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### Los Llanos (The Plains)

Have you ever thought about a place with a warm climate, impressive sights and where man and nature can coexist together? This place is found in Venezuelan “Llanos”. They are placed in the east of the country in northwestern South America. These are grassland plains where it is possible to see miles and miles of green vegetation that look like an infinite carpet under the shining sun in the pale blue sky with some clouds as fluffy as giant cotton balls. Also, these have long and abundant rivers that run and inject life into the land when these are observed from the clear sky. The smell of the wet ground, wildflowers, and green vegetation is as familiar to those who were born in that land as a mom’s smell is to a baby. But, it is not only their vivid landscapes, it is also their food, people, and folk music that made the Llanos ones of the most charming, soothing, and marvelous places to live or visit to admire the majesty of the creation of God.

The principal ingredients of their foods are corn, meat, fish, beans and rice produced in their lands. In addition to the “arepa”, in the “Llanos” can be found other dishes such as “cruzado”, “chicha”, and “cachapas”. The “cruzado” is a famous soup made with beef, and chicken or hen that is combined with potatoes, carrots, green onion, corn, cilantro, pumpkin, and others root vegetables found in the area such as “ocumo”, “name”, “apio”, sweet pepper, and “yucca” to provide a distinctive and hearty flavor with a consistency slightly thick. The smell of

“cruzado” is a potpourri of fragrance that invites the palate to taste at least a sample that promptly becomes a big bowl. The “chicha” is a sweet and thick drink made with grounds of rice, sugar, vanilla, and condensed milk and served with granitized ice. The “chicha,” most of the time, is finished with colorful icing, chocolate syrup, cinnamon powder or more condensed milk. This drink is exquisite, delicious, and nutritious. Finally, “cachapas” is like a pancake made with ground sweetcorn with a slight touch of salt and sugar. “Cachapas” are a delicious food that can be taken any time during the day and filled with cheese, ham, beef, chicken, bacon, or whatever companion that its diner imagines.

Not only its exquisite food is outstanding in the Llanos but also its people who make this land a wonderful place. The “Llaneros” Plainsmen, people who live in Venezuelan Llanos, are charismatic, friendly, diligent, cheerful, joking, kind, and a little superstitious. They are the kind of people who never permit you to go without taking a seat, talking and drinking a big cup of aromatized and fresh coffee. They are hard workers, getting up very early in the morning when the darkness is out yet and one can hear the rooster crow; then, they start their labor. They start before the glare and warm sun comes up to make bloom wildflowers and convey its energy to the crops. They sing tunes to their cattle and reap their crop under the ceaseless sun like little ants until the sunset is showing on the horizon. After, they go back home to share with friends and family with a smile on their faces. Community represents another feature of the people of this region. They always are disposed to help, lend their supplies, or give part of his harvest to the people who are in need.

In addition, the Llanos expresses its emotions and feelings through its music. The “joropo” or “llanera” music is the traditional Venezuelan music originated in the llanos. This is a practice of vocal communication; some of them sound soft and slow and others as fast as a

tongue twister. This kind of music is distinctive for its use of the harp with its nice vibration sounds like a harmony of delicate female voices; maracas that look like small balls with a stick made with coconut skin, or leather with small particle beans or seed that produce a sound as little pebbles in a wood glass, and a small guitar called “cuatro” which sound in perfect harmony “Kam-boor-pin-ton” when it is in tune. In the “Llanos” they sing about diverse themes of herding, politics, nature, and milking, and these tunes are transmitted orally from generation to generation. The “Llanera” music awakes emotions of gladness, braveness, love, and strength that invite their listener to dance or move gladly to the rhythm of the music.

In conclusion, although the food, people or music of Venezuelan “Llanos” have not been promoted and known around the rest of the world. The Venezuelan “Llanos” is a beautiful place with amazing people, landscapes, and delicious food. The “Llaneros” are strong and neighborly men who launch their days with an aromatic and fresh brewed coffee, and who work and reap the fruit of their labor that is brought to the table in delicious dishes. They love sharing about their culture, food, and showing others the beauty of their lands. If you have a chance to go to Venezuela, do not miss the opportunity to visit Venezuelan “Llanos”, a pleasant place to live or simply admire.

## Gallery of Pictures

The Venezuelan “Llanos”- Landscape



Sunflower Crop in Venezuelan “Llanos”



Landscape of Venezuelan” Llanos”



Sunset in Venezuelan” Llanos”





Llanera Soup “Cruzado”



Corn pancake “Cachapa”





Rice Sweet Drink “Chicha”



Plainsmen “Llanero” working with cattle



Plainsmen “Llanero” sowing the ground



Musical Instruments playing in “Llanera” Music - “Joropo”





Group of “Llanera” Music



“Joropo” dance



“Joropo” dance in couple

