

Rancho Mastatal Updates

RM Program News

: Cob Workshop in the Making

After three years of experimenting, building and messing around with cob, we here at the Ranch are anxious to put together a natural building workshop specializing in constructing with cob. We'd like to couple this workshop with our recent foray into the use of natural paints and plasters and think that by combining these techniques that we should be able to put together an amazing class. The only problem to date is that we have not been able to find anyone willing to commit to such a workshop. We've been speaking to a number of organizations and individuals in an effort to set some dates in 2006 for this workshop. Project ideas range from a cob kitchen and oven at one of the local women's houses to a cob library in town. The list of possibilities is almost endless. We estimate that we have room to build a new cob structure here in town or at the Ranch every year for the next decade, at least. We're incredibly excited about the possibility of educating others about the wonders of building with sand, straw and clay, just as Ilanto taught Robin in Coquille, OR 5 years ago. It's been pretty amazing what has transpired in the ensuing years. Please let us know if you know anyone out there that can help make this a reality, and if any of you from Yestermorrow are reading this, drop us a line if this might fit into your undoubtedly busy 2006 schedule (or maybe 2007). And by the way, the composting toilet and shower structure over at the worksite looks amazing. We applied the second and final coat of lime plaster this week and we should be taking our first showers there in a matter of days. We'll do our best to send finished pictures soon. The only job that remains is whitewashing both structures. This should go on quick and easy over the course of the next week or so. Happy Building.

Conservation Update: MINAE and Conservation

The park rangers working in the La Cangreja National Park tend to be the butt of a lot of jokes at the Ranch these days. We often jest that their only real function is to cart locals around in their new Toyota trucks. To their credit though, they do a great deal to keep the local "cantinas" in the black. This is probably all a bit harsh and perhaps not totally justified, but after months of hearing hunting dogs in our forests night after night and finding dead shrimp in our rivers, we're getting fed up with their seemingly uncaring attitudes towards the area's natural resources. We were cautiously optimistic that the three major environmental problems that we have in our area, animal poaching, the illegal harvest of trees, and the contamination of our rivers, would improve with the arrival of MINAE after the decree that made La Cangreja a national park in 2002. I'm dejected to report that this has not been the case. We are now left with the difficult decision on how to proceed. One potential solution, at least a partial one, is to form a group of volunteer park rangers from our community who will work together to put an end to these atrocities. We're exploring a number of avenues and trust that it is simply a matter of time before we are able to come up with and implement some solutions to these problems. It is fairly evident that we will not be able to depend on our friends from MINAE, at least soon, and we understand that the problem will not be solved easily, but we will continue to work hard to assure that the situation improves, regardless of what it will take.

Building Report: Cob Update

Shelves going in there's a lot less area that needs to be cobbled. As a result, the walls are exploding upward. We estimate that we're at least halfway there. It's finally looking like a house, and a beautiful one at that. GILBERT and ALEX have been working on the sitting room and patio floors, the former made of wood and latter of bamboo. We're also getting close on beginning our work on the waddle and daub walls that will eventually enclose the sitting room.

Our wish list of future building projects, besides the classroom which will closely follow the completion of the house after our return from the United States, includes a bamboo gazebo hangout (Robin already has the first drawings), a cob kitchen and oven at Katia's house, the community library, and a small cob house for a local family. One final small piece of information of note in the building world to share with you. Marcos has decided to build a composting toilet at his new cabin!!! He's already purchased the materials and will begin construction soon. Así es Marcos! The first on many future composting toilets in our community.

Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Ode to a Ranch-O

Sloshing a Pilsen at the pulp with chiquillos, Guarding the bread by Makin up lies, shooing away flies.... And Doña María.... Si, tiene ajo, te prometo. Ranch-o, little ranchooooo, how I love thee

A little yogalizacion with A stinky pup Mangy neck hugs and Doña María, still searching for bread. Downward dog a la Ion, Mandi the magnificent, how do you bend so? Ranch-oooo fantasticoooo, come te quiero....

Serving up not your average Macaroni, sweeping away the Turdie toadies.... Cururú why won't you Hunt them? Rations of (peanut) butter, Avocados, deliciosos, bagels (mmmmmmm) Oh little ranchooooo....

Tanning on a Sunday, meg and em On yogamats, in the front yard.... Waterfall runs and actual runs.... That hill will never Be conquered. Unless There's another earthquake like the one at 2 am. Aftershocks, my little pueblo... como te quiero....

Can't wait to see the Maximón, La casa nueva and the billy free zone. We think of you At Mecca for breakfast (REBAR!!!!) On warm days, almost tropical with Casey Woman of jungles on The back porch. Bikinis in Greenlake....

Community Facts/Stories: Beautifying the Community Center

That massive concrete structure that we love joking about blowing up has finally started to win us over. This all thanks to the efforts of Susan, her UW students (see names above), and the students from the local elementary and high schools. The Mastate Charitable Foundation, the US non-profit that raises funds for local community development, natural resource protection, and education, purchased materials that are being used to beautify the community center. The result has been astounding. The entire inside of the community center is now donned with beautiful murals. It has transformed the building. It is now a pleasant place to be. We have plans for other projects at the community center in the coming months. The next challenge will be to improve and entrance. Little by little we plan to make this a wonderful building in the coming years.

Comida Corner: Spicy Chickpeas

This recipe comes from The Best Ever Vegetarian Cookbook by Nicola Graimes. The combination of ingredients makes this dish sharp and tangy.

1 ¼ cups dried chickpeas 2 ounces tamarind pulp ½ cup boiling water 3 tablespoons oil (we use ghee) ½ teaspoon cumin seeds 1 onion, finely chopped 2 garlic cloves, crushed (we use a whole head) 1 inch piece of fresh ginger root, peeled and grated 1 fresh green chile, finely chopped 1 teaspoon ground cumin 1 teaspoon ground coriander ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric ½ teaspoon salt 8 ounces tomatoes, peeled and finely chopped (we never peel) ½ teaspoon garam masala Chopped fresh chiles and chopped onion, to garnish

1. Put the chickpeas in a large bowl and cover with plenty of cold water. Let soak overnight. (We use a pressure cooker). 2. Drain the chickpeas and place in a large saucepan with double the volume of cold water. Bring to a vigorous boil and let go for 10 minutes. Skim off any scum. Cover and simmer for 1 ½ - 2 hours, or until the chickpeas are soft (if you choose to use canned chickpeas omit this step). 3. Meanwhile, break up the tamarind and soak in boiling water for about 15 minutes. Rub the tamarind through a sieve into a bowl, discarding any seeds and fiber. 4. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and sauté the cumin seeds for 2 minutes, until they sputter. Add the onion, garlic, ginger and chile and sauté for 5 minutes. 5. Add the cumin, coriander, turmeric and salt and sauté for 3-4 minutes. Add the tomatoes and tamarind pulp. Bring to a boil and simmer for 5 minutes. 6. Add the chickpeas and garam masala. Cover and simmer for about 45 minutes. Garnish with chopped chiles and onion (we use fresh cilantro as well).

Buen provecho!

Inspirational Impressions: An Original

“All the right paths always cross”.

--Sacha Harris

Hasta pronto.

Abrazos,

Tim and Robin and the Crew