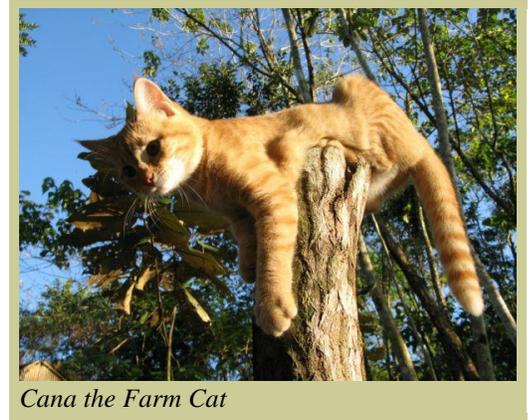


Rancho Mastatal Updates

December/January 2010/11

We're off to the races in the New Year as we finish transitioning to life back at the Ranch after a wonderful family visit in the States. The caretaking crew this past fall was the best we've ever had. We returned to Mastatal to everything in perfect working order and a group smiling friends and new visitors. The annual group from Solar Energy International (SEI, <http://www.solarenergy.org>) was also arguably the best ever and to boot our new interns raced to an amazing start. The Wilderness First Response Certification Course that began on January 12 was off to a marvelous beginning too when we experienced a major disruption in our lives with the news that Robin's father John unexpectedly passed away in Canada on January 16 (see below). The news necessitated an unplanned trip to the United States to be with family for just over a week. Even though the trip was for disconsolate reasons, we enjoyed spending time with family and celebrating Dr. John Nunes' life. The tremendous outpouring of love by friends and family at and before the memorial service was a testament to John's positive impact on the world. We returned to an ever-improved Ranch and hit the ground running as we prepare to impregnate BONNIE (one of our goats), receive the Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician Course students, delve deeper into our temporarily suspended internship, continue to overhaul our Zone 1 gardens, install the deck of the Community Learning and Sharing Center, design and build new furniture and a garage structure, dial in the pond ecosystem and the plantings out at the goat slope and in general roll with the amazing energy that's been flowing in and out of every crevice around the Ranch as of late.



Cana the Farm Cat

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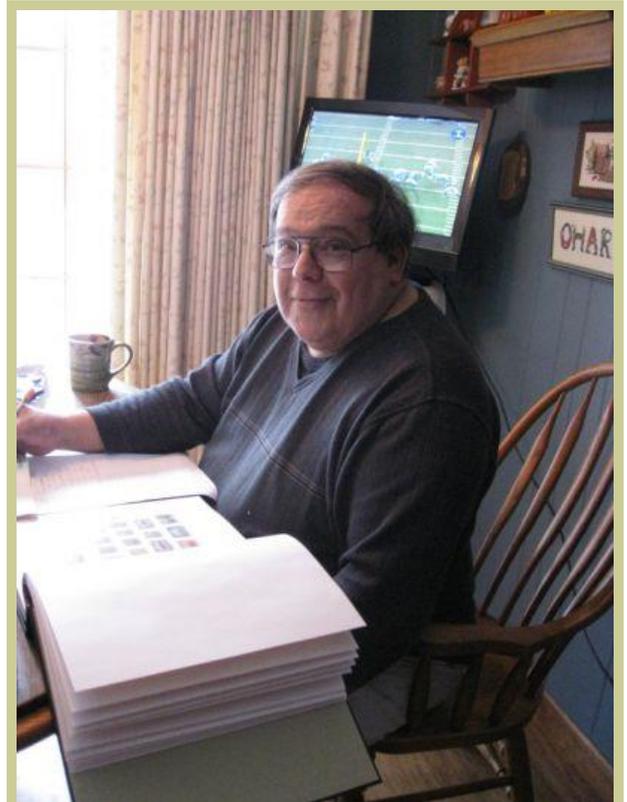
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RM Program News: John J. Nunes

On Sunday morning, January 16, we received a call from Robin's mother who told Robin that her father, Dr. John J. Nunes, had passed away earlier that morning in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The news brought great sadness to what was shaping up to be a picture-perfect tropical morning. After a flood of tears we began preparations for our return to the United States to memorialize John and spend a week with family. It took us a few days to make the necessary arrangements and on Wednesday we made the long trip from Mastatal to Binghamton, NY and the following day to Burnt Hills, NY where we met up with Robin's amazing sister Jill and her wonderful mother Alice.



John Nunes

Robin's father John earned a Masters degree and PhD in Materials Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute after earning his undergraduate degree in Ceramic Engineering from Alfred University in Alfred, NY. Dr. Nunes worked for most of his distinguished career at General Electric's Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory and spent many of his retirement days with his cherished stamps and running his successful and respected stamp business, "Nunes Nook", named after the restaurant that his Portuguese mother founded and ran outside of Rochester, NY. Philatelic interests were one of many commonalities that our families shared as stamps were also Tim's dad's favorite hobby. Tim's brother Kevin earned his M.S. in Finance from Alfred Univeristy, John's alma mater, and Robin's sister Jill, like Tim, graduated from Cornell University. A series of tight connections that now includes marriage, common friends and a granddaughter.

Hundreds of friends and family members reached out to the Nunes' family during the subsequent weeks as their house quickly filled with flowers, food and baskets from close and afar. Jill did a spectacular job preparing the space where the memorial took place. The room was filled with a collage of pictures from throughout John's life, his fraternity jacket, flowers, various awards earned over the years and a smattering of his treasured stamps. Jill and Alice both spoke beautifully at the service before a group of the family's closest friends headed out to one of John's favorite restaurants in Schenectady, NY, Petta's, an old-school Italian eatery that proved the perfect way to wrap up the full day.

John was a loving husband, father, grandfather and friend and earned the utmost respect of colleagues and family alike. His smile was omnipresent and contagious and he brought happiness in to every room he entered. John's active, sharp mind and intellect were a source of awe and enjoyment to everyone that spent time with him. He will be greatly missed.

Without John's support over the years, this news would not be going out as part of the Rancho

Mastatal newsletter, as without him there would most likely be no Ranch. We are forever indebted and grateful for his contributions and inspiration and will continue to honor him for the rest of our days. His legacy will live on for at least another generation with Soledad Maria O'Hara Nunes who will proudly carry John's name well into this century, and hopefully well beyond. May this RPI standout RIP. Thank you John, Dad and Papa.

Building Report: Perfecting the Perfect Hearth Loaf

If you put in the *Canta No Llore: The Songs of Rancho Mastatal* CD, and go to track number 11, you will hear Anya Rose sing "I, I don't know/ how they started sourdough?" Well this is exactly the question that has been running through our heads here at the Ranch. A lot goes into making a good sourdough loaf, and a lot of our baking setup is changing these days. Soon we hope to have a revamped baking section (goodbye beer fridge!) and a brand new beautiful cob oven. These changes have encouraged us to look deeply at our current sourdough recipe, and ask can we do better? Confidently we shout YES! The question then is as the song goes "how do they start sourdough?"

Over the next couple of months, myself and a highly qualified team of baking professionals will be experimenting loaf by loaf, recipe by recipe, searching out the Perfect Sourdough Hearth Loaf!



The Community Center's Cob Oven
photo by Tim O'Hara

Anyone who has eaten here at the Ranch knows that our sourdough bread is wonderful, but anyone who has baked it knows that it is very different than most risen breads. In fact, its texture and consistency is more akin to a quick bread. Basically it is a very watery recipe. This means that it tastes delicious, its crumb is nice and airy, and it rises quickly. But as GREG taught many of us here at the Ranch, appearance is everything, and our Sourdough loafs just aren't as inspiring when they must be poured goopily into a glass Pyrex baking dish. You know that beautiful loaf of bread on the front of your bread baking book?...well, we want that coming out of our oven! Therefore we have set a goal for ourselves: to create a loaf that is simple to make, will hold its shape, happily rest directly on the hearth of the cob oven, and naturally have the taste and texture we crave with our egg-toasties! These are hearty goals, but we are off to a good start.

EILEEN and I tackled the first baking day of the New Year with a commitment to experimentation and documentation. We learned from ROBIN that our current recipe had never been experimented with, and we had taken the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" philosophy over the years. So we scoured the bread baking books in the kitchen library, combined our knowledge, and laid out our plan of action. We picked a new recipe to try and we committed to slowly reducing the water of our current recipe. On Page 109 of *The Cheese Board: Collective Works* you will find a very simple recipe for the Suburban Bread. This was chosen as our experimental recipe due to its similar ingredients, both white and wheat flour are called for, and its simple mixing/kneading procedure, mix it all together and knead for 15 minutes.

So we went to work, all while teaching the new intern group, and the results of test run #1 were roundly considered a success. Our current recipe, with a little less water, produced the normal

tasty loaf, and our Suburban Bread, despite a worryingly slow rise, formed a decently shaped loaf, with a nice airy crumb. Needless to say we were excited about the results and believe we are on the path to the perfect sourdough hearth loaf. Over the next few baking sessions we hope to experiment with our water quantities, kneading and rising times, and oven steaming equipment!

Hopefully when you make it back down to Mastatal, waiting for you at the meal table will be a lovely loaf of bread, perfectly shaped by caring hands, baked by a new cob oven, and fermented by a plethora of yeast. In the meantime we will keep experimenting and updating everyone on our pursuit for the perfect sourdough hearth loaf.

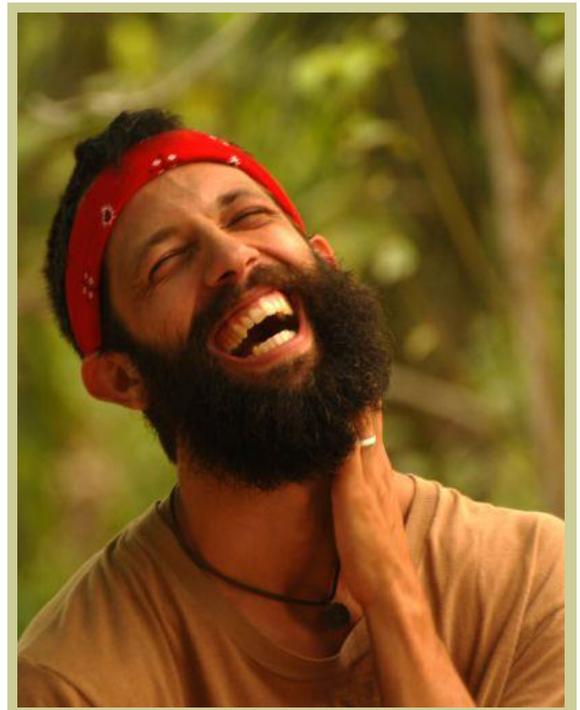
Scott Gallant

Conservation Update: My First Week

After a five-hour plane trek, a one hour cab ride, and a two and a half hour bumpy bus haul, I arrived at Rancho Mastatal with just enough sunlight left in the day to find my bed. I am staying in the Hanky House, one of the amazing natural building structures made from bamboo, cob, and wood. I dropped my bags feeling as if I have just walked into paradise. The peace and tranquility almost radiates off the walls. The pictures do not do this place justice; there is something you feel when you are here. Looking at my bed on the first floor I could only think about the amazing people that had slept here before me. Men and women, who built these composting toilets, formed these trails, planted the vegetation and impacted the community. I then headed back to the Main House for a family style dinner made up of all local foods.

The next morning I woke before the sun. Too excited to sleep any longer I headed to the main house from some coffee. I had my book in one hand and a cup of the best coffee I have ever had in the other. I found a hammock overlooking the garden and listened to the tropical birds sing as a toad came hopping by me. I knew right then and there that these next three months would be far different from what I was used to. In Bloomfield, New Jersey I would be making my way through the snow covered concrete streets to work at a restaurant six days a week; where cars rule the road, everyone is in a rush, and the word community is only used when speaking about buildings.

As the week went on we had all sorts of workshops with Timo; learning everything from how the biodigester worked to turn poop into gas for the stove to how to make soap. His very meticulous way of explaining things gave us not only an understanding for what it was we were talking about but also an appreciation for it as well. Not just telling us how it is, but why. Everyday that passed felt like I was getting a better grasp of the Ranch life. Learning the day-to-day jobs and how projects start as ideas and become finished works. Gaining confidence to come up with my own projects and help on those that are already a work in progress.



Red

photo by Matthew Abrams

As the weekend approached I was so surprised that I had already been here for almost a week. It had felt as if my plane had just landed. Geoff took all the interns in the back of the pick-up down to one of the many waterfalls for an easygoing Sunday afternoon. When we returned to the Ranch many of us were excited to get over to the Soda to watch the playoffs of the NFL games and enjoy some small snacks. It was a nice way to end an amazing week, even though the New England Patriots lost to the stinky Jets.

I am looking forward to learning even more next week as well as immersing myself even more into some projects. There has been some talk about continuing the building of the new garage; I think that would be a great project for some of the interns and I to take on. Timberframing is something I would love to learn about. I am just very happy and excited to have the opportunity to be here right now. It is going to be an amazing three months.

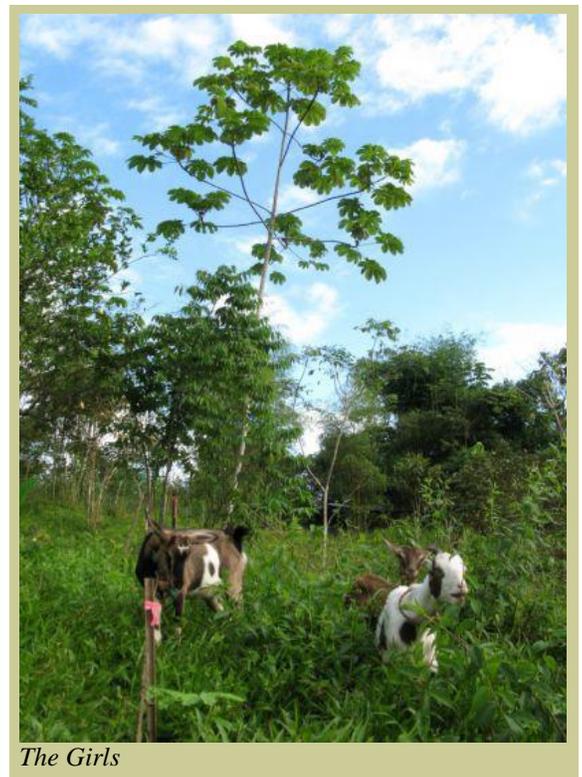
Hannah Wylie

Farm Facts: Yeah Baby

Mother Nature eased us into the dry season this January by gracing the gardens with some nice showers and cloudy afternoons, which have allowed us to tuck transplants and baby plantas snugly into their beds. We're looking to achieve balance in the gardens, keeping in line with one popular resolution for 2011. For example, we're giving renewed attention to our tried and true local veggies as well as promoting diversity with some newcomers, like komatsuma and mustard greens. And of course, we would never forget our beans. Whether they be lablab, long or winged ... we love our beans. While our leguminous friends fix nitrogen in the ground, our team of NEEM, pepper, and effective microbial sprays, bokashi soils, flowers, and snippers are working hard to crush pests and pack in nutrients.

In addition to future food, enthusiasm is sprouting in the agricultural scene amongst the new interns at the Ranch, led by our own two forces of nature: the machete-swinging RACHEL JACKSON out front in Zone 1 and the boot-stomping AMY KOZLOWKSI (and proud pond-mother of a new tilapia babies!) out back in the new agricultural extension - "the Chicken Wing."

Most recently on the farm, we've been dealing with the life drama of the bot fly, which has led us to explore our role as caretakers and, again, consider the issue of balance. How much do we, as humans, care for the bodies and choreograph the movements of our non-human partners? Obviously, we are a source of food – a white bucket of kitchen compost will promptly kick the flock into a tottering trot behind you. But what happens when a large family of bot flies invades your goat? (This parasitic insect lays larvae into a fly or mosquito, which then transfers the larvae into a larger host.) Do you expel them with a dose of meds and good squeeze? Use a hot



The Girls

compress on an abcess? Aloe on an open wound? Vitamin C? Let her immune system do all the work? With a little bit of everything, Mabel bounced back as evidenced this morning by her bold head-butting match with Bonnie, after which she gave a hop and kick in the air and kept on grazing, her wattles swaying. So, at the end of the day, as I listen to the rumble of ruminating guts and warbling coos of roosting ladies, I do believe our little farm does allow these beautiful animals to express and embrace their animalness.

.... Next up for human meddling in animal affairs? Match-making a worthy billy goat with our lovely Bonnie.

Nicolai

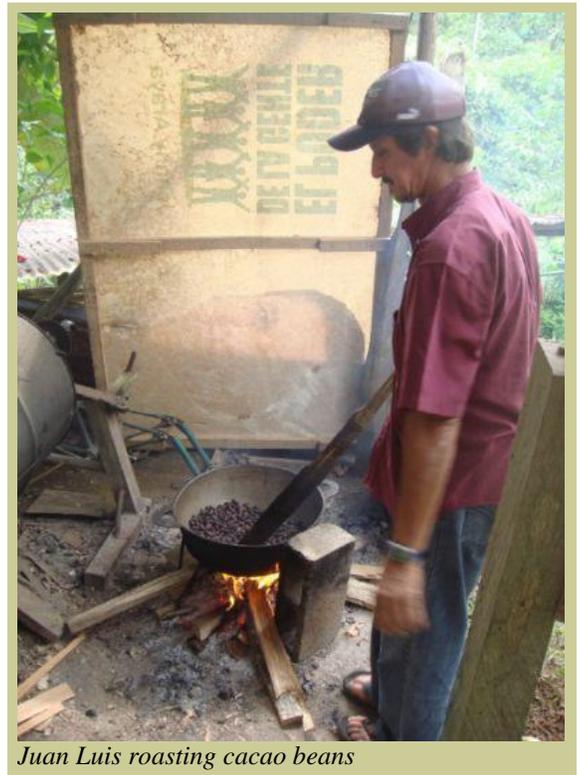
Community Stories: Sampling the New Old World

I'm four weeks in Costa Rica, with eight weeks to go -- these first four in the low-land tropical rainforest, about 20 miles north of this Nation's Central Pacific Coastline. I've volunteered here, as a regular hand at Rancho Mastatal, while awaiting a Solar Energy International workshop on installing solar panels in developing nations, which is now complete. This Rancho is a business, a part of the ecotourism global marketplace that Costa Rica leads, and it's doing especially well, I think, because of a serendipity of incredible people, and because of something very old.

Some of the leading thinkers of our time have convincingly argued that community and economy are effectively synonymous, asserting that this is the nutshell reason why the global marketplace has extinguished much of genuine local community. Yet most individuals remain free to create economic ties with their neighbors. When we do, we recreate the

natural order in which people once thrived, either utilizing barter or local money systems, because economic interdependence compels shared care-taking. The result is a sustainable home for man, and this seems to me to be what they are striving for within the gates of Rancho Mastatal. Shared care-taking is also compulsory in the global system, of course, but the distances involved give the advantage to the pirates, impelling all to compete through a race to the lowest standard.

There's no question in my mind that most of us could live sustainably in this sort of simple manner, wherein people cooperate locally to provide for each other while nurturing the living systems upon which all depend. But it's also easy to backslide. I ask one of the Rancho's owners if he has ever considered exporting vanilla, which is a rich opportunity, and he replies that he rejects that possibility because the Rancho would then be participating in the broken global system. And yet he endorses and admires a friend's industry doing exactly that elsewhere. After all, he explains, there's room for almost every sort of thing if the balance is kept.



Juan Luis roasting cacao beans

It's difficult to create bubbles within the global marketplace that can maintain the critical mass necessary to keep that living balance. Here, this involves disciplines such as regular training to step away from pit vipers and to recover methane from humanure, while waiting hopefully for broken ideas to die -- including the idea that poaching on the Rancho's preserve is harmless or even beneficial to the poachers...the Rancho's owners betting that they can absorb this poisoning of a part of themselves until...when? Meanwhile, they are gaining ground, gardening a paradise. Yet, it seems to me that most people now agree that setting aside parks and preserves isn't enough to regain global balance, much less to secure it. We've come to recognize that such isolation is an illusion, for in fact the most essential systems know no boundaries. There just isn't anywhere the rain ends and the trees begin. And so the future of Rancho Mastatal is our future, in all our hands, everywhere.

In the work I lead elsewhere -- a business called People Power Stations -- I'm applying a global solution, one community at a time, building genuine local marketplaces that participate in sustainable prosperity. The way I look at it, we only succeed if we have local sustainable prosperity everywhere, because this then amounts to global sustainable prosperity. And this is a deep challenge because there are no two places alike, as indeed there are no two leaves identical or any two things alike in nature. The global marketplace has produced a monoculture of pseudo-local marketplaces that are actually just identical hubs of the monolith, interchangeable and thus anathema to nature's plan of sustainability through diversity. But imagine a world filled with unique, living marketplaces.

Still, the fellow who exports vanilla beans can make a place in any one of many such sustainable communities. He doesn't even have to sell his stuff locally, but if he doesn't, then his vanilla plantation will need to be a dispensable part of his local economic/ecological system -- a business that can leave no substantial footprint. My point is that we don't have to give up anything of value to us to enjoy sustainable prosperity, and certainly some of the stuff of global civilization is among the most valuable, such as its art and IT. But we can also have our finger-licking-good franchise, and eat it too, just as long as that doesn't mean a company town that prospers by upsetting the balance.

In contrast, a small mess is starting to collect near the gates of Rancho Mastatal, absorbing tourist dollars in exchange for corporate beer and wooden snakes, building a tourist economy, which is the epitome of our global-enterprise disaster. The reason for this paradigmatic tragedy is the economy stupid. Specifically, it's the illusion that money has value, which generates a scramble for this imaginary tourist wealth. Okay, it's a pretty good illusion, but, in fact, money is nothing in itself, just a promissory note to apply to future acquisition. Consequently, when we root an economy in the money of the global marketplace, we are divested from both the local place and the immediate present. Instead, we seek independent wealth, which is to say we seek independence from the here and now of community. With dollars, I can pick up and go anywhere, anytime, which is sweet, except the consequence is that I need not produce anything of specifically-local value to exchange for that money. And if something has no local value than it has value nowhere, which is to say that it has no value. And to compete with every other junk dealer on the globe I must exploit as irresponsibly as possible, selecting the most vulnerable communities and the deepest forests, to pillage their human and other natural resources.

Now, this might sound like nothing more than a polemic, but in fact it points exactly at a deep solution, which is to create a new kind of money that has real local value. The way we are trying this with People Power Stations is through discounting one or two essential commodities when purchased with our community currency, to create a demand for the local money that permits it to operate alongside the global money. For example, in the poorest regions, water might be discounted, or food; and discounting taxes when paid with local currency is a powerful means to create a local boom in a more developed community, because it compels local sourcing of most commodities and services addressed through the economy-of-scale of taxation; while discounting electricity from the Big Energy utility can transform cities into collections of self-reliant communities by compelling Mr Peabody to source energy locally as he spends the local money back into the neighborhoods from which it came. And so the local money goes 'round and around, funding education, healthcare, etc -- most of what is essential right here and now -- delivering these most essential commodities to those whom need them most while building complex, diverse economies. A world comprised of communities like this is a sustainable world, and perhaps nothing else is. And just maybe it's the richest of all possible worlds.

Our project aims to try this as a new kind of nature preserve, wherein we include man and his marketplaces as a part of the living dynamic. For hundreds of centuries, humans have been splitting farther and farther away from the forest, as we've evolved physically and culturally through competition between each other rather than through cooperation with our neighbors. But we're still of the Earth, of course, and I think we are mostly at our best with our hands in it. This was how we lived as little as five thousand years ago, before the invention of money. And maybe what was right about this old way of life can be recovered for all of us, and not just limited to the micro-economies of places like this Rancho, by using two kinds of money that permit us all the wonders of the open marketplace while recovering all the strengths of the closed ones.

In the end we'll get past this bump, I believe, and it will be remembered as no more than one of the innumerable growing pains in our story, something that happened when man first reached out for the Moon and balanced his ambition with a reach back to the new old world.

Kevin Parcell

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Intern/Guest Gossip: What are Wattles for?

This week as part of Goat Appreciation Week we held a scintillating contest/scientific inquiry with the goal of answering the important question “What are wattles for”? This time we are not talking about the building implement, but rather the two three-inch long fingers of flesh that hang from Mabel’s neck.

After sorting through many interesting and scientific submissions, I have selected a few winners, although it’s important to remember that we are all winners during



Bonnie and Ty

Goat Appreciation Week.

- Wattles are legs without feet...or arms without hands.
- Wattles are for sopping the gravy off your dish.
- Wattles are horns in reverse.
- Wattles are for milking when you don't want any milk.
- Wattles are simply a genetic defect, like neck flab.
- Wattles are for tying kites up in the sky.
- Wattles are for dancing with an extra swing.
- Wattles are to remind human beings we don't know everything.

I was just going to leave things at that, but apparently the contest/scientific inquiry inspired an urgent need among some people around here to find out “for real” what wattles are for. So I trudged over to the Internet machine store to do some learning. For real.

The first thing I learned is that wattles are spelled with ts rather than ds. So now I have to change all my “What are Waddles for?” contest posters, t-shirts, and hats.

The second thing I learned is that many other people are also confused about the purpose of wattles. In fact, according to the Internet machine, the general consensus is that nobody really knows what wattles are for! Wattles are just wattles!

Aside from the “wattles are just wattles” crowd, I did encounter two unlikely theories that are worth noting. First, that wattles indicate success potential for milk producers. Kind of like an extra teat on the neck? But one that doesn't give milk. Which sort of discounts that theory. And second, that wattles are designed to fall off if a wolf attacks a goat at the throat. This I also have to discount after learning from www.dairygoatjournal.com that wattles can in fact grow on parts of the body other than the neck; in their words, the wattles can be “misplaced”. Also, they do not always come in pairs. So basically it seems like the word “wattle” just means an unidentifiable lump on a goat.

So go out, find a goat with a lump, tie up your kites, appreciate the wattles, and go on wondering.

Laura Killingbeck

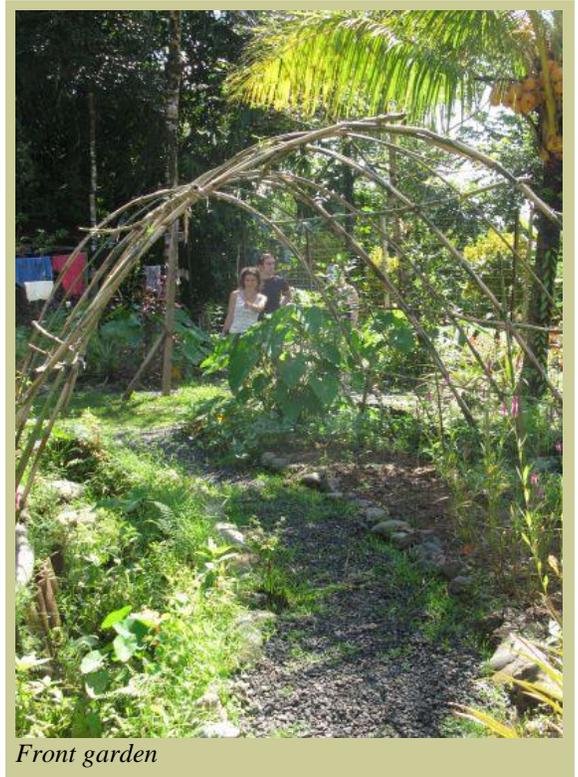
Comida Corner: B Money's Money Pasta Sauce

This one's from Brandon. Check it out.

Ingredients:

1 C. lemon juice
3 avocado peeled chopped
1/2 head garlic peeled
3/4 C. chili pepper flakes or 4 scotch bonnet
chilies with seeds
4 red bell peppers
3 green onions roughly chopped
1 white medium onion cubed
12-15 culantro (sawtooth or Asian cilantro) leaves
1 1/4 C. oil, olive or vegetable
4 large tomatoes
honey
salt and pepper to taste

Combine lemon juice, avocado, garlic, peppers, onions, culantro, oil, and 2 tomatoes in food processor. Combine until all ingredients are combined well. Pour mix into large bowl and add the rest of the tomatoes. Finish blending the tomatoes with hand blender. Add honey until desired heat is reached. Add salt and pepper to taste. Makes enough sauce for 2 large Pyrex dishes.



Futbol Follies: Quiet

There's not much new news on the futbol front as of late as projects, groups and wonderful, restful Sundays have dominated recent weeks here at the Ranch. Basketball has taken over as the main source of cardio recreation these days but that's sure to swing back to games on the big field soon. Enjoy the respite.

Inspirational Impressions: Pink Pangea

Pink Pangea, the community for women travelers, is offering a 12-week online travel-writing program to aspiring female writers who are passionate about international travel, committed to exploring new cultures, and interested in bringing a unique perspective to other women travelers. This is an opportunity to become part of an emerging community of women travelers inspiring others all over the world — while building your career.

For more information contact Jaclyn@pinkpangea.com and visit <http://www.pinkpangea.com/travel-writing-program>

Abrazos,

The Ranch Crew

