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MealFlour Odyssey Metcalf 2017

This summer, I learned a tremendous amount that even if I were to make a list of everything I did, it would not completely portray the amount of knowledge, experience, and memories that I gained this summer. However, through some of the events I describe below I hope to be able to show some of my fondest MealFlour memories and what I learned by spending ten weeks in *la tierra del quetzal*.

One of the most frequent events in the life of a MealFlour intern is going on home visits. In visiting the farms, MealFlour, alongside the program participants, can troubleshoot problems with the farms such as mold, ants, excess humidity, etc. One of my favorite home visits to go on was the farm in Huehuetenango, Guatemala. In Huehue, the mealworm farm was taken care of by participants in PEILE, a vocational training program. I remember during my first visit to PEILE, the farm wasn't in the best of conditions. It had mites and the food was moldy, which meant that mealworm production was not going as planned. With the help of MealFlour staff, the PEILE women were able to clean out the mealworm farm boxes and put in fresh



oats and a fresh water source. By having the farm be in unideal conditions, the women were able to learn firsthand the things to watch out for and how to best promote mealworm growth. Fast forward to my last home visit in Huehue at the end of the summer, the women were given a knowledge retention survey and based on their experience troubleshooting mealworm farms in the beginning of the summer, they were able to accurately and quickly describe the mealworm life cycle and the importance of caring for each stage. After taking the survey, the women also brought up an idea about hosting an expo on mealworm products in order to spread mealworm farming to other women in the PEILE program and Huehue as a whole. This was particularly impressive for me, as when most participants start in the MealFlour program they are skeptical about eating worms or about what having a mealworm farm might entail, however the PEILE women not only overcame this doubt, but they wanted to share their knowledge and the impact of mealworms with their community.

One of the other wonderful aspects about spending my summer in Xela was really immersing myself in a culture different from my own. From learning about the different *tiempos de comida* to exploring the use of *vos* and other Guatemalan-specific Spanish vocabulary, I felt like I was really able to learn a lot about the city I was living in. I found out that the Guatemalan tamal, *los paches*, are incredibly delicious, especially when coming home after a long day of work. I was also very pleasantly surprised by the varying climates in Guatemala depending on the location. Xela was usually in the high 50's/low 60's, but places like Guatemala City or Antigua were usually in the mid to high 70's.

From teaching English to Guatemalan adults to assisting in a food security study in the Palajunoj Valley to working in Primeros Pasos mobile clinics, I learned a lot about myself and where I see my work taking me in the future. Being able to interact with Primeros Pasos patients and MealFlour participants on a regular basis allowed me to really get to know them better, as more than just a number on statistic. Instead I was able to talk to them about their day, have conversations with them about current events, and just overall listen to the stories and experiences that they had to tell. These are the memories I will keep with me and will use to pursue my interest in the intersectionality between global health, service, and technology.

