

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



History

- Explored by Columbus in 1492, when he named it *La Espanola*.
- The capital, Santo Domingo was founded in 1496, and is the oldest European settlement in the Western Hemisphere.
- Spain ceded the colony to France in 1795.
- Conquered by Haitians under Toussaint L'Ouverture in 1801.
- 1808 people revolted and captured Santo Domingo, and establishing the first republic; 1814 Spain regained title to the colony; 1822 reconquered by the Haitians; 1844 Haitians were thrown out and the Dominican Republic was established, headed by Pedro Santana.
- The Dominican Republic remained unsteady and lead to a dictatorship headed by Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina until 1961; in 1961, Juan Bosch of leftist Dominican Revolutionary Party became the first democratically elected president in four decades.
- Currently (2008) Leonel Fernández is President, and working to improve the economy.
- There are over 687,000 foreign born from the Dominican Republic in the US accounting for just over 2% of the total foreign-born population.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the number of foreign born from the Dominican Republic in the US increased by 98%: NY, NJ, FL, MA, RI, PA
 - < 1/2 of 1% of the total US population, but > 2% of the population of New York.



Geography and Cultures

- Located in the West Indies, and occupies the eastern 2/3 of the island of Hispaniola, which it shares with Haiti.
- Population (2006 est.) 9,183,984; Majority mixed African and European descent.
- Fast population growth is a continuing problem.
- Language: Spanish
- Ethnicity/race: white 16%, black 11%, mixed 73%
- Religion: Roman Catholic 95%
- Family networks and friends are more important than universal right.

Health Concerns of Immigrants

- Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Malaria, Typhoid, Yellow fever, Dengue, Heart disease, Diabetes, Obesity, Liver disease
- Lack of preventative care and health insurance

Food Management Practices

- Women typically prepare and serve breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Lunch is the most important meal of the day
- Women do all the cleaning; men are usually the bread winner. Nowadays you can see more women in the workforce because of economic reasons.

Foods

- Fruit: *zapote* (photo at right), *nispero*, lechoza (papaya), mango, guava, banana
- Vegetables: plantains, tomatoes, cabbage, carrots, cilantro
- Protein Foods: peanuts, beans, pork, fish, goat, chicken



Typical Dishes and Snacks

- *La bandera dominicana* (Dominican flag dish, mixture of meat, rice and beans)
- *Tostones* (fried plantains, often accompany the main dish)
- *Sancocho* (stew of different kind of meats, yucca and plantains and spices)
- *Habichuelas* (red, black or white beans in a thick sauce from the same beans)
- *Flan de queso* (a dessert with custard and cheese)
- *Sopa de camarones* (a shrimp broth with coriander)
- *Chivo quisado* (goat stewed with tomatoes, green peppers, and spices)
- Snacks include *chicharrones* (pieces of fried pork) and *empanadillas* (patties with any kind of meat or cheese)

Food and Major Celebrations

- Christmas - Big meal is on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day people wear new clothes and visit with friends and family.
 - Roasted pig, pigeon peas and rice (*moro de guandules*), potato salad, *pasteles de hoja* (shredded plantains, green bananas, yams, filled with pork meat)
- The Three Kings Day is celebrated on January 6th; the night of the 5th the children get their presents (toys or games), it is a remembrance of the three kings when they came to visit with Jesus when he was born. Again people enjoy new clothing.
 - Becoming more important in US as a way to teach children



- Easter - Fish is the traditional food as well as *habichuela con dulce* (sweet beans stew) which is more like dessert. Most Dominicans are highly religious and Good Friday is a day of sadness; most people go to church.
- Carnival, commemoration of the National Independence, Feb. 27th.
- "Merengue Festival" takes place in mid-year in Santo Domingo.
 - Food is major component at these two festivals. Typical foods at festival include fried chicken and plantains, goat meat, rice and beans.

Communication Style

- Address elders and people you do not know using the formal address "Usted"
- Important to look people in the eyes when speaking.
- Impolite to not shake peoples' hands when you first meet.
- Use hands a lot when they speak, accompanied by facial expressions.
- Talk loudly, particularly with their friends, and are very expressive.
- Upon meeting close friends or family, kiss on the right cheek.
- Wrinkle nose and eyebrows if they don't understand.
- Very friendly nature and most will talk with anyone.