

Why It Matters That Brunch Has Come To Belize



[Ali Wunderman](#) Contributor

[Dining](#)

World of Wunder



San Ignacio Resort Hotel as night falls

SAN IGNACIO RESORT HOTEL

Belize is a country at a crossroads as a result of the recent rise in tourism that seems to demand the tiny Central American country adopt one identity or another. Is it meant to continue the development seen further north on the Yucatan Peninsula, or be an eco-haven in the way Costa Rica is portrayed? Perhaps it's an undiscovered jewel thirsty for investors that will turn it into the hot new luxury destination, despite the fact that it's currently lacking in things like chain businesses.

Fortunately the answer to this query is simple: Belize is Belize. As much as developers want to slice through the mangrove and [erect hotels in marine reserves](#) to attract an Instagram-friendly audience, that doesn't change what's at the heart of this country: a conservation culture, a sixth sense for swindlers, and extraordinarily delicious food.

This is not to say that Belize is stuck in the past; on the contrary, Belize is surging ahead into the future of luxury, but it's a future that they're defining, not one being prescribed to them by outsiders. And nowhere is this more evident than at the [San Ignacio Resort Hotel](#), a family-owned boutique resort overlooking San Ignacio, the largest city in the Cayo district of western Belize.



Where else does brunch come with a couple of curious aracari?

ALI WUNDERMAN

This year the 43-year-old establishment introduced brunch to its notable culinary program. They aren't the first place in the country to offer brunch, but they are the only hotel occupying a particular niche: in the city of San Ignacio but with the lush jungle on-site, wholly Belizean but entirely ideal for customers seeking a high-end experience. In fact, the Queen of England famously stayed here in 1994, inspiring the name behind the Royal Suite.

So what does brunch have to do with it? Some consider brunch a way to identify gentrification, an issue with which Belize is currently grappling with (as mentioned above), but in this case it's a way to showcase the country's unique culinary prestige, which often goes ignored internationally. It also shows the hotel's commitment to serving the interests of its guests without abandoning the heart of who they are: a Belizean business.

The brunch experience is a pleasurable one. Guests are seated on a Mediterranean-style veranda before the heat and humidity have reached Belize's interior. Keel-billed toucans and aracari regularly take their own brunch on the palm trees just beyond the restaurant, a delightful display to watch while enjoying chef's Sunday brunch menu begins with cocktails. Most notable is the Culantro Mojito,

which seems like a typo, but is actually a cocktail infused with a cilantro-like herb that grows wild in the Belizean jungle.

It's this affinity for foraging and growing locally that makes this brunch program such a standout. Here you have thoughtful, delicious brunch items infused with Belizean flavors, neither abandoning the past nor ignoring the future. "All our beef and pork products are sourced from our sister company, Running W Brand Meats," explains the hotel's Chef Enrique Awe. Ensuring that their meat is antibiotic and steroid-free, among other desirable qualities, is one way of catering to a clientele that expects only the best. And the fact that it comes from only a few miles away ensures the lowest possible emissions in procuring this resource, something important to not just the hotel, but Belize in general.



The veranda and its view
SAN IGNACIO RESORT HOTEL

Environmental conscientiousness is fairly common in Belize, and with it, the knowledge of plants. San Ignacio Resort Hotel offers a medicinal walk around the grounds that teaches visitors what's edible, medicinal, what could kill a person, and what could save a person from the plant that could kill them. As with the culantro, Chef Awe was inspired by what was growing around him: it's like a brunch buffet was growing on its own right outside the hotel. "Some local plants that are used is Chaya," Chef Awe notes, adding that they go great with scrambled eggs. "Chaya helps regulate the metabolism, helps maintain eye, and brain functions as well as cholesterol levels."

Another plant the restaurant uses is Callaloo, a wild spinach seen frequently in Caribbean cuisine, but rarely used in Belizean restaurants. "I love it and all its health benefits," Chef Awe exclaimed when

describing his decision to incorporate it into his menu. “I took a play on spinach and artichoke dip by replacing the spinach—the combination is so deliciously unique.” He says Callaloo is rich in antioxidants, has high amounts of iron, calcium, and vitamin C. Although knowing what he’s cooking is the Chef’s job, this awareness of plants is common throughout the Belizean community.

Even so, Chef Awe is still learning from the surrounding rainforest. Thick leaf oregano was new to Awe, who discovered it while walking through the hotel’s Medicinal Trails. “I’ve only used the thin baby oregano throughout my career which can be eaten raw and on salads. The thick leaf oregano is not to be eaten raw: we use it to enhance the flavours of our stews and soups.” It’s this sense of almost nonchalance that informs Belizean cuisine—it’s less of an attempt to be “authentically Belizean” and more a result of just being Belizean.

Bread is served with brunch, but this isn’t a typical basket of rolls. Instead, carbs come in the form of Belizean favorites like fry jacks, Johnny cakes, creole buns, and hand-made flour tortillas. Toast is available, but anyone who’s tried a fry jack would never pick toast over this Belizean delicacy. Entrees include brunch favorites like chicken and waffles, huevos rancheros, and omelettes, but all with the kind of local twist that can’t be found anywhere else. Even the desserts, which include a sorrel sorbet or a guava tart, are made with classic Belizean flavors.

Brunch may have come to Belize, but rest assured, it's happening on Belize's terms. And it's delicious.



Chicken fried chicken, a brunch special at San Ignacio Resort Hotel ALI WUNDERMAN

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