

# Rancho Mastatal Updates

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## Third Quarter 2013

We hope that this finds everyone happy and well. Our annual visit to the U.S. allows me the space that I am sometimes not afforded while living and working in Mastatal to think a bit more deeply about life and the world. It's a blessing but also leads and exposes me to the overabundance of information that now seems to commonly overtake people's lives. I'm grateful for the added insight that the Internet provides at the stroke of a key, but am easily overwhelmed and confused as to how best use this ever



more readily accessible and plentiful information to live and act more appropriately. We thoroughly enjoy and even need this respite from our intense lives in Mastatal and are fortunate to be able to find time to play out-of-doors, plant and process foods. Nevertheless, a good chunk of my typical day is dedicated to catching up on the administrative duties of the Ranch, working on program development for the upcoming season, and caressing more the industrially-fabricated machines that facilitate this writing. It's a tricky yet achievable balance that is made easier by intimately participating in the burgeoning local food movement that's sweeping much of the United States. As I strive to find a personal day-to-day equilibrium, I find myself thinking more and more about regenerative farming and food production. Our lives continue to get shaped by our profound experiences in Mastatal and it is easier than ever to see that we have been irrevocably transformed by our years at the Ranch. Given our intense involvement in a resurgent homesteading movement I can't help but feel that growing food responsibly is the most noble act on earth. By diligently and intelligently participating in this essential act that provides us with one of our basic needs, we can speak to some of our greatest environmental and social challenges while equitably providing food for the planet's inhabitants. Over the past 7 decades, estimates put the loss of farmers at about 6 million in the United States. Agribusiness has steadily filled the space created by this rural retreat with destructive practices that have produced increasingly greater quantities of food for a burgeoning global and urban population. This growing yield per farmer has come with a price that we are increasingly obligated to address, most notably nutrient depletion in our soils, increased greenhouse gas emissions, rural degradation, and the exhaustion and contamination of available water resources. As we take a closer look at the impacts of a more globalized agriculture and live daily within an ever more susceptible world economy, some see agriculture as a way to put people back to work while concurrently addressing these trials. There seems to be a change a brewin' out there. I feel it more on each of our trips to the US. I am in turn encouraged by the path that we've chosen in Costa Rica. Some recent reports declare that the number of farms in the United States is for the first time in decades on the rise. With the economy in the throes of instability, millions of

capable individuals out of work, and record numbers falling ill due to poor lifestyle and food choices, that's something to rejoice. In a decade that sees more than half of us living in urban areas worldwide, could this be the beginning of our return to the land and a more responsible food production paradigm? Even here in this post-industrial upstate New York city where I spend a few months each year, I can't seem to go a day without hearing about a new Community Supported Agriculture farm or another farmer's market opening in the vicinity of my mother's house. I believe that there's an awakening taking place that sees growing numbers engaging in our food systems again. A few weeks ago Robin, Sole and I happened upon an incredible goat farm selling raw milk and the best damn feta we've ever sunk our teeth into. Here in the Triple Cities (Binghamton, Johnson City, Endicott), the birthplace of IBM and Link flight simulators and home to many electronics and defense industry related businesses, you can find an active regional farmer's market every day of the week. Suburban gardens are making a comeback and urban agriculture is popularly seen as a positive regional development thanks to organizations such as [VINES](#). As I delve deeper into what all of this means, I have picked up Simon Fairlie's [Meat: A Benign Extravagance](#) and Wade Davis' [One River](#), two books relevant to this discussion that are rocking my world further as I think about all of this. The former is a must read for anyone passionate about responsible food consumption and production and speaks intelligently to what agriculture's global impact is. Fairlie tries to hold the reader's hand through the regularly confusing statistics and reports often cited by vegans, vegetarians, omnivores and carnivores and helps us make sense of it all as we try and figure out the best way to provide our growing numbers with healthy and sufficient calories without extinguishing other species and destroying our natural resources along the way. It's a courageous attempt to bring clarity to a muddled matter. The latter, an ethnobotanical adventure that follows the life of Harvard professor Richard Shultes, touches upon the total annihilation of once resilient indigenous cultures due to our insatiable appetite for rubber, cocaine and oil, the latter an integral part of today's industrialized farming model. Since we started the Ranch 12 years ago, our world has become quite farm and food-centric. A number of our friends are now full-time farmers and numerous others are self-proclaimed foodies with model initiatives that are helping change the conversation we're having in this country about food. I feel entirely blessed to have found our way into this world of sauerkraut, Sun Golds, kohlrabi, Malabar chestnuts, and responsibly sourced meat and dairy. There is for me no turning back and we welcome all of you to join us in our support of local farming movements and healthy homesteading activities across the world. So grab yourself some homemade kimchi, take a seat and enjoy the rest of our newsletter.

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## RM Program News: Nature vs. Man

During a recent visit from a middle school group, the trip leaders relayed to me a story from one of their nightly check-ins. They asked the students if they thought humans or nature was more intelligent. Despite the philosophical depth of this question, one of the students had an immediate and confident response. Without hesitation he shouted out “Humans of course, AK-47s and the Stock Market, duh!” His reply came with such confidence the leaders didn't know how to respond before the other kids chimed in as well, and the moment whistled away in the many voices.



*Planting Vetiver*

His response, implying no other evidence was needed, opens up a fascinating conversation into the fields of education, intelligence, progress, and much more. What in society causes a young person to believe AK-47s are the pinnacle of intelligence? How do we see through the pattern that places humans on a pedestal above the rest of this animate and inanimate planet? It is a quintessential Pandora's box in this short call and response.

It is worth noting that this young man is intelligent himself. Perfect score, Ivy League intelligence, perhaps. His work ethic was also apparent during his stay, as he was the first to grab a digging spade and often the last to put it down. All in all he is the exact model of a young person that gives one hope for the future, yet, his response is jarring.

AK-47s have killed more people on this planet than any other gun. The Stock Market creates ownership without responsibility; a mechanism indirectly responsible for the environmental and genocidal disaster occurring before our very eyes. Yet in this middle school world view, these are man's greatest achievements.

For this conversation, let us put aside the question of what type of parents/society/genetics/culture/etc. lead to this mindset, and let's ask why on earth did he not shout out “Photosynthesis and Fermentation, nature of course!” Or mycellium communication or spider silk or biological nitrogen fixation or fireflies or ant-plant mutualism or...on and on. He could have said “Quantum Physics and the Wheel” or “Disposal Plastic Water-bottles and Porn,” and his point would have been null immediately.

I argue: how can you come to any other conclusion other than nature as more intelligent, especially looking at two startling facts.

One; everything man has ever accomplished is mimicking nature in one fashion or another. Two; man is destroying his only source of clean water, clean air, topsoil, and indigenous knowledge; thereby putting into doubt the future survival of his species.

One of the strongest material humans can make is Kevlar. It requires a huge amount of energy, resources, and creates massive amounts of waste. It is very expensive. Spiders, on the other hand, create silk that is 8x stronger in tensile strength than Kevlar. It is made at room temperature and from bug juice. Read that again and be dazzled gradually.

Dolphins use sonar to communicate miles and miles underwater, an environment that baffles our best communication devices. Mollusks create ceramic shells stronger than any ceramics we can make, and they do so underwater while filtering calcium particles from the sea. Trees transport water and nutrients from the soil hundreds of feet into the air with no electricity, waste, or moving parts. Plants turn sunlight into everything that sustains our civilizations, including food, fiber, fuel, and shelter. Humans don't know how to do this.

The list can go on and on. But our disconnect from nature undermines this seemingly obvious and limitless intelligence. That we do not even recognize its superiority is proof alone that we are inferior. So few people remain in a daily place where they are awed, moved to tears, wonderment and joy by the simple beauty and brilliance of nature.

Or perhaps we simply take it for granted. I walk by trees everyday and I forget the miracle that is happening in the cambium layer, the leaves, the perfect structural layout of the fibers. But the Stock Market is constantly grabbing our attention, we must know the latest numbers, we are awed how quickly it makes us rich and ruins us, often in the same month. While the tree is quiet, the spider is swept away, and photosynthesis is something that occurs in middle school science class.

When humans are gone, yes we will become extinct, nature will still be present. We are not the center of the universe, we are not God, we have no divine right to rule this planet, we are simply part of the process, which will continue with or without us.

Our worldview's are so limited. This young man was fortunately expanding his, staying in home-stays where he was left communicating with gestures for a week and a half. If we asked him to consider the worldview of a young man in Africa, forced to use an AK-47 as a boy soldier, perhaps his response would be different. Of course he is in middle school, as we all once were, his views, thoughts, opinions will change drastically over the next 15 years or so. I would very much like to ask him this question when he is 25, but in the meantime I will prepare for next years group and come to the nightly check-in with a leaf and a spider in tow.

*Scott Gallant*

## Building Report: Chicken Cabin

Over the years we've regularly had the conversation about how our accommodation infrastructure should evolve. With the "loss" of Leo's and the possible forfeiture of Tiburon's in the not-too-distant future, we feel the need to provide more family style lodging options at the Ranch as we see increasing numbers of parents with children looking for the type of experience that we provide at the Ranch. This discussion has prompted us to make a relatively recent decision to build a new home in the forest near the Goat Slope. The abode will boast room for 4-5 inhabitants, have majestic views to La Cangreja, and once again feature timber frame construction. NIC DONATI will be heading up the work beginning in December and with ALEX HERNANDEZ and an intern crew, hopes to finish the building by July of 2014. We should get a significant boost halfway through from SKIP DEWHIRST, LIZABETH MONIZ and a handful of aspiring building students who will be visiting us for 9-days during the [Timber Frame Construction Workshop](#) in March. The new home coupled with the nearly-complete Honey Hut should situate us well with regards to capacity moving forward.



*Milling Nic*

The upcoming season's building efforts will not solely focus on the new cabin though. We have plans to construct a tadelakt (Turkish waterproof lime finish) cob shower and a batch mouldering toilet, the latter much like you see elsewhere around the Ranch, at the Honey Hut. The completion of these will mark the consummation of this amazing house overlooking the forest and fodder fields. Moreover, we'll start taking a closer look at the considerable detail work remaining at the "Bamboo Palace" edifice that now protects the ping-pong table and new wattle and daub hangout space near the trailhead to the waterfall. Any and all involved in our burgeoning food processing operations are anxiously awaiting the opportunity to see this space through to completion. Needless to say, we'll have our hands full this building season and look forward to bringing the new crew of interns up to speed as we finalize designs, gather materials, and harden our feet for the coming days of stomping, chiseling and raising.

## Conservation Update: Sweet Stop: The San Miguel Trapiche

Its about a 45 minute walk up the dirt road to reach the trapiche, or sugar press. The road climbs to San Miguel, where we veer to the right down another dirt road. The red earth winds across a ridge that looks over Mastatal's vivid green hills and tropical forest. "When I come here, its like being in another world," says Junior, looking across the rolling green.

We walk a few minutes more. We pass some small houses, and suddenly there are the oxen and a giant bubbling sugar vat, just to the left of the road, under an open air structure made of wood. The oxen are enormous white creatures harnessed together with a colorful painted yoke. They stand near the central sugar press, which consists of metal cylinders designed to grab and crush sugarcane stalks. To the left of the structure is a five foot wide metal cauldron bubbling with sugarcane juice.



*Trapiche*

Ademar greets us with glasses of cool, freshly pressed sugar cane juice. It is sweet and brown, and tastes like a fresh, liquid version of brown sugar. Ademar, his brother Juan, and their friend Alvaro are working the cane today. When I first called Ademar a few weeks ago, I could barely hear his voice crackling over the phone--I had caught him in the middle of rounding up cattle down by the river. I love that this calm, smiling, middle aged man with wire rimmed glasses handing me sugar cane juice is the same cowboy I talked to earlier.

As we drink our juice Ademar and Alvaro hitch up Gitano and Canario (Gypsy and Canary) to a traditional Costa Rican cart. The cart is made with wooden wheels and painted in bright swirls of color to match the oxen's wooden yoke. Right now its full of flattened sugar cane stalks that just came out of the sugar press. We follow the troop a few hundred feet down the dirt road to where they drop off the spent cane to use as compost and cow feed. Then we help load up stalks of cane Alvaro and Ademar chopped and piled earlier that morning. The cane is a couple inches thick, and anywhere from 4-6 feet in length. It is a variety called barbada (bearded), specifically grown for sugar production.

Gypsy and Canary plod down the road with their sweet load. Back at the trapiche Ademar hooks them up to the central sugar press. The oxen move together in a fixed circle which turns the pressing cylinders. Ademar walks in front of them, leading them around as Juan pushes canes through one end of the press and Alvaro pulls the flattened stalks out the other side. The fresh juice trickles directly down into a large drum.

After the oxen are started, Ademar moves over to check on the huge vat of bubbling sugarcane juice. He stirs it with an enormous 6 foot long wooden spoon. The vat is heated on an gigantic stove that is fed from below with medium sized tree trunks. We watch Juan haul a 6 foot long, foot- wide trunk and chuck it into the fire as if it were kindling. These people are not messing around.

The cane juice in the vat has already been bubbling for almost five hours. Ademar pours a cup of oil into the vat, and the bubbling froth recedes immediately. I ask him why he added the oil. “I don't know,” he says, “My dad always did it that way.” Much of the equipment that Ademar uses today has been in use since his childhood. The knowledge of the sugar making process, as well, is a family heirloom. “Most sugar companies do lots of tests to know when the sugar is ready to be poured,” says Ademar, stirring the vat. “But I do it all by sound.” He takes the massive wooden spoon and ladles a scoop of the liquid sugar into a long, coffin-like wooden box that Juan has moved next to the sugar vat. Ademar holds the ladle high and tips the golden brown liquid into the bottom of the box, listening. “See,” he says, “that's the sound you hear when the sugar is ready!” I listen, but hear only the plopping of liquid falling onto wood. Then again, I did not spend a lifetime listening to sugar.

Ademar and Juan pour more of the sugar into the box, and stir it vigorously with the enormous ladles. The liquid thickens slowly, and just when it's ready, Ademar ladles it into the round holes of a homemade wooden mold.

As we wait for the sugar to harden in the molds, Ademar ladles the rest of the hot juice from the vat into the wooden box. Various people wander in and out of the trapiche structure as we watch. Our neighbor Chilo appears out of nowhere, picks up a wooden spoon, and leans against the sugar molds, chipping bits of sugar off the sides and licking the spoon. A dark eyed little girl draws pictures of animals in my notebook as she eats a bowl of whipped sugar cane.

When the sugar vat is empty, Alvaro starts hauling five gallon buckets of fresh cane juice from the press to start a new batch. Immediately he adds a bucket of gelatinous goop made from guacimo and mozote stems. Ademar stirs this mass into the sugar water, where it collects any dust or cane bark that got into the juice. Then he ladles the gel out of the vat, leaving the clean cane juice behind. A fairly ingenious process that involves no chemicals and makes a perfectly pure product.

After this point, the sugar juice will boil on the fire for another 4-5 hours before it will be ready for Ademar to listen to it hitting the bottom of the wooden box and go into the molds. After the sugar in the molds cools, he will flip them out and package them in rounds of four with deftly tied strips of sugar cane leaves.

By this time, Junior, Alec, Kyle, and I are positively giddy from drinking so much sugar cane juice. We prepare to stumble our way back to the Ranch, packs loaded with rounds of warm sugar blocks, and minds full of a new found appreciation. Real sugar tastes fresh and amazing, but making it is a huge amount of work! Even before chopping the cane, hauling it, pressing it, boiling it for five hours, stirring it, pouring it, molding it and wrapping it, you have to chop and season wood for the fire, collect and prepare wild plants as natural purifiers, and make molds and equipment—not to mention farm the cane itself.

But honestly, Ademar tells us, as Gypsy and Canary plod around the press, “The really hard part of making sugar is taming the bulls!”

So much of food processing is about place. The place where one grew up, and learned how to

listen to sugar; the place where the cane grows with the perfect combination of sun and water and soil; the place where the raw materials of wood and metal and oxen are produced to last a lifetime; the place where one's family knows a skill and makes a life around it for generations. Place-based food production can't be "re-placed". You cannot make this sugar in Rhode Island, where I was born. You cannot make it on a large or small scale, anywhere but where the method and science and art of it has rooted over time. These skills and methods are unique, and uniquely placed; where the red earth winds across the ridge, in the hands of capable farmers whose parents taught them how to tame bulls and listen to the sound of sugar.

*LK*

### **Farm Facts: Permaculture Design Course**

Towards the end of last month the Ranch played host to its annual Permaculture Design Course (PDC). For two mad weeks a group of 21 'students' descended on Mastatal for an intense, no-holds-barred introduction to Permaculture Design – myself, SCOTT and another intern, LOWELL, amongst the ranks. Teaching us was CHRIS SHANKS, an experienced teacher and manager of our sister-project 'Bona Fide' in Nicaragua, who has lead the Ranch's PDC course for the past five years.

It was intense. 14-hour days, combining practical work with classroom discussions and lectures, proved very tiring; and was only made possible by the usual smorgasbord of wholefood deliciousness from the kitchen (and frequent visits from our friends at 'La Iguana Chocolate'!) Despite the intensive schedule it really felt like considerable time and effort had been put into designing the program of the course, with sufficient time allocated for each topic. This allowed for some very enlightening discussions, as well as many amusing anecdotes from CHRIS. The former in particular was incredibly useful given the considerable diversity of experiences and backgrounds in the group: hailing from Australia, the UK and Guanacaste, C.R.; sharing their knowledge of plant biology, architecture and forestry; and ranging from permaculture novices to those already managing their own projects – it made for some lively debates!



*Using the A-Frame*

Given all of this, it was with much anticipation (and more than a little relief) that we presented our final design projects to the group – the culmination of 80 hours of learning and more than a few late-night design sessions. The design project aimed to simulate the entire design process, from surveying to presentation, in an attempt to satisfy the brief given to us by our 'clients'. Though a source of stress at times, the finished results were all superb – scale maps with colourful overlays, illustrated handouts and detailed diagrams supported a 25 minute presentation from each of the four groups. After all this hard work, a celebration was in order! A goat-calzone party with a 'talent/no talent' show provided just that, with music and merriment lasting long into the night.

To me, the course was a great success. As an intern at the beginning of a 5 month Agroforestry &

Homesteading Internship, the course allowed me to look deeper into the theory behind the work that goes on at Rancho Mastatal, and in the wider Permaculture movement. It also acted as a vector by which I could appreciate the design aspect of the Ranch; what might be termed the method behind the (albeit organised) madness. The most striking lesson for me however, was the realisation that the wider Permaculture movement amounts to not just a new approach to food production (permanent agriculture) but also a shift in cultural norms and the emergence of new pattern-languages (permanent culture), which hints at the emergence of a globally-conscious, globally-responsible culture – an exciting prospect indeed.

□ The Permaculture Design Course would not have been possible for myself, SCOTT or LOWELL, without the additional effort expended by the rest of the staff, interns and volunteers, picking up the slack – to be able to shirk our duties in order to immerse ourselves in learning was fantastic, and was very much appreciated. Thanks too must go to the two translators, JORGE and JULIO, who between them helped the five 'Ticos' in the group decipher CHRIS' swift delivery. And, finally, my thanks to CHRIS for his seemingly limitless energy and encyclopedic knowledge of everything Permaculture.

*Alec Kinghorn* □

### **Community Stories: Noise**

Riding on a the buses toward Nicaragua I kept coming across two disturbing and related sensory events. One were the Ticos using their cell phones as speaker systems for all their neighbors to hear, and the other were the Gringos with ear buds in, oblivious to the world passing around them.

Noise plays a monumental role in daily modern life. To the point that noise pollution is fairly constant and taken for granted, even, or especially, in the small town of Mastatal. From the two extremes of shattering the sound around oneself (speakers) to numbing it (head phones), individuals have the distinct possibility of going through their entire 24 hour day with zero moments of silence.



*Scott Working the Chainsaw*

I lived in Leon, Nicaragua for four months a few years ago doing volunteer work for a small non-profit. Leon was an amazing town, incredible architecture, history, progressive student engagement, geography, etc. Yet what I will always take from those months is the noise. Pit Bull's reggeaton hit *You Know You Want Me* was atop the charts and every single store front in Leon had their own obnoxiously large speaker system shouting this song, and a few others on loop, into the public street. If I hear this song today, I am instantly brought back to those muggy streets with my desire to put a foot into every speaker system. My own personal PTSD. Yesterday I went into a super market in Grenada and couldn't hear the clerk because the speaker was so loud. At dinner in a small soda, sitting as the only customer in a huge and empty colonial home, both the television and sound system were going at once. Neither could be understood over the other and I was forced

to wonder what drove a culture to have such immunity, or love, of noise.

Latin American's are historically known for being part of huge extended families, kids rushing in and out, the fire roaring in the kitchen, metal on rock as machetes are sharpened. For anyone who has grown up in a large family, the constant presence of people and consequently sound becomes embedded in your life. As these families have become broken up through the effects of Americanization, urbanization, lack of local work, etc., people have felt empty without this bubble of happy traditional sound. Perhaps in response Latin American's play reggaeton constantly, remove the muffler to their motorbikes, and are very comfortable shouting into their cell phone in public places. This is my theory at least.

The Gringo traveler on the other hand looks to hide from this noise. The head phones and English lyrics provide a comfort, a safe place on the nauseating bus rides. Yet this contradicts the entire point of traveling; to be present and take in with all your senses everything happening around you. You must not cower from the good, the bad, nor the ugly when traveling. I can't tell you how many volunteers and interns I have talked with who routinely express a goal of living in the present, being fully conscious of the moment, etc., yet as soon as they arrive at their breakfast shift they plug in the Ipod or at six in the morning they begin milking the goat herd with little white ear buds numbing their universe. How can one possibly expect to provide those animals with appropriate care in this vein? We don't need constant noise to survive, but Apple has some how convinced us otherwise.

We walk the line of the double edge sword in Mastatal being located in the center of town. It brings the joys of local interaction, easy access to a cold drink, and sweaty run around, but it brings noise. Between the bar speakers, the motos, and our own speaker system, one can quickly feel overwhelmed. The new bar in town unfortunately directs its speakers toward the wildlife preserve. Sometimes you can hear the faintest of bass all the way down to the Quebrada Grande. If this was raw sewage or garbage being dumped into the forest, the local Ministry of the Environment would have to act, instead noise pollution is much harder to quantify, even though its affect on a broad landscape scale is increasingly recognized as disastrous. Noise pollution, whether shattering the outside environment or retarding your inner environment appears to be a constant in Latin American life.

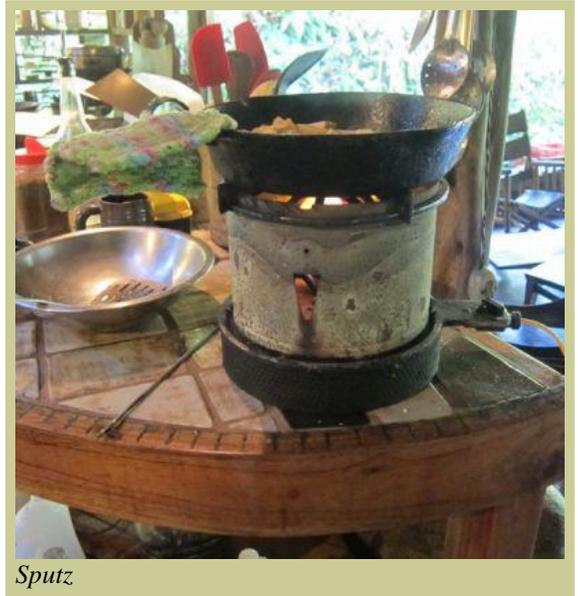
I AM a lover of music, talented musicians amaze me, I appreciate the cacophonous of the city and the deafening of the jungle rains and cicadas. I attempt to play ukulele, have a large record collection (sitting in my parents basement naturally), and my old mp3 player is filled with 10,000 songs. But if given the choice these days between experiencing music from a technological device, or silence, I will choose silence.

*Scott Gallant*

### **Intern/Guest Gossip: Put Them in a Pancake**

Leftovers: some people love them, many people hate them. The same old cold version of yesterday's dinner. Be bored no more by your leftovers, instead **PUT THEM IN A PANCAKE!**

“A pancake?” you may ask. Yes, a pancake, or you may call it a fritter if you prefer. Many of your scrumptious morning meals at Rancho Mastatal have been made by following the magic mantra: **PUT IT IN A PANCAKE!** Leftover: rice, beans, coconut (post coconut milk processing), soups, veggies, fried rice, day old coffee, squash puree, yuca, potatoes, you name it, has at one time or another been put into a little patty of deliciousness and served up for breakfast. Often to rave reviews and a plethora of recipe inquiries. Well, for all those that asked, here is the magic secret:



Mark Bittman's [How to Cook Everything Vegetarian; Simple Meatless Recipes for Great Food](#), on page 392, discusses “Turning Leftover Purees into Griddlecakes.” To summarize, use the ratio of 1 cup flour to 1 cup puree add 1 tsp baking powder, and 1 egg. Add liquid as necessary to reach the desired consistency. In true Rancho style, we find the need for exact measuring to be ignorable. Feel free to make a pancake with 70% puree and 30% flour, or 80/20...it's your kitchen, go crazy! As long as it holds together and has a texture that you like, you are set.

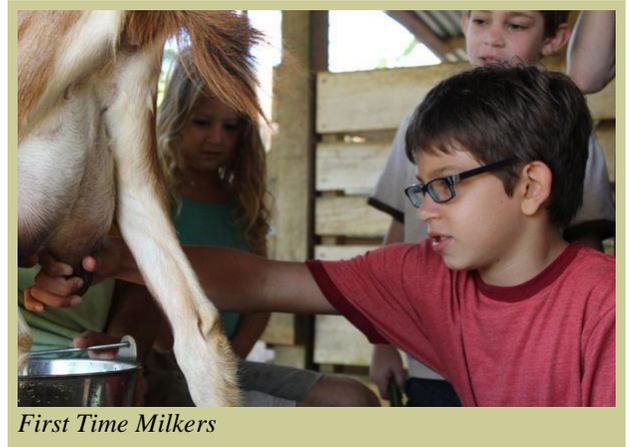
“But fried rice isn't a puree?” I can hear you say. It is true, that many of our leftovers are not in a pureed state to begin with, but simply toss it in a food processor (or use a hand blender) and mix a solid with some liquid and the eggs called for in the recipe and you can make a puree from whatever you have on hand! Adding the baking powder at the same time you are making your “puree” is a great way to ensure it all gets thoroughly mixed.

So with the secret to leftover magic in your possession, go ahead, get creative and **PUT IT IN A PANCAKE!**

*NWW and all the 2013 Wet Season Interns (Also, thank you to Rachel Jackson for letting us in on the secret! We couldn't have written this without you.)*

## Comida Corner: Arabela's Sour Cream and Sour Milk

This recipe comes from our neighbor Arabela, who makes it regularly from the milk of her two pastured dairy cows, Negra and Pancha. Sour milk and sour cream are consumed frequently in Costa Rica. They are made by using fresh, raw milk that is naturally cultured with native lactic acid bacteria. This bacteria is present in healthy, raw milk, and is considered an important probiotic for people.



### *Instructions:*

Use second milk (the second half of the milk when you milk—it has a higher fat content) and leave it in a container, fresh and raw, overnight. Make sure the container is covered with cheesecloth or something to keep out insects. Any clean container works, but should have a wide mouth.

The next day, you will see that the cream has risen to the top of your container. This is sour cream. Underneath the cream is sour milk. At this point, you can either stir or shake everything up and drink as creamy sour milk, or you can spoon the sour cream off the top to use separately.

You can also leave the milk out longer, and it will increase in sourness.

Here's another.

### *Sour Cream Recipe*

*From: "Home Dairy with Ashley English"*

If you don't have access to raw milk you can substitute pasteurized cream and add a live culture.

### *Ingredients:*

1 cup heavy cream

¼ cup live culture buttermilk OR use a packet of dried starter culture. To use the starter culture, simply increase the milk to four cups and follow the recipe as written, substituting your packaged culture for the buttermilk.

### *Instructions:*

1. Warm the cream gently in a small saucepan over medium-high heat until it reaches 85 F (29 C).
2. Transfer the cream to a glass or ceramic container. Using a metal spoon, stir in the buttermilk or dried culture. Mix until well incorporated.
3. Cover the container with a plate or lid, and leave it at room temperature for 12 hours.
4. After the culturing has passed, your cream should have noticeably thickened. Store the sour cream in an airtight container in the refrigerator, and use within one or two weeks.

Buen Provecho!

LK

**Inspirational Impressions: Conscience**

The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard."

--- *Gaylord Nelson*

And another.

*For the Hog Killing*

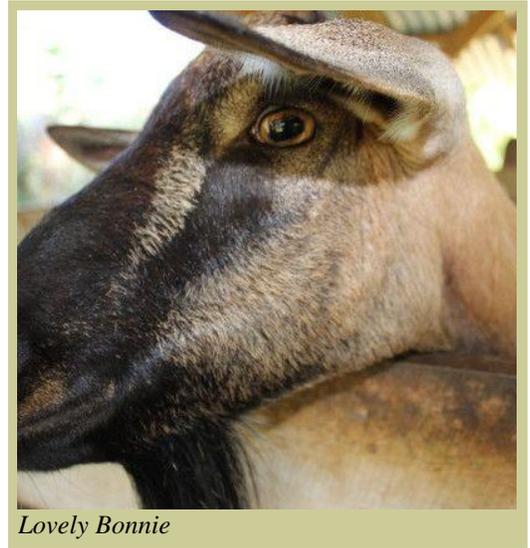
□ Let them stand still for the bullet, and stare the shooter in the □ eye, □ let them die while the sound of the shot is in the air, let them die □ as they fall, □ let the jugular blood spring hot to the knife, let its freshet be full, □ let this day begin again the change of hogs into people, not the □ other way around, □ for today we celebrate again our lives' wedding with the world, □ for by our hunger, by this provisioning, we renew the bond.

--- *Wendell Berry* □

□

Abrazos, □ □

The Ranch Crew



*Lovely Bonnie*