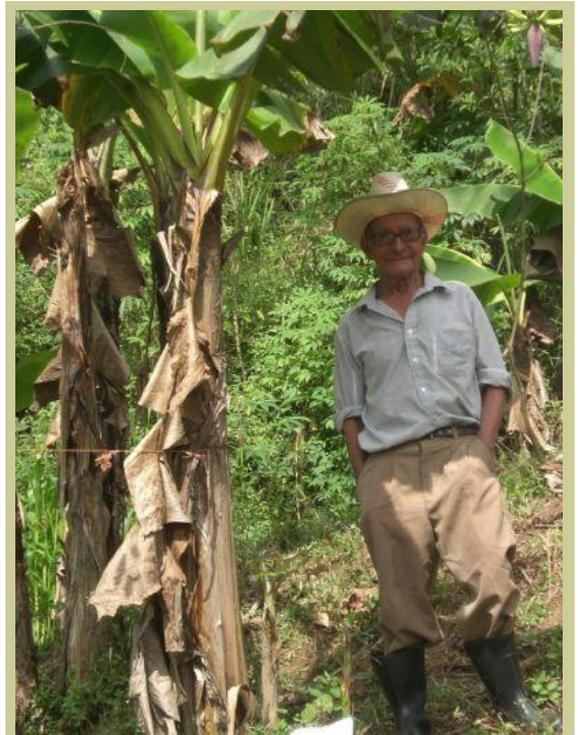


Rancho Mastatal Updates

August/September/October 2011

This one's coming to you straight from Vestal, NY, the home of Tim's mom, Robin's mother-in-law and Sole's grandmother. We decided to combine three months in this edition as we've simply had too much on our plate as of late to get anything out to you any sooner. It's a somewhat "abridged" version with a few borrowed contributions and some creative category shuffling for the same reason. We're thoroughly enjoying our time catching up with everyone in the Northeast as we closely follow the courageous acts taking place across the world. This for me is a time to recharge my batteries and reconnect with family and loved ones but also an opportunity to catch up on politics and important issues taking place in the United States. As the richest, most influential and arguably most destructive country in the world, reintegrating with the news never fails to be a roller coaster ride full of frustration, discontent, struggle, inspiration and hope. I've just finished an incredible book written by Howard Zinn entitled [The People's History of the United States: 1492 to Present](#). If you haven't read it yet, I would encourage you to do so. It speaks to what is happening across the globe right now and offers a roadmap to how we got to where we are as a species and offers suggestions on what we can do to bring about a more equitable and just world.

At the recent [Connecting for Change](#) conference in New Bedford, MA I had the honor to briefly meet and hear Amy Goodman, a progressive and intrepid broadcast journalist and host of [Democracy Now!](#) that I greatly respect. As she finished her eloquent keynote speech on speaking out about political atrocities and taking citizen action she raised her fist while saying in a loud voice "democracy now". My body was overcome with goosebumps as the audience stood up and exploded in applause. Her radio/television program should be an important source of your news as its one of the few media outlets that brings to its listeners the important stories that we'll never find in today's corporate run media. I recently watched an uplifting but sobering talk by activist [Malik Yakini](#) who is working to eliminate racism in our food system. His Detroit-based project is helping turn empty lots into gardens and has inspired thousands to do the same in cities throughout the world. Those of you that have heard of Annie Leonard should be happy to know that her latest video, [The Story of Broke](#), has recently been released and tells a version of the story of our economic problems in terms that everyone can understand. Check it out and support her wonderful efforts. We should all be praising President Obama's recent decision to delay the decision on the Keystone XL Tar Sands Pipeline. For many it has restored hope in our government and has proven that Obama does indeed have a spine. On the heels of that historic decision, Josh Fox, the director of [Gasland](#), is joining forces with Bill McKibben and [350.org](#) as he heads up strong efforts to prevent hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in the [Delaware River Basin](#), the source of drinking water for almost 16 million people including residents of Philadelphia. Fracking is presently one of the most contentious and relevant issues in Broome County where my mother lives. Energy companies are pressuring municipalities, businesses and individuals to open up their land for natural gas exploitation utilizing the industrial process called hydraulic fracturing to gain access to the sub-shale methane. The process is dirty and dangerous and fracturing communities throughout the region. [Sandra Steingraber](#), professor, author, biologist, cancer survivor, ecologist and speaker talks eloquently on the topic if you'd like to learn more. ExxonMobil, the



Moncho

richest corporation in the history of our country, Halliburton, Range Resource, Cabot Oil and Gas, Chesapeake Energy, Goodrich Petroleum, the American Petroleum Institute and others are telling us that without exploiting tar sands and natural gas reserves we'll never achieve energy security or a healthy economy. To counter their greed and lies we should be demanding that our government take subsidies away from big oil and energy companies and invest this money in efforts to advance and implement green technologies that will indeed boost our economy while creating a system that can truly bring us energy security and a cleaner environment. Good economic and solid environmental policies are not mutually exclusive. All of this is of course taking place simultaneously with the numerous inspirational protests taking place throughout the country under the banner of Occupy Wall Street and around the world, especially in the Middle East and Northern Africa. With the top 1% of citizens of the United States now in control of 42% of the wealth; two expensive, destructive and senseless wars in the Middle East; over \$700 billion being spent on national "defense"; a deteriorating environment; catastrophic cancer rates and almost 50 million people in the latest census coming in under the poverty line, the time has come to demand lasting change in our broken political and corporate systems. The amazing solidarity being demonstrated by people of all income levels, ages, religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and genders is unprecedented in my lifetime and providing hope for many of us that were close to losing it. The important social movements of the 60s took place before I was able to comprehend their importance and it's our time to bring back the spirit that for a short time brought about significant change in how we treated one another and viewed big business and government. The time is now for every single one of us to grasp on to an issue that's dear to our hearts and begin the difficult and long work to advance it. Please take action as you think about what 2012 has in store for you and your family. But before then please take a moment and enjoy the newsletter.

This month's update includes:

[**RM Program News:**](#) Arriving in the Rainy Season

[**Building Report:**](#) 2012

[**Conservation Update:**](#) Environmental Services Payment Program

[**Farm Facts:**](#) Tunisian Shakshuka

[**Community Stories:**](#) Economics of Fermentation

[**Intern/Guest Gossip:**](#) Haikus and More

[**Comida Corner:**](#) Chaya Spring Rolls

[**Fútbol Follies:**](#) Tranquilo

[**Inspirational Impressions:**](#) Shelley and Eisenhower

RM Program News: Arriving in the Rainy Season

My driver slammed on the brakes as we came to a stop two feet before the road dropped off abruptly into an avalanche-induced cliff. Eeek. Realizing my own inability to change the situation at that point, I resigned myself to fate's hand and focused on practicing my halting Spanish with my driver. Arriving at Rancho Mastatal, I stepped onto solid ground with a great sigh of relief and greeted the three interns who came to welcome me... and told me that besides themselves, everyone else was en route to or from the hospital. That night I lay awake in bed for some time in the open air of the Hankey House, pondering my fate as the rain's creative mimicry of the sound of footsteps perpetually drawing closer kept me company.



The rain will come down

photo by Anne Dzakovic

I awoke in the midst of a rainforest alive with the sounds of the life within it. All concerns of the day before melted away and I reveled in the sight of the light breaking gently through the forest onto the gleaming cedar floors of the Hankey. Two weeks have now passed and I find myself

surprised with new beauty every day. A certain mental invigoration has been given to me by this environment, which -while yet still composed of the same large categories of trees and frogs and terrain as I have before known- is nevertheless entirely transformed, with different species and varieties of each. It is beautiful, and it is good to be here within it.

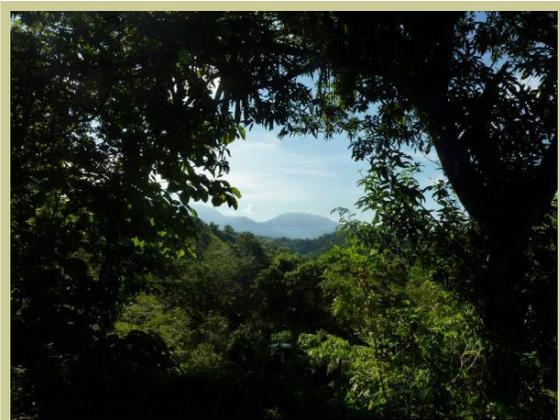
--- *Linden (current volunteer)*

Building Report: 2012

The 2012 building docket is starting to fill up as we debate what to undertake in the world of construction in Mastatal this year. Atop the list of course is the continuation of the Community Learning and Sharing Center (CLSC) in the center of the town of Mastatal. With the frame up and roof on we'll be concentrating on the wall systems, plastering, detail work and furniture and will be striving to fill the space with books and other resources next year. On site at the Ranch there's talk of building a new farm kitchen out on the goat slope so that we can more efficiently manage our milk, cheese, fruit harvests and the culling of our hens. The structure would also be home to a double bed and common space for folks that spend time on that part of the Ranch. It may be powered by a new solar installation and our second biodigester. We're also seriously contemplating the addition of another small cabin in our continuing efforts to provide comfortable space to returning guests and interns. We have a few potential spots picked out and are just now beginning the process to select the best space. We've added an earth building workshop and a bamboo construction course to the 2012 calendar and will again be hosting Yestermorrow. All of this alongside other unmentioned projects should provide fodder for another exciting year on the building front.



*Ty and Vinicio on Raising Day
photo by Maxine Chapman*



Through the trees

Conservation Update: Environmental Services Payment Program

Taxing oil imports to better the environment seems to make a lot of sense to many of us but has proven quite a controversial topic to some and outrageous to others. Fortunately for us, the planet and many other landowners that are enrolled in Costa Rica's Environmental Services Payment Program, the government of Costa Rica has supported this progressive program for well over a decade. Each year we receive cash from an organization named [FONAFIFO](#) who manages money given to them by the Costa Rican government. The government raises this money via oil taxation and other means. The money is then distributed to organizations and individuals who can prove that they are preserving standing rainforest or reforesting

degraded land. This mitigates global warming, creates habitat for animals, and provides future resources for our kids. The incentive is significant and for us represents an important source of income and allows us to continue doing the good work that we do. This strategy is being copied by other countries around the world as it proves its worth in the list of actions that some governments are taking to try and create a better world.

Farm Facts: Tunisian Shakshuka

We are sending you two recipes in this edition, the first, right here, was brought to us by a recent wonderful intern named Lissa Eidelman. Enjoy! It's a keeper.

Eggs Poached With Spicy Tomatoes

Originally by Mohamed (a farmer lost in the modern world)

Passed along by Lissa Eidelman

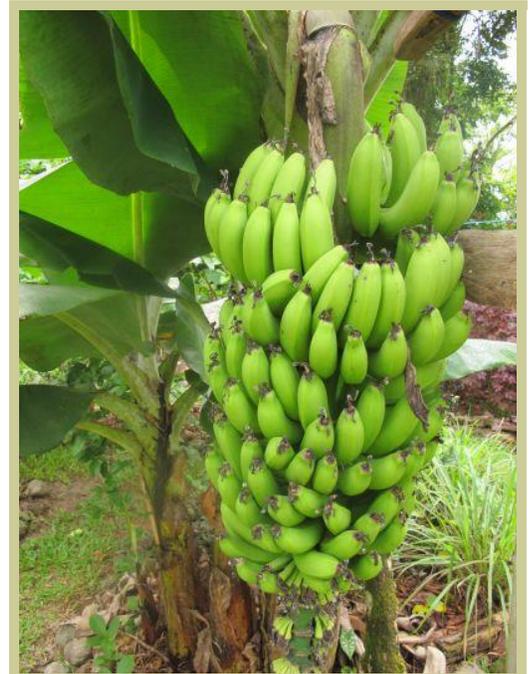
Ingredients:

- Generous olive oil
- 1/2 onion, sliced thin crescents
- 1 ts coriander
- 1/2 ts cayenne Pepper
- 1/2 ts cumin
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 4 - 7 tomatoes, cut in wedges
- 1 - 2 jalapenos peppers, minced
- 5 - 10 eggs
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Process:

1. Heat oil in a skillet and sauté onions and jalapeños for 5 minutes.
2. Add tomatoes, garlic, and spices and cook over medium heat for 15 - 20 minutes, while stirring occasionally.
3. When the tomatoes have lost about half of their form and the sauce seems developed, add salt and pepper and check seasoning.
4. Then, gently crack eggs over the mixture. Sprinkle a bit of salt and pepper onto the eggs.
5. Simmer, covered or uncovered, about 3 - 7 minutes or until egg whites are set, but the yolks are still runny.

Buen Provecho!



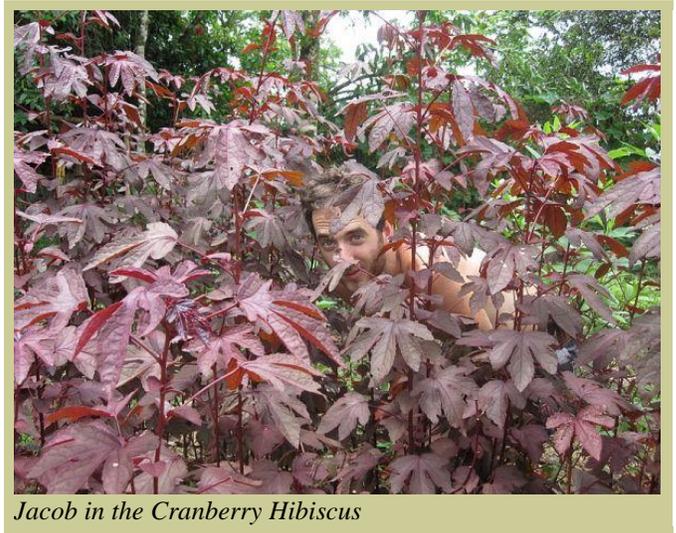
Bananas

Community Stories: Economics of Fermentation

This one is borrowed and quite long but excellent if like us you're interested in fermentation and local economies.

By Charles Eisenstein. Originally appeared in Wise Traditions Magazine.

My brother John and I share a hobby of brewing lacto-fermented sodas – root beers and ginger ales – which we share among family and friends and occasionally sell at health food conventions. Often we are asked, "Where can I buy this?" Our answer is "Nowhere." Unless you are lucky enough to run into us at the Weston A. Price Conference, chances are you will never see lacto-fermented soda for sale anywhere.



Jacob in the Cranberry Hibiscus

Our personal reasons for not "expanding our operation" are deeply relevant to the conflict between craft and commerce in food production. Usually I make soda in 5-gallon batches. The process is fairly time-consuming, but it fits in well with other chores and there is no obligation to brew a certain amount at a certain time. Since I enjoy brewing several times a week, I produce a surplus – far more than our own family can drink. To expand to a commercial level, though, would mean changes in the way I brew, because as it stands I can only net about \$20 per hour of labor. To be commercially viable, I would need to exploit efficiencies of scale by buying better equipment: a bottle-washing machine, bottler, larger fermentation vessels, etc. Then it is no longer a kitchen hobby; it is a business that must consider shipping, legal licensing, labeling laws, sanitation regulations, accounting, etc.

The Compromises of Commerce

So far so good. Some people are naturally inclined towards business. There are more and more small foodcrafting businesses these days, and I am happy to pay a premium for their products. But it is more than a matter of hobby vs. business – there are certain compromises one must make to bring production past a certain critical volume. The critical volume for fermented foods is especially low, because the product is alive and working. Lactofermented soda keeps fermenting in the bottle, for instance, leading to foaming and spraying when you open it, or even dangerous exploding bottles, if you leave them out long enough. There is a good reason that mass-marketed soft drinks are dead. In fact it is a necessity in the context of national brands, centralized production, and mass distribution. To change the way food is produced and processed inescapably demands changes in the way it is distributed and sold.

The compromises one would have to make to sell fermented soda on an economically viable scale are constant refrigeration and scary warning labels, or pasteurization, or plastic bottles. None are acceptable to us, for ecological and health reasons.

Similar compromises apply to most of the fermented foods that have survived the last century of food industrialization. Pickles and relish are no longer fermented at all, but preserved in vinegar and sterilized with heat in the canning process. Wine is treated with sodium metabisulfite before fermentation to destroy wild bacteria and yeasts that make the results less predictable. Beer is usually pasteurized or microfiltered to kill or remove living yeast. Yogurt survives, but it just isn't as good after the first day; the same is true of bread. Sauerkraut is usually pasteurized. To be sure there are niche brands, available in health-food stores, which are still living foods, but then freezing or refrigeration is necessary. This is rather ironic, since a major motivation

for fermenting foods in the first place was to preserve them, in the days before refrigeration.

To make our soda with pleasure and without compromise limits us to a production level of ten to twenty gallons a week. This is sufficient to supply perhaps five or ten households. From this realization, a new (or rather very old) economic model of food production suggests itself.

When Money Reigns Supreme

Anyone who has tried to incorporate all the principles of Nourishing Traditions into their diet will find that it is almost a full-time job. If you want to grind your own flour, bake your own bread, make your own yogurt, your own soaked-and-slow-dried nuts, your own relishes and chutneys, your own bone stock, your own sprouts, your own kombucha and ginger beer... this is more than the typical beleaguered house husband can handle. One wonders how they did it in the old days. The answer is, They didn't! For one thing, before the age of the suburbs and the automobile, extended families lived together in the same house, and as often as not, next door from cousins and uncles. Four people cooking for 16 people is a lot easier than one person cooking for four. Moreover, communities were small and close-knit, and there was probably some degree of specialization and sharing among households.

I don't want to make ginger beer for hundreds of people, most of them strangers, but I would be delighted to make it for a handful of other families whom I know well. Maybe one of them would make fresh-ground slow-rise sourdough bread for me (I never could get that to work). Maybe another would supply me with chutney and fish sauce. Maybe another makes soy sauce. Another brews beer; another wine from their own grapes. Maybe another neighbor has a 30-gallon cauldron for making beef stock; another, a 30-gallon pickling crock. For most traditional foods, the optimum level of production is more than for the nuclear family, but less than what is considered economically viable in today's money economy.

Money can facilitate exchange among friends and neighbors, but in essence money is an anonymous form of energy – almost by its definition as a universal medium of exchange. Among friends and neighbors, the usual laws of market economics do not apply. You don't seek to maximize profit. You don't raise your prices to the maximum just because you can. You are not doing it for the money; you are doing it for your family and for the neighbors. In an economy of reciprocation and social exchange; that is, in an economy that is not primarily a money economy, "economic efficiency" takes on a different meaning.

The more anonymous the customer, the more money stands as the sole motivating force. In today's multi-level, automated, and standardized food production & distribution system, the consumer is almost totally anonymous to the farmer, the commodity buyer, the processing factory, and even the grocer. There is no reason to care about the wholesomeness of the product, except to the extent necessary to conform to whatever regulations are enforced, and whatever the public might find out about. No reason? Oh pardon me, I forgot about altruism. Yes of course, a company might make products better than they need to be out of a abstract altruism, but when the (very real) pressures of market competition come to bear, such altruism quickly degenerates into sloganeering and PR. Some version of "caring about the health of the consumer" surely appears in the mission statements of all the major food corporations, including the most egregious violators of the public trust. In other words, it is hard to genuinely care about someone you don't even know. Compassion in the abstract is almost always a self-deception. Much more reliable is the goodwill and mutual sense of responsibility that exists among neighbors who are bound together into a community, their good intentions enforced by social pressure and the intimacy of long association.

In many areas of life, social mechanisms of enforcing responsible behavior have atrophied as communities have disintegrated. These have been replaced by legal mechanisms. The old mechanisms of gossip, ostracism, reputation, etc. have lost their power. No matter how much your neighbors dislike you, your money is still good at Wal-Mart. In today's anonymous society, we are little dependent on our communities, which have become mere collections of buildings. More and more, we are connected to our neighbors by proximity only. The

increasing legalism and litigiousness of America is a symptom of unraveling communities, weakening connections. On a most basic level, we no longer make food for each other. All phases of food production, from the farm to the kitchen, are increasingly the province of strangers who are paid to do it.

You cannot pay someone to care. You can pay someone to act as if they care; you can pay them to follow meticulous guidelines; but you can't make them really care.

Wholesomeness of food is more than a matter of which methods and processes are used to bring it from soil to table. When caring is codified, the code loses much of its meaning, especially under the influence of powerful corporations. The letter persists while the spirit departs. Many of the best, most conscientious farmers I know eschew the organic certification, because they know that food produced according to the letter of the organic code need not be consonant with the spirit that gave birth to organic farming in the first place.

Toward a More Personal Food Economy

To genuinely return to our "wise traditions" in food, farming, and the healing arts, I believe we must begin to dissociate ourselves from the money economy and return to older models of reciprocity. As with anything, such an effort must start with you, personally, as an individual. For starters, price must not be your primary consideration in making a purchase. The consumer's desire to find the cheapest price is a crucial link in the whole crazy chain. The supermarkets compete on price, their suppliers compete on price; the food processors are compelled to choose lower costs over healthier processes; the farmers are enslaved to commodity markets that compel them to cut raise productivity (measured in dollars) to the maximum just to survive. Commodity markets do not care about the farmer's well-being. They operate according to price, and price alone. If that price means 16-hour days and bare survival for the farmer, so be it. If it means 16-hour days and bankruptcy for the farmer, so be it. The market, in which sentimentality is an obstacle to good business, does not care.

Compassion usually only extends as far as the eye can see. We live, most of us, oblivious to such things as world hunger, deforestation, and toxic waste – oblivious, that is, until it comes a'knocking. Our response to a starving person at the door is different from our response to a starving person in Africa, who we know exists, in theory, but who isn't in our faces. How could we expect consumers, then, to really care about farmers, who are separated by layer after layer of distribution, processing, and packaging? And how could we expect farmers to really care about the wholesomeness and goodness of their food, when the beneficiaries are similarly remote, and when the tangible rewards hinge not on goodness but on cost efficiency?

Social connections, and human contact, are the ally of good intentions. It is easy to participate in an exploitative food system when you cannot see the victims. But it goes against human nature, and rational self-interest, to victimize someone with whom you have a continuing relationship of mutual dependency. In the arena of food, we put it this way: "Social connections and human contact are the ally of good food."

Vast economies of scale are incompatible with personal relationships. What personal relationships can there be when you have 10,000 customers and 200 suppliers (or 10 suppliers employing 200 laborers)? At vast economies of scale, of necessity, standardized specifications replace relationships of trust.

Government regulations governing food quality, toxic ingredients, etc. can only go so far. When food is a primarily a commodity, powerful forces will always be at work to deceive the public for the sake of profit. Usually this deception won't be intentional; it will be the sum total of the economic decisions, wishful thinking, unquestioned habits, and skewed scientific research priorities of food companies, farmers, consumers, and scientists. It is tempting to look for enemies, but the conspiracy we face is one without conspirators. The problem goes deeper than that, to the way we treat food. Certainly new regulations can be beneficial, but it is an uphill battle when food is a commodity.

An alternative path exists: food should not be primarily a commodity. Food is a gift of God's Good Earth, for

which all religious traditions teach gratitude. To subject it to the economic regime of the lowest bidder is to desecrate the gift and insult the Giver. For most of human history, the sharing of food was a significant social act, cementing ties between friends and kin, showing welcome to strangers. Today it has become an anonymous act of commerce.

Other people in other times would no doubt have thought it exceedingly strange, if not downright obscene, for total strangers to grow, process, and even cook nearly all one's food.

The Proper Role of Money

That is not to say that food should never be bought. Money has its rightful role, even among friends, as an aid to fairness and a means of support. What I am saying, rather, is that the sharing of food should be part of a personal relationship. Money may be involved, but the profit motive should be secondary. In my economic relationships with the local farmers I know, I am happy to pay them a fair price, in hopes that they will be prosperous. My sentiment is partly selfish, because I know that if they are prosperous, they will continue to provide me with good food. But also I simply don't feel good about eating food that came through the devaluing of another human being's labor, especially when I know that human being personally. When a personal relationship exists between food supplier and food consumer, then bargaining becomes a process of each party coming to understand the other's circumstances to find a mutually fair price, rather than a heartless and shameless exercise of getting the best possible price, which in economics is called "maximizing utility" and in commonsense language is called greed.

Let me also add that the difference between food produced by someone you know and shared through means that respects both producer and consumer, and food grown, processed, and sold by strangers working for faceless corporations, is a difference you can taste. The body responds differently. Food given in fair and respectful exchange by someone you know and trust is more nourishing. I doubt anyone will ever discover a shred of scientific proof for this, but I invite you to verify it for yourself.

In working with my bacterial soda culture, I sometimes get the feeling that the bacteria itself doesn't want to be sold. Similarly, I feel that sauerkraut wants to live in a barrel in the basement. Before you dismiss this as a flight of fancy, consider the uncanny resistance of truly wholesome food to mass production and mass distribution. Most fresh foods, for example, have a limited shelf life, which can only be extended by killing the food through processing, or putting it in suspended animation by refrigeration or freezing. The former response diminishes its healthfulness; the latter has environmental costs. (Also I never have believed the freezing fully preserves the healthfulness of food. It tastes less vibrant, even if all the enzymes are supposedly intact.) Other preservation methods, namely dehydration and fermentation, might arguably work for mass production and distribution, but even here there are problems with storage and shelf life (food companies' use of preservatives and pasteurization is not entirely gratuitous). Besides, such foods cannot account for the bulk of one's year-round diet.

In production as well, true organic farming that builds the soil, doesn't depend on large external inputs, doesn't pollute the environment, and doesn't exploit labor is again incompatible with large-scale production of crops or livestock. The compromises farmers make to achieve the economies of scale necessary for survival in the commodity economy are, again, not entirely gratuitous. No one builds a 5000-hog concrete hog barn out of aesthetic delight, devotion to animal husbandry, or desire to nourish one's neighbors with good food. The connection between fresh, wholesome food and localism is not an incidental one.

When people ask if they can buy our soda in the future, we usually say, "No, but we'll teach you how to make it." We envision a society where every household has a speciality, be it soda or sauerkraut, soap or stock, bread or soy sauce, that they make in quantities sufficient for five or ten households – precisely the quantity that maximizes efficiency without compromising quality. (It is not much more work to make ten gallons of soda than it is to make one, but to make fifty gallons is an enterprise of an entirely different order.) We envision a

society also where farmers are personally acquainted with the people who eat their produce, or perhaps, for certain products, linked through one degree of separation. This is workable, because almost as if by design, the ideal size for a sustainably operated mixed family farm is sufficient to meet the food needs of 20 or 30 families. Of course, farms might specialize to some degree, so each family might patronize three or four farms; even so, this calculates out to a manageable number of people per farm, few enough that the farmer can know each personally. Personally I believe that true sustainability requires even smaller farms, and more farmers. Maybe almost everyone not living in a city should be a part-time farmer, at least to the extent of tending a vegetable garden or keeping a few chickens.

In such a society, money alone would not guarantee good food. Moving into a new community, you would need to get to know people, build connections, find your niche. Moving to a new community would be a big deal, as indeed it was in yesterday's small towns and neighborhoods, more demanding than simply finding where the supermarkets and superstores are located. There would be more sharing in life. We would be more dependent on our neighbors, less dependent on strangers living thousands of miles away, and less dependent on corporations governed by the profit motive. Food would recapture its ancient role of social bonding. This would, I believe, be a much happier society than our current one, with its alienation, loneliness, and rootlessness.

If this seems a fantasy, or the required transformation too daunting, remember that change only need happen one choice at a time. In fact, it happens no other way. If you are a commodity farmer, reconnection with the consumer can be gradual, guided one decision at a time by an intention or a vision. One farm family that I know and admire well provides a good example of this. Even as they continue to sell bulk milk to Organic Valley, they also sell raw dairy products from the farm and through a friend's CSA. So far the bulk sales are what pay the bills, but the direct-to-consumer sales are growing, and promise one day to enable them to keep fewer cows, work not so hard, be prosperous, and have the pleasure of providing good food to people they know as real human beings. What, after all, is the purpose of life if not to do good work and do it well? To maximize one's financial benefits is a dispiriting way of life.

Authentic Change is More than a Brand Switch

For the consumer, it is essential to realize that positive dietary change involves more than choosing product A over product B from the supermarket shelves, or supplement pill A over supplement pill B. If health may be defined as wholeness, then it is to be expected that a move toward healthier food will involve a move towards wholeness in other areas of life as well. Healthy eating is not so simple as a brand switch, because mass distribution and mass marketing generally rests on the same foundation of ill health, where money has exceeded its proper facilitative role to become an end in itself, supplanting other forms of human relationship. The pathological state of food economics inevitably expresses itself in the food. Checking ingredient lists in packaged foods is important, but it only goes so far. Seek instead to buy food from real people that you feel good about.

And yes, be prepared to pay a little more. Today's ridiculously low food prices are an insult to the farmer and an insult to the food. Most of our food dollar today goes for the processing, packaging, shipping, advertising, etc., not for the raw ingredients. So even if you pay a premium for fresh foods direct from the farmer, the eventual effect will be to reduce your consumption of processed foods and restaurant food, and therefore your monetary expenditures. Don't compare farm-bought free range eggs with store-bought eggs and conclude you can't afford to pay triple the price. You must compare the entire lifestyle that goes along with it.

In an age where nearly every social function has entered the realm of money, it is no wonder that we are chronically fixated on getting the best price. Not too long ago, such things as food, shelter, and clothing were produced by one's own family, and rarely bought and sold. In many places it was still true in the 20th century. Writing about the Ladakh of India, Helena Norbert-Hodge observes that before the road was built connecting them to the outside, money was used but rarely, for such things as jewelry. The necessities of life were shared

or exchanged through other social mechanisms. Money was not important, because it bought nothing important. Today the opposite is true: everything costs money. Even such intimate functions as housecleaning, cooking, and child care are given over to paid outsiders. In today's society, unlike ever before, without money one has nothing. One is completely dependent on money to live. Or so it appears. No wonder, then, the omnipresent dread of my students at Penn State that they will be unable to find a job and "make a living." When I poll them about their main motivation to attend college – to get a good-paying job, or to learn things – about 90% acknowledge the former. Their major life decisions are determined by money. Their thrall to it is nearly complete. And they are not to be blamed for this, in a world where money has usurped most other modes of economic relationship.

People complain they are unable to afford real food. Why is "fake food" so cheap? Because it has become subject to the economic efficiencies that govern any other commodity. But this is precisely the same reason – that it (and all other necessities) is a commodity – that it has become something we can afford or not afford. There is therefore a deep connection between the insecurity that compels people to choose the lowest price, and the fact that bad food is cheap. The system is self-reinforcing, a vicious circle. When life's necessities become monetized, money becomes a life necessity.

If I make soda for you, usually it is because you are my friend, relative, neighbor, or guest. I might let you pay for it, especially if you are a friend, but just as likely it will be a gift. My soda contains something of my essence; it is too good, and too personal, to be sold for the sake of profit alone. To trade something personal for something anonymous is a disrespect to the giver, just as the perversion of the gift of food into just another commodity, is to disrespect the good earth from whence it comes. It is thus an insult to your own labor to sell its fruits for mere money alone. If you do that, the spirit will be dissatisfied. The beautiful soda is gone, and all I have is money for it? How common! That is why, along with the money, should come the joy of providing something good to others. For me, this only works when I can see and know these others.

Why even make soda in the first place? Why be a farmer? If it's for the money, there are better professions. In such things, the proper role of money is to enable one to do Good Work.

I must emphasize again that I don't advocate abandoning money altogether, just keeping it in its proper place. Specialization is fine when it comes to the technical products of industrialized society, but in the intimate realms of life, specialization has run amok and stolen something of our humanity. Food is one such realm. Here we need less specialization and more sharing, more producers and fewer middlemen. An anonymous, commodity-based food system is inconsistent with fresh, living, wholesome food. Of necessity it impoverishes the farmer, sickens the consumer, and ruins the land. As a consumer, to begin withdrawing from this system will mean paying more, initially, for certain foodstuffs, and spending more time in the kitchen. The ultimate result, though, will be to enrich you. By withdrawing, partially, from the money economy in this one area of life; that is, by basing economic decisions on something other than the best price, you will quite naturally become richer in those things that money cannot buy. And, almost as if by magic, you will become materially more wealthy too – not because

Intern/Guest Gossip:Haikus and More

Haikus from the Permaculture Design Class

Villa Vanilla
Masking scents of compost bliss
Like drugstore perfume

So curvey swirvey
Lets broadcast many seeds over you
To meditate in

Haikus from University in Washington - Tacoma

Its time to go home
Had so many adventures
I will miss you all

Soft mist in the trees
La Cangreja looms above
To wish me farewell

You know you live at Rancho Mastatal when.....

- You have a rash on your face, chest, and arms but they are all different....when you live there long enough, you don't get any rashes
- Farting improves your street cred
- You wear soccer socks and don't play soccer
- You find spiders the size of your head
- You mix rum with ferments
- You get excited about moldy clothes that are underneath the cat castle
- You visit the meth lab daily
- You judge when to harvest the composting toilet based on the heat on your butt
- You consider showers hot when the water is slightly warmer than air temperature
- You get so dirty that you are clean
- You eat kefir ice cream as a snack
- You have a meeting to talk about the next three meetings that you need to have
- You spend all your money on chocolate and beer and rum
- The number of holes on the bottom of your crocs equals the number of holes on top
- [P-styles](#) are prized commodities
- Poop enters the conversation at least once a day, especially during a meal

Compiled by Maxine Chapman, Simon Evers, Alisha Goldstein, Rachel Jackson, Amy Metsker, and Sarah Sullivan



Playing upstream in the Rio Negro

Comida Corner: Chaya Spring Rolls

In making spring rolls, you can really stuff them with whatever you want, assuming you cut them vertically and are able to roll them in whatever wrapper you chose to use. Below is what we use at the Ranch with the ingredients we have, but feel free to get creative and add local flavors and spices. This recipe makes about 10 rolls.

Ingredients:

- 20 large Chaya leaves for wrapping, boiled for 5 minutes
Alternative option: Spring roll wrappers (soaked in warm water before you use them to roll)
- 2 red sweet peppers, each cut vertically into 10 long strips (20 total)
- 6 eggs, beaten and cooked into a thick omelet, then cut into 10 long strips
Alternative option: Fried or baked tofu strips
- 2 avocados, each cut into 10 thin wedges (20 total)
- 2 carrots and any types of greens, finely grated together into the consistency of coleslaw
- Bean thread noodles (We do not have these here, but you can usually find them at natural food stores or anywhere with a good selection of different ethnic foods. They need to be briefly boiled and shocked in ice water before added to the rolls. Rice noodles can also be used, but aren't quite as delicious.)
- Dipping sauce: You can get creative with the type of sauce you use. It goes well with some kind of sweet sauce such as plum sauce, duck sauce, or any kind of chutney mixed with some kind of savory/spicy sauce such as a soy sauce-based sauce, red chili sauce, or spicy peanut sauce.

Process:

- Interlock two Chaya leaves together with stems facing out to make a large round/oval wrapping surface.
- In center of leaves, lay the following ingredients together vertically: 2 slices of red pepper, 1 strip of egg, 2 slices avocado, 1-2 spoon fulls of mixed greens/carrot slaw. *Make sure to not overfill your leaves, or you will not be able to roll them. There should be at least an inch of leaf around your ingredients.*
- Roll Chaya leaves around ingredients in the same manner you would roll a burrito.

Serve with one sweet and one savory dipping sauce.



Frog in garden on Chaya



Futbol Follies: Tranquilo

After the big victory a few months back, it's been mostly quiet on the *fútbol* front as Mastatal experiences its heaviest rains of the year.

The men's and women's teams are tentatively scheduled to start competition in a tournament in La Vasconia in December. We'll keep you posted up on that and more as we move closer to the start of the new season.

Inspirational Impressions: Shelley and Eisenhower

"Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number!
Shake your chains to earth, like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many; they are few!"

--- *Percy Bysshe Shelley*

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched,
every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a
theft from those who hunger and are not fed."

--- *Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Abrazos,

The Ranch Crew



Gerardo - Farmer, Basketweaver, Medicine Man