

Roasted guinea pig in Saquisilí, Ecuador

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A roasted guinea pig has been placed in a white bowl on top of a metal pail. Saquisilí has one of the largest daily markets in Ecuador. Everything from agricultural products to livestock to handcrafted goods can be found in Saquisilí. The active market makes the town a lively place to visit and is a popular tourist destination. Many anthropologists see the market of Saquisilí as a culturally significant because it represents a time in Ecuador's history that is increasingly hard to find. As the country becomes more industrialized and more land is becomes open to investors, traditional lifeways are beginning to disappear. By providing an arena for local craftsmen, markets like the one at Saquisilí help preserve a little bit of the country's traditions. One tradition that is maintained in highlands Ecuador is the raising of guinea pigs for consumption. Besides the llama, which is an important pack-animal, there are few indigenous domesticated animal species in Ecuador. Unlike North Americans who raise cattle, chicken, turkeys, and pigs for consumption in great quantities, highland Ecuadorians eat a much more limited diet of meat. Guinea pigs provide an important source of protein and are consumed throughout the Andes region.



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