

Rancho Mastatal Updates

September 2008

Here's our first newsletter of the year from our North American "office" in Vestal, NY. Robin, Sole and I made it back to the States safe and sound and will be spending the next few months visiting family and friends, getting some rest, and setting up our programs for 2009. We're enjoying the beautiful fall weather, catching up on sports and politics, and not having to answer dozens of questions before breakfast. Sole's getting used to her new surroundings and thankfully behaved well on the long trip home. A lot of people have been asking to see pictures so I put a few up on

the [Yahoo! Group site](#) if you'd like to check them out. Or I can directly send you a few in an email. Just let us know. She's a treat. A SMITH picked us up in Newark on the day of our arrival stateside. We stayed with him and RACHEL BRANDELL in that bastion of blueness Montclair before heading northwest to the Binghamton area where we'll be based for the next many weeks.



Robin and Sole

Before returning to the land of crazy politics and wild baseball, we had one of the bigger surprises of our lives when in through the main house door at the Ranch popped a grey-haired man sporting an "Old Fart" hat who had a familiar look. The eyebrowless figure had a sneaking resemblance to a guy that we've come to know well since first meeting him in Seattle 8 years ago. El TIBURON, fresh off of his recent stem cell transplant, flew to Costa Rica for a few days of rest and relaxation and to visit with friends in town. He's as strong as a saino and responded well to his treatment. We plan on seeing plenty of him during the coming calendar year.

The Ranch is currently in the capable hands of a small crew of interns up to the challenge of looking after and enhancing our projects until our return in December. We'd like to thank CHRIS, GREG, RED, SAM, GRANT, MICHELLE, RYAN and the others for allowing us the luxury of being with our homegrown loved ones for a while.

The next few weeks has us traveling to VT and MA and possibly ME to see a bunch of our buds. Bioneers, just a few weeks away, promises to be a highlight. We're looking forward to see many of you there. All the best to everyone out there and to some, hasta pronto.

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RM Program News: 2009

We're starting to cobble together our 2009 season. Next year the Ranch will see both familiar and new faces as our dynamic programs continue to evolve. We'll be meeting up with old friends DAVE MCEVOY, IAN WOOFENDEN, TOM MCDONALD, SUSAN BOLTON, and LIZABETH MONIZ and SKIP DEWHIRST as well as hosting our first yoga group, students from Elmira University not far from where TIMO grew up and a crew from the University of South Dakota, our first visitors from the "Great Faces, Great Places" state.

Our schedule will continue to solidify in the coming weeks with our ability to be in closer touch with potential visitors while in the States. For a look at our upcoming calendar, see our website at <http://www.ranchomastatal.com/pages/programs/events2.php?Grouping=TopMenu&PageName=events>. Please let us know if you or anyone you know is interested in visiting with a group next year.



Tyler chilling on the Cork beam

Building Report: Salt and Pepper

Despite the plethora of name proposals, none of which are reminiscent to the structure itself, we are happy to announce the (near) completion of the new beautiful shower structure. In recent

months the path past the Hooch has become a

hotbed for building projects and the shower will, without a doubt, be a welcome addition to the current and future residents of the Hankey and Hooch. Near the close of an almost three month mad dash to complete the Yestermorrow-started project, two showers are operable, complete with two changing rooms and a sink. The timberframe-wattle and daub walls have just received the final touches of lime plaster and the final layer of cob floor has been left to dry. JENNIE has delicately crafted the bamboo relief on the front wall that will most certainly be reflected in any future name proposals. After many days of fully exploiting the broken ceramic tile supply at the Ranch, the mosaic along the base of the floors provides a burst of color, set against the soon to be lime washed walls. Every step of the process has been guided by the well-seasoned advice of TIMO, ROBIN, and GREG that prove the ever-increasing understanding of natural building in the Costa Rican climate we have all grown to love.



Bambano - Hankey Shower Inauguration

Many thanks to ALEX and JUNIOR for hours of assistance throughout the process and special

thanks to everyone who has passed through the Ranch in the recent months and lent a hand as this project materialized. JASON and JENNIE are excited to see the project complete and will be spending a few days at the waterfall relaxing in the near future. The inaugural shower has not yet happened, but is expected within the coming week. Keep posted for pictures of the completed project. The shower is waiting for your next visit.

Conservation Update: Diaper Free!!!

Disposable diapers by some estimates makes up to 4% of United State's landfills. They can represent a unbelievable 1/3 of the non-biodegradable waste, 2 tons per baby, in our dumps. Cloth diapers, even though arguably a better environmental choice, have an enormous negative impact too in their manufacturing and maintenance. Much to many people's surprise, there's a third choice, one unarguably the superior ecological and possibly the best health choice for your baby. Believe it or not, this largely unknown option in the industrialized world is one used by billions of mothers throughout the rest of the planet. The theory that babies can't be out of diapers before they turn 1 1/2 years old is entrenched in our Western society, yet nothing could be farther from the truth. Babies are ready to participate in natural infant hygiene as soon as they are born. It's just a matter of the baby and the parents learning how to communicate better with one another at an early age. We've been practicing the diaper-free method with Soledad since she



Sole flying diaper free

turned 1-month old. After two months, we "catch" about 70% of her pees and we're getting better with her poos though I must admit that the apricot jelly's a bit more of a challenge in the beginning. By coming to understand the normal times that she may need to pee and getting in tune with her signals, we're progressively moving towards a life without diapers. It's a concept that's beyond the comprehension of many people that we've spoken to it about, though everyone seems to be fascinated about the idea. Most families in recent history in the US have counted on disposable diapers at a significant environmental and economic cost. Most people in the First World have been convinced by their pediatricians and the diaper companies that the only way to deal with our babies waste is by capturing it in plastic and then disposing it into our growing number of landfills. Hmm. Kind of goes along with the belief that it's a good idea to use drinking water to carry your shit to the nearest wastewater treatment plant where we add toxic chlorine to the now non-drinking water before dumping it into our rivers. Anyway, for all current or future mothers out there, if you'd like to know more about this method, send us an email and/or read **Diaper Free: The Gentle Wisdom of Natural Infant Hygiene** or **The Diaper-Free Baby: The Natural Toilet Training**

Alternative. It'll turn your world bottomsidedup.

Community Facts/Stories: Science Fever

There's great news in the community. Three students from Mastatal's elementary school ROY SALAZAR GARCIA, JOSEPH ZUñIGA RIVERA, and KATTIA's son ION BEATRIZ HERNÁNDEZ have made it through to national finals of the annual Costa Rican schools and colleges science competition.

The first heat took place in La Gloria the 24 July, between the 23 schools and 3 high schools in our district of Chires. Similar events took place in the other 32 districts in the Canton of Puriscal. There were 7

qualifying places to take the winners to the second heat in Puriscal at the end of August.

Impressively, the elementary schools and 'telesecundariAs' of Mastatal and Zapatón walked away with 4 of those places. Kattia was ecstatic!



Joseph, Ion and Roy - Champions!

There was no time to bask in glory, however. Each stage of this competition gets progressively more demanding because students are expected to demonstrate more knowledge of their chosen topic. In Puriscal, they would exhibit a project poster, a visual demonstration, provide a summarizing leaflet and a written report.

The boy's project tells the story of chocolate 'el proceso del chocolate', its history and its making from pod to the finished cocoa product, illustrated with photos and tasty samples from Chocolate Iguana. Preparations in hand, the entrants from Mastatal and Zapatón crowded into two minibuses early on Friday 29 August all set for the Puriscal Regional Science Fair 2008.

The school sports hall was a hive of activity. Each of the 48 schools and 10 high schools that qualified had a table to display its project set around a central space where visitors milled around. On one side of the central space a banner, flowers, head table and microphone located the judges. On the other side chairs and gallery seating accommodated spectators (parents, teachers, friends) come to support the event.

After the official opening the judging would take place behind closed doors – only the students taking part would be left to answer the judges' questions. Ion, Joseph and Roy were nervous, but bearing up well. And competition was stiff, with no distinction between the age of the competitors (from about 7-17 years old). Entries covered a really wide range topics: solar energy, recycled paper, the effects of smoking, dinosaurs, the insects of Costa Rica, natural dyes and pesticides, Aids, photosynthesis – to name but a few. The indigenous school of Zapatón's project was called 'you don't need money to see light' and showed a traditional method of the Huetar people of making candles using seeds.

Judging was followed by an early lunch and then the exhibition was opened to the public. By 13.30 everyone was crowded into the hall to hear the results. Every student got a certificate and medal for being there. But, there would be nine prizes, 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in three categories for: the best science project; best demonstration; and best treatise. There were only 3 places for the national finals.

The indigenous school in Zapatón won second place in the demonstration category. A twinkling glance from the MC was followed by the announcement that the elementary school of Mastatal had won first place for 'Monografía', the best treatise! Roy went first, then Ion and Joseph to shake hands with the judges and to collect their golden pens. Then we all waited with baited breath for the final result: who would go to San Jose?

At this point a flurry of hands sketched the cross in an attempt to curry divine favour; Ion's hands amongst them. Third place was announced, then second, and then... you guessed it! The boys from Mastatal got first place through to the finals! Involuntary whoops from our corner accompanied the news. Kattia had tears in her eyes. They went up again to receive a second prize and, as the event closed, were swept away by congratulatory backslaps, smiles, complements and photo-calls. They'll be in this week's Puriscal newspaper too.

The finals will be in San Jose next month, from 23-25 October. The boys need to take their project yet another step further. Already they and their teacher Umberto Campos Mora have a day set aside to spend at Chocolate Iguana to investigate how you make soap with cocoa. So far they're on a winning streak, let's keep our fingers crossed!

Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Introducing the Best of Rancho Mastatal Music CD

One early morning while Timo and I and a few others were making breakfast, we were listening to several songs that were performed and recorded by people who have come through the Ranch. I then kiddingly proposed that we should make a compilation CD of Ranch performers. Once it came out of my mouth it seemed like a pretty good idea and the others agreed. So what do you think folks? I'd like some feedback on this idea. How about a Rancho Mastatal CD, with all proceeds going to the Mastatal Charitable Foundation? If this happens I'll need plenty of help, maybe an online committee? Many questions and issues will have to be worked out, and any of you who have recorded know the amount of time, effort, and sometimes money, it takes to make a quality sounding and looking CD.



Ty and Sparky with a New Release

Here are just a few of the issues that will have to be worked out (not looking for answers now).

How do we choose which songs go on the CD? Do we let individual artists decide for themselves? Sometimes an artist's favorite song of his or her own might not be the right one for a particular record or audience. How many songs per artist? How many songs on the record? Artwork and graphics: Who does them and do we send the music and art to an environmentally sound company to make the first several hundred, or do we try to make it happen with home burners and home printers? Should the record be thematic, or just based on best works. i.e. thematic as in songs written at the Ranch, or songs having something to do with nature, the environment? Or do we just let fly with "best" songs available for this particular project?

So at this point I'd like to know, is this a good idea? How many musicians out there have music recorded that they would like to have on the record? If this idea takes off, who would like to be a part of a team to see it through? If you know in what capacity you'd like to help, let me know, or if at this point you just want to be a part of the discussion that would be awesome.

This can be an opportunity to get some of the great music that the Ranch has been blessed with, out to a much larger audience, while also helping add to the extraordinary work done by the MCF. If you have any input, please contact me: Sucia at alansmith101@gmail.com.

Thanx and enjoy the rest of this amazing summer.

A Smith

Comida Corner: Bayou Chocolate Torte

From our favorite, the Rebar Cookbook. This was made for Jennie's birthday and boy is it divine! It is not to be taken lightly as it has tremendous depth and should be called death by chocolate!

12 oz (360 g) dark Belgian chocolate
1 1/3 C. Sugar
1/2 C. Bourbon
8 oz (240 g) unsalted butter, softened and cubed
5 eggs
2 tbsp flour



1. Preheat oven to 350F. Butter an 8" springform pan. Line the bottom of the pan with parchment paper cut to fit inside. Wrap the outside of the pan with foil so that it won't leak when placed in a water bath. Have all ingredients measured and ready to go before commencing.

2. Pulse the chocolate in a food processor until fine. Gently heat the bourbon and sugar until the sugar dissolves. (Careful not to ignite!!) Pour the hot syrup over the chocolate while the food processor is running. Add butter, one piece at a time. Add eggs one at a time. Finally, add flour, mixing 15 seconds more.

3. Pour the batter into prepared pan. Place the pan in a large baking dish. Fill the dish with water halfway up the sides of the springform pan and place in the center of the oven. Bake 25 minutes. Cool the cake completely on a wire rack in the springform pan and refrigerate covered overnight. Invert the cake onto a cookie sheet and remove the parchment and then invert onto a serving platter so the cake is face up. Serve as is, or in a pool of raspberry coulis.

HELPFUL HINT

The better quality chocolate you use for this recipe, the better your results will be. We use Belcolade from Belgium. (My friend used Lindt dark chocolate.)

RASPBERRY COULIS

2 pints fresh raspberries
1/2 C. sugar
1 C. water
1 tsp orange zest
2 tbsp Grand Marnier

Combine the berries, sugar, water and orange zest in a pot and simmer until the berries collapse and the liquid is syrupy (about 10 min). Cool slightly, then strain through a fine mesh sieve. Cover and refrigerate. Whisk in Grand Marnier just before serving. (My friend left out the orange zest and Grand Marnier and it was still delish.)

Hope you enjoy it!

F?tbol Follies: Doh!

A folly it certainly was. Reaching the semi-finals after a hard fought 3-month battle, the Guarumal, armed with its full arsenal for the first time since the beginning of the tournament, decided not to show up for its most important game yet. Mysteriously, ROLANDO, the coach, decided to experiment with a lineup that had finished at the top of the table of both of its group stages. The result was a disappointing and heartbreaking 2-1 defeat to an outmatched team from La Gloria. JUNIOR, one of Guarumal's stars all year, inexplicably started the game on the bench, as did one of Guarumal's strongest players

HERMES. La Gloria scored within five minutes of the initial whistle, after which the coach surprisingly yanked TIMO and one of Guarumal's top midfielders JASON. The first half ended 1-0 with the good guys with their backs against the wall. The score stayed the same until Guarumal evened the match with a late second half goal from WILLY. La Gloria, playing with only 10



Guarumal Soccer

players, went ahead on a dribbler in the 93rd minute seconds before the final whistle blew. It was a devastating way to end the season, but perhaps deserved. Until next year.

Inspirational Impressions: Boredom and Consequences

“Boredom is a choice”.

--- *Various*

“Milton Friedman is the embodiment of the truth that “ideas have consequences.”

--- *Donald Rumsfeld, U.S. defense secretary, May 2002*