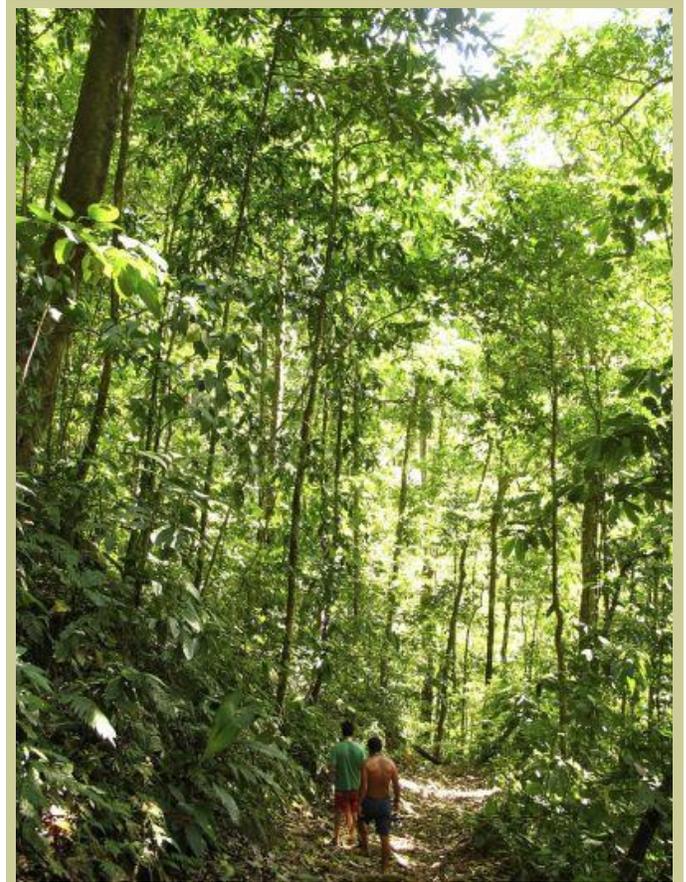


# Rancho Mastatal Updates

---

## November 2006

**Rancho Mastatal UPDATE for the month of NOVEMBER 2006** Comin' at you once again from el Rancho. December in Mastatal. The most amazing weather one could imagine. An overzealous cantina crowd. Tamales. Pork. Aguinaldos. A reasonably dry plaza. Christmas music that most people scorn. That making SPARKY and TIMO the happiest people on Earth. Pork. Bare asses in the cocina. The annual lip synch contest. Uncontrollable laughter. The Christmastime pizza party. Guaro. Gomas. Birthdays just about every day of the month. Hence eggs getting smashed on somebody's head just about every day of the month. GILBERTH's cumpleaños fiesta. Elementary school graduations. Guaro. Pork. Guaro. Pork. Guaro. Pork. Pegas. Gomas. Perfect mornings and unbelievable evenings. Whoops from the bar and visitors from out of town. Frijoles tiernos. Elotes. Chorreadas. Bailes. Afternoons at the Elmer Hohl. Boxing Day. Quite possibly the best day of the year. Fireworks. New Year's Eve. Bonfires. Amazing people everywhere. Preparations for the best year ever at the Ranch. Watch out and see you soon.



*A magical stroll beneath the rainforest canopy on one of the many trails around Rancho Mastatal*

*photo by Aaron Drury*

This month's update includes:

[RM Program News: Becas](#)

[Conservation Update: Neutralize Your Carbon Use](#)

[Building Report: Here We Go Again](#)

[Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Rap for this Land](#) (a.k.a. Holla Back RM)

[Community Facts/Stories: Mafia](#)

[Comida Corner: Cantuccini di Prato](#) (Biscotti)

[Fútbol Follies: Awaiting the Dry Season](#)

[Inspirational Impressions: Making a Difference](#)



*Future Artists*

*photo by Paul Noriega*

### **RM Program News: *Becas***

Imagine never having had the possibility to study beyond elementary school. Or never having left your hometown before your 18th birthday. *Beca* means scholarship in Spanish. It's become a more common word in our vocabulary over the past year as we increase the number of scholarship opportunities that we offer to local residents through a number of inventive programs. *Becas* can take the shape of an all-expense paid educational field trip for a local young adult to another part of the country or tuition and room and board to one of the many workshops that we offer at the Ranch each year. We also hope to soon offer a yearly *beca* to one deserving local

student that would cover their educational costs through high school and college.

The unique opportunities that we're able to present can positively change the lives of the recipients in unimaginable ways. They present a wonderful chance for students and adults alike to grow, learn and explore in a way that would otherwise not be possible. The result can be powerful, positive change.

Let us know if you'd like to learn more about how you can help.

## Conservation Update: Neutralize Your Carbon Use

Since many of the world's governments and big businesses don't seem to be taking the global warming threat seriously enough, it's important that as individuals we do what we can to mitigate our personal damage to the global environment. Through some new, innovative programs, you can now offset the amount of carbon dioxide that you add to the atmosphere via your daily activities by buying something called carbon credits. Carbon credits are measured in units of certified emission reductions (CERs) and each one is equivalent to one ton of carbon dioxide reduction. Carbon credits are traded in the open market or on the Chicago Climate Exchange or the European Climate Exchange.

The concept of carbon credits came into existence as a result of the increasing awareness of the need for pollution control and took official form after Kyoto. A number of organizations in conjunction with universities all over the world are working to build an information database for businesses and industries that will allow them to research and calculate what they need to invest in to offset their greenhouse gas emissions. We can now more easily do our part too. Search the web to find out how you can participate. It'll cost you a few extra dollars a year but will result in a better night's sleep while doing something positive for our planet.

Of course, in addition to buying carbon credits, there are thousands of other decisions that you can make during the course of the year to help minimize your and other's contributions to global warming. Set aside one day a year and plant a dozen trees. Next time you're ready to purchase a car think about biodiesel or buy a hybrid. Turn down your thermostat a degree or two. Make a New Year's resolution to drive less this year. You'll be amazed at how many unnecessary trips you make every month. If you have a bike, ride it more. Buy from responsible companies and purchase locally whenever possible. Turn off your computer and television when you're not using them. Watch or buy someone [An Inconvenient Truth](#). Elect officials that give a shit about renewable energy and the protection of our natural resources. Take a second right now to think of other ways that you can live more responsibly. And even if you're not too concerned about global warming yet, some of above acts can save you money, help to keep you shape, and assure that the world's energy needs are met for centuries to come.

Now that it's easy to buy carbon credits to offset the damage that you're doing to the earth by flying and traveling, make sure that you take the time each year and before each flight to find out how much it will cost you to offset the destruction that you're doing to future generations. Take ten minutes, do a bit of research and see how you can help to do your part.

If anyone has more information about carbon credits and how we can participate, please share with



*Escalera de Mono - "The Monkey's Ladder" - lets our primate brethren move freely between the forest floor and the canopy.*

*photo by Delfino Cornali*

the rest of us via this forum. Thanks.



*Applying clay layer to the walls of La Choza  
photo by Aaron Drury*

### **Building Report: Here We Go Again**

Coming back to the Ranch after our two-month hiatus each year generally results in surprises around every corner. Even a few days away from the Ranch can mean significant visual changes throughout the premises. This is undoubtedly accentuated after our elongated visit to the States. Upon returning this year we found a newly refurbished composting toilet, back gate and garage at the Main House (Thanks ALEX, GILBERTH and CARACA), a stunningly beautiful new guitar rack (Thanks again STEPHEN), a completely reorganized and cataloged library (Thanks PHOEBE), a revamped and indexed medical supply storage system

(Thanks BRUCE and ANNA), two new, beautiful dining room sized tables (Thanks TYLER and MR. HAZZARD), three new chairs (Thanks BRUCE and CARACA), molding around the windows at Jeanne's House (Thanks ALEX and GILBERTH), cleared trails and a bountiful field of healthy black and red beans (Thanks CHEPO and JUNIOR), a well-fed and well-taken care of volunteer crew (Thanks LILY and KATTIA) and too much more to note everything in this space.

Now that we're back on the ground, the construction's about to kick into 6th gear with seemingly dozens of building projects on the horizon. These comprise the finish and other work on the Hankey (sometimes now referred to as the "Shwanky"), a number of both big and small projects at the new classroom, another composting toilet to serve the Hankey and the Hooch, a timberframe couple's cabin beyond the Hankey, a timberframe toolshed in front of Jeanne's, and yes, finally, the new outdoor kitchen and bar at the main house that should bring a fat smile to KATTIA and LAURA's faces. We'll be building more furiously than ever this summer while we co-live with an amazing core crew of long-term volunteers all eager to get their hands dirty and expand their creative range while spending another amazing summer in Mastatal.

Damn it's a good day to build.

**Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Rap for this Land** (a.k.a. Holla Back RM)

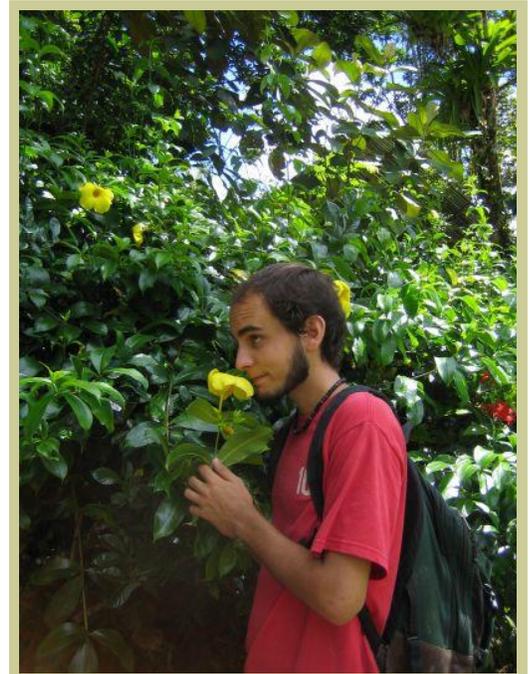
Returned from a land where "y'all" ain't slang  
where Yankees ain't welcome and six-shooters bang  
Ten-gallon hats  
cheap labor sold  
oiled up slacks  
buckles made of gold  
Returned from a land where "woohoo" is "yeehaw!"  
"Yippy rack rib roast rodeo hee-haw"

Came back to the Ranch where my peeps is at  
crackin' plastic white balls wit' my wiffle ball bat  
Ringin' them shoes  
lose to Caleb `n' Nate  
over Aguila booze  
Happy Liz spectates  
Came back to the Ranch where backsides sing  
where I ain't got to worry `bout sportin' no bling

Except fo' town dances like up in San Mizzle  
bust moves to reggaeton hot feet full shizzle  
Gots to have more luck  
than my man Buckshot  
Nico's car gets stuck  
in the same old spot  
Now friendly old glances come from brand new faces  
my cleats took a lickin' needin' brand new laces

Ponder poopy-paintin' with Erin and MIke  
pork-fried rice that me and Paul don't like  
`Ricka down under  
Nutmeg shows her card  
Guy deep in slumber  
Add Seth to the yard  
And so it goes on and on without no breaks  
Life with Robeen y Timo takes all cakes

Returned to a land where my butterflies flip  
Flop down in the `mocks hear some local gossip  
It's all familia  
it's all familiar  
back porch pelicula  
we's all peculiar



*Sparky stopping to smell the flowers*

Returned to a land where you know I got mine  
You know a friend down here just ain't too hard to find

Sparky



*The magic of the everyday at Mastatal - a  
rainforest leaf*

*photo by Aaron Drury*

### **Community Facts/Stories: Mafia**

A small community of townspeople (who just so happen to all work as volunteers) has formed around the Ranch's dinner tables, which now stand on the back porch of the main house. Day and night can pass in just minutes as conversation livens an atmosphere illuminated by LED Christmas lights. For years, the townspeople have been able to interact in a peaceful manner, but those days may be over. Mafia has invaded. There is no telling who these people are, but we know they are here. Every night, there seems to be an attempt on an innocent's life. Stool pigeons are often quieted with a single glance that says "I got one in the clip and five in the hole." Occasionally, the local police officer manages to thwart these attempts, yet many of our fine young officers have also mysteriously vanished after dark. Perhaps most the most disturbing thing is the fact that ordinary people are beginning to turn on each other; even married couples are suspicious of their mate's intentions. Distrust has become so rampant that the community lynches one of its members each day in hopes that mafia presence dissipates and eventually disappears. Spirits of fallen innocents look on as events

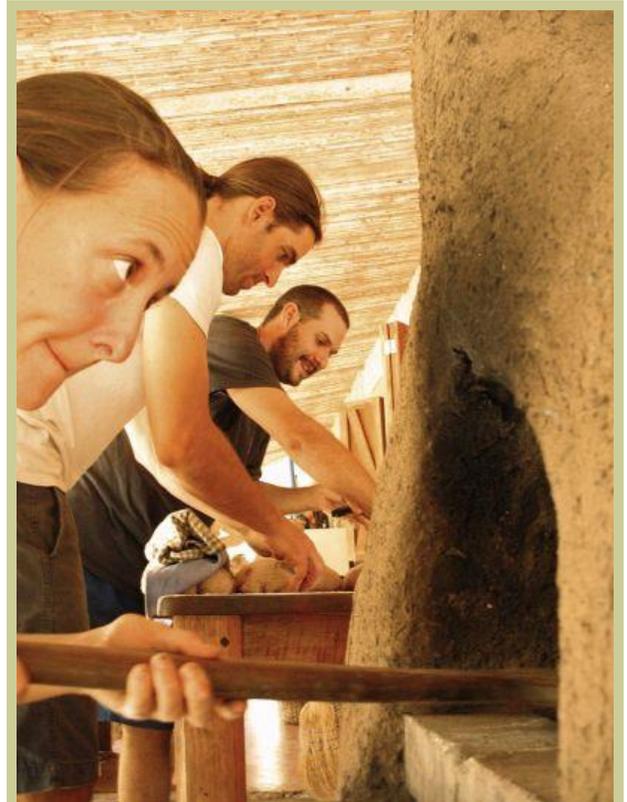
unfold, often in disbelief, sometimes in awe, occasionally in frustration, but always in anticipation of becoming part of the next risen community. Mafia has become significant to all of us here at the Ranch. Just be careful what people you choose to interact with; they may have aces up their sleeves.

## Comida Corner: *Cantuccini di Prato* (Biscotti)

Have you ever seen a cookie with class? This version of biscotti definitely sits atop the cookie totem pole, but isn't snobby enough to shun creativity. Go ahead and get a little crazy when deciding on a dried fruit or nut to add to the recipe. Our latest attempt included dried apricots with almonds, and it had us all as joyful as giddy schoolchildren yet feeling as sophisticated as royalty. Kids in a candy store, only wearing monacles... for a true King/Queen Poopypants...

### Ingredients:

1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup plus 1 tsp sugar  
½ tsp baking powder  
¼ tsp salt  
½ cup dried cranberries (or substitute any dried fruit)  
4 tbsp cold unsalted butter, cut into ½ inch pieces  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
1 ½ cups shelled unroasted pistachios (8 oz) (or substitute any nut)  
2 eggs, lightly beaten



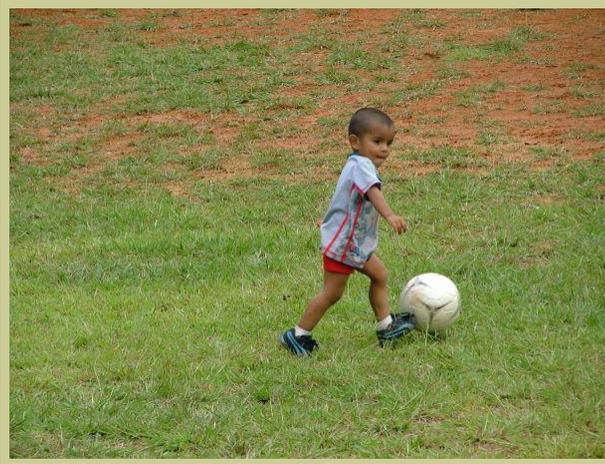
*Robin at the helm of the wood-fired oven. Few ecstasies in this world match warm, homemade bread out of a wood oven.*

*photo by Aaron Drury*

When you are ready to raise this dish to the throne...

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter a large heavy baking sheet.
2. In a food processor, combine the flour with 1 cup of the sugar, the baking powder and salt. Process for a few seconds to blend. Add the dried cranberries and process until coarsely chopped. Add the butter and vanilla. Pulse until the mixture resembles coarse meal.
3. Add the pistachios and eggs and pulse 10 times to blend. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and pulse 5 times, just until the dough is evenly moistened.
4. On a lightly floured work surface, divide the dough into 4 equal pieces. Roll each piece into an 8-inch log. Transfer the logs to the prepared baking sheet, leaving 2 inches between each. With your hands, flatten the logs to a width of 2 inches and sprinkle on the remaining 1 tsp of sugar. Bake for 25 minutes or until golden brown. Using a metal spatula, transfer the logs to a rack until they firm up slightly, 15 to 20 minutes.
5. Transfer the logs to a work surface. Using a sharp knife and a quick single motion, slice each log on the diagonal into ½ inch slices. Return the biscotti to the baking sheet, cut sides down and bake just until the first hint of golden brown appears, about 7 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool completely.

*Buen Provecho (per favore signore, buon appetito!)*



*Kendal, future star of Los Galacticos*

### **F?tbol Follies: Awaiting the Dry Season**

The overgrown plaza has recently been given a haircut in preparation for the dry months ahead. It's basically been unusable for the last half year and has resembled an Everglades swamp more than our beloved playing field. After a weekend of weedwhacking, raking, and machete swinging, we're ready to begin putting the refurbished field to use once again. Metecincos and games of Ultimate will again become a daily occurrence. We're also looking forward to some major improvements to the field this summer so expect much more to come from the Fútbol Follies in the near future.

### **Inspirational Impressions: Making a Difference**

*"Every day of our lives we are on the verge of making those slight changes that would make all the difference".*

---Mignon McLaughlin

*Abrazos,*

The Ranch Crew



*Visitors like this amazing spider just popping in to say hello and remind you of the extraordinary world in which we live*

*photo by Aaron Drury*