

restaurant will be just past the hospital. (624)142-2741. M/C, VS, AMEX. \$\$\$.

El Vaquero: Elegant steakhouse. 6-10:30 pm, closed Sundays. Blvd. Mijares #31, downtown across from city hall. (624) 105-2703 www.elvaquero steak.com. M/C, VS, AMEX. \$\$\$.

Havana Supper Club: Hot nights and cool jazz with a Mexican menu. Km 29, Costa Azul. (624) 172-6269. Cash only. \$\$.

La Dolce: Italian trattoria serving antipastas, meats, pizzas, and seafood. 2pm-11pm. Closed Monday. On the Plaza in downtown. Phone: 142-6621 and 142-6622. M/C, VS. \$-\$\$

La Panga Antigua: Fresh seafood, tender steaks and Mexican classics in a beautiful patio setting. Open daily 2-10pm. Zaragoza #20, across from the church. (624)142-4041. www.lapanga.com M/C, VS, AMEX. \$\$\$.

Local Eight: Global cuisine with a wide variety of international influences. Dinner only, open nightly. Plaza Mission, Local 8. (624) 142-6655. M/C, VS. \$\$\$.

Mama Mia: Beachfront seafood, Mexican and pizza. Open daily from 8am-10:30pm. Inside Coral Baja, Km 29.5. (624)142-3939 ext 730. M/C, VS, AMEX. \$\$.

Mi Cocina at Casa Natalia: Innovative Euro-Mexican cuisine and delicious cocktails in a courtyard setting. Blvd. Mijares No. 4, just of main plaza. Phone 624-14-67100. www.casanatalia.com VS, M/C AMEX. \$\$\$.

Mi Ensalada: Breakfast lunch and dinner. American and Mexican specialties. Gourmet salads. Open: 8am-10 pm from Monday to Saturday. Original location in front of La Jolla Condominiums at Km. 2.9.5. (624) 142-4956. Mi Ensalada second location: Plaza Mission, Boulevard Mijares next to HSBC. (624)142-0236. VS, M/C. \$-\$\$.

Morgan's Encore: Enjoy international and Mexican cuisine in a hacienda atmosphere. Open daily, 6pm-10pm. Located in the art district at the corner of Morelos and Obregon. Phone: (624)

143-3825. M/C, VS. \$\$\$.

Morgan's: Mediterranean take on seafood, steaks and organic vegetables with a decidedly Tuscan twist. Doblado and Hidalgo, downtown. Open daily from 6-10pm. (624)142-3825. M/C, VS. \$\$\$.

Passaparola: Italian Bistro. Full Bar. 1:30pm-10pm. Closed Monday. Banamex Plaza, Blvd. Mijares. (624)146-9399. Cash only. \$\$\$.

Posada Terranova: Traditional Mexican cuisine. Breakfast, lunch, dinner daily from 7am-10 pm. Degollado between Zaragoza and Doblado. (624)142-0534. www.hterranova.com.mx. VS, M/C, AMEX. \$\$.

Sardina Cantina: A varied menu with seafood, bar food, pastas and burgers. Check out their great happy hour specials on food and drink. Open daily from 7am-10pm. Km. 29 next to Minisuper Dick's at Coral Baja. (624)146-9531. M/C, VS. \$-\$\$.

Shooters: Rooftop sportsbar with cheap beer and great bar food. Open noon - midnight during the week, and until 3am on weekends. Doblado and Blvd Mijares. (624)146-9900. M/C, VS. \$.

Tequila: Mediterranean cuisine with Asian and Mexican influences served in a romantic, candlelit courtyard. Extensive wine list. Walk-in humidor. Open daily from 6pm to 11pm. Manuel Doblado No. 1011 just past city hall. (624)142-1155. AMEX. \$\$\$.

Tommy's Barefoot Cantina: Fresh seafood, Mexican food, burgers, pizza, pasta and steaks. Noon-10 pm. Closed Wednesdays. Next to the Puerto Los Cabos Marina in La Playita, 6 minutes east of San Jose. (624)142-3774. www.tommysbarefootcantina.com. M/C, VS. \$\$.

Tropicana: Seafood and Mexican menu - a popular place for breakfast among locals. Open daily from 8 am-10pm. Blvd. Mijares #30, downtown. (624)142-1580, AMEX, VS, M/C. \$\$.

Voila Bistro: Delicious, gourmet Mexican cuisine with French and Asian twists housed in a former brothel.

Open daily from noon-10pm. Inside Plaza Paulina on Morelos street in the art district. (624) 130-7569. M/C, VS. \$-\$\$\$\$.

Zipper's: Casual dining right on the beach at Costa Azul. Huge burgers, steaks, ribs, sandwiches

TODOS SANTOS

La Garra Restaurant & Sports Bar: Tapas and seafood, pool tables, free wi-fi, live music Saturdays, happy hour 4-7pm. Corner of Obregon and Ocampo in Todos Santos. Closed Tuesdays, open 1-midnight Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and 1 to 10 Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. (612)145-0004. No credit cards. \$.

Do you have a favorite restaurant you would like to see listed here? Email susybuchanan@bajapulse.com.

Food is a part of every culture. Mexico's meals are heaped with culture and popularity. You find Mexican restaurants across the world, even in unlikely places like India and China. The best Mexican food, though, is what you can discover and be treated to right here in its place of origin.

There are numerous food staples native to Mexico that are not commonly found elsewhere. One such is the nopal cactus, sometimes referred to as 'prickly pear'.

The nopal has deep roots in the Mexican heritage. Around the year 1325AD it is believed that (the god) Huitzilopochtli told the Aztec chieftain to look for a new homeland. When he saw an eagle eating a snake, perched on a cactus growing from a rock surrounded by water he would know this was the place to build their city. When the Aztecs came across the eagle eating the snake the cactus he was sitting on was the Nochtli, the Aztec word for nopal. They named their new city "Tenochtitlan" the place of the nopal cactus. We now know this city as Mexico City and today you see the eagle eating the snake on top of the nopal cactus flying high as the emblem on the Mexican flag.

The nopal was considered the

What Am I Eating? Cactus? Really?

by Christine Wenzel



lifeblood of Mexico's ancient cultures. It was food for the indigenous tribes and their livestock. They used it on wounds, to purify water, for fencing in their valued animals and keeping out the wild ones. It was said that cattle who grazed on the nopales developed a special flavor to their meat and milk.

The nopal remains a staple in Mexican cuisine and also for medicinal purposes. Sometimes referred to as a vegetable, and other times a fruit it is found in most supermarkets. Often there is an attendant in the produce section, behind his cart, shaving the spines off the fleshy cactus pads and then throwing them into a pile, ready to sell.

Nopales have a flavor similar to green beans and a mucilaginous texture. This inner thick gluey liquid disappears during the cooking. The most common dish is scrambling them with eggs, huevos con nopales. You will also find them in salads, tacos and combined in meat recipes.

The purported health benefits derived from eating or drinking a

juice made from the nopal is epic. Besides being a source of dietary fiber, it is rich in vitamins, especially vitamins A, C & K and B6. The minerals it carries are magnesium, potassium, manganese, and iron.

The website www.nopalexport.com states, "the nopal has been clinically proven in studies to reduce both hyperglycemia, reduce LDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels and may help prevent the primary cause of heart disease."

For the tequila lover you'll be happy to learn this cactus is renowned as a hangover remedy. On the website Bizarre Hangover Cures from Around the World it is claimed to be one of the best. The theory is the dietary fiber absorbs toxins and speeds up the cleansing of the blood stream as well as soothing the gastrointestinal tract.

Whether all or some of the health benefits are true, or not it still remains that this multi-use plant, tastes good, looks great in a garden and is a significant part of Mexico.

