

The most complete guide to Yucatecan gastronomy

Yucatan is home to a rich gastronomic tradition that combines ingredients that are common to all of Mexico, such as corn, tomatoes and beans, with others that are typical of the region, such as habanero peppers, sour oranges and the famous achiote that gives color and flavor to the dishes.

As if this were not enough, the typical dishes of Yucatan have been enriched, with the passage of history, with European influences (Spanish, yes, but also from other countries with which henequen was traded), Caribbean and Lebanese. This gives rise to a very particular cuisine, different from that of the rest of Mexico and other nearby regions of the Caribbean and Central America.

Today, Yucatecan gastronomy is internationally recognized for its traditional cultural richness and for its elaborate dishes, which require hours of preparation, and which delight and surprise those who expect only an extension of Mexican food. Today we present some of its most representative dishes.

The most iconic dishes of Yucatecan cuisine

Lime Soup

Lime soup is a simple broth (originally turkey, usually chicken) that is seasoned with the base trio of Yucatecan cuisine: onion, tomato, and sweet chili (a local variety of bell pepper or *Capsicum annuum*). However, what gives lime [soup](#) its signature flavor (and, of course, its name) is the Yucatecan lime. Unlike the lime and lemon that you can find in other places, the Yucatecan lime is green, with a "chuchuluco" and a very characteristic flavor. The lime soup is seasoned with its juice and some slices, as well as including shredded meat and fried tortilla strips.



Cochinita pibil

The Yucatecan dish par excellence, the [piggy pibil](#) it consists of pork marinated with achiote, garlic and sour orange, wrapped in banana leaves and cooked underground; hence its name, because the underground furnace is called [PIIB](#) in Maya. Nowadays it is very common to prepare it also in the oven or in a slow cooker. Find it at [restaurants](#) and on the street, in the form of tacos and tortas, always accompanied by red onion.





Panuchos and salbutes

After [cochinita pibil](#), there are no Yucatecan dishes more famous than panucho and salbut (and yes, it's called salbut, not *salbute*). They consist of a fried handmade tortilla, on which a slice of hard-boiled egg or shredded chicken or turkey, onion and other vegetables, such as lettuce, tomato, cucumber, avocado, etc., are served. More recently, both [panuchos](#) and salbutes have begun to be prepared with dishes such as cochinita, relleno negro or asado. What is the difference between a panucho and a salbut? The panucho tortilla is crunchy and stuffed with beans; that of the salbut should be soft and fluffy (see next page photo).



Pibil chicken

It is an avian variant of cochinita, but it is most often served with rice, beans and tortillas.



Poc Chuc

This roasted pork fillet is served with sour orange, red onion, chiltomate (a roasted tomato sauce), avocado and "frijol colado" (bean soup), as well as a good habanero sauce. The [Magical Town of Maní](https://yucatan.com/en/magical-town-of-mani) is especially famous for the quality of its Poc Chuc, and you will find it there, without fail, in all the restaurants. It is a great option if you are looking for a lighter dish in Yucatecan gastronomy.



Stuffed cheese

It is prepared with ball cheese (Dutch) stuffed with ground beef and pork with almonds, raisins, sweet chili and spices from the region. It is covered with a white sauce (known as K'óol) based on flour, lard and chicken broth, and tomato sauce.

Black padding

Traditional turkey (or chicken) seasoned with "recado negro", a condiment made from roasted chiles and spices that give it a slightly spicy flavor and the traditional black color. It is accompanied by but negro, a kind of ground pork meatball with [black recado](#) and stuffed with hard-boiled egg.

The [black stuffing dish](#) consists of shredded turkey (or a piece of chicken) and a slice of bread; it was the typical dish of weddings in the past, and it is also one of the oldest dishes in our gastronomy.

The [recado negro](#) is especially laborious to make from scratch; for the same reason, most Yucatecans buy it either packaged in the supermarket or more homemade in the local markets. If you don't like spicy food, be careful: even the "non-spicy" version of the black recado can surprise you with its spiciness.

Marquesitas

The marquesitas arose as a response to the drop in sales that winter caused to Helados Polito several decades ago. The marquesitas are, basically, an ice cream cone made by hand in the shape of a tube, filled with grated "[ball cheese](#)" (Edam).

Currently, in addition to the cheese that originated them, the marquesitas are filled with Nutella, cajeta (dulce de leche), jam and other options. Find them at stalls in parks, in front of churches, and along the entire Paseo de Montejo.

Motuleño Eggs

This dish consists of a tostada (fried tortilla) with black refried beans and a fried or scrambled egg; the egg is topped with tomato sauce, cubed ham, cheese, and peas and garnished with plantain. It's also very common to eat at noon! And although Motul eggs are originally from the [Magical Town of Motul](#), it is said that they were invented by Don Jorge Siqueff, founder of the Siqueff restaurant.