

Canadian, American and Cuban Chefs mix it up in Cuba this winter!

Wendy Holm, P.Ag. –
Contributing Writer



This January, as many Canadians are huddling against the cold and damp of the Pacific Northwest, twenty-two Canadian and American chefs, vintners, and food professionals will be basking in the warm reception of Cuban chefs from Havana to Santiago de Cuba as we sample the best of this tiny island's rich and amazingly varied cuisine!

Our Cuban partner in this tour is Asociacion Culinaria de Cuba - the Cuban Culinary Association.

Welcomed into the House of Chefs in Varadero, Cienfuegos, Camaguey, Santiago de Cuba and Havana, participants will be treated to traditional and contemporary cuisine reflecting Cuba's African, Chinese, Jewish, French and Spanish heritage.

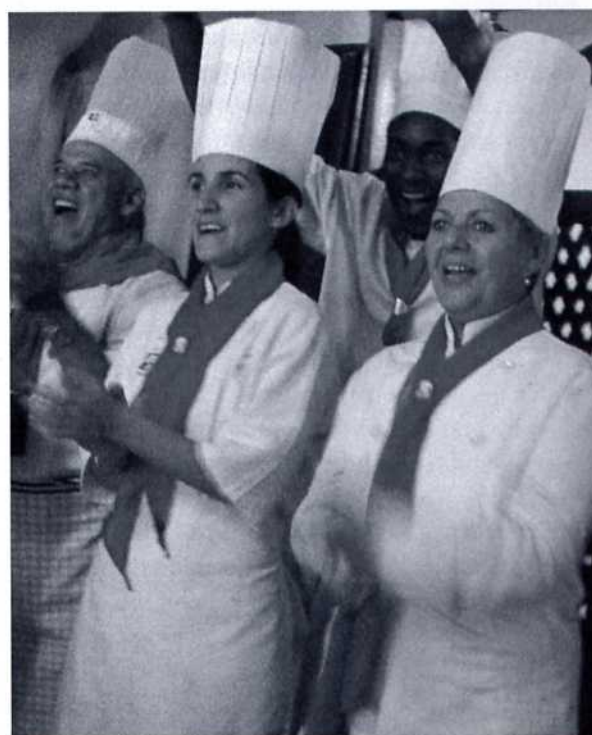
In Camaguey, our chefs will mix it up with their Cuban counterparts, preparing dishes from local ingredients.

As Cuba is a world leader in urban and organic farming methods, we will of course also visit a large urban "organoponico" and enjoy a traditional lunch of succulent roast pig at a farmer cooperative.

In Old Havana, we will drop in on paladars and bustling farmers' markets before our final reception at Havana's Casa del Chefs.

As a Canadian Agrologist, I have been building bridges of cooperation between farm communities in Canada and Cuba for 9 years. During that time, I have brought 400 farmers to Cuba in 20 delegations and now also lead a CIDA project (to increase milk production in Cuba) and teach a UBC undergraduate course to Canadian students in Cuba (AGSC 302: Field Studies in Sustainable Agriculture, Cuba).

Why Cuba? Because when the Soviet Union



Casa del Chefs, Camaguey

collapsed, Cuba had to re-invent the way they produced food. Food scarcity brought communities in closer touch with issues of food security and sustainability. Traditional farming methods returned. Pesticides and chemicals were replaced with biological controls. Urban agriculture was born. Today, farmers are respected and empowered

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members of Cuban society. And that respect begins in the Cuban kitchen and at the Cuban dinner table, where fresh, local ingredients take centre stage.

I was persuaded by Cuisine Canada to organize our first Cooks' Tour in 2005. In response to popular demand, we are offering it again this winter.

Want to learn more and/or become involved? Here's how!

1. Join us January 29th to February 12th 2007 to experience the best of Cuban cuisine and make professional connections you can follow through on when the Cuban chefs come to Canada in 2008. Full details posted on the website www.theholmteam.ca or call me, Wendy Holm, at 604-947-2893.

2. If you can't join us, consider donating some utensils or other equipment! We are gratefully accepting donations of culinary items to be given to the Cuban chefs we visit. Everything will be deeply appreciated!

3. If you are in the position to do so, consider helping us raise a bursary for one or two young chefs to accompany the group in January. Call Wendy for details. We will put your name up in lights!

The 2005 Cooks' Tour was profiled in a 6-page article From Cuba with Love, appearing in the April 2006 issue of Canadian Living magazine. A great deal more information about the tour, including a copy of the Canadian Living article by Elizabeth Baird and Rose Murray, is posted on the website <http://www.theholmteam.ca>

Call me to discuss! 604-947-2893.

Wendy Holm is an Argologist and Farm Columnist living in Bowen Island, BC.



Casa del Chefs, Cienfuegos



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