

Rancho Mastatal Updates

February 2008

Rancho Mastatal UPDATE for the month of FEBRUARY 2008

Man, where to start. This month has been an overwhelming and wonderful whirlwind of incredible people, mind-blowing projects and a cohesive community energy that only results when the best people in this universe convene to compose their creative, hilarious and loving ideas in an effort to create a magical space in what we often times refer to as "home". I'd like to thank SPARKY for taking charge of the newsletter during his always too-short stay here in Mastatal. We trust that your cranial scar has fully healed. The splatter on the rollbar has unfortunately created a permanent reminder of our little adventure. I'd also like to express gratitude to everyone else out there who has contributed to this publication since our return from the States a few months back. It takes a bunch of work and energy to bring these updates to you every month and every little bit of help is welcome and appreciated. Summer always brings a bit more movement to Mastatal, and this year has been no different. The energy is perceptible everywhere you go. Mastatal's first soda, bequeathed with a stunning, colorful mural thanks to DEIVIS and JULES, is about to open. KATTIA has a new addition on her house as does FELO and IRMA's pulpería. We have three new timberframe structures under construction and are putting the final touches on the first one that we started last year. There's yet another lodging option in town with the opening of JAVIER's Villas Mastatal. Dozes of people are helping to install our new water delivery system, a welcome fact as our town has been without water for multiple hours everyday for the last month. The soccer field recently got a much-needed facelift and with dances in Mastatal and San Miguel, a local cabalgata, and visitors from all over, Mastatal is animated and energized. Moreover Robin's belly continues to grow, reminding of us of near future changes. The rainy season's been pretty typical to date, outside of a 7-day rainy spell that had folks predicting an extremely abridged invierno. The weather's been back to normal with most people grateful that the unexpected rains brightened up the forest and kept the polvo on the streets at bay. Enjoy.



Our namesake — the Mastate tree

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Amanda leads the elementary school children of Mastatal in a music enrichment program

RM Program News: Music Maestro!

Music has always been an important part of our daily life here at the Ranch. It is not uncommon for main-house dwellers to "ease" into consciousness to the sounds of Rock Classics (available in Puriscal for a measly 1000 *colones* from the guy who walks around with a backpack full of ripped CDs), dance through dinner-making to the sounds of the Scissor Sisters, rock out dish duty to Weezer's Blue Album, or to gently slip into dreams of sugarplum dances to the soothing sounds of reggaeton (blaring from the local cantina well into the evening hours).

Lately, however, the ever-swelling force of live melodious (at times) performance has shaken the Ranch. The end room of the main house fills up almost nightly with acoustic guitarists, djembe drummers, whistlers, clappers, head-nodders, and bed-bouncers (note: bouncin' on the bed is no longer allowed due to frame damage during one riveting performance). Originals like *The PBR Song*, *When I Saw You*, and *In-Between* have risen in popularity and complement such sing-a-long faves as *Wagon Wheel*, *Dirty Old Town*, and a large collection of the other best songs ever written by humankind.

Meanwhile, AMANDA started teaching music classes at the local elementary school to a group of ecstatic students. Thanks so much for taking the initiative to make that happen. ANYA has taken over since she left, and DEIVIS will soon be here for support, wailing on his own guit-box and blowing the roof off Mastatal's own little school of rock.

There is an insane amount of unparalleled musical talent that comes through our doors, and it's a shame that we have not had the means to really record all of the original songs written within our gates. If we could go back and record them all, we would have a soundtrack that tells the story of this place through the voices of the people that make it so great. Thank you everyone who brings the music into our lives.

Conservation Update: Eco-Tourism and Our Rainforests

Eco-tourism is about saving our rainforests.

True eco-tourism isn't just about showing people the rainforest and its wildlife or simply providing a place to stay in or near the rainforest. It is great to show your guests all of the uniqueness of the tropical rainforest, but we have to do more than that to be eco-friendly and help sustain our rainforests. We need to inform our guests how they can save the rainforest while they are here and when they return to their home country, wherever that may be.



Cows on the way to the hot springs

Here are two main problems, not being addressed, that are destroying the rainforest and our sea-life as well. If you are truly a sustainable, eco-friendly project, then you will address these two issues and include this information when providing eco-tours. If you have a restaurant, what better idea than showing your guests that you are concerned about saving the rainforests and oceans?

1. Hundreds of thousands of acres of rainforest are cut down yearly for the expansion of cattle ranches. Most of this cow meat (beef) is being exported to the United States and Europe. The area from Guanacaste, Costa Rica to Mexico has almost 90% of the dry tropical forest cut down to raise cattle, and 65% of the beef is being exported to the United States and Europe. Larger areas are being cut down in the rainforests of the Amazon, Congo, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Madagascar. Cattle produce millions of tons of methane gas, a global warming gas, each year in the U.S. alone. The process of raising cattle throughout the world causes more global warming than all the cars on the planet. This includes cutting down forests and the whole process of raising food to feed cattle to cattle producing methane gas and pollution from cattle excrement. Rivers are being ruined from erosion, caused by large tracts of land being cut down for cattle ranches. These rivers also destroy coral reefs by dumping millions of tons of sediment that suffocate the coral. Many coral reefs are dying out because of this. A human eating cow meat for protein requires about 20 acres of land per year to sustain his/her protein needs. A person who basically eats chicken for protein requires about 5 acres of land. A vegetarian who eats soy, nuts, and beans for protein only requires one acre of land per year. The cow meat produced each year, for a meat-consuming person, requires over 1500 gallons of precious water. The plant protein produced each year for a vegetarian only requires 50 gallons of water. Don't forget the unhealthy hormones and antibiotics being used to produce the meat you eat. Be kind to animals, avoid eating them and serving them whenever possible.

2. 90% of the shrimp eaten in the United States is either caught or raised in the tropics. 100% of the shrimp served in Costa Rica is caught or farmed here. For every pound of shrimp caught in the tropics, 10 pounds of other creatures are caught, left to die, and are then thrown overboard.

Many times, the shrimp nets are dragged along the bottoms of reefs, thus destroying them. Thousands of sea turtles are caught yearly in shrimp nets and either drown or have their fins cut off, only to be thrown back into the sea to die. Shrimp ponds, for raising shrimp, are constructed in areas where mangrove swamps once existed. The mangroves are huge nurseries for many of the ocean fish. Mangroves are cut down and destroyed. These ponds also excessively pollute the remainder of the mangroves, killing much of the native fry (baby fish) with large doses of nitrates and nitrites, which exist in the water from overfeeding. Please, do not eat or serve shrimp!

These changes are not life threatening, nor do they stop you from enjoying so many other great foods to serve or eat. We all need to take responsibility in caring for the rainforests and ocean creatures and to pass them on in good health to the next generation. Be sustainable. Be eco-friendly.

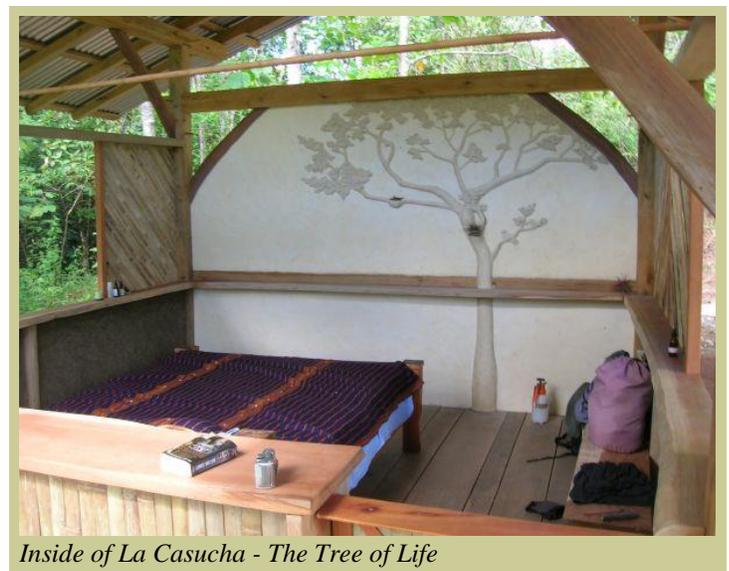
For any questions, comments, or additional information, contact:

Henry Kantrowitz
Nature Guide
Past Curator of Zoo Ave Wildlife Conservation Park
Co-founder of the Birding Club of Costa Rica
cbirdman@yahoo.com

Building Report:Progress

Let me start this article with a very important fact that has nothing whatsoever to do with the topic, but needs to be said.

THE NEW YORK FOOTBALL GIANTS WON THE SUPER BOWL IN THE GREATEST UPSET IN THE HISTORY OF THE GAME AND DAVID TYREE, WHO WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL IN MY TOWN, MONTCLAIR NEW JERSEY, MADE THE GREATEST FRIGGIN CATCH IN SUPER BOWL HISTORY TO KEEP THE GAME WINNING DRIVE ALIVE, to defeat the then 18-0 New England Patriots. The game made both me and Timo very Happy. Yeah Giants!



Onward to the Ranch progress report.

I am lucky enough to say that I have been able to return to Rancho Mastatal for at least three months a year for the past four years. One of the perks of being able to do so is to be able to see the changes that take place on a regular basis. Upon my return in January it seemed to me that more progress had been made than in any of my previous stays here.

When I left last April the kitchen was still inside the main house. As you know that kitchen served us well, but it was tight work for several people in the narrow space between the counter and the sink. Not to mention those giant cockroaches who were camped out in the crevices of that old sink. And the eating area, though intimate and friendly, was often not adequate for the larger groups that come through. Now the old kitchen is a comfortable library. The walls are lined with bookshelves and two well-spaced small tables with chairs provide room for studying, gaming or hanging out.

And Robin finally has her outdoor kitchen. Remember the area between the bodega and the porch that used to be used for storage or small projects? It's now an airy, spacious food preparation area. A large square cutting table that centers the area, and a rectangular baking table both made by TYLER SEE are wood masterpieces and are representative of the kind of artistic vision that encompasses every piece of work at the Ranch. Speaking of which, Timo, Robin and Nic designed and built an L-shaped, double-shelved serving table, topped with local *Cristobál* hard wood, and faced with cedar molding and bamboo slats. JENNIE-LEE PERLMUTTER added a cedar shelf with teak branches above the baking table that blends as if the kitchen was built around it. And CHRIS RIMMERS built an original and much needed spice rack. Hey Rimmers, we need you on the basketball court. Get back down here! The kitchen is made complete by the clay tiles covering the new sink, designed by New Jersey's hardest working artist, HEATHER OSSANDON. The unique tiles represent the view of the constellations from the front gate of the Ranch. Heather spent a few months with Puriscal's master Potter, NORMAN, sharing pottery secrets and using his resources, to come up with the brilliant tiles. Thanks H! Seeya in the Clair!

Meals are now served on the back porch, which provides plenty of room for most groups. Congratulations to ROBIN, KATTIA, LAURA, TIMO and all of the volunteers and interns who spent and continue to spend so many hours a day making the love-filled, delicious meals that we are graced with throughout every day here at the Ranch. The new kitchen is wonderment, and a pleasure to prepare food in.

Another Ranch revolution is the gardening activity taking place. Last year KEYO came through and worked her butt off in between her vicious fever, feverishly mapping out plans for a more food productive garden. Heather's friends KRISTINE DAILEY and JENN SCHWARTZ spent several days clearing several growing areas around the main house to prep for the new gardens, and JENN even took a sharp bite from what was later realized to be a garter snake. Since then several small garden plots have been seeded, planted, and maintained, with several volunteers and interns taking responsibility for individual plots. Budding seed experiments are frequently seen and everyone seems to be into the challenge of making fresh fruits and vegetables more and more present. The local gardening expert DANILO spends a few days a week here, planting, weeding, and providing his wealth of knowledge to anyone who asks. Serious sustainable food production is constantly increasing. Many hands are in the garden on a daily and weekly basis. I wish I could mention all of the names of everyone who has helped make so much changed happen so fast.

When I left last April the extension and porch to the Hankey House, designed by "BIG TIME" JOHN MINGLE, was a strange looking carousel, shell-shaped structure that was hard to envision as a future deck area. Now completed, John's genius and vision are realized. The raised, octagonal-ish platform, takes up minimal ground space below, but provides an open, spacious hangout area for the oft-crowded volunteer sat the Hankey House. We missya Jersey John! Hope to seeya soon.

An addition to the entrance of The Hankey House is a sculpture of "*The Spirit Tree*" made of cob, by JULES. Check out the website to see the picture of the tree, which is also a tree that she designed in her deck of cards. I've never met Jules but she has made an incredible impact on the Ranch. Jules, your name comes up often by many here who enjoyed your presence and art. The Ranch patiently awaits your return.

Last year LIZABETH and SKIP from the Yestermorrow Design/Build School(<http://www.yestermorrow.org>) headed up a 2-week course on timberframing, that resulted in what is now called the *Casucha* (the shack). Prior to the frame being built, Tyler led the building of the foundation, with help from plenty of vols and interns. Then Yestermorrow built and raised the entire 12' by 12' frame, which will be used for long term volunteer couples. When I left in April, the work of art, with gable roof, was standing. Since then the walls have been waddle and daubed, and furniture projects are now underway to ready the *Casucha* for guests. Another brilliant tree sculpture made by RACHEL JACKSON highlights the inside, back wall. It's looking like a solid bet that the *Casucha* will be ready for Lizabeth and Skip to stay in during the Yestermorrow class this March. We are buzzing with energy in anticipation of Skip and Lizabeth, and the Yestermorrow group, which is always a guaranteed revolutionary education on building, design, sustainability, hard work, good fun, and an invasion of radiant, loving people. Lizabeth and Skip WE CANT WAIT TO GET TO WORK!

One of the most anticipated changes in the works is the family restaurant or soda being constructed across the street from the Ranch, behind the bus stop. Long time Ranch family and employees LILY and CHEPO have finally found the time and means to make their vision a reality. The family soda will be called "*El Paso de Las Lapas*" which translates to "The Path of the Macaws," a soda to La Cangreja National Park which is a corridor for the Scarlet Macaws that occasionally bless the skies high above Mastatal, alerting us to their presence, almost always in pairs, with the loud, distinct Macaw squawk. Chepo and his sons ALEX and JUNIOR along with a crew of local workers have been diligently at work for months building the soda, the front of which will be painted with a wall-covering mural currently being designed by one of my best friends, band mate and brother, DEIVIS "DEIVITO" GARCIA. *Viva Los Porchistas!*

Congratulations to Lily, Chepo and family! The soda will certainly improve the quality of life for local families, who often have no place to hangout besides the local *pulpería* (saloon). I cannot WAIT for my first *casado*. "*El Paso de Las Lapas*" is expected to be open by the end of March or beginning of April.

A few days ago one of the most valuable human resources the Ranch has known in its 7-year existence, GREG WATSON, ran plumbing from a 1,200-liter water tank that sits in the woods above the ping-pong table. If you've been here for a long stay you have probably experienced life at the Ranch without running water. Washing dishes for upwards of 40 people with water from 5 gallon drums and washing our bodies only in the river was a frequent, quick educational experience, and a small introduction to what a part of life is like on a regular basis for a large percentage of the people of the world, and very much a part of life for most of the people in the Mastatal community. Living without running water often made me think about all of the things we take for granted living in the U.S., and how it seems that so many of us treat clean running water as an endless resource. For the first time, the Ranch now has a reserve for washing dishes and filling

water bottles. Greg's timing was impeccable. The local water system is experiencing problems and has been shut off for much of the last three days. This coincided with the arrival of the VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY group. Because we now have the tank we have been able to wash dishes and fill bottles without a glitch. Greg. Thank you. You are the man.

I've only listed projects recently or almost completed. The following is a brief list of a few major projects that are now underway. Intern and previous Yestermorrow student RYAN BELTZ is using his carpentry skills and natural building knowledge to head the construction of a timber-frame tool shed that will sit next to the wood shop. Annual long term volunteers GEOFF, TYLER, SPARKY, and yours truly, SUCIA, are hard at work building a shared space that will be used by us to live in on our repeated visits here. We all agree that the Ranch is not just a place that we visit and work at, but our home, and as much or more a part of our lives as anywhere else. THANKS TIMO & ROBIN for providing us this incredible opportunity to become more a part of this community. We love you and will always be by your side.

I've probably not mentioned dozens of other projects, pieces of furniture, new recipes, brilliant revolutions, major life changes, incredible art projects, and moments of love and brilliance. You all know what I'm talking about; the kind of art and building projects that endlessly spring up here. I'm sorry for all that I've missed in this writing. It would require a writer to do nothing but write in order to keep up with the progress that is constantly underway here. The group of long-term volunteers and interns here at this time are so damn amazing and talented. NICK, DAVE, RYAN, LAURA, ANNA, JULIAN, GREG, JENNIE, LORI, RACHEL, GEOFF, SPARKY, TYLER, and the family of CORIN, TRIXIE, KAT, ALMA, IAN and of course, TIMO and ROBIN, are all dedicated to the world's most immediately necessary art forms; sustainable living and natural building. Thanks for all that you do.

There are two projects in particular that I have saved for last that are well underway. "The Nug" or "Nugget" is the temporary name for the future child of Robin and Timo. Robin is well into her seventh month of pregnancy with their first child. We are all so excited to see this baby enter the world. To know that two giving, loving, artistic, nice, hard-working, powerful and personable people, one hundred percent committed to making the world better and more sustainable, have decided to have a child makes me, and I'm sure many others, feel very hopeful and happy. And what has changed around here as a result of the Nug's presence? Other than Robin's lack of presence in Frisbee games, and a basketball sized lump in her stomach, Nothing! As would be expected, she works just as hard as ever. Robin you're an incredible model of strength and inspiration and the Nug is gonna rock!

And yet another Nug! LAURA, our dedicated family member who works daily in the kitchen and the AMAZING MOM OF MOISES AND JOSE, has one more child on the way. If you know the boys and Laura you know what a hard working, dedicated mom and community member she is. Moises and Jose are two of the most fun, interesting, loving and independent kids you can meet. Of course they are. Laura rules. And JAKE, the dad of the newbie, we'll see ya soon!

And remember, the previously 18-0 New England Patriots ended this season 18-1 because THE NEW YORK GIANTS (really New Jersey Giants), WON THE SUPER BOWL. Four words: "ELI MANNING, DAVID TYREE."

Hasta la Pasta,

Sucia

Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Pay to Play - Does it pay to pay for volunteering?

This question came up in a conversation I had a couple of days ago with my mother. She was surprised (perhaps appalled?) at the notion of working in a ranch and still having to pay for the experience. Of course, what she doesn't know is that not only is that a pretty standard practice here in Costa Rica, but that some people charge an arm and a leg for the opportunity.

So what do you get for \$10.00 a day (or \$15 depending on the length of your stay)?

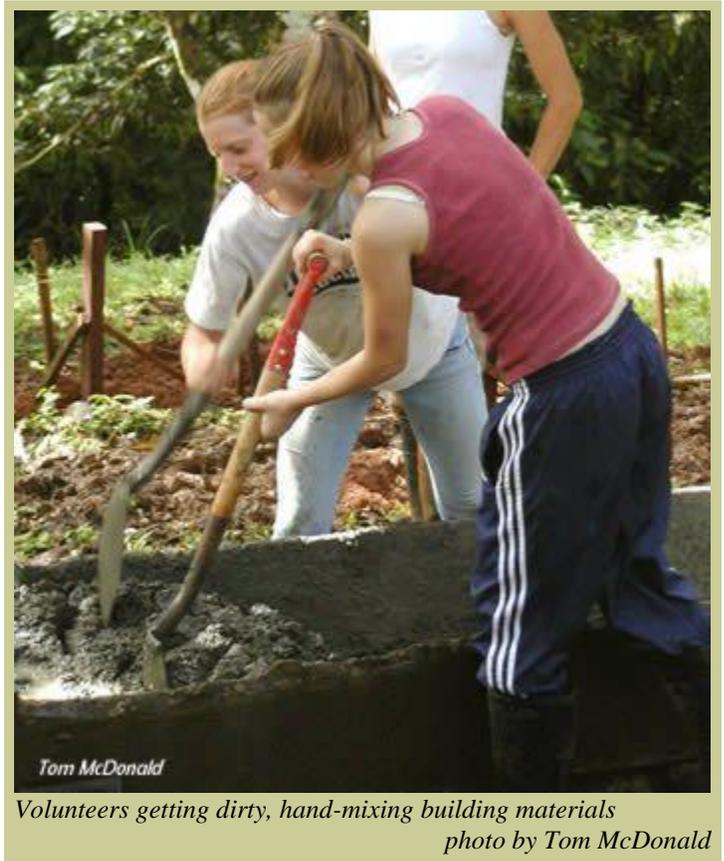
Besides food and lodging (which one could argue is being paid by with our unskilled and sometimes leisurely labor), Rancho Mastatal provides you with plenty of education on a very wide variety of subjects ranging from construction to making homemade kefir

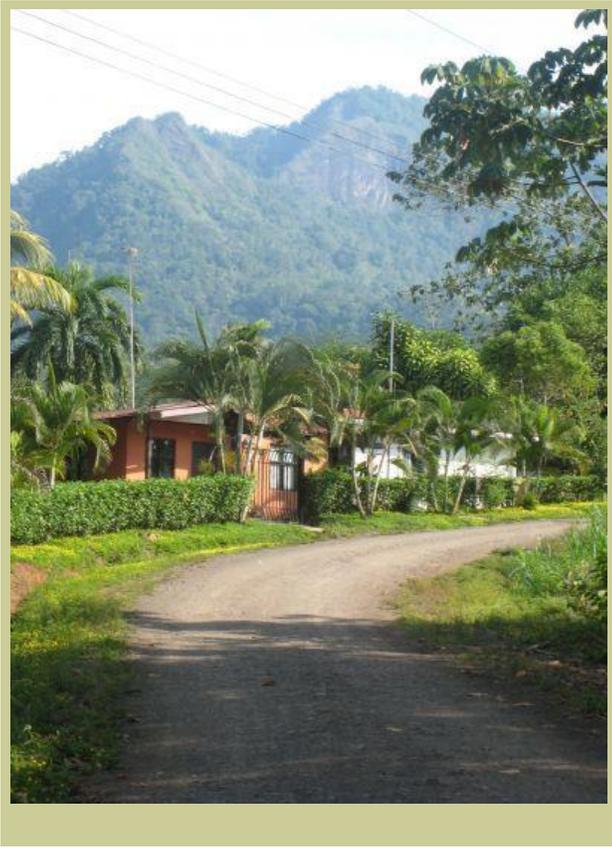
(similar to yogurt). Moreover, you have complete carte blanche to explore whatever you are most interested in, read books from their extensive library, and practice your newly learned skills as often as you like. There is also plenty of down time to enjoy the gorgeous natural surroundings, to see life from a different angle, and at a different pace you are probably used to.

The truth is, if you take into consideration the expenses of having the ranch available for us to learn by doing (and making plenty of mistakes at it), including certain things that wear and tear with use (like some expensive tools), then paying this amount seems absolutely fair. And considering that the only thing that is expected is a good disposition to help with the daily chores of the farm, which tend to become fun when you share them with wonderful people around... then one could barely think of it as paying to work, because work mostly feels like play around here!

I'm very grateful for my experience so far at the Rancho, and if you are living a hurried life, I think you may also find that a vacation here is not only much cheaper, but certainly much more fulfilling than just going to the typical "hotel, entertainment, shopping, lounging" kind of vacation. You may find great joy not despite the work, but in spite of it.

And to that I say: "*Pura Vida!*".





Community Facts/Stories: The Education Dilemma

I can't be sure if educating all of Costa Rica's youth is reminiscent of what goes on here in our region, but if it is, the entire rural school system is currently scrambling to find a way to get their kids into class so that they may begin working on their new year's homework. I'm not entirely positive why the Ministry of Education waits until the last minute to try to resolve so many of its outstanding issues, perhaps it's that they just don't work much during the summer months, but one thing that's unquestionable is the mayhem that ensues each year during the first week of February. There have been protests in Zapatón, kids abandoned without any way to get to school, and threats of closing the *telesecundaria*, all within a matter of a few days. Kids in our town are already arguably gyped when it comes to access to an equal education on par with the majority of the rest of the country, so it's disheartening when additional, avoidable issues arise that hinder their ability to gain knowledge of subjects that may help

them get ahead in life. Teacher misconduct, striking bus drivers, and a lack of educators top the list of challenges so far for the 2008 academic calendar.

We work intimately with both of our educational institutions in Mastatal. We've dedicated heaps of time, energy and other resources to the elementary school and *telesecundaria* since we arrived here and plan to continue to do so this year and for years to come. Perhaps our contributions help to offset some of the setbacks each year. We've gotten off to an early start this time around with the help of a number of interns and volunteers and have already constructed two new chalkboards and purchased some new compact fluorescent lightbulbs for the *telesecundaria* and started designing a new work table for the elementary school. MCF hopes to help the *telesecundaria* rewire their classrooms in the coming weeks too. Moreover ANYA ROSE, with the recent help of DEIVIS GARCIA, has been teaching music daily to the young kids of the elementary school, carrying on with a program that AMANDA STONE started in late February. The secondary school seems to be working harder than ever this year to improve their somewhat tainted reputation in an attempt to avoid having their institution closed down. There's been talk in town that due to low test scores, a lack of infrastructure, and an unmotivated student body, the Ministry of Education may shut their doors altogether. We have mixed feelings about this as ongoing education for our communities' youth is obviously critical yet we'd like to see everyone working harder to assure that the proper infrastructure is in place for these kids to be able to learn in a healthy and effective environment. As always, there's lots of work ahead. In the meantime, we'll be pulling our weight to assure that our kids get the best possible education in spite of the system's shortcomings. Lastly hats off to our amazing elementary school teacher, UMBERTO, who is unrelenting in his efforts to edify our children.

Comida Corner: Nic's Best Ever Pizza Sauce

Whenever it comes to pizza night we have never had too much trouble finding someone to make the tomato sauce. We have had some really great sauces over the years, but I must say with some certainty that Nic's is the best ever! Thanks Nic for sharing a family heirloom with the rest of us and I encourage you to take the time to make this treat, it is definitely worth the time and is way better than a jar of Ragu!

This recipe has been passed down through several generations of the Donati family. Like many of the meals here, measurements are up to what you have on hand and your personal preferences.

Ingredients:

- Fresh tomatoes (can be replaced with tinned or canned tomatoes)
- Tomato concentrate (paste)
- Garlic
- Onions
- Herbs (rosemary, thyme, sage, oregano, basil, marjoram... whatever you have really)
- Salt
- Sugar/Honey/Tapa Dulce
- Black Pepper

Instructions:

The amount of tomatoes you use will obviously influence the amount of sauce, if using fresh tomatoes they will boil down to about a third of their wet bulk. So bear this in mind when selecting quantities. It is hard for me to give exact quantities as I always do it by eye but I will try! About 10 kg of tomatoes makes about 40-50 sauce servings of 10" pizzas.

1. Chop fresh tomatoes into halves and remove the stem part. At this point it is optional to remove the seeds, rumor has it that they make the sauce bitter, however I remain undecided on the fact. We squeeze the halves into a pot which makes removing them easy and gets all the juice out so less cooking down time. Note: keep all the juice if you remove the seeds, it can be stored in the fridge and used later.
2. Now chop down the tomatoes as small as you can be bothered, the smaller you chop them the quicker they will boil down.
3. Put in a large cooking pot and heat on high. Cooking time will vary on quantity but you are looking at a couple of hours. Leave the pot top off so the water vapor can escape.
4. Stir intermittently. As the tomatoes boil down you will want to turn the heat down and eventually for the last part to get all the water out to turn to very low and use a diffuser. After the sauce has boiled down it should be thick with very little water, be careful not to burn it!!!



*An early pastel work of Delfino Cornali - of tomatoes fresh on the vine (from the CSA where he used to work, years ago)
photo by Delfino Cornali*

5. Meanwhile, chop several onions and a head of garlic.
6. Remove the tomato sauce from the pan and put in a temporary container.
7. In the same pan that the tomatoes were cooked in heat a generous dosage of oil. When the oil is hot add your tomato concentrate (this can be replaced by some of the tomato sauce that has been boiled down).
8. This is the key to the whole recipe. You want the tomatoes to burn (or caramelize) in the oil so that they dye the oil a deep red and leave a burnt tomato sediment. The more burnt tomatoes the better. If all the oil is absorbed add some more.
9. Keep stirring the burning tomatoes until you have approximately half the amount of burnt tomatoes as chopped onions. Once you have a nice burnt, sticky, oily goop in the bottom of the pan add the onions and sauté until they caramelize as well (a light brown color).
10. Now add the rest of the tomatoes that you have aside and cook for about 10 more minutes.
11. Turn the heat off and add the crushed garlic, herbs, salt pepper and sugar to tomatoes to desired flavor.
12. Hint: I like to salt the sauce then add sugar to remove acidity (this will depend on tomatoes) then finally add the garlic and herbs. I love garlicky sauce so it is important not to cook the sauce with the garlic in otherwise you will cook off all the garlic flavor. If the tomatoes aren't very strong flavored (wait until you have added salt and sugar before deciding this) you can add lemon to bring out their flavor.

Buen Provecho.

F?tbol Follies: Majenga

Fútbol season for the Galacticos is at a bit of a lull right now as the sun continues to scorch the soccer field here in the dry season. Visiting teams have not been traversing our roads, and we have not recently been piling into the back of the red truck, grabbing each other's kneecaps, and showing off our beautiful banana-hammocks. Still, that does not mean that the world's favorite sport has disappeared from our town completely.

A couple of times per week, it is common for community members to meet at the soccer field with some of us Rancho-ers and Iguanas for a pick-up game, known locally as a Majenga. This is your chance to see Mastatal soccer at its absolute finest... passing the ball occurs as frequently as snowfall, shooting hard from close range at inexperienced goalies is standard, blasting the ball into the snake-pit from inches in front of a wide-open target is almost encouraged, and defense is a discretionary consideration. It is the moment in time when looking good is much more important than winning, personal glory is everything, and yet there's a nice sense of togetherness.

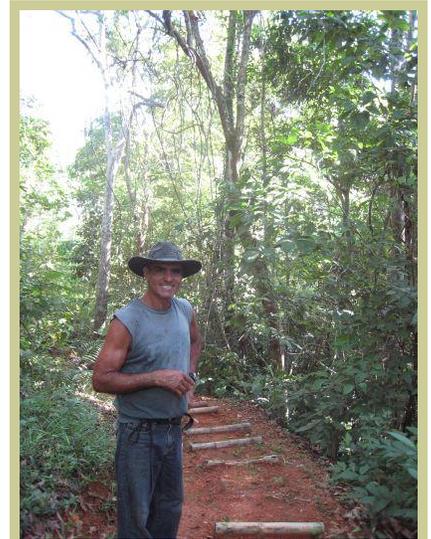
Inspirational Impressions: The Good Life

"Eat a big breakfast and be noble to everyone you meet."

- Don Mario

Abrazos,

The Ranch Crew



Here's a photo of friend and neighbor, Mario, along the trails in the rainforest

photo by Amanda Caudill