

CENTRAL AMERICA

HONDURAS

Breakfast in Honduras:

A typical Honduran breakfast usually consists of scrambled eggs, beans and tortillas. "American-style" breakfasts are commonly available, often including toast with jam and coffee or orange juice.

Honduras Meals:

A typical meal in Honduras usually includes rice, beans, tortillas, some kind of grilled meat such as chicken or beef, and a salad. On the Caribbean coast or in the Bay Islands, seafood dominates Honduras cuisine. No travel taste test of Honduras food is complete without fresh fish, shrimp, lobster or the endlessly versatile conch (*caracol* in Spanish).

In large Honduras cities like Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, and [La Ceiba](#), big American restaurant chains are cropping up with increasing frequency. Don't be surprised to find T.G.I. Friday's, Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and even Cinnabon.

Other Honduras meals:

Burritas: shredded meat, refried beans, cheese and avocado rolled up in flour tortillas. Different from Mexican burritos.

Tamales: in Honduras cuisine, tamales may include vegetables or potatoes as well as chicken or pork. Beware before you bite, as bones are sometimes left in the meat!

Pastelitos de Carne: deep-fried flour pastries filled with meat, rice and/or potatoes.

Snacks & Sides in Honduras:

Anafres: (pictured) a traditional Honduras appetizer comprised of hot black beans and cheese, served with chips.

Tostones: crunchy deep-fried plantains, an indispensable side dish in Honduran cuisine. Also known as platanos fritos.

Ceviche: chopped raw fish, shrimp, or conch mixed with onions, tomatoes and cilantro, and marinated in lime juice. Served with fresh tortilla chips. Popular in every coastal region.

Honduran Desserts:

Tres Leches Cake (Pasele de Tres Leches): A cake soaked in three kinds of milk, including evaporated milk, sweetened condensed milk and cream.

Arroz con Leche: Rice soaked in warm milk with sugar, cinnamon and other spices. Also known as Honduran rice pudding.

Beverages in Honduras:

Popular Honduras beer brands are Salva Vida, Port Royal, Barena and Imperial. [Guaro](#), a sugar cane liquor, is popular in Honduras. If you're daring, you might seek out some [Giffity](#), a fiery Garifuna liquor.

Where to Eat & What You'll Pay:

In mainland Honduras, food is cheaper than that of other nations in Central America. Expect Honduras food to be more expensive in the Bay Islands of [Utila](#), [Roatan](#) and [Guanaja](#), where almost everything (besides seafood!) must be shipped in.

PANAMA

Breakfast in Panama:

Panama breakfasts often contain deep-fried corn tortillas heaped with eggs and other goodies, including fried meat. If your heart can't handle it, don't despair – fresh fruit, eggs and toast are easy to come by. And of course, Panamanian coffee is a must.

Panama Meals:

A typical Panama meal usually includes meat, coconut rice and beans accompanied by local fruits and vegetables like yucca, squash and plantains. As with [Costa Rica cuisine](#), this platter is often called a *casado* (a "married"). The food of Panama's islands and expansive coasts is vibrant with fresh seafood and tropical embellishments, such as mango and coconut.

Other Panama meals:

Sancocho: A Panamanian stew, packed with meat (usually chicken) and veggies.

[Empanadas](#): Savory corn or flour pastries filled with meat, potatoes and/or cheese.

Carimanola: a fried yucca roll stuffed with meat and boiled eggs.

[Tamales](#): boiled pockets of corn dough, stuffed with meat and served in banana leaves.

Snacks & Sides in Panama:

[Yuca frita](#): fried yuca root accompanies many Panama meals, serving (and tasting) like tropical french fries.

Plantains: in Panama, plantains come three ways. *Patacones* are salty fried green plantains cut crosswise; *maduros* are mature [fried plantains](#) (slightly sweeter); and *tajadas* are baked plantains cut lengthwise and sprinkled with cinnamon.

[Gallo pinto](#): rice and beans, often mixed with pork (unlike Costa Rica gallo pinto).

[Ceviche](#): chopped raw fish, shrimp, or conch mixed with onions, tomatoes and cilantro, and marinated in lime juice. Served with fresh tortilla chips. Popular in every coastal region.

Panama Desserts:

[Tres Leches Cake](#) (*Pasel de Tres Leches*): A cake soaked in three kinds of milk, including evaporated milk, sweetened condensed milk and cream.

Raspados: Panamanian snow cones, topped with sweet syrups and condensed milk.

Beverages in Panama:

Panama beer brands are Panama Cerveza, Balboa, Atlas and Soberana. Balboa beer is a darker stout-like Panama beer, while the others are lighter brews. Beers in Panama are as cheap as \$0.35 US in the supermarket, and about a dollar in restaurants. If beer doesn't provide the kick you seek, try some Panama seco, a fermented sugar cane liquor. Mix with milk to lessen the bite (thought that particular cocktail might be even more daring...)

Where to Eat & What You'll Pay:

Panama isn't the cheapest Central America country, but because all costs are in American dollars (Panama's national currency), no fancy calculations are necessary to determine the

price of your Panama meal. If you're looking to save money, sample the most authentic food in Panama at a *fonda*, or roadside stall.

PANAMA

Breakfast in Guatemala:

Guatemala breakfasts are simple, typically including an assortment of eggs, tortillas, beans and plantains. Many breakfasts in Guatemala take advantage of the country's abundant tropical fruits, like bananas, papaya, mangoes, and avocado. And of course, no Guatemala breakfast is complete without a mug of world-class Guatemalan coffee.

Guatemala Meals:

Corn, beans, rice, cheese and tortillas form the backbone of most Guatemalan meals. Meat stews (*caldos*) and soups (*sopas*) are also popular dishes. If you order roast chicken, don't be startled if your Guatemala meal comes with the feet still attached (rare, but not unknown).

Many meals in Guatemalan have similarities to those of Mexico, Guatemala's neighbor to the north. Guatemala food such as nachos, [tamales](#) and enchiladas are just as delicious as you'll find in your favorite Mexican restaurant – and much cheaper. Chinese food restaurants and fried chicken stands are also quite common in Guatemala cities.

Other Guatemala meals:

[Chiles rellenos](#): Chile peppers stuffed with rice, cheese, meat and vegetables.

Chicken Pepian: Chicken in spicy pumpkin and sesame sauce.

Kak'ik: A traditional Mayan turkey soup, with spices like coriander, achiote, and chile peppers. A must-try.

Snacks & Sides in Guatemala:

[Guacamole](#): Mashed avocados, mixed with lemon or lime juice and diced veggies like onion, tomato and garlic. Serves with chips, or as a topping to other Guatemalan foods.

Spiced mango: Sliced green mango, seasoned with chili and lime. Sold from street carts.

Tortillas: Thin, flat corn cakes, a staple in Guatemala food. As cheap as five cents on the street.

Nachos: the best nachos I've ever had have been in Guatemala. They include toppings like cheese, refried beans, avocado and peppers, and almost always include fresh hot chips. Delicious!

[Elotes](#): Roast ears of corn with cheese, lime, chili and butter or mayonnaise.

Guatemala Desserts:

[Tres Leches Cake](#) (Pasel de Tres Leches): A cake soaked in three kinds of milk, including evaporated milk, sweetened condensed milk and cream.

[Flan](#): A wobbly, golden-colored caramel custard.

Beverages in Guatemala:

Check out our article on [Guatemala drinks](#).

Where to Eat & What You'll Pay:

Guatemala is once of the most inexpensive Central America countries, and accordingly, Guatemala food is cheap. You'll only find U.S. prices in the most touristy destinations like [Flores](#) and [Antigua Guatemala](#); and even there, less pricey options are broad.

International restaurants, cafes and coffee shops are common in well-trod areas. However, local eateries and street vendors are the best places to try authentic Guatemala food (and less authentic, like fried chicken and french fries). Just remember the traveler's mantra: wash it, peel it, cook it or forget it.

EL SALVADOR**Breakfast in El Salvador:**

El Salvador breakfasts typically include an assortment of El Salvador foods, such as eggs scrambled with vegetables (huevos picados), cheese, [fried plantains](#) (platanos fritos), mashed beans and tortillas. Fresh tropical fruits like mango, pineapple and banana are a welcome accompaniment.

El Salvador Meals:

Because El Salvador boasts an extensive coastline, seafood is a common ingredient in El Salvador cuisine. Soups (sopas) and stews (caldos) are extremely popular in El Salvador, especially sopa de pata, a mix of... well, see below.

Other El Salvador meals:

[Pupusas](#): thick corn tortillas stuffed with cheese, meat, squash, and/or other fillings.

[Empanadas](#): flour pastries filled with meat, potatoes and/or cheese. In El Salvador, "empanadas" can also refer to a dessert: fried plantains stuffed with sweet cream.

[Tamales](#): boiled pockets of corn dough, stuffed with meat or sweet corn and served in banana leaves.

[Sopa de Pata](#): a popular soup made from corn, plantains, tripe and cow's feet.

Snacks & Sides in El Salvador:

[Yuca frita](#): fried yucca, often served with [chicharon](#) (deep-fried pork cracklings).

[Pacalla](#): palm flowers breaded in cornmeal, fried and served with tomato sauce.

[Platanos fritos](#): deep-fried plantains.

[Curtido](#): a spicy, vinegar-based condiment made from cabbage, carrots and other veggies. Much like sauerkraut.

El Salvador Desserts:

[Tres Leches Cake](#) (Pastel de Tres Leches): A cake soaked in three kinds of milk, including evaporated milk, sweetened condensed milk and cream.

Pastelitos: pasty turnovers, stuffed with sweets like custard, jam or caramelized fruit.

Semita: coffee cake with guava or pineapple jam.

Beverages in El Salvador:

The most popular El Salvador beer is Pilsener. Characteristic non-alcoholic beverages in El Salvador include Kolachampan, a sugarcane-flavored soda; tamarind juice; horchata, a sweet herb and spice-based El Salvador drink; and [ensalada](#) ("salad"), a drinkable blend of finely chopped tropical fruits.

Where to Eat & What You'll Pay:

When it comes to authentic El Salvador food, El Salvador makes it easy. The best place to get a quality El Salvador [pupusa](#)? A [pupuseria](#), of course! What about a Pastelito? A pasteleria! Other great (and *extremely* inexpensive) places to try El Salvador food are street carts and open air markets. If you're not on a budget, there are plenty of mid-range to upmarket restaurants in big cities like San Salvador, and in El Salvador's touristy coastal regions.

El Salvador food is varied, delicious, and fast in its own right. However, U.S. citizens hungry for American fast food can find it in restaurant franchises like Pizza Hut, Burger King, Wendy's and Subway populating El Salvador's largest cities. In turn, pupuserias and other El Salvador restaurants are cropping up in the U.S. I enjoyed a fantastic lunch of sweet corn tamales, squash blossom pupusas, and fried yucca at a tiny restaurant in San Francisco. Better than a Big Mac, that's for sure!

NICARAGUA

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Breakfast in Nicaragua:

A typical Nicaraguan breakfast usually consists of eggs, cheese, gallo pinto (see below) and sweet plantains, served with bread or corn tortillas. Fresh juice or coffee accompanies most Nicaragua breakfasts.

Nicaraguan Meals:

The majority of Nicaraguan meals are founded upon traditional Nicaragua foods like corn, beans, plantains, yucca and peppers. A characteristic Nicaragua meal might include a meat like chicken, pork or fresh seafood from Nicaragua's expansive coasts, deep-fried plantains, rice and beans (aka "gallo pinto") and a cabbage salad. *Other Nicaragua meals:*

[Chicharrones](#): Deep-fried salty pork skin.

Vigoron: A classic Nicaragua meal founded in Granada, featuring chicharron, yucca and a cabbage salad.

Nacatamal: A Nicaraguan [tamale](#) – corn flour stuffed with meat (especially pork, mashed potatoes and/or veggies, tied in a plantain leaf, and boiled.

Indio Viejo ("Old Indian"): An elaborate stew-like dish composed of shredded meat, onions, tomatoes and peppers fried with precooked corn meal, then thinned with orange juice and broth. Adorned with mint.

Snacks & Sides in Nicaragua:

Quesillo: A tortilla stuffed with cheese and served with cream, onion, vinegar and chile.

[Tostones](#): crunchy deep-fried plantains, an indispensable side dish in Nicaraguan cuisine. Also known as platanos fritos.

[Gallo pinto](#): Rice and beans. Mixed with coconut milk on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast.

Nicaraguan Desserts:

Cajeta de Coco: Caramelized strings of coconut and yucca.

[Tres Leches Cake](#) (Pasele de Tres Leches): A cake soaked in three kinds of milk, including evaporated milk, sweetened condensed milk and cream.

Beverages in Nicaragua:

The Nicaragua drink "el macuá", a blend of light rum, guava juice, lemon juice and sugar was recently voted the official Nicaragua beverage. When it comes to cerveza, the most popular Nicaragua beer brands are Toña and La Victoria. Bufalo is a relatively new Nicaragua beer. International beers like Heineken and Corona are easy to find in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua's bounty of tropical fruits are used in many non-alcoholic beverages, blended with water, milk or yogurt. In Nicaragua, it's best to err on the safe side if you're not sure the water is purified; also order your drink *sin hielo*, or without ice.

Where to Eat & What You'll Pay:

In the Nicaragua capital city of Managua, international chains like McDonalds are almost as common as authentic Nicaragua restaurants. Head to the market in Leon for some low-cost Nicaragua cuisine, or the central park in Granada for a *vigoron* plate from a streetside vendor. In Nicaragua's coastal cities like San Juan del Sur and Bluefields, enjoy some of the world's freshest seafood -- including lobster -- at beachfront restaurants. Fortunately, Nicaragua food is super-cheap. And that includes the lobster.