

Rancho Mastatal Updates

August 2004

We apologize for the exceedingly late update. We are a bit bogged down as we prepare for our two month sojourn stateside. As a result, August's update is a bit undersized. Our next edition highlighting news in September will hail from Tim's hometown, Vestal, NY, where we will be visiting family and friends. We'll also be headed to see friends and family in Burnt Hills, NY, the Adirondacks, VT, ME and FL. We're hoping to see many of you before too long. We would like to thank Roger, Meghan, Billy, Mandi, and Emily in advance for taking care of the Ranch while we are gone. Their efforts are greatly appreciated and allow us to attend to matters in the United States while hopefully getting a little rest after an amazing and hectic year in Mastatal.



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RM Program News: Villanova University Leadership Program

During the month of October we will be receiving our first group from Villanova University, located near the City of Brotherly Love and Tim's former home, Philadelphia, PA. Noreen Cameron, a professor at Villanova, and Tom McDonald (a.k.a. Sr. Tiburón), owner of Tropical Adventures in Education in Seattle, WA, will be bringing down this group as part of Villanova's Leadership Program. The group's objectives include but are not limited to volunteer work in the community and a meaningful cultural exchange with locals. The group will be spending an entire week in Mastatal participating in a number of activities including a visit to Zapatón, a tree planting session with the high school students of La Gloria, and rainforest walks at the Ranch and in the national park. We are thrilled about this new program and look forward to developing a strong and significant relationship with Villanova.

Conservation Update: New Shroom Building Report: Natural Plasters

Amongst biologists, it is generally believed that a significant number of species disappear from our planet every year, and some argue, every day. Much of this loss in biodiversity is the result of deforestation, and many of the species that are lost disappear from tropical forests. It is also commonly believed that a considerable number of species vanish before we ever have the opportunity to identify them, even though these species debatably play an important role in our global ecosystem. Some species may hold the secrets to current and future problems in our world and others may prove necessary in our highly interconnected biological world. Nevertheless, for a plethora a reasons, some perhaps justified and others probably not, the annihilation of our forests continues. For some taxonomists, it's a race to discover and name species yet found. For biologists it's a pursuit to find answers to the complicated questions of how all beings interact with one another. Amid the doom and negative reports that are often released from the world's scientific community, there are stories of optimism. This past month, in the La Cangreja National Park, scientists identified what they are calling a mushroom new to science. Little is still known about this fungus yet it may prove to be an important component in our local bionetwork. The forests in our area are believed to hold many more treasures, as taxonomists have only performed superficial inventories in La Cangreja up to approximately 2,500 feet. Its highest point rests at almost 4,000 feet and scientists expect to find many new secrets in the coming years. This small yet potentially important discovery is yet one more reason why we need to work to preserve and set aside lands not only in our area, but in all biozones around the world.

Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Soapmaking

We inched a bit closer to a more sustainable life this month by learning how to make our own natural soap. CHUCK HENRY, a professor at the University of Washington and a sustainability maharishi, recently brought himself, his family, two thermometers, some coconut and palm oil, and a few recipes for body soap down with him to the Ranch and so off we went. We received both a practical demonstration on how to make and a theoretical sermon on the chemistry that makes soap work. After listening to Chuck's Powerpoint presentation, one would think that it would be a time consuming and difficult process, though it proved to be easy, straightforward, and even relatively fast. We are changed people as a result. Since our first demonstration, we have made two batches of mango/coconut soap and a lot of pure castile soap. Liquid dishwashing soap is next on our list. If anyone has a recipe, we would love to hear from you. There are number of good books on making soap available on the Internet.

Community Facts/Stories: Roads

Well, it's that time of the year again. The rainiest part of the rainy season lies just ahead and we are preparing for impending road closures and some tough going on our roads. The situation is ripe for some serious problems again this year. We have already experienced a number of days without bus service due to the tough conditions, and expect circumstances to get worse in the coming months. We are doing everything we can to assist in keeping the roads open, but unfortunately, heavy machinery, which is limited in our municipality, is necessary to clear the more severe landslides. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that we decide to visit family and friends back in the States at this time of the year.

Comida Corner: Barbecue Sauce Inspirational

This gem, once again, from the Rebar Modern Food Cookbook, is great on grilled foods, soups, sandwiches, or whatever else you like!

Rebarbecue Sauce 1 cup apple cider vinegar 1 tsp coriander seeds 1 tsp mustard seeds 1 ½ tsp whole cloves 4 allspice berries 2 Tbsp vegetable oil 1 medium yellow onion, diced 2 garlic cloves, minced 1/3 cup brown sugar, firmly packed 2 Tbsp molasses 2 Tbsp soy sauce 2 Tbsp chipotle puree or more to taste 1 five and a half ounce can tomato paste (or make it yourself like we do) 1 bottle dark beer

1. Combine vinegar and whole spices in a small pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until the liquid is reduced by half (15 minutes). Strain out the solids and cool. 2. Meanwhile, heat oil in a skillet and sauté the onion until golden, adding garlic halfway through. Sprinkle sugar into the pan and when it melts, add all the remaining ingredients, including the vinegar. Bring mixture to a simmer and cook for 20 minutes, or until the sauce is thick and glossy. Season to taste. 3. Cool and puree the sauce until smooth. Refrigerate for up to 3 weeks.

Happy grillin' and buen provecho!

Inspirational Impressions: Standing Bear

Man's heart away from nature becomes hard. Standing Bear

See y'all next time.

Abrazos,

Tim and Robin