

Learn About the Afro-Limón Culture

An Integral Part of Costa Rica's National Heritage

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The presence of this cultural manifestation has been enriching the history of our country, assigning an enriching diversity that manifests itself in different elements, such as language, food, music, dances, arts, crafts, architecture, festivities, and religion among others. The influence of the inherited customs of West Africa and the Antilles has definitively marked what Afro-Costa Rican culture is, both in architecture, gastronomy, and music and in its traditions. Afro-Costa Rican culture is not an imitation of the African tradition since it has its own particularities within its territorial, social and cultural dimension. The maximum expression of these occurs in the Province of Limón, on the Caribbean coast.

Limón is outstanding for being bilingual since the province speaks Spanish, English, and even Mekatelyu (native dialect). In the architecture, you can see the clear Afro-British influence of Victorian style, which comes from the Antilles and Jamaica. Costa Rican Caribbean cuisine is rich and very peculiar. In gastronomy, there are many dishes cooked in coconut milk, such as rice and beans or sauces with curry and other spices that accompany fish and seafood. Here we use species such as pepper or powerful hot chili peppers, such as the so-called Panamanian chili and which are an important part of dishes such as "Pati". Among its most common desserts is the sweet "Plantintá", the pineapple or banana filling and the "Pambón", which is black bread with spices.

The rhythm of the Caribbean is the "Calypso", a great musical genre that is present in the daily life of this region and is considered the main expression of the cultural identity of Limon, which is considered a rhythmic culture. The Calypso comes from Trinidad and Tobago, but the Lemon calypso has a great influence on the Jamaican mind. It entered Costa Rica through the port of Limón in 1872, in the hands of the Jamaican workers who were hired for the construction of the railway. Music for the working class, of small bands that gather around the

singer who composed in a spontaneous way with very little time before beginning the concert, which used to be in beaches, bars, canteens and street parties. The lyrics of the calypsos is differentiated by its social criticism, full of humor, in addition to also rescuing important cultural aspects such as food, traditions, stories and the relationship between people of African descent with the whole world. It is said that the best thing about Limón is its people.

Our beloved Limón also has religious diversity, where Protestants stand out, as Anglicans, Baptists, and Methodists, as well as syncretic cults and Catholicism. The Baptist faith was introduced in 1887 by Joshua Heath Sobey and has been important as time passes and throughout the history of Limon in the struggle to preserve customs and values through all generations, since for many years it fulfilled a function besides religious in education. From the Baptist churches emerged important artistic expressions such as religious songs as an expression of faith and nostalgia, and the impetus for theatrics by assuming roles for school and congregational dramatizations. Among the different syncretic cults, the existence of brotherhoods is mentioned, as well as the "Pocomía" and the belief in the "Obeah", which is the man with supernatural powers that act as a shaman, witch or healer. In the oral tradition, the stories of Brother Araña stand out as a cultural hero and trickster of western and Caribbean African mythology identified with the god Anancy.

The carnivals of Limón take place in October and are highlighted by costumes, masks, parades, colorful parades, floats in the streets, and banquets. The carnival has its origin in the syncretism of the Spanish festivals with the indigenous pre-Columbian festivities and also the African festivals. Carnivals are very important because of the cultural unity that they promote among the peoples and families of this area, as well as promoting tourism. On August 31 of each year, Black and Afro-Costa Rican Culture Day is celebrated.