

The Good Life

Ayusa Teas: guayusa is an Amazonian alternative to coffee



Natasha & Daniel Engel from Ayusa discovered the calming and focusing effect of this tea while they were high in the Andes.

Victoria Cosford

Natasha used to love coffee, drinking easily two cups a day. Since discovering guayusa, however, she's been able to give it up effortlessly – and that was five years ago.

Ayusa Tea is the name of the business she and husband Daniel launched as a consequence of a trip they made some eight years ago. Both 'digital nomads', they'd headed to the town of Cuenca with their two young children. 'Everyone said we were loco', Natasha tells me. 'We wanted to get out of the western world and show our kids a different life.' What they found was a town high up in the Andes, Spanish colonial architecture, glorious mountain backdrops – although not long after arriving, stomach cramps ('like Bali Belly!') sent

the family to a local naturopath who gave them guayusa tea to drink. The calming effect was striking – and immediate. And so Natasha started researching.

Guayusa, an Amazonian plant, is gathered by local farmers who dry out the leaves to create a tea supercharged with anti-oxidants, amino acids, natural caffeine, and gut health benefits; it focuses the mind and is an anti-inflammatory. Fast-forward to today and a farmers' market stall which lures you in with a vision of pretty pastel cardboard cylinders containing tea bags, beautiful glass tea pots, infusers, handy sample packs and glass bowls of loose leaves. Natasha herself, bursting with vitality and enthusiasm, is a perfect advertisement for this wonder tea, while Daniel is the

genius behind the bottles of sparkling guayusa. An organic energy drink, it's a delectable cross between a fizzy iced tea and a ginger ale.

As delectable indeed as are the teas: the pure, the cinnamon myrtle and the anise myrtle. Natasha and Daniel have a regular supplier in Ecuador who sends out big sacks of the leaves they then package in their Ocean Shores home. It's a small but perfectly polished family affair.

Ayusa Tea is at New Brighton Farmers Market every Tuesday from 8am to 11am and at Mullumbimby Farmers Market every Friday from 7am to 11am.

Mex-inspired food under the palms, just off the beach at Brunswick Heads

If this year's wet weather has stopped you from making it across the Bruns footbridge and over to the beach, then you may've missed the ongoing evolution of one of the shire's truly unique venues – Rosefina's Place on South Beach Rd, just opposite the surf club.

The cute little caravan that started it all proved just too small, and has been sent home to pasture and replaced by a more effective mobile food outlet nestled in the beachside garden. An upgrade in premises has allowed Rosefina's to pursue the original goal of creating beautiful Mexican food to share with the community.

Rosefina's Place has recently launched a new all-day menu with a focus on Mexican-inspired flavours and dishes.

The often-requested tacos will return and now be available every day, not just on weekends. You can also enjoy spiced chorizo tostadas, or a hearty brekky burrito with free-range bacon and free-range eggs to get your day started. The Rosefina's favourite is the RosaBene, a Mexican take on the traditional eggs benedict with crunchy tostadas for dipping into the plate's abundant flavours including eggs, black bean puree, rhubarb compote and sikil p'aak, a traditional Mayan dip from the Yucatán region in Mexico.

Plant food lovers among us will enjoy the Mexi-bowl, a Mexican rice-based dish incorporating a variety of plant flavours and textures from pickled carrot to guacamole for your hungry fork.

Like everything else about Rosefina's Place the garden continues to grow and evolve with the seasons, providing a tranquil oasis to retreat to on a warm day. Protected from the hot winds, it catches the cooler ocean breezes that can get lost on their way inland. Away from busy roads or a bustling business district, for many Rosefina's is a sweet retreat between the ocean and the river. A reminder of a time before the world came to Byron Shire. www.rosefinas.place Facebook/Insta @rosefinas_place





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