

Manzanillo

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SUN

Manzanillo's Lifestyle E-Magazine

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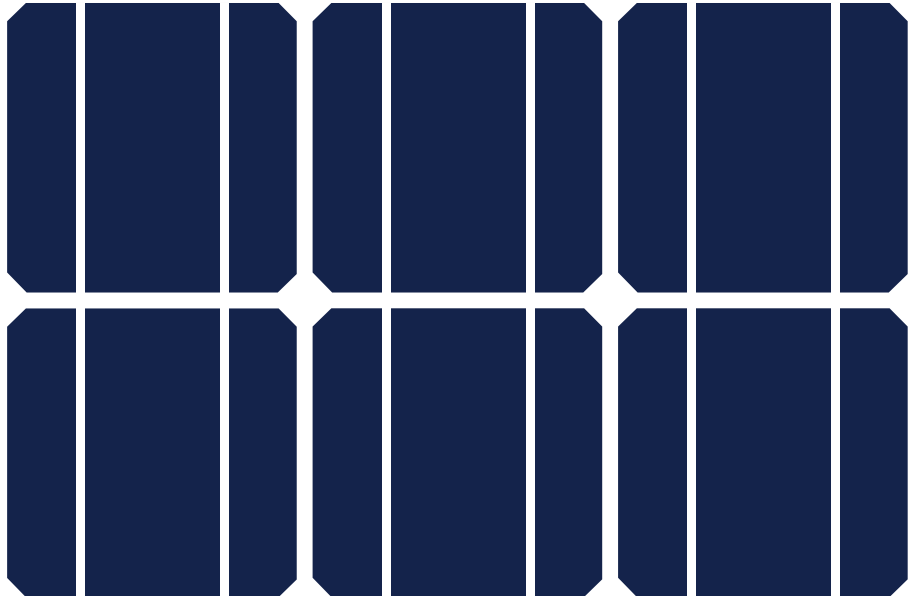
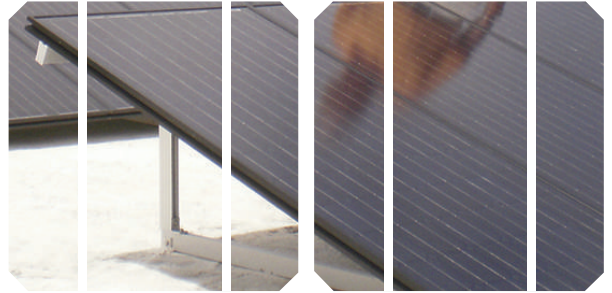
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E-MAGAZINE

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Publisher:

Dana Parkinson

Layout:

Ian Rumford

Editors:

Dana Parkinson

Kirby L. Vickery

Contact:

info@manzanillosun.com

dana@manzanillosun.com

ian@manzanillosun.com

For advertising information in the magazine or
web pages contact:

ads@manzanillosun.com

Writers and contributors:

Tommy Clarkson

Suzanne Marshall

Dana Parkinson

Terry Sovil

Senior Tech

Freda Vickery

Kirby Vickery

Yann Kostic

Ken Waldie

John Chalmers

Writers and contributors may also be reached
via the following email:

info@manzanillosun.com

Submissions for possible inclusion in the
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each month. We are always looking for writers
or ideas on what you would like us to write
about in the magazine.

Article submissions:

Preferred subjects are

Manzanillo and Mexico

All articles should be 1000 words or less or may
be serialized or 500-750 words if accompanied
by photos.

Pictures appropriate for the article are welcome.

Comments, letters to the editor, articles, photos
and advertisements are always welcome.

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Message from Dana Parkinson – Manzanillo Sun

Dear Manzanillo Sun readers,

So, a new era begins, for the Manzanillo Sun eMagazine and website, for our community of readers, and for us, the new Manzanillo Sun team.

As you know, Freda and Ian are leaving us all with years of history of articles and advertiser participation, a positive mark on the Manzanillo community and they are not done yet! As promised, Freda's articles will pop up now and then. Ian continues to participate in helping with the transition as well as continuing to be involved with the online community. He has been very gracious in lending a hand.

I hope you will join me, on the web site and on Facebook, in letting Ian know what the magazine has meant to you over the years. Thank you, Ian, for all your help and support as we continue on!

I, like you, started off as a reader. I continue to look forward to the stories that I have the privilege of seeing before they go to print. I love to hear the local stories of enthusiasm and adventure for this place many of us call our home and many others call their second home.

Where will the magazine go from here? Well, much of that depends on what you let us know you are looking for. We have already started working on some of the items you have asked for over the years, such as an interactive forum, classifieds, an events calendar the whole community can use for free, a local directory where you can rate and review businesses as well as recommend the best and generally a place to gather.

For us, participation of you, our local authors, both for articles and on the site, is key. This lets us know what you think is important and interesting. If you'd like to write an article or a series, get in touch.

The new web site is now at the regular location, at www.manzanillosun.com. It will be further developed over the next few months. There are some beautiful photos there for your enjoyment. You may wish to share yours for the web site or for the magazine cover.

One of our most exciting new additions is the P2C series of articles, or Path to Citizenship. In Mexico, to become a naturalized citizen, one must pass a knowledge test, encompassing geography, politics, history, civics, arts and culture. Some would say that the same content is a must for those living in Mexico. We will be presenting this for all those that are interested in taking the journey to citizenship, even if in spirit. As well, we'll direct you to the best sources to do your own research.

So, get in touch at: dana@manzanillosun.com with your ideas, suggestions and articles.

Onward!

Dana

Anticipating Summer in Manzanillo

by Suzanne A. Marshall

As our retired life evolves and we respond to the magnetic lure and beauty of Manzanillo, we find ourselves heading into our first spring and summer season. Now that we've made the big decision to stay beyond the glorious winter season, we wonder about the unknown and of course the hot and rainy season. Local friends and expats assure us that we'll manage just fine. And besides, could it be any worse than the -30°C temperatures we take in our stride as the hearty Canadians we were raised to be? Probably not, but there will be an adjustment, no doubt. Thank goodness we have the prevailing breezes off the shores of Manzanillo Bay. And the Mexicans, of course, have hundreds of years of building experience behind them. They apply that experience with solid brick and concrete structures that are built to hold the heat and rain at bay. It works quite well and, of course, we will layer our comfort with some well-managed air conditioning and ceiling fans.



Manzanillo sits in the western coastal state of Colima and supports the busiest port in Mexico. Unlike the endless deserts and cacti that are usually depicted in movies, Mexico is really more about tropical terrain that is mountainous and lush. Colima sits where the Sierra Madre joins the Southern Sierra Madre on the same latitude as Hawaii. Because the winter months are moderately hot with balmy evenings and no rain for 6 months, it is a wonderful place to be when escaping northern winters.

Of course, it makes perfect sense that the rains must come to replenish the luscious green mountains and the valleys filled with coconut and pineapple groves; expansive vegetable farms growing peppers, limes, tomatoes, mangos and many other vegetable and fruit varieties. It is a sight to behold when one can glimpse the vast fields of sugar cane that are maturing, with their stalks of pampas reaching for the sky and catching the light of the setting sun in their frothy plumage. Replenishing rain feeds the miracle of these bountiful growing cycles.



I am assured by the locals that the rains tend to fall every three or four days as the atmosphere unleashes the buildup of humidity in the air. So there are still lots of blue skies and sunshine hours. In my mind, I was expecting to see daily curtains of rain and constant sheltering from the deluges. But my friends say no, just go on about your daily life and errands and always carry an umbrella for the showers that can start suddenly. I have also been told that one must see for themselves the awesomeness of a Manzanillo thunder storm. I actually look forward to this.

As a child, my father taught me and my brothers about weather systems and how magnificent they could be. So we would all watch the prairie thunder storms with great excitement and interest instead of fear. It was quite delightful to watch the gathering cloud formations of gigantic cumulonimbus and stratocumulus clouds filled with moisture; the loud crackling and booming of thunder and the shooting

bolts of lightning hitting the ground; Mother Nature at her stunning best!

From my research I have learned that the rainiest and hottest months are August and September. Ever the one for backup plans, I begin to explore the idea of short getaways and, at the same time, exploring other areas of Mexico near and far. It's time to learn some geography and history which this beautiful country will amply supply. There's a lot to learn from written sources but nothing substitutes for the experience of 'being there'.

So, a few months ago, we decided to check out some areas around Guadalajara since we had to attend our annual condo meeting there anyway. This area is at a very high altitude making it a much drier climate than at the seaside. As a matter of fact, Guadalajara stands at an altitude of 5,138 ft. (1566 meters), almost a mile-high city. Near there, lies Lake Chapala the main source of water for the city of 4.3 million people.



We decided to stay in that area in a place called Ajijic which also borders the town of Lake Chapala. This afforded us the opportunity to investigate small hotels and potential short-term rentals in the summer months. It is a very popular area for Americans and Canadians who come to winter. There are estimated to be between 6,000 to 10,000 foreign residents in the area. "The main pull factors for these residential tourists are: an amenable climate, reasonable property prices, access to stores, restaurants and high quality medical service, an attractive natural environment, a

diversity of social activities, proximity to airports, tax advantages and relatively inexpensive living costs."



Our first experience in this area was very positive. Not only is it beautiful and affordable, but there is a very active social community for expats. With all the amenities one could really expect, this seemed like a good option for a little breakaway vacation. As we roamed the streets and walked the lakeside boardwalk filled with restaurants, shops and entertainment, we spotted a grand looking lakeside bed and breakfast. It appeared to be an old three-story mansion with elegant windows and wrought iron gates. Out of curiosity we rang the bell. In a few minutes a tiny and lovely elderly lady answered the door. She spoke excellent English as we inquired about rates and bookings. Before we knew it, she was showing us through the most elegant sitting rooms and dining areas. The four bedrooms were like suites and we decided that on our return a few days later, following our meetings, we'd stay a night and get the 'feel' of the area.

As we were departing, our hostess asks us if we are going to hear the symphony that evening? "Symphony?" we responded a bit stunned. "Where?" She goes on to say that some event is taking place that evening in the old city hall. So we made a mental note of this but thought it highly unlikely that we could attend, not having a clue about where this might be or if we would be presentable.

Off we went to seek out a nearby cafe to grab a bite and then return to our little hotel for the night. As fortune would have it, we chose a small boulevard cafe and

were happily munching when we noticed some activity right across the street. There, numerous young people were gathering and entering a large building. They were dressed in dark dressy jackets and pants and carrying various instrument cases with violins, cellos, violas and so on. Could this be the symphony?



I am delighted to say that once we crossed the street and entered the building we found ourselves welcomed to attend a concert being performed within the hour by the string symphony orchestra of the University of Guadalajara. We stayed and listened to the twenty-piece orchestra in a lofty hall playing some of the most beautiful and famous classical symphonies for strings (including some modern Spanish compositions).

We had never imagined we would find ourselves listening to such a marvelous orchestra in a yet-unexplored town in Mexico and one that we will be delighted to return to in future.

As an aside, we saw our engaging bed and breakfast hostess arrive for the concert. We stayed the night at her B&B upon our return a few days later and thoroughly enjoyed our stay. We had definitely found an enriching adventure in Mexico and now look forward to our future returns to this nearby location when we want a change of scenery. It's a way of always ensuring perspective and never taking anything for granted.





Miraguama Palm, *Coccothrinax miraguama*

Family: Arecacea

Also known as: Miraguama Thatch Palm or Wiry Miraguama Palm

When I first saw this attractive, solitary-trunked species – in a *vivero* about an hour from *Ola Brisa Gardens* - it was labeled as a “Caribe Palm”. However, none of my books, reference materials, or internet sources called it that - only the one nursery where I found it! This was, however, a good tip as to its origin.

Depending upon which botanist to whom you turn, there are anywhere from 14 to 49 different species in this genus. But most agree that this is the most attractive of the lot!

In its native environs, it is unique to the savannas, hills, open woods and coastal areas of Cuba. (In fact, its name is that of a province in that small, island country.) There it has several localized, common names such as in Matanzas where it is called “Biraguano” and in Camaguey and the province of Las Villas where folks call it “Yuraguano” or “Yuraguana”.

Research – and experience – has borne out that the *Coccothrinax miraguama* is somewhat popular among the more focused palm collectors but rather rare in private sector cultivation. In fact, other than in our gardens, the only other place I have seen it employed was poolside, in the lush tropical gardens of a Puerto Vallarta hotel.

Now, firstly, this beautiful, slow growing, medium-sized palm has a thin trunk and a small crown of smallish, rigid, fan-shaped leaves.



Planted in groupings or singularly - such as this juvenile specimen - may showcase your Miraguama Palms.

(OK. Test time. Does the preceding information mean its fronds are pinnate or palmate? a pause while you remember Correct, I’m proud of you! You have been paying attention in the past. They are palmate!)

The Miraguama Palm is one of the faster growers in the *Arecacea* family. When employed in one’s garden they are perhaps best displayed in groupings of varied sizes (as that pair I saw, of different heights, in PV and as we have likewise done with the two on the Grand Terrace in our gardens).

As mentioned earlier, of the numerous varieties in the *Coccothrinax* species, the *miraguama* probably has the best looking leaves. The starburst shaped fronds, 20 -30 per palm, form a complete - but partially divided - stiff circle of up to five feet (1.5 meters) in width and are comprised of 40-60 inverted V-shaped leaflets. These leaves are a shiny dark to almost bluish green above and grayish underneath.

The stems are slight – only six inches in diameter but can be as long as four feet (1.2 meters) and are unarmed (without barbs/teeth). Its fruits range in color from red to a deep purple-black.

The trunk is perhaps its most unique aspect being covered with a fibrous sheath and – if properly trimmed – stubbed frond stems emanating upward and through this material. The degree of trunk matting may differ from palm to palm. He who I so greatly admire, Robert Lee Riffle, described these trunks as “An exceptionally beautiful woven mesh design of old leaf fibers and narrowly triangular leaf base covers younger parts of the stems, while older parts are bare and show closely set rings.”

The Miraguama Palm may grow to a height of between ten to fourteen meters (33-46’) with a crown spreading to just over 12’ (3.5 meters) or so, with a height of about 8’ (2.5 meters). That trunk, initially covered with old leaf bases and the fibrous sheath, is reminiscent of that of the Coconut or Date Palm but later cleans to a bumpy, smooth, gray colored trunk. It likes direct sun or light shade and needs well regular watering in well-draining, sandy soil. It is rather tolerant of the cold taking temperatures down to 26 to 28°F (-3 to -2°C).

From an up to three-foot-long (91 cm) inflorescences (flower stalk) protruding from the leaves, its white/cream/tan bi-sexual flowers come out in the late spring or early summer. From these come the fruit which are red and round when ripening, turning dark red and then to dark purple, almost black, when ripe. 0.5 inch in diameter.

As a result of the unique trunk, lithe leaf stems and large limp fronds this unique palm is ideal as a “close-up landscape subject” or for entryways, courtyards or patios. However, it’s not a good candidate as an inside featured plant.

If you’ve space and are able to find one, I encourage you to make it your own – you’ll get no few positive comments on it!

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The Miraguama's unique trunk and attractive fruit berries (seen here in various stages of maturity) are two other reasons for having one or two of these in your gardens!



On slight stems, its drooping tipped, palmate leaves are a shiny dark to almost bluish green above and grayish underneath.

P2C -Path to Citizenship

Quetzalcóatl – Meso-American God

Alternative titles: *Ce Acatl; Ehécatl; Feathered Serpent; Kukulcán; One Reed*



Quetzalcóatl, Gordon Galbraith, Shutterstock

Quetzalcóatl, Mayan name Kukulcán, (from Nahuatl *quetzalli*, “tail feather of the quetzal bird [*Pharomachrus mocinno*],” and *coatl*, “snake”), the Feathered Serpent, one of the major deities of the ancient Mexican pantheon. Representations of a feathered snake occur as early as the Teotihuacán civilization (3rd to 8th century ce) on the central plateau. At that time Quetzalcóatl seems to have been conceived as a vegetation god—an earth and water deity closely associated with the rain god Tlaloc.

With the immigration of Nahua-speaking tribes from the north, Quetzalcóatl’s cult underwent drastic changes. The subsequent Toltec culture (9th through 12th centuries), centred at the city of Tula, emphasized war and human sacrifice linked with the worship of heavenly bodies. Quetzalcóatl became the god of the morning and evening star, and his temple was the centre of ceremonial life in Tula.

In Aztec times (14th through 16th centuries) Quetzalcóatl was revered as the patron of priests, the inventor of the calendar and of books, and the protector of goldsmiths and other craftsmen; he was

also identified with the planet Venus. As the morning and evening star, Quetzalcóatl was the symbol of death and resurrection. With his companion Xolotl, a dog-headed god, he was said to have descended to the underground hell of Mictlan to gather the bones of the ancient dead. Those bones he anointed with his own blood, giving birth to the men who inhabit the present universe.

One important body of myths describes Quetzalcóatl as the priest-king of Tula, the capital of the Toltecs. He never offered human victims, only snakes, birds, and butterflies. But the god of the night sky, Tezcatlipoca, expelled him from Tula by performing feats of black magic. Quetzalcóatl wandered down to the coast of the “divine water” (the Atlantic Ocean) and then immolated himself on a pyre, emerging as the planet Venus. According to another version, he embarked upon a raft made of snakes and disappeared beyond the eastern horizon.



Quetzalcóatl: Aztec round dance
courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago

The legend of the victory of Tezcatlipoca over the Feathered Serpent probably reflects historical fact. The first century of the Toltec civilization was dominated by the Teotihuacán culture, with its inspired ideals of priestly rule and peaceful behaviour. The pressure of

the northern immigrants brought about a social and religious revolution, with a military ruling class seizing power from the priests. Quetzalcóatl's defeat symbolized the downfall of the Classic theocracy. His sea voyage to the east should probably be connected with the invasion of Yucatán by the Itzá, a tribe that showed strong Toltec features. Quetzalcóatl's calendar name was Ce Acatl (One Reed). The belief that he would return from the east in a One Reed year led the Aztec sovereign Montezuma II to regard the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés and his comrades as divine envoys, because 1519, the year in which they landed on the Mexican Gulf coast, was a One Reed year.

In addition to his guise as a plumed serpent, Quetzalcóatl was often represented as a man with a beard, and, as Ehécatl, the wind god, he was shown with a mask with two protruding tubes (through which the wind blew) and a conical hat typical of the Huastec people of east-central Mexico. The temple of Quetzalcóatl at Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital, was a round building, a shape that fitted the god's personality as Ehécatl. Circular temples were believed to please Ehécatl because they offered no sharp obstacles to the wind. Round monuments occur particularly often in Huastec territory.

Quetzalcóatl ruled over the days that bore the name ehécatl ("wind") and over the 18th 13-day series of the ritual calendar. He was also the ninth of the 13 gods of the daytime hours. Although he was generally listed as one of the first-rank deities, no ceremonial month was dedicated to his cult.

As the god of learning, of writing, and of books, Quetzalcóatl was particularly venerated in the calmecac, religious colleges annexed to the temples, in which the future priests and the sons of the nobility were educated. Outside of Tenochtitlán, the main centre of Quetzalcóatl's cult was Cholula, on the plateau region called Mesa Central.

Source: Britannica

<http://www.britannica.com/topic/Quetzalcoatl>



Mexican Mask of Quetzalcóatl
courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum




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Cochineal Cactus, (*Nopalea Cochenillifera*)

Family: *Cacataceae*

Also known as: *Cochineal Nopal Cactus*, *Nopal Cactus*, *Velvet Opuntia*, *Wooly Joint* or *Prickly Pear*

Growing originally in Mexico and Central America, early on it was called *Opuntia cochinellifera* but now the botanical community has bestowed its own genus name. It can grow to 12 - 15 feet (3 - 4.5 meters) tall and may require regular trimming to keep it in within proper limits. Its pads are about 8-10 inches (20-20.5 cm) in diameter and thicken with age. Eventually, the base of the Cochineal Cactus will become more round in shape - like the trunk of a tree.

The genus name, *Nopal* means cactus in the language of the Aztecs (Incorrectly reported some places as meaning cactus in Spanish.) In turn, *Cochinillifera* is the Latin word for "cochineal bearing" stemming from the Greek word for red, *kokinos*.

That's because the cochineal insect lives off this cactus. And yes, a red dye is produced from their tiny, crushed, dehydrated bodies, appropriately called cochineal dye. Well, in point of fact, only the female cochineal actually provides the red dye "stock". But no few must make the sacrifice of their lives in that it takes around some 75,000 to make one pound - 155,000 for a kilogram!

Before artificial dyes came into being, cochineal dye was the main red dye for both food and fabrics.



It can grow to 12 - 15 feet (3 - 4.5 meters) tall and may require regular trimming to keep it in within proper limits.

Recently I came across three relative bits of interesting trivia. "In the 1400s, eleven cities conquered by Montezuma each paid a yearly tribute of 2000 decorated cotton blankets and 40 bags of cochineal dye; during colonial days Mexico had a monopoly on cochineal dye with it being the country's second largest export after silver; and, cochineal is one of the few water-soluble dyes that resists fading."

But let's return to the *Nopalea Cochenillifera* itself. Some - including a botanical reference or two that I've read - state that the Cochineal Cactus is needle free. Wrongo! They are there, very tiny and fairly licking their proverbial prickly chops for a tender finger to puncture.

Actually, they're little tufts stuffed with microscopic needles which are called glochines or glochids. ("Glochis" is Greek for "the point of an arrow.") If pierced by such, they might be removed by a "blast of water". If that doesn't work, try duct tape or - as a last resort - hot wax.

After needle removal, both the fruit and the pads are edible. I understand that the pulp - derived from the ripe, pear-shaped, deep red to purple fruit - tastes like raspberries. I know of some who use the cactus fruit to make a salad dressing. (A large Cochineal Cactus can have hundreds of such fruits but just be sure to take the seeds out as they are very hard and can break your chompers.) Also, those seeds can be ground into flour

The pads make interesting foodstuff as well. Eat them as is or, after peeling the pads, one can eat the inner part, raw or cooked as vegetables. Some folks like to leave the pad whole, make lengthwise cuts, season it, and then grill them. Also, these pads can be juiced like other green vegetables.

While the exact nutritional value has not been established, some believe it might be good for you. We know that there is scientific indication that ingestion of it can lessen low-density cholesterol, is low in calories and sodium as well as being high in fiber and vitamin C. It can help control blood sugar and - purportedly through actual laboratory testing - can reduce the effects of a hangover (if eaten before drinking).

That all being said, beyond not eating the spines (well, duh!) never eat any part of this - or any other - any cactus that has white sap.

Now, in addition to being food stuff, the blossoms of the *N. cochinillifera* attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. For garden use, the *Cochineal* is well suited for planting alone or in groups. It can be effectively used in rows. Its attractive uniqueness makes it a nice addition for a bit larger rock garden. They also can be planted in large pots. Ours has its own specific location on the Transition Terrace.

They should be grown in full sun or partial shade and want their roots in fertile (but sandy), well-draining soil. They're tolerant to drought and low soil fertility, but will do much better when fertilized and irrigated at regular intervals. Should you want more, this is easily accomplished via cuttings or seeds.

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The blossoms of the *Nopalea Cochinillifera* attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.



Eventually, the base of the Cochineal Cactus will become more round in shape - like the trunk of a tree



Travels with Daisy

by Kirby Vickery

On the sixth of May at oh dark thirty, I placed my two-year-old puppy into her brand-new genuine PETCO airplane-quality traveling carrier, purchased the day before along with some attachments which I was told were required by the airline. The cost, including the required special flight food was over \$125.00. I'm not going to complain about the costing as it was my decision to bring her with me to Mexico to begin with. Coupled with about \$300.00 to get her inspected, injected, and prodded in order to be able to get her into Mexico to begin with, this little project is starting to get just a little expensive. In any case, Daisy has shown herself to be a good companion and with me going back into the palliative (actually, "palliative" is the wrong word here. I should say 'Home Bed Care' if there is such a phrase) care business, I know I would enjoy her presence.

Earlier, she had shown herself game to try this contraption so I pulled her back out and invited her to jump into the back seat of my little six-speed-automatic-transmission-with-two-clutches-and-no-dipstick-Canadian-Test-bedv-Ford Fiesta, otherwise known as my little Tomato Can. My daughter grabbed the keys while walking around the car heading for the driver's door asked, "Do you want me to drive, Dad?" She had already told me that she really didn't like the car but there is something that happens to all women when their own children reach majority: They have to drive and nothing else matters. Even though she was sounding nice, polite, and caring; I knew under that calm exterior was a woman with an attitude from hell and if I wanted to escape the car with some sort of

equilibrium, either mentally and physically, she would have to drive. So I shut up and got in the rider's side of the car. Actually I wasn't worried as she is a good driver anyway.

About two and half hours later we drove into SEA TAC International Airport, otherwise known as: Alaska Airlines Departure Land. Now Daisy and I were allowed to get out of the car twice on the way in but I don't remember if she did anything. That was when I started



to become concerned with Daisy's bowel and bladder habits. There, on the door, was a large sign telling me that there are no loose dogs on premises and that they all had to be caged. It was at 2:30 AM that my puppy entered her captivity and Laurel was off leaving Daisy in her cage and me standing beside it.

Wandering inside, we discovered that nothing opened before 3:30 or so. This gave me plenty of time to use a ticketing kiosk to retrieve my advanced computer work with the mighty Alaska Airlines. I was after our tickets, some boarding passes and some baggage claim slips. It was even good enough to give me receipts for everything including the extra \$100.00 for Daisy that I didn't expect as I seemed to remember something that said I wouldn't have to pay extra for her. It was because she was too big to ride in the cabin and I started to wonder just what kind of flying arrangements Daisy was really going to have. I mean they were offering me an upgrade in my seating at less than that.

The problem with the kiosk was that it wasn't spitting out anything but receipts. I should have turned around



right there, got my money back and process through that Canadian outfit, WestJet. I probably would have, except I couldn't reach Laurel, and I was stuck. So I decided to stick it out in Alaska Airlines Passenger Land and wait until some of the Assistance Processing terminals would open up.

I think it was WestJet's option of having an overnight stay in some town in the middle of Canada. There was another airline offering a lovely two-hour layover in Houston, only to be followed by a 15 hour hold in Mexico City. I could just see Daisy hanging curtains and having a telephone line installed due to the length of time she was to be in that carrier.

At three twenty-nine that morning, Alaska Airline Passenger Land was a barren place. At three thirty, the entire place filled up with people all hoping for their five minutes with one of the friendly ladies in Passenger Assistance Land. Daisy and I got in line really late at three thirty-two. After a sizeable wait, Daisy and I were motioned forward by a very tall but nice looking young lady whose smile disappeared as she gazed at Daisy's brand-new-custom-PETCO-built-airline-approved-food-and-water-stocked-pet-carrier.

When we arrived at her station, she had turned to call an Alaska Airline Passenger Land Assistance Supervisor. I started to be worried. He frowned and shook his head while pointing at the brand-new-custom-PETCO-built-airline-approved-formally-water-and-food-stocked. They had lifted it up onto their conveyor belt, spilling most of the food and water from the custom built dish inside the pet carrier and told me that, because I didn't have any metal in it, Daisy wasn't going anywhere near any of their airplanes. I could tell Daisy was not pleased. Darn, I sure wish I could have reached Laurel.

Then the tall but nice looking young lady told me that all was not lost. She told me there was a vendor located down in Alaska-Airlines-Baggage-Land that sold pet carriers which were, in fact, certified-custom-made-authentic-flight-approved-pet-carriers-with-metal-screws-to-hold-them-together. She also said that this merchant would open at 5:30 and that would give me ample time to get back up to Passenger Assistance Land to make the 7AM Alaska Airline Flight. She took my

checked bag and told me that I would catch up to it in L.A. and then we could fly down to Manzanillo all together as a family unit. Such assistance, a great thing for an Airline to have.

I hurried down into Baggage Land and waited until Mr. Vendor opened. Well, not quite. I was able to talk him into opening fifteen minutes early. He sold me a \$95.00 pet carrier which needed assembly, but he guaranteed the people in Assistance Land wouldn't have any problem with it. I put it together while I was waiting in the Assistance Land's line again. This time the tall lady didn't ask any questions but started to rip all the tags from the old carrier and tape them onto the new one.

Thus armed with all the Assistance Land documentation, Daisy and I were sent over to TSA Station 2 Land. It was there I was asked to take Daisy out, hold onto her, while they inspected my new-brand-new-certified-airline-approved-with-more-food-and-water-pet-tagged-and-stamped-pet-carrier. I put Daisy back in only this time she wasn't quite sure about it. They disappeared her down into the Airport's Baggage Handling Land and I headed to the TSA human processing land which was backed up so far they had assigned extra help in designating which line to get into. There was a certain amount of line cutting but I glanced at my watch and knew I had plenty of time.

About an hour later, I finally reached the front of my line and had stripped all the metal off my body and placed everything in these big grey plastic containers. They had so many people in uniform telling all the other people where to go it was difficult to follow anyone's direction. I was put through one machine and something went wrong. I don't know if it was because of me or the machine, but I was told by three people to do three different things all at the same time and they were agitated. Now I don't go around armed with anything more sinister than a trim trio and these guys and gals were armed to the teeth with pistols that make tiny holes going in you but some really big caverns coming out. So I picked the closest uniform and asked what she wanted me to do.

I was directed to go through another machine and was allowed to dress and pick up my stuff. Leaving TSA Land, I quickly became enthralled in finding the Alaska



Airline Gate Land. This included waiting for a train and following almost incomplete instructions. But I finally located it at the other end of the large Alaska Airline Terminal Land. I walked up to the gate and was told that it had closed and that I was too late. I had to go over to another desk where I was told that I had missed my flight (amazing how this flight became mine all of a sudden when I couldn't get on it.) but they had pulled Daisy off and I could pick her up in Baggage Land. I saw a sign that said "Customer Service Land" and cornered one of two people standing under it.

"Could-I-have-your-name-please?" But he had a smile and I knew that I was down the tubes at this point so I didn't make him repeat it. Besides that, he was under the 'Customer Service Land' sign and so far those guys had at least tried to help regardless of reality. It was at this point in time I didn't much care what happened. I knew I wasn't going to Mexico or even L.A. and that I could pick Daisy up at my leisure. I still couldn't get Laurel to answer the phone. I let this guy book me on their Wednesday flight and then he said something that made my ears pick up. He suggested that I call the number he gave me because they have more options to choose from and could possibly help me get out of town.

I remember I was thanking him as he rifled off, "Could-I-have-your-name-please?" to the next sucker in line. The reason I say that is because, when I called that number he gave me and explained my situation to a lady at the other end, her reply ended our conversation when she asked, "What do you think I can do for you that he can't in that we're both working for the same airline and have the same computer?" It was time to go and get Daisy. I wonder if different airlines have different methodologies they proscribe for customer care and abuse.

So I reversed my path to find my way back to Baggage Land. Again, as before, there wasn't a single person anywhere to be found. Looking around, I finally found a bench style desk with a young lady behind it. Before I even opened my mouth, she asked my name and told me that she would send someone to get Daisy. I asked where my checked bag was and her whole attitude and demeanor changed. She informed me that my bag was

on its way to L.A. but she would get it back for me. The way she said it was like she thought I put it on the wrong airplane all by myself.

If I thought admitting to this dastardly deed could help I would have admitted it right, then, and there. I did make a mistake in asking when she thought it would be possible for me to collect my bag and instead of giving me a date and time, she launched into a dissertation about aircraft landing, taking off and flight schedules. I tried to stop her a few times but she had to get out what she had to get out and that's all there was to it. I also noticed that as she was trying to tell me all about west coast scheduling, she kept getting angrier and angrier.

I saw fit to stand elsewhere while I waited for Daisy to show up. When Daisy was delivered I noticed that her carrier was still free from doggy stuff and, as her leashes were in the checked bag currently on its way to L.A., I started asking around for a leash. This is how and when I met Paul. His name tag told me he was the supervisor in Baggage Land and he eventually came up with a leash for me.

After Daisy had finished her thing in a gravel area they probably couldn't find any other use for, I went looking for Paul to give him back his leash and to find out when my bag was going to be returned to Seattle. As luck would have it I ran into his snippy assistant and asked her again when she thought my bag might be returned to me. She had launched into her diatribe about scheduling again when Paul showed up. I asked him the same question and he interjected with the same thing she was saying which was the aircraft the bag was on hadn't landed yet. I told him that I knew that but did he have a best guess when they might be able to load and deliver the bag back into Seattle's Baggage Land. He told me that it would probably be tomorrow and how did I want that handled. When I told him that I would like to the Airline company to deliver it because of the time and distance, the girl started to come out with her line of complaints again and, by that time, I had had it up to my neck and told her that I was through talking with her. She put her hands up and told the world how angry she was and that she would never deal with me again.



Now, seeing as I was on a one-way ticket and passengers don't normally go into Baggage Land from where they are departing from, I think her chances are pretty good of that happening. Since then I discovered that she went ahead and ordered the bag routed through to Manzanillo where it waited for me until the 11th. I finally got hold of Dan, my son-in-law and he agreed to meet me in Coupeville because taking the Airporter Shuttle seemed to be the most expeditious thing. And it was because it took me out of Alaska Airline Land and didn't belong to them.

Dan met me in Coupeville and we had a good meal before he took me home. I fell asleep exhausted and dreading the morning on the 11th. It was the last sleep I was to have before I was on the Manzanillo flight out of L.A. on that day.

It was on the morning of the 9th that I rechecked everything for the upcoming flight. Things like Daisy's health certificate which had to be less than ten days old. I thought it was neat that the 'lot' they used for her rabies was to have expired in June of this year and the young man who inspected Daisy in Manzanillo tried to tell me that she would need another vaccination before then. Anyway, I did make a call to Alaska Airlines Land to check on how things were. It was at this point that I discovered that miss Snippy authorized my bag to continue its lonely down to Manzanillo all by itself instead of having it returned to me as she said she would. I didn't know that "getting even" was a subject they taught in the Alaska Airline's Land of Instruction in Customer Care and Abuse.

That ending up costing me a small lock as Mexican Custom's had to peek inside when it got there. I did get the lock back, by the way.

At oh dark thirty on the tenth (Dan wanted to leave early) we loaded Daisy, her stuff, and my book bag into the car. And with Dan driving this time, off we went again into the Land of Alaska Airlines. I didn't know it at the time but I had forgotten all my insulin and a WIFI amplifier. I'm still dickering to find the time and energy to replace that which I need.

When I got to the airport, I again went straight to the Customer Service Kiosk to get all the stuff I needed to get to make this a smooth day and Daisy decided that she didn't like being towed and set up a yowl every time I moved her with the tow rope I installed on her carrier. Well once again the kiosk never heard of me or Daisy so I decided to call their Customer Service Land off one of the brochures someone had made a mistake in giving me.

What had happened was the nice young man on the phone had moved my flight to an earlier one as I had requested. But, true to Alaska, Airlines Customer Service and Abuse, had neglected to move Daisy's flight. He also neglected to have the kiosk acknowledge this deception which was lucky for me. The automated processing section of Customer Service Land caught the discrepancy and blocked me out forcing another phone call. This time I got through to someone that probably flunked that portion of training and she stepped through all the procedures to make sure everything was just right. My hat is off to her and to the other too few sincere folks working for that Airline. I just hope that they don't ever get caught!

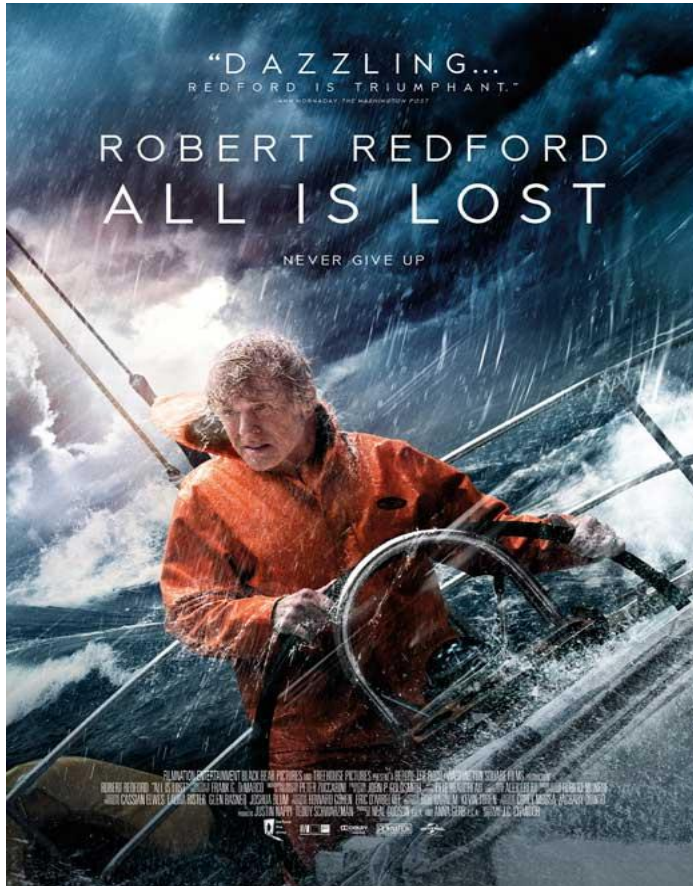


At The Movies

by Suzanne A. Marshall

All Is Lost

Starring: Robert Redford
Director: J.C. Chandor



“After a collision with a shipping container at sea, a resourceful sailor finds himself, despite all efforts to the contrary, staring his mortality in the face.”

Be prepared to spend the entire movie at sea on a small sailboat. I am not a sailor but I feel that I learned a tremendous amount about the knowledge required to be a sailor as well as the preparedness that is entailed for survival and navigation on a large body of water. So the movie is extremely solitary and you are the invisible guest lost at sea trying to survive a crisis.

Despite his 79 years, Redford plays a seasoned and able seaman which I suspect he may well be. Though I am not one who tends to enjoy this type of claustrophobic story, the movie carried me along with its quiet intensity and fascinating science on the challenges of sailing especially when you run into trouble. The cinematography is wonderful as is the sound track and sound effects.

‘All is Lost’ was nominated for an Oscar for Best Achievement in Sound Editing. It won a Golden Globe award for Best Original Score by Alex Ebert. Robert Redford was also nominated for his performance as Best Actor, Drama. These categories were nominated by other notable film organizations too numerous to mention (43).

IMDB has rated the movie at 6.9/10 by 58,415 viewers. I agree with this rating.



At The Movies
by Suzanne A. Marshall

The Magic of Belle Isle

Starring: Morgan Freeman, Virginia Madsen
Director: Rob Reiner

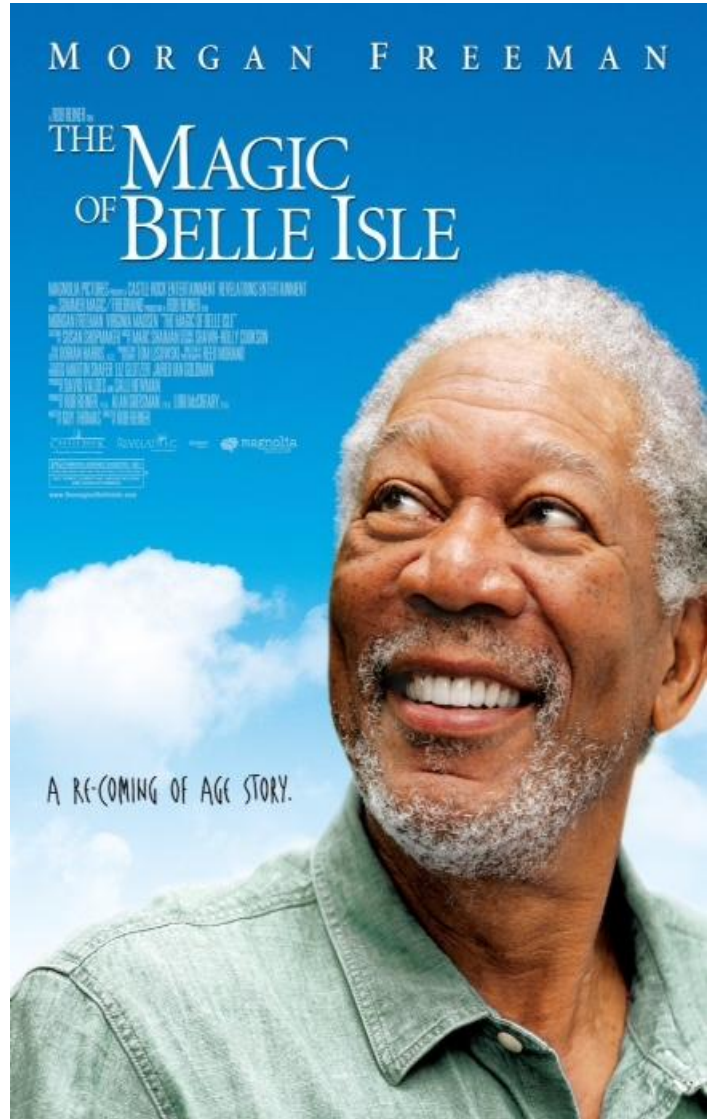
“Monty Wildhorn, an alcoholic novelist of Westerns, has lost his drive. His nephew pushes him to summer in quiet Belle Isle. He begrudgingly befriends a newly single mom and her 3 girls who help him find the inspiration to write again.”

Not only is Monty an alcoholic but he is also disabled and living in a wheelchair. He is brought to Belle Isle to enjoy the summer and hopefully find himself again. But no matter how hard Monty tries to be a miserable old coot, it doesn't play that way in this role.

So the film ends up being kind of sweet, schmaltzy and sad but unfortunately not too believable. This may be because I just can't buy Morgan Freeman in this role. I've had too much exposure to his fatherly and wise personas in other movies I think. The setting of Belle Isle is beautiful and the kids and dog in the story do a good job of softening up Monty's character as the story unfolds.

If you like sweet and sentimental and are just looking for some nice story without a lot of violence, language or angst, this movie may well entertain you. It does have 'feel good' qualities and a happy ending.

IMDB rating: 7/10 based on 12,410 viewers. A bit over-rated for me.



monkey's
POLLO • BURGERS • BEER

The Soul of the Gallant Woman

from the Colima de Ayer Facebook page

The third ring road of Colima is a very important road. It connects Villa de Alvarez to the city of Colima and is well known for the relatively large number of accidents that happen on it. You can count on at least one per week, some with deadly consequences.

It is felt that this is the reason (the hazardous history) that a woman mysteriously appears on the road, distracting drivers. When they attempt to dodge her, they suffer fatal mishaps and many others claim to have run her over.



Many witnesses say that these events are caused by a presence from the great beyond, which appears late at night, around the area of the Ex Hacienda del Carmen. The apparition crosses in front of the car, causing accidents left and right.

It is well known that, in the places where they happen, spirits that died tragic deaths conserve the energies of the people who died there, right in front or near the hacienda. They say some are so overwhelmed, that they wander indefinitely, repeating the death over and over again.

According to statements made by the drivers that have experienced it, they have said that they were certain that they ran over the person with their cars and felt

the bump, but when emergency services looks for the injured person, they cannot even find any traces that someone has been injured outside the vehicle.

They have extended their search to nearby wooded areas, still with no results. So, after so many incidents, it has come to be known as something commonplace and people are not surprised to hear the same story again and again.



Part of the legend says that that area, before it was the ring road, back in the 80s, was a truck stop where for those carrying loads to and from such places as San Antonio, Suchitlan and Comala and that some of the truckers, during the meal and rest stops, were known to frequent the "gallant women" of the area.

During such a visit, the legend states that one such woman was strangled and the body hidden and, thirsty for revenge, she now takes it upon herself to cross in front of cars and cause havoc.

From the "Legends and Stories from my Neighbourhood" series, with special thanks to our friends at Colima de Ayer

So You've Had a Windfall...Now What?

by Yann Kostic

Sometimes we get lucky through an inheritance, a tax refund, a settlement, a gift, or even winning a lottery. The downside is that we have to figure out what to do with the cash. In such a situation, where do you start?

Understanding how to prioritize your financial goals is important. You might be inclined to splurge on a luxury, invest in a new home (or several), pay down debt, or save up a cushion of cash for future emergencies. Which is the best option?

In most cases, you'll want to save first to ensure you have an emergency stash of cash in place. After all, finally paying down your car or student loans isn't going to provide much comfort when you lose your job or your best contract and can't afford your mortgage or lifestyle.

Beyond a minimum level of essential savings, priorities will differ depending on your life and your goals. Luckily, there are questions you can ask yourself to ensure that you're doing the right thing with your windfall.

For example, is your debt load worrisome because of its level or interest rate? If so, you may want to apply the spare cash to paying more than the monthly minimum payments. Just be sure to think about how best to eliminate debt among various sources.

For example, do you pay off one credit card or pay a little on all? Do you pay one car loan off or pay both cars loans off.

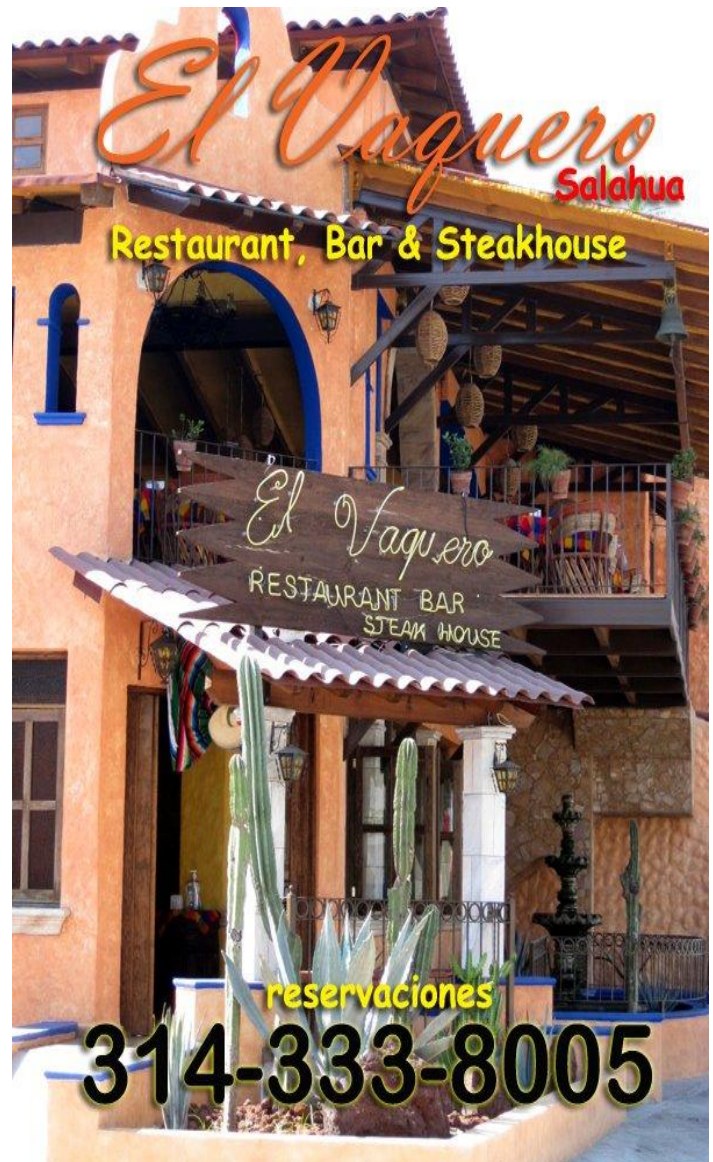
Also consider whether the cash would be best used to invest more in your 401(k) plan (or equivalent IRA). If your employer offers a match and you're not getting all of it, you may want to take advantage of the "free" money by contributing more.

It may also be wise to think about whether you have enough insurance, meaning health insurance, life insurance, long-term disability insurance, and liability insurance, in case something goes wrong.

Finally, remember there may not be a "best" decision.

It's not a one-size-fits-all situation; however, professional advice can help.

Yann Kostic is an Investment Advisor (RIA) & Money Manager with Atlantis Wealth Management. Yann specializes in retirees (or soon to be), self-reliant women and expats in Mexico. Atlantis is working with an international custodian which allows multiple international currencies in a single account. Yann splits his time between the Lake Chapala area, Manzanillo & Central Florida. Comments, questions or to request his newsletter, "News you can use" contact him at yannk@atlantisgrp.com in Mexico, (376) 106-1613 or in the US (321) 574-1521.



Agua de Horchata (Rice Water)

by Chef Rodrigo Bueno

This traditional Mexican beverage is made with rice. You may find it in other parts of Latin America made with different seeds or nuts added in. For a dairy-free beverage, you can use water instead of evaporated milk. And we suggest using one of our favorite blenders to get a silky smooth consistency.

Ingredients

2 cups dry white rice
3 cups water
1 cinnamon stick
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup sugar
1 can evaporated milk



Directions

Soak the rice in the 3 cups of water with the cinnamon stick, overnight or for at least 6 hours.

After resting, place the mixture into a blender and add the evaporated milk, sugar and vanilla extract, and blend until smooth.

Strain the liquid through a fine sieve a few times to remove any grittiness.

Serve over ice and garnish with a cinnamon stick or ground cinnamon on top.

