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BAJA TIMES

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January 1-15, 2016 E-mail: bajatimes@yahoo.com WWW.BAJATIMES.COM

LOCAL NEWS

SANDAG's Economic Numbers For The Holiday Season...the following were only a few listed by the San Diego Associated Group of Communities: $5.3 billion in USD in total retail and food service spending which broke down to $1600 USD per person; $900 USD was the average amount that adults spent on holiday gifts, a 20% increase over 2014; 1.1 million additional people visited the Greater San Diego Region with 730,000 of them coming from Mexico to shop & visit friends/family in December.

New Course Added for Newport-Ensenada Race...the first change since 1948 involves the smaller craft. They will start from San Diego Harbor and merge into the main body of racing yachts coming down from Newport Beach. Both starts for the historic overnight bi-coastal sailing will rake place on April 22nd, 2016.

149th Mormon Temple In The World Is Dedicated in Tijuana...the 13th facility in Mexico will serve the 45,000 members of the Church of The Latter-day Saints living in the communities of TJ, Rosarito, Tecate, Mexicali, Ensenada, San Luis Rio Colorado, San Quintin, San Felipe & Guerrero Negro. The night prior to the dedication hundreds of local youth participated in a cultural celebration highlighting the history of the Church in Mexico performed through dance and music.

Uber, Briefly Legal in TJ, Now Stuck In Limbo...last month, Tijuana authorities effectively banned Uber and other ride-sharing services after complaints from the city's politically powerful taxi industry. Uber officials say they want to comply with the new regulations, but the city's demands aren't clear. San Diegans and Tijuanenses have welcomed Uber in Tijuana as a new way to fight against the city's notoriously bad transportation system. But authorities say they continue to worry about problems surrounding unlicensed taxis.

Where Do Mexico's 1 Million U.S. Expats Live?

As we begin the new year of 2016, we thought that investigating where our fellow residents who decided to settle in our adopted country preferred to live would be an interesting exercise. We found that Viva Tropical.com felt exactly the same way which saved us from doing a lot of research to bring you the facts, some of which were very surprising. Sit back and enjoy reading about the popularity of your chosen destination. Did you make the right choice?

For decades, expatriates from Canada and the U.S. have been crossing the border into Mexico looking for something better. Their reasons vary, but among them are less taxation, more personal freedoms, a lower cost of living, a higher quality of life, warmer weather, and a slower pace.

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The Feast Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe

On December 12th, millions of Catholics went on a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City. They were celebrating the Feast Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which has been a national holiday in Mexico since 1859.

Tijuana, too, had its pilgrimage to their most beloved church: the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Located in the heart of downtown, the building is considered a historic site and is Tijuana's second oldest church, built in 1902. The original church burned down in 1911 but was rebuilt, remodeled and enlarged over the decades.

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Baja Magician in the Kitchen

We were fortunate enough to meet Ann Hazard at a Book Signing event at Plaza del Mar shortly after we moved to Baja back in 1998. Priscilla bought both of her 'Cooking with Baja Magic' books and they were a great investment, not only in the kitchen but in helping us adjust to the legerdemain of the land on which we had chosen to live. Enough about us; let's listen to Ann's words of wisdom from both volume's introductions which have made our rite of passage to our adopted country such a pleasant journey.

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From Front Page

Where Do Mexico's 1 Million U.S. Expats Live?

In fact, there are more U.S. residents living abroad in Mexico than in any other country in the world. Recent estimates by the U.S. State Department have the total number of U.S. expats living in Mexico nearing 1 million. That's up from only about 200,000 just a decade ago. However, this number could be even higher since U.S. illegals in Mexico are quite common. Many U.S. citizens overstay the time allotted on their tourist visas. Others go back and forth like nomads without ever establishing formal residency.

As a result, it's difficult to say exactly how many U.S. citizens are living in Mexico, or–for that matter–exactly where they are living. However, recently released data gives the details of the 20 cities south-of-the-border with the highest number of residents who register themselves as U.S. citizens. These locations account for nearly half of all the U.S. expats over the age of 50.

Expats can be found all over Mexico… in big cities, tiny villages, beach hotspots, and mountain towns. Here are a few of the major areas where you'll find expats in Mexico, along with some details about some of the top cities that made the list in each category.

Border Towns

Not surprisingly, a number of U.S. citizens choose to live in places that are in close proximity to the border of their home country. These areas are popular places for multinational companies to establish their facilities. They're also quite convenient for quick trips back to wherever "home" is, or even just to one of the large U.S. cities that is usually situated just across the border. Here are a few of the most popular ones:

·**Tijuana** – The largest city on the Baja peninsula (and the 7th largest in Mexico), Tijuana is an important manufacturing center that's home to a number of multinational conglomerates. A growing cultural center, it's home to a rapidly growing number of U.S. citizens, many of whom still work in Southern California but prefer the lower cost of living south of the border.

·**Mexicali** – With a highly educated population, Mexicali boasts one of the highest standards of living in Mexico. It's a cosmopolitan city with a large middle class. It's also home to Silicon Border, a large industrial park that hopes to become a global hub for semiconductor manufacturing. Mexicali is also known as an important sports town.

·**Juarez** – Located on the Rio Grande, Juarez has been dubbed "The City of the Future" for its rapidly growing industrial sector.

Beach Towns

Mexico is unique in that it offers options for beach towns on a number of coasts. There's the Baja Peninsula which is bordered by both the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of California. On the eastern side of the country is the Gulf of Mexico and, on the southern side of the Yucatan Peninsula, the Caribbean Sea. Along all those shores are sand beaches, rocky cliffs, and desirable locations that give way to lush mountains or even deserts.

·**Ensenada** – Dubbed the "Cinderella of the Pacific," this city is a popular cruise ship destination, a wine-growing region, and a haven for a variety of exotic flora and fauna. It is home to the great white shark, Guadalupe fur seal, puma, ocelot, roadrunner, and more. It's also popular among North American snowbirds, as well as young Californians who want to work in California but enjoy a lower cost of living.

·**Playas de Rosarito** – Located on the Baja Peninsula, this area has always had a largely tourist-based economy. During prohibition when many U.S. residents began to cross the border into the speakeasies of Tijuana, Rosarito became a popular getaway among the more affluent clientele and the Hollywood crowd.

·**Puerto Vallarta** – Puerto Vallarta is one of Mexico's most highly developed tourist destinations. It caters to a large number of tourists and expats, including cruise ships and a growing LGBT population. It's been called the "San Francisco of Mexico."

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From Page 2...

Where Do Mexico's 1 Million U.S. Expats Live?

•**Los Cabos** – Composed of the twin cities of Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo, this area was once a fishing community. Today its economy is geared towards tourism, although sport fishing is one of its largest draws, as is golf. It's also one of the top spots in the country for whale watching.

Interior Cities

From bustling cosmopolitan cities to quiet mountain towns, Mexico's interior also houses a large number of U.S. expats. Many of these places offer top-notch infrastructure, quality medical facilities, and great scenery.

·**Chapala** – This popular city is located on the north shore of Lake Chapala, the largest freshwater lake in Mexico. Famous for its mariachi music, this area is home to one of the country's largest expat populations, many of which live in the village of Ajijic, a town of roughly 5,000 inhabitants.

·**San Miguel de Allende** – Home to a growing number of U.S. expats, this city has seen its economy shift from agriculture and industry to commerce centered around tourists and foreign residents. San Miguel has a well-preserved historic center, a mild climate, rich culture, and low crime.

·**Guadalajara** – When considering the fact that the city's suburb of Zapopan also made the top 20, this area contains a very large number of foreign residents. There's a historic city center with ancient buildings, public parks, and beautiful squares. Guadalajara also has a thriving manufacturing industry and serves as one of Mexico's important cultural centers.

What the numbers don't show…

It's important to note that, while statistically accurate, the numbers don't necessarily paint a perfect picture of what the expat population in those cities actually looks like. The list merely shows the top places where expats are actually registered.

What the data doesn't take into account is those who don't register or those who are only in Mexico for part of the year (i.e. snowbirds). Since places like Quintana Roo, Cancun, and Playa del Carmen contain the seasonal homes of many from the U.S., a visit to one of those places would have you wondering why every city on the entire Yucatan Peninsula didn't make the list.

Someone who's spent some time on the Yucatan would easily argue that it is home to as many expats as places like San Miguel, Chapala, and Rosarito. The likely explanation is that the expats in those areas have made those other cities their more permanent home.

Another thing to consider is that some of the cities on the list have high populations in general, such as Guadalajara (3rd highest in the nation), Leon (5th), Juarez (6th), Tijuana (7th), Zapopan (8th), and Monterrey (9th). So it's entirely possible that you could arrive and still find yourself wondering where on earth all the gringos are.

Not to mention, just because these areas are popular among the majority of U.S. expats, it doesn't mean they're the best destinations for you. They could be, if you are looking for a large city or a place with a high concentration of expats. But if you want to branch out and integrate yourself into the local community, your ideal destination probably isn't on this list. Come check it out for yourself!

The best solution if you're searching for a place to become an expat in Mexico is to take a trip down and see things for yourself. While there's nothing data-oriented or official about just laying eyes on a place, there's no substitute for getting your feet on the ground and experiencing a city firsthand. So, narrow down your search. Then book your flight…or in the case of our favorite destination, just hop in your car and head due South."

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From Front Page

The Feast Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe

By 1948, the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe had achieved Cathedral status. As in years past, people gathered in Miguel Hidalgo market and marched on foot (or rode in decorated trucks) towards the cathedral where a Mass honoring the Virgin was held. Fireworks filled the sky. Little boys, as in years past, dressed like Juan Diego (more on him to follow) and girls wore traditional costumes.

If you're not familiar with the story, please read this summation of Barbara Zaragoza's recent comprehensive article for the San Diego Free Press and be sure to Save The Date in your 2016 calendar as soon as you've finished. Please note that this holiday not only holds importance for Catholics, but also for Mexicans in general. In 2002 Pope John Paul II canonized Juan Diego, making him the first indigenous American saint. He also declared Our Lady of Guadalupe the patroness of the Americas.

"The story of Juan Diego and the Virgin of Guadalupe goes back to the colonial period when missionaries sought to convert the indios to Christianity. As T.R. Rehrenbach describes in Fire & Blood: A History of Mexico: Late in the year 1531 the missionaries were provided with an enormous breakthrough to Amerindian hearts. According to the story, a poor indio who had been baptized as Juan Diego had a dazzling vision of the Virgin Mary at the northern terminal of the causeway from Mexico at Tepeyac. The Lady spoke to Diego in his native tongue:

"Beloved son, go you to the bishop and tell him to build a church to me on this spot, so that from it I may give help and protection to the Mexican people in their sorrows and calamities."Juan Diego rushed to the bishop, Juan de Zumarraga, but was turned away. Again the Virgin appeared to him, instructing him to climb the hill of Tepeyac, a location usually covered with snakes and cactus, but where he now found a profusion of Castilian roses. He gathered them in his native cape, and at last was ushered in to see the bishop. As he spread the roses, it was seen that the cape had become imprinted with the image of a radiant, dark-featured Amerindian maiden."

"Zumarraga has been accused of inventing this useful miracle. The story, however, has the aura of Amerindian visions. In any case, the vision, which became accepted by the Church as the Miracle of the Virgin of Guadalupe, had an explosive effect in Mexico. The Spanish Church admitted that the Mother of God could appear to a poor indio, speak to him in Nahuatl, and if she chose, show herself as a dark-faced Amerindian. The cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe was peculiarly appealing to all with native blood. From that time forward the Lady of Guadalupe was the patron of Mexico, venerated under many names: Our Mother, La Morenita, Our Lady of Sorrows; to this day indios approach the altar of her shrine on the hill of Tepeyac on their knees. In the next fifteen years, nine million Amerindians were baptized."

"How did Catholicism take root so effectively with indigenous peoples in Mexico? The answer may actually go all the way back to Roman times on the European continent. The Roman Empire–which at one time spanned throughout most of the European continent as well as the Middle East–was a pagan society. As the saying goes, there were as many gods as there were people. When Emperor Constantine demanded that his empires people convert to Christianity in the 4th century A.D., the founding fathers of the Catholic Church found the task to be extremely difficult. Pagan traditions had been rooted in local cultures for centuries. The people wanted to continue their worship of Mithras and Serapis, for example. They enjoyed their stories of miracles, their pilgrimages made to shrines and their offerings."

"So the Christian priests came up with a brilliant compromise: they created saints, both male and female. These saints could be as numerous as people wanted. Worship of the saints could include the previous pagan traditions of pilgrimages and miracle stories. Nowhere was the blending of paganism and Catholicism more obvious than in the Roman Empire."

"When the Spanish colonists came to the New World many centuries later, they too had Catholicism on their side. The religion already had a tradition of fusing indigenous traditions into the 'mainstream' form of Christianity. Indeed, following the Conquest in 1519–21, the Spanish destroyed a temple of the mother goddess Tonantzin at Tepeyac outside Mexico City, and built a chapel dedicated to the Virgin on the site. Newly converted natives continued to come from afar to worship there, often addressing the Virgin Mary as Tonantzin."

"Around downtown Tijuana you can buy images of the Virgin of Guadalupe in numerous shops. Outside the Cathedral, religious vendors also have stands throughout the year. These religious items, too, are fascinating and significant. Eileen Oktavec wrote a book called Answered Prayers: Miracles and Milagros Along the Border, which tracks the tradition of offering milagros to saints, a practice shared by Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, the Tohono O'odham and the Yaquis. Oktavec spent two decades documenting the tradition along the Arizona-Mexico borderlands and in her book she explains that a milagro, which means "miracle" in Spanish, is also an object for which a miracle is sought. Catholics may buy a silver object that looks like a leg in order to hope that a crippled leg may be healed. She has described the many different kinds of milagros collected for Saints Days and the personal experiences of many pilgrims within her book."

Pilgrims who come to Tijuana's Cathedral next December 12th, 2016 will seek healing from their physical ailments and look to the Virgin of Guadalupe for comfort.

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From Front Page

Baja Magician in the Kitchen

"When I was a child, Baja was a Never-Never Land, a place where I felt more at home than in my own hometown. It was a place of endless empty hills, sunny skies, and see-through aquamarine water teeming with fish. My sister Nina and I loved it all. Still do."

"Why? Well let me tell you a couple of secrets about Mexicans. They believe life is to be enjoyed, that integrity is paramount, and that God and family are more important than money. They may live in what snooty gringos call a third world county but guess what? They don't think they're deprived. They think we're ridiculous with our obsession to hoard and discard possessions. These folks are more resourceful than you could ever imagine. They've raised recycling to an art form. And they will use the lamest of excuses to throw a fiesta. Do they count carbs? Hardly. They consider it just another example of our gringo lunacy. One more thing…I believe Mexico is the only second world country on the planet…on the cutting edge of a better life for all."

"Our family spent our vacations traveling in Baja and mainland Mexico every year when I was growing up and nothing bad (like being robbed by banditos or ingesting toxic amoebas) ever happened to us. We visited cities and seaside resorts, we took our camper to remote beach and mountain villages where we were the only gringos for miles."

"My mother let me loose in the kitchen early on and we became partners in culinary crime. Later on I spent time in Spain, the Imperial Valley of California, Colorado, and New Mexico. My recipe file box eventually outgrew itself and I typed up my first cookbook in 1981."

"From 1998 until 2003, my family had a second home in La Bufadora, at the tail end of what the L.A Times has labeled "Baja's Romantic Gold Coast." La Buf epitomized Baja Magic for me because it was raw and remote, It drew me in iike a magnet and helped me reconnect with the essence of who I am. Like everyone else whose soul has been captured and held prisoner by Baja, I am humbled by the vastness of its emptiness, its mountains that rise up right out of the desert…stark and adamant against sea and sky. The face of the desert, with its profusion of blooming cacti and surprise oases, enraptures me. Nowhere am I happier than walking down a deserted beach and slipping into the water for a quick swim."

"I have always felt more at home in Mexico than in the U.S. and for years I pondered why. Now I know. I now know that my heart is Mexican. That is why I am here and the experiences I share now are more authentic. I will remind you again that Baja Magic isn't just about cooking…it's about creating and maintaining an attitude where we can focus on the beauty of God's creations…not our own. To cultivate it is to imagine yourself in a simpler, gentler place, celebrating life and beauty with people you love. Baja Magic is about savoring life. It's about sharing. Caring. Laughing. It's about accepting life as it presents itself and not minding that you don't have all the answers. Just kick off those shoes, crank up the mariachi tunes and remember to dance while you cook. Ole!"

Ann sure can write up a storm. She can cook up one, as well. We'll let her tell you all about one that's perfect for the upcoming El Nino winter we're about to experience:

ALBONDIGAS SOUP

Albondigas, or Mexican Meatball Soup is a robust, tasty soup that can be served alone as a meal or as a first course. It's delicious and as typically Mexican as tortillas and beans. This recipe came from my mother's collection. In the late '60s, as my dad was finishing up construction on our family's "dream house," she flew off to Guadalajara, San Miguel de Allende and Mexico City with my Aunt Joan. The purpose of their trip was to decorate the new house. They had a blast together, traipsing all over the place hunting up beautiful, finely crafted furniture, ordering custom handmade rugs and ferreting out folk art from all the different regions of Mexico. My mom's main goal was to find a hand-carved front door from the mission era. She found one, all right. In San Miguel de Allende. And she had it shipped home, along with the rest of her treasures. My parents don't own that dream house anymore, but I do know that the Mexican door still graces the house where I spent my teenage years. And … guess who ended up with the best of the folk art? That would be me....

My mom claimed that she combined a hastily scribbled list of ingredients (in Spanish of course) given her and Joan by a waiter in the El Presidente Hotel dining room in Mexico City on that trip with a recipe she conned from a waiter at Caesar's in Tijuana to come up with this soup. If she was telling the truth, then this soup is a hybrid from two internationally famous, historic Mexican restaurants. She modified it some herself, so that it's easier to make.

Since I just made it this morning for a holiday gathering, I can attest to the fact that I too have modified it. Just now! Try it. You're guaranteed to love it! So will everyone else. *Serves eight.*

2 quarts beef broth
2 14.5 ounce cans of diced, fire roasted tomatoes
2 medium onions, chopped
6-8 cloves garlic, minced
1 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp oregano
1 tbsp basil
2 bay leaves
1 cup of your favorite salsa roja (red)
1 lb ground beef
1 cup uncooked white rice
1 tsp seasoned salt
½ tsp pepper
6 corn tortillas, cut in thin strips and fried

In a medium frying pan, cook onions and garlic in olive oil until translucent. Set aside. In Dutch oven, place beef broth, diced tomatoes, onion and garlic, spices and salsa. Heat to boiling on high, then cover and reduce heat to low. Simmer for two hours. Season to taste with salt, pepper and extra salsa if you like it spicy like I do.

In large bowl, mix ground beef with rice, salt and pepper. Form into 1-1/2 inch round meatballs. Add meatballs to broth and simmer for no less than one hour, and not more than two. Add the fried tortilla strips to garnish each bowl of soup. This soup may be kept in the refrigerator several days or part of it may be frozen for later use.

Ann Hazard
http://LivingWithBajaMagic.com/home.html
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Editorial Playas de Rosarito, S.A. de C.V.
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Baja Times Newspaper P.O. Box 430145
San Diego Ca. 92143-0145

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EDITORIAL OFFICES:
Benito Juárez Blvd. #23-100
Rosarito Beach, México
TEL (661) 612-1244 613-0551

EDITOR: *Gil Sperry*
e-mail: gilsperry@yahoo.com
SALES AGENTS:
Ernestina Gutierrez
bajatimes_tina@yahoo.com
Enrique Estrada
bajatimes_enrique@yahoo.com.mx
CLASSIFIEDS: *Rocio Palacios*
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 10th, At San Diego
WILDCOAST House and Garden Event At the San Diego Horticultural Society, 2:20-5:30 pm Enjoy wine, cheese and seasonal blooms while learning all about WILDCOAST'S efforts to conserve coastal and marine ecosystems in California, Mexico and Cuba. Advance registration required: $45 per person. All proceeds support WILDCOAST
Contacts: www.wildcoast.net, Yolanda@wildcoast.net or (619) 423-8665 ext. 200

January 11th, At San Felipe
Best of Baja Awards Gala
Margarita House, San Felipe

January 31st At Rosarito
Rosarito Theater Guild Annual Wine Tasting Event and Auction Time and Place: TBA Save The Date… More Info Coming Soon!

February 22nd-24th, At Guerrero Negro
Baja Whale Watching Tour with The Baja Good Life Club
Members: $175 per person, Non-Members: $215 per person
e-mail: rachelpack@bglclub.com or call: (686) 230-9933

February 28th to March 1st At Rosarito
The Rosarito Theater Guild presents an encore performance, "Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill" Call the Box Office for more details: (664) 609-3451

March 2nd through March 6th Ar San Felipe
Baja Cancer Walk, 100 miles 5 days Walk for money to fight cancer Call (686) 230-9933 or e-mail: the bajawalk@gmail.com

May 7th, At Rosarito
Rosarito to Ensenada 50 Mile Bike Ride Saturday, 10:00 AM
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August 26th, 27th, and 28th, At Rosarito
Baja Sand Castle Festival
Rosarito Beach Hotel Please Save The Dates…More Details to Follow

August 19th, 20th, and 21st At Rosarito
The 5th Annual Baja Blues Fest
The Rosarito Beach Hotel
Please Save The Dates…More Details Coming Soon

October 12th-15th, At Rosarito
7th Annual Rosarito Beach International Mariachi & Folklorico Festival ALL…100%...of the net proceeds benefit the Boys and Girls Club of Rosarito. Headliners Include Mariachi Nuevo Tecalitlan and The Mariachi Divas. All Events, including the three-day Workshops, held at the Rosarito Beach Hotel. For More Information visit: www.clubrosarito.org Or Contact Club President Rosy Torres via phone at: (661) 850-1773 Or via e-mail: rosymtorres@hotmail.com

Mondays and Thursdays At Rosarito
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Wednesdays, At Rosarito
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AA GRUPO GRINGO MEETINGS: Sun, Mon & Thurs, 10am; Tues, Wed & Fri, 6pm, Sat, 3pm, Ave. Mar Mediterraneo #16 (2 blocks east of Las Brisas Hotel).
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP MEETING: Tuesday 10AM (Same meeting place as Grupo Gringo) Al-Anon provides hope for friends and family members of problem drinkers.
BAJA BRIDGE CLUB: Mon, 11am, at Club Marena, km 38, TJ–ENS. ACBL duplicate game. Info: Clara Lowe (619) 270-1266, claralowebaja@gmail.com
BAJA GOLD COAST BRIDGE CLUB: MONDAYS,11am, at Rosarito Beach Christian Church, km 42.6, TJ–ENS. ACBL duplicate game. For info contact: Gwen Castelda 646-155-4036, gypsygwen@gmail.com

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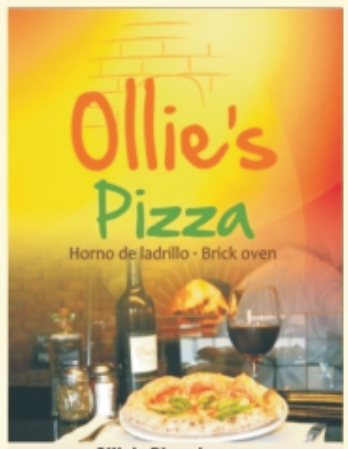
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Kaiser Plans To Open New Medical School In Southern California...

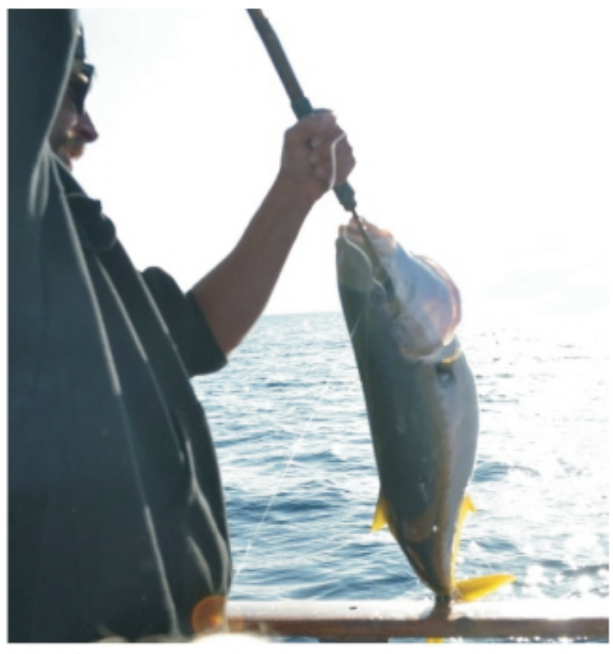
The health care giant recently announced that it is getting into the medical education business and plans to open its own medical school in Southern California. Kaiser officials said while the exact location hasn't been selected, they hope to start their first classes in 2019. Edward Ellison, executive medical director of the Southern California Permanente Medical Group, said there's nothing wrong with the current state of medical education but he believes starting a medical school from scratch will allow Kaiser to look at things with a fresh perspective.

Lindberg Field Has a Plan for Terminal 1 Now it Just Needs $1 Billion...

San Diego International Airport leaders have settled on a $2.2 billion plan to rebuild Terminal 1 and part of Terminal 2. How they will pay for it all or even half of it, though, is still unknown. Officials are forging ahead with environmental review of the whole project, a process that will take 18 to 24 months and cost at least $2 million while staff attempt to identify their financial options

Baja's Best Fishing: All About Hooks Why They Differ and Why It Matters

By Will Ebersman of PFO Media



Fishing hooks have been around for hundreds of years, made from different materials, and are all used for one simple purpose – to bring the angler and fish together. Consider them as part of a system – fishing line, with or without a line storage method, hook and bait/attractant.

All fishing hooks are designed with a single purpose in mind and that is to retain the fish long enough for the fish to be harvested. This requires a hook strong enough to withstand all the various forces it will be subjected to. The trade-off between strength and penetrating ability is a delicate balance.There is a growing trend in fishing where the fish is only retained long enough to be photographed and released. This requires hooks to be fine enough to allow the fish to be released with little, if any, damage.

It is believed that the original hooks were made of several briars, twigs, or spines of plants tied together to form a 'V' shape. The line was fastened to the upper end of the hook, baited and then cast out into the water where the fish would find and bite the hook.

Artificial baits, in the form of wet and dry flies, were made to mimic natural baits such as insects in many of their life-cycle forms. These were made or wrapped on hooks made from thin wire, floating either on the waters' surface or slightly below it.

Commercially-made hooks start out as a large spool of wire. The wire is drawn through die plates into smaller diameters, cut, formed, sharpened and then boxed for sale either as a bulk box of a hundred or a thousand. For the individual angler, hooks are packaged in smaller bags and can contain as few as a single hook, or as many as a hundred.

As the hooks are made, some companies will subject then to a heat or cold source. Hooks are heated to release some of the internal stresses caused by manufacturing (annealing) or are frozen to allow the hooks to be sharpened and hold their sharpness. Other companies treat their hooks to an acid bath to thin out the points in a process called chemical sharpening.

In a similar manner, some hooks are chemically treated to provide protection against salt water. Other companies will treat their hooks to have colors or other properties.

The size of hooks is broken down into fresh and salt-water categories. Fresh water hooks get smaller as the number becomes larger. That is, a Size 4 hook is larger than a Size 8 and smaller than a Size 1. In the salt-water category, the opposite is true. Sizes are indicated by a size number, a 'O' and a slash mark to indicate that the hook is sized for Ocean or salt water. A Size 1/0 hook is the smallest hook whereas a 4/0 is larger.

Another sizing system used in connection with hooks deals with their strength and physical cross-section. This is described as a 2X, 3X, or similar, and refers to the hook's resistance to being pulled or twisted out of shape.

Most commonly, steel wire is used to make hooks. Some exotic metals are used, primarily titanium, but this is most common in live-bait fishing where large offshore species of fish weighing several pounds are the target.

Another factor that separates hooks is their external shape. The traditional J-hook is in the shape of the letter J. The point of the hook typically parallels the hook shaft. Circle hooks are named because their point aims directly at the hook shaft.

J-hooks are set by snapping the rod tip upwards when a bite is detected. The angler then cranks line in and the fish is retrieved. Hooks can be found embedded deeply into the fish and at a number of different locations. These are used when the target species is more likely to be eaten.

Circle hooks require less angling skill in that when a bite is detected, the fish is allowed to run. The shape of the circle hook brings it up and out of the inside of the fish and the hook sets inside in the mouth of the fish's jaw about 95% of the time. This hook is the preferred one for hook-and-release style fishing as it causes less damage and stress to the fish. The major exception we have found seems to be when the target species is halibut.

In order to keep fish or bait on the hook, manufacturers will often process a barb onto the hook. This is commonly located just behind the barb of the hook. Surf rigs, consisting of two pre-tied hooks, will often have a bait-keeping feature where the barbs are found on the shaft of the hook and not as part of the point.

Fish hooks can be single, double or treble in nature. Single hooks allow for greater penetration into a fish. Double hooks are used primarily for trolling with artificial lures but are sometimes used for deep-water fishing. Treble hooks are found either as single hooks or connected to a jig or lure.

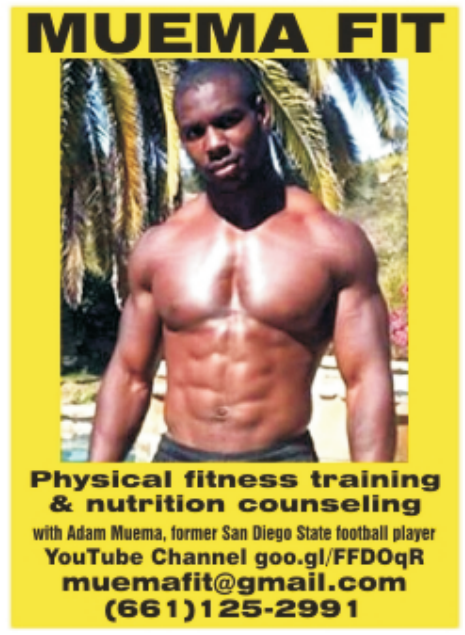
Live bait hooks are available with a separate ring through the eye of the hook. This feature allows for live bait to swim more freely and naturally, making it more appealing to predatory fish.

A dull hook is a dangerous and inefficient item. A small file or sharpening stone can be applied to keep the hook point needle-sharp. An old trick is to drag the hook point over a thumbnail. It the point digs in, the hook is considered sharp enough.

Hooks are subjected to salt-water which can cause corrosion. They are also dragged on the bottom, which can also cause damage to the hook eye or point. I recommend that you dispose of them after a fishing session. If you decide to retain them, they should be washed and air-dried to preserve their life.

Another key to hook preservation is to keep them dry whenever possible. If you purchase your hooks in bulk, simply take only enough hooks with you to last for a fishing session. Keep your wet and dry hooks apart as a wet hook can change dry hooks into rust very quickly.

At present, Mexican fishing regulations allow for the use of three hooks at a time. This can be single, double or treble hooks so an angler can end up with as many as 9 hook points on a line. Many anglers use three single hooks 18" inches apart with a weight at the bottom. Another version of this is two hooks 18" apart and above a jig, which serves double-duty as the weight.



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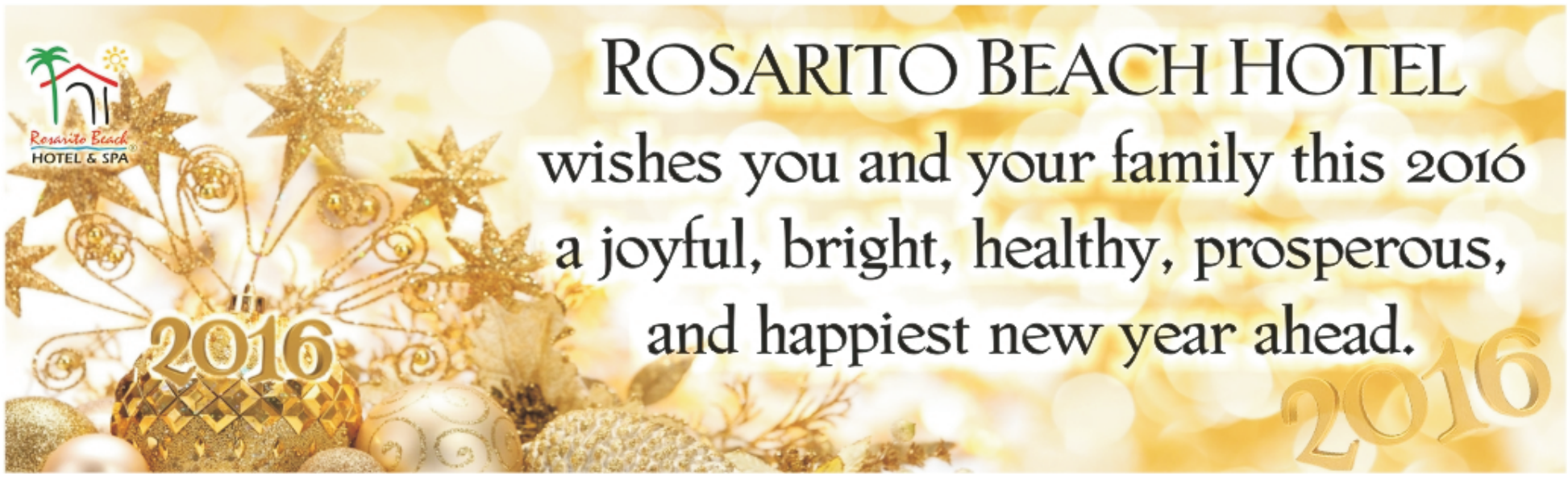
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