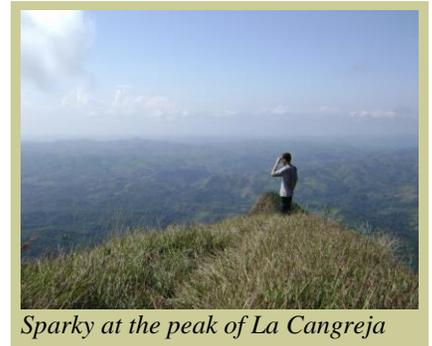


Rancho Mastatal Updates

October/November 2010

Sorry for the delay in bringing you this edition of the Ranch newsletter. Visits to family and friends, caretaking our little one, ongoing Ranch and MCF and other work, and of course a little play have all contributed to a significant postponement in getting this out to the masses. We're in the midst of wrapping up another stateside visit and will soon return to our home in Costa Rica. We're looking forward to what's shaping up to be our busiest season ever. We spent a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday at Tim's mom's house with 30 family members and friends but will be departing before the rest of the festivities descend upon us. We've had the pleasure of experiencing plenty of snow prior to our departure, something quite special for Sole and fun for all of us. As usual, we'll be spending the end of the year celebrations in Mastatal. We want to wish you all a wonderful holiday season and the best in the arriving year. As much as we've enjoyed our stay, it's time to get our hands dirty and back in to our numerous projects down south. The hardest part about leaving is saying goodbye to our amazing families. They allow us the luxury of warm, comfortable beds, delicious food, important advice, priceless legal and financial counsel, fabulous company and most importantly a boundless quantity of love. We are truly fortunate to have this to come back to every year. This stay zoomed by faster than any other that I can remember which has us thinking about adding a few more weeks on to our stay next year. And though still a dream, a US-based farm project to add to the mix still intrigues us. In the meantime, we've got our work cut out for us during the upcoming season. And right now, I've got 4 inches of snow to shovel off of my mom's driveway. Enjoy the beautiful winter months and hope to see you in Mastatal soon.



Sparky at the peak of La Cangreja

This month's update includes:

[RM Program News](#): HPU Visit

[Building Report](#): New Online Store

[Conservation Update](#): Cookbook Preview

[Farm Facts](#): Thank You Caretakers

[Community Stories](#): Connecting for Change 2010

[Intern/Guest Gossip](#): Will

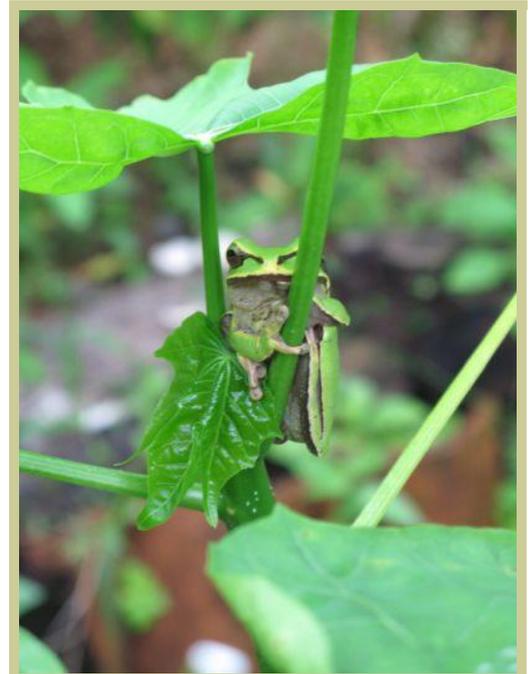
[Comida Corner](#): Banana Beer

[Fútbol Follies](#): Gearing Up for New Season

[Inspirational Impressions](#): Noam

RM Program News: *HPU Visit*

ANGELA COSTANZA returned to the Ranch in August of 2010 with a small yet wonderful group from [Hawaii Pacific University](#) for a week of community service and environmental work in Mastatal. LAURA, MATTHEW, FAYE and BECCA made up the fabulous crew this year and left quite the impression in the short time that they were with us. They spent their stay in the forests of La Cangreja and in the community of Mastatal learning and contributing to our sustainability efforts. A few of the female students donned uniforms for the Mastatal girl's soccer team on Sunday and all of the students returned a few days later to enjoy one of rural Costa Rica's main draws, *el baile*. They were a true pleasure to host at the Ranch and we're looking forward to HPU's return next year. Thanks to Angela for all of her invaluable work and dedication over the years. She's been one of Mastatal's staunchest supporters since her first visit to our community in 2003. Mahalo.



Frog in garden on Chaya

Building Report: *New Online Store*

The Ranch has finally launched it's Online Store! Our friend, staunch Ranch supporter and talented Webmaster DELFINO CORNALI recently built the Ranch an integrated Internet shop as part of our ever-improving website. It is now live and just in time for the holidays. We are currently selling Rancho Mastatal organic and natural dye t-shirts and the [Canta No Llore: The Songs of Rancho Mastatal](#) CD in addition to taking pre-orders for the Ranch cookbook. Yes, you read that right. The first edition of the [Buen Provecho: The Recipes of Rancho Mastatal](#) cookbook will be available in a few short months. Please take a look at the [storefront page](#) and if you'd like to support our efforts and/or the efforts of the Mastate Charitable Foundation, please pick something up for yourself, a family member or a friend. We'll be adding more items to the store in the coming months. Thank you again Delfino for designing and constructing a fabulous store and website. The latter has been our link to the world as well as our lifeline. We wish you all a wonderful holiday season. Abrazos.



Rancho Business Card

photo by Michelle King

Conservation Update: Cookbook Preview

Some of you may be wondering what a cookbook has to do with conservation. To understand, use your imagination and read a draft of the introduction of our soon-to-be-released and long-awaited cookbook.

Buen Provecho: The Recipes of Rancho Mastatal - Introduction

We opened our doors on November 1, 2001 with the hope of providing a space where individuals could come to learn about the importance of living more responsibly while offering an important economic injection to

the small community where we decided to call home. Since that momentous day, on the heels of some eventful weeks traversing the American West and much of Central America in our two trusty Toyotas, the Ranch has evolved into an organism that has touched the lives of thousands of people in ways that have inspired them to become better citizens of our world. We currently host workshops in an array of areas such as wilderness medicine, renewable energy, natural building, and Permaculture and annually receive hundreds of dynamic middle school, high school, college and university students who come to learn about responsible community development, the importance of the world's rainforests, and how to tread lighter on Mother Earth. The bustling Ranch environment has been a laboratory of social betterment and learning while playing a critical role in the financial improvement of this little corner of Central America. We work hard and play even harder as we endeavor to strike a balance that allows us to be both compassionate and happy while laboring to improve the state of our world's affairs. The pervasive exchange of wisdom, creativity, guidance and love that takes place at the Ranch is what helps to drive us to be good denizens of our surroundings. But with that said few would doubt that it's the amazing cuisine that flows out of the Ranch's kitchen that truly inspires, fuels and allows it all to happen. Without the healthy, mouthwatering, homemade food that magically appears out of our small kitchen three times a day, I would now be writing a much different story.

Robin insisted from the moment that we passed through the Ranch's gates that we would provide our guests with scrumptious, wholesome food at almost any cost. Our first Ranch project ever was to build a cob oven made from materials harvested and amassed in Mastatal. The sand was gathered and sifted at the Quebrada Grande, the rock hauled from its swift waters, the clay excavated from William's father-in-law's farm in Salitrales, the straw collected from Chepo's rice harvest, and the manure gathered fresh from the buttocks of Tino's cows. With the help of our first volunteers, Robin industriously hand-laid the stone foundation. We then began mixing the collected ingredients for the oven cavity and there commenced our love affair with cob. We've been mixing mud ever since, but that story will have to wait for another time. In a matter of days the oven began to take form and throughout the first year it was one of the focal points of our efforts. Since then, it has been instrumental in nourishing Ranch guests with a weekly dose of bagels, breads, pizzas, pitas and roasted vegetables. Hardly a week has passed since its completion



Some of Robin's famously fabulous bread, straight from Mastatal's earthen oven

when one could not pass by the oven and become mesmerized by its fiery glow. And then of course be bowled over a few hours later when partaking in the leavened treasures that it had helped produce.

Food is the centerpiece of life at the Ranch. It brings us together and sustains us thrice daily. Everyone that spends time with us can be comforted after a well-earned night's rest or a hard morning's or afternoon's work by knowing that soon they will be sitting down to a delectable, filling and life-giving communal meal. And as is so often the case during Ranch meals, the conversation can be as stimulating as the culinary spread. It is commonly a magical combination.

Over the years we've succeeded in building what we consider an amazing culinary infrastructure. With the help of goats, chickens, pets, the biodigester, compost piles, composting toilets, bulk purchases, and creative leftover dishes nothing goes to waste. With the aid of our gardens, orchards, forests, and neighboring farmers we reap the earth's bounty. And with the dedication of our local staff, interns and volunteers, we convince people that cooking with fresh, local ingredients and a bit of love can provide intense happiness for both those preparing the dishes and those eating them. We continually strive to improve our kitchen systems and hope to someday procure all of our ingredients and cooking gas from our immediate region. The culmination of our almost decade long tropical journey in food production and preparation is now sitting in your hands. We trust that you'll enjoy what you find inside. And we encourage you to improve on the recipes that you come across and to experiment with or without measuring devices and the exact ingredients found within. We all have to eat and most of us want to eat well, so why not make cooking healthy food an integral part of your life. It promises to enhance your life irrevocably.

We have countless people to thank for helping us with this publication. So many in fact that I wouldn't even know where to begin. Nevertheless, without the help of a few specific individuals, this book would never have come to fruition. Thank you KAREN WATSON, BRIAN O'ROURKE, DESA VAN LAARHOVEN, KATTIA HERNANDEZ PEREZ, LAURA BADILLA MURILLO, ROXANA BADILLA MURILLO, NATE SANDERS and ANDREA LAWSON. Other specific acknowledgements will have to wait for the second edition.

Lastly, we simply want to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has passed through our doors to contribute to our work and the well being of our community. As much of a challenge as it's been at times, we have lived a blessed life in Mastatal thanks to all of you. Gracias a ustedes, a la madre tierra, y buen provecho!

Grandes abrazos,

Robin, Timo, Solé and Pico
December 2010

Farm Facts: *Thank You Caretakers*

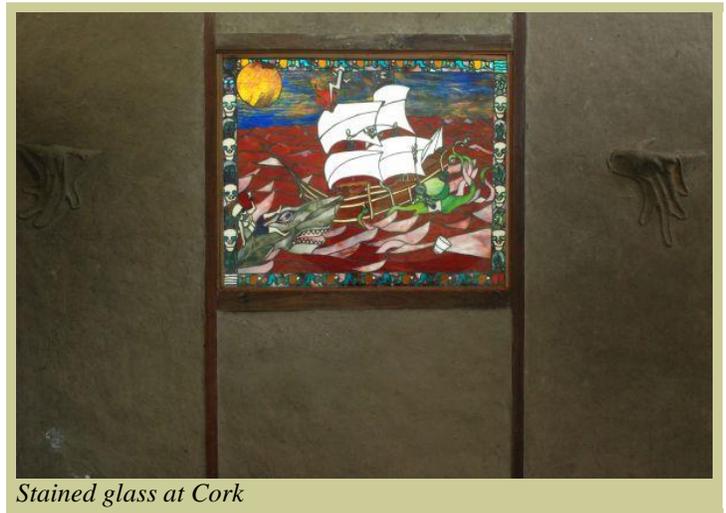
The Ranch's living systems have been tended to by our amazing caretaking crew since Robin, Sole and I headed north to see family and friends in late-September. RACHEL JACKSON, AMY KOZLOWSKI, EILEEN RICHARDSON, BERT VERA CRUZ, CAROLYN PANZARELLA, and MICHELLE KING, with the occasional help of others, have been managing the Ranch facilities for the last 10 weeks. We are forever indebted to them for their dedication and hard work. Without them our goats, chickens, ducks, gardens, orchards, kefir bug, kombucha mother, biodigester, Pico, Maximo, Bandito, and fish would either be dead or much worse for the wear. They're commitment allowed us to return to the States for what for us is an important time reconnecting with family and friends in the US. We're looking forward to resume the reins and see all of the changes that occurred while we were away. Thank you girls and Burt. See you in a few days.



Gardening Gang

Community Stories: *Connecting for Change 2010*

Many from the Ranch community come together each year in Massachusetts for the annual Connecting for Change conference put on by the Marion Institute. This year was no different as dozens of Ranchers congregated in New England to celebrate friendship, the environment and work to bring social justice to everyone. Congratulations once again to DESA for pulling off this incredible event. The conference was held for the third consecutive year in downtown New Bedford. The vibrant city, diverse population



Stained glass at Cork

and rich history make it the perfect place to spend a long weekend with great friends at this superlative event. This year's keynote speakers included Greg Mortenson, Van Jones, Diane Wilson, and Annie Leonard and workshop topics included "Growing and Using Herbs Medicinally", "Planting for Peace: Buy Seeds, not Bodies", "Growing the Next Economy, Locally and Regionally", "Population and Global Sustainability", and "Cultivating Connections: Engaging Youth in the Food System". The conference also featured a film fest and family and kid programming offering something for people of all ages. For more information and to attend next year's conference, check out the Connecting for Change website at <http://connectingforchange.org>.

Intern/Guest Gossip: Will

A former student and visitor to the Ranch, Will, was lost at sea some weeks back in South Carolina. He visited with the wonderful Randolph School in Wappinger Falls, NY. His mother Goldy was a part of that trip. This poem was read at his memorial.

The Invitation by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It doesn't interest me
what you do for a living.
I want to know
what you ache for
and if you dare to dream
of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me
how old you are.
I want to know
if you will risk
looking like a fool
for love
for your dream
for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me
what planets are
squaring your moon...
I want to know
if you have touched
the centre of your own sorrow
if you have been opened
by life's betrayals
or have become shriveled and closed
from fear of further pain.

I want to know
if you can sit with pain
mine or your own
without moving to hide it
or fade it
or fix it.

I want to know



Butterflies mating

if you can be with joy
mine or your own
if you can dance with wildness
and let the ecstasy fill you
to the tips of your fingers and toes
without cautioning us
to be careful
to be realistic
to remember the limitations
of being human.

It doesn't interest me
if the story you are telling me
is true.

I want to know if you can
disappoint another
to be true to yourself.

If you can bear
the accusation of betrayal
and not betray your own soul.

If you can be faithless
and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty
even when it is not pretty
every day.

And if you can source your own life
from its presence.

I want to know
if you can live with failure
yours and mine
and still stand at the edge of the lake
and shout to the silver of the full moon,
"Yes."

It doesn't interest me
to know where you live
or how much money you have.
I want to know if you can get up
after the night of grief and despair
weary and bruised to the bone
and do what needs to be done
to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me

who you know
or how you came to be here.
I want to know if you will stand
in the centre of the fire
with me
and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me
where or what or with whom
you have studied.
I want to know
what sustains you
from the inside
when all else falls away.
I want to know
if you can be alone
with yourself
and if you truly like
the company you keep
in the empty moments.

Please join us by sending condolences, love, and good thoughts to Will's family.

Comida Corner:*Banana Beer*

This is a recipe from Laura Killingbeck,
Rancho Mastatal's fermentation guru.

Ingredients (for 4 liters of banana beer):

6-8 ripe bananas
2 cups tapa dulce (sugar)
2 lemons
Water
½ cup or more strained active Ginger Bug

Process:

1. Blend or mash the bananas and boil in 3 ½ liters water. Let cool.
2. Strain out as much banana pulp as you can.
3. Add the tapa dulce, lemon juice, and Ginger Bug.
4. Pour this mixture into 2 two-liter soda bottles, leaving some room at the top. Cap these bottles tightly and store in a dark, warm place. As the yeast digest the sugars in the water, they will create a small amount of alcohol (1-2%) and lots of carbon dioxide. If the



Cob Oven

bottle is closed tightly, the carbon dioxide will build up in the bottle, causing natural carbonation. You will need to check on your banana beer several times a day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner is convenient). Slowly uncap the bottle near a sink with the mouth pointed AWAY from you. Under high levels of carbonation, the top may explode off, or liquid may bubble up out of the bottle. Slowly release the excess carbon dioxide and pour yourself a sip of the banana beer. It's good to taste the beer a couple times a day to see how the flavor is developing. The longer you leave it to ferment, the more acidic it will become. If it's not ready, simply recap it and let it sit longer. If it's ready, recap it and put it in the fridge. The coolness of the fridge will slow down the fermentation process so you can preserve your banana beer in the state you want it.

Note: You may notice several inches of leftover banana pulp rising to the surface of the bottles. That's okay! As soon as the beer is ready, pour off the pulp and set aside. You can use the pulp in pancakes or bread recipes, or heat and serve as warm banana syrup.

Variation:

Pineapple Beer: Replace bananas with a similar quantity of pineapple. I like to use pineapple slices from just under the pineapple skin that still have those little hard brown dots on them that are impossible to remove. This utilizes more of the fruit, and the brown pieces get strained out anyway.

Futbol Follies: *Gearing Up for New Season*

The futbol scene has been quiet as of late with the heaviest months of rain recently gone. Action will begin to pick up once again with the drier weather approaching. Los Galacticos will kick off the year with a multi-month tournament being hosted by the community of La Vasconia. The town boasts a beautiful field that provides players with a great surface on which to play. The people of Vasconia are also historically great hosts, which makes it a perfect venue for fans as well. The fact that it's a mere 30-minute drive from Mastatal really makes it an ideal Sunday destination. We're looking forward to the return of soccer Sundays and will keep you posted throughout the new season.



Girls soccer team (Roxana top row second from right)

Inspirational Impressions: *Noam*

“All over the place, from the popular culture to the propaganda system, there is constant pressure to make people feel that they are helpless, that the only role they can have is to ratify decisions and to consume”.

--- Noam Chomsky

Abrazos,

The Ranch Crew



High Society Anna