budget car rental. Everyone who goes there likes it. Renee, the owner is very personable. He is from Mexico City and his wife is from Argentina. The place is small, with modern, clean decor and there is space for a few people to sit down. Quite possibly the flakiest empanadas you have ever eaten. Try the beef and chicken empanadas. The filling alone would make an amazing entree somewhere else. Beef and chicken were 18 pesos each. Everything else is about 15 pesos. That's about \$1.50 per empanada. Renee explains his "art" and the flavors thoroughly. This place is a must stop if you want freshly made (not frozen) empanadas. This is a very small place with great food.

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 15th. 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 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.

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. Veggie burgers are on the menu. 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 a soft drink. \$5-7

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 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 the photos and you may recognize some of the Hollywood stars who have eaten there. \$6-12 pp dinner

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. The place isn't fancy and you'd be tempted to walk past it. As good or better than Otate's, with larger portions. \$4-8 pp.

Otate's- 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. 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 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. Great beef and chicken dishes from Monterey area. 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.

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

Kinta is on Avenida 5 between Calles 2 and 4. 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. They have garden seating which is our favorite place. Closed on Mondays. Tell Chris that Mark and Denise from Nah Ha sent you and you will know you are among friends! You can't go wrong here! I would place them in the special occasion section, but the food is so inexpensive for the value, Kinta gets the moderate price designation. 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. \$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 pizzas 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 umbrellas at the SE corner of the square. If it is raining hard, they may be closed as they have no indoor seating \$5-10 pp.

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. 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 on every trip. 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

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

Special Occasion Restaurants, Upper Price Range

Kinta is on Avenida 5 between Calles 2 and 4. See our review above. They deserve a listing in two places!

Sorrisi- An Italian place with gelato ice cream and a coffee shop. Located on Calle 3 Sur, $\frac{1}{2}$ block off of Melgar. 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. A/C. \$12-20pp 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, 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. Shorts and a polo shirt are fine.

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. 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 pretty 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 can be a bit stuffy, but they are simply trying to be professionals. It is also a nice lunch place. \$8-15 pp. Denise eats lunch there all the time with her friends. Good "date" place and to see and be seen. Shorts and a polo shirt are fine.

(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.)