

What Next?

Ideas for implementing sustainable living practices back home

RANCHO MASTATAL, COSTA RICA



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WHAT NEXT?



“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” - Anne Franke

"Composting toilets are not allowed in my state/country."

"I could never put a biodigester in my garden".

"Organic food is so much more expensive than conventionally grown food."

"Its just me, how can I do all of these things and still have a job/social life/study etc.?"

What can i do though?!

"I dont have time to cook all my own meals."

"I live in a city. How could i grow my own food?"

"Your climate, is easier/better. You can grow things all year round."

"Building code doesnt allow me to build a natural building where I live."

"I would love to do what you guys are doing but nobody near me is interested in helping or participating."

TIP #1

"Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don't."

-Steve Maraboli

Oftentimes we are already performing many positive acts that we take for granted and don't notice anymore.

START SMALL & EASY



◀ Educate yourself

As much as we would love to impart all of the information that we know during your stay with us, the reality is that if you are interested in shifting your current paradigm, you are going to have to do some reading and learning on your own. We have a fantastic library with many books on a huge array of subjects. We have invested heavily in our library over the years. Ask someone for a book recommendation, write down some titles and pick some of them up when you get home. Spend some time in our library browsing titles to get you inspired! Make sure you put them back where you found them!!

▶ Be a conscious consumer

At the Ranch we make a conscious decision to support our local farmers and buy as much as they can produce. This means that we buy whatever is available from local farmers at any point in time. People commonly turn up with food to sell. Sometimes we have advance notice but other times they turn up unexpectedly. For us, it is important to buy products from local people. We believe that this helps support the local community as the money will stay in this region. Sometimes it is more expensive to buy products from local people as they are not able to produce them at a competitive market rate due to an unfair economy of scale. As conscious consumers we choose to pay more for products that we value. This is a powerful concept to think about; your money is like your endorsement. Every time you buy a product you are endorsing everything that has gone into that product. Make sure that you know what you are buying and how you are spending your money.



◀ Make soap

All of the soap that you use while at the Ranch we make ourselves. We use local and natural ingredients and by making it ourselves we know what is in our soap. We make the dish soap, hand soap and our own shampoo and conditioner. In about one hour's work you can make enough soap for the whole year from safe, local, natural ingredients and it will be cheaper! Take a workshop with us and begin down the path of making your own soap. We also have some great books in our library that do a great job at outlining the process



TIP #2

**"Any change, even
change for the
better, is always
accompanied by
discomfort."**

-Arnold Bennett

Start small and easy. As the changes become new habits, you can make further changes. It's important to incorporate change into your lifestyle so that it becomes a permanent habit rather than a temporary blip.

START SMALL & EASY



◀ Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Over the years we have spent a lot of time creating and organizing relationships with vendors, farmers and tradespeople in our region to ensure that the amount of waste generated from our activities is minimized. We buy everything that we can in bulk and without packaging. Bulk items generally come in handy sacks or large containers which we can reuse and/or refill (like our cooking oil). Our vegetables are packed in newspaper or cloths which we can compost or reuse. The products that we cannot reuse or recycle have to go to the landfill. Try avoiding the supermarket when you can and instead shop locally and at farmers markets. Build relationships with neighbors, small businesses and producers and explore ways to reduce packaging together. Waste management is a huge global problem. Try and think how you can reduce the amount of waste that you produce.

▶ Compost

All the organic material at the Ranch is composted and used in our food production spaces. We feed our dogs our leftover food so that we don't have to buy store bought dog food. This insures that they are eating healthily. All other kitchen compost is managed in our Zone 1 compost structure. There it is broken down into soil and used again in the front gardens. The composting toilets around the Ranch are also breaking down our human waste to make sure it is safe for application in our orchards. This takes a minimum of 6 months in our climate. We have many books in our library detailing different types and scales of composting systems. It may be easier than you thought to compost all of your own organic waste at home. Try **"Worms Eat My Garbage"** by *Mary Applehof* or the **"Humanure Handbook"** by *Joseph Jenkins*.



◀ Ferment food!

The fermentation movement is well underway! Increasing amounts of research is being published regarding the health benefits of eating probiotic foods. We make all of our own ferments in large batches so that they last a long time. Just like with our soap production, an upfront investment of a few hours can provide you with enough fermented goodies for weeks or even months. We have a number of books in our library which are easy to follow and will get you on the path to fermentation fever! Why not start by reading **"Wild Fermentation"** by *Sandor Katz* or take a "day workshop" with us.

TIP #3

"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone accross the waters to create many ripples."

-Mother Teresa

*Have patience with others, meet them where they are at.
Not everyone will see the value in what you want, but it is
important that you value it.*

START SMALL & EASY



◀ Ferment drinks!

We make all of our own sodas (available everyday at lunch), alcohol (not available to guests) and dairy kefir (often used in salad dressing and smoothies). By doing this we support small-scale farmers, especially the local "trapiche", or sugar mill, run by a family in San Miguel. The "trapiche" is where the sugar cane is turned into "tapa dulce", our local sugar source. Sugar is a key ingredient in many types of fermented foods and drinks. Fermenting our own products saves huge amounts of garbage. Although many bottles and cans can be recycled, it involves a huge amount of energy to recycle and the sad reality is that many recyclables actually never make it to a recycling facility. Why not make your own alcohol, soda or dairy kefir? You could start by looking for **"The Art of Fermentation"** by *Sandor Katz* in our library, or take a "day workshop" with us.

▶ Generate your own energy

Costa Rica produces about 97% of its annual energy through renewable energy sources, principally hydroelectric. At the Ranch we are doing what we can in the renewable energy realm to contribute. We have a number of independent solar systems as well as the biogas produced from the biodigester that we use for cooking. We also use wood to try to reduce the amount of propane that we might otherwise use in our kitchen. As solar and other forms of renewable energy generation become more affordable, there is no better time to think about investing in these technologies. The financial returns on solar panels are getting better each year. What fuels are being used to heat, cool and cook with in your house? Is there a better option? it might be worth some investigation.



◀ Drive less or not at all

While we do have 3 vehicles at the Ranch, we consume hardly any fossil fuels over the course of the year. This is mainly because we make only about 10 trips a year outside of the Mastatal area. We have had the same trucks since Robin and Timo first came to Costa Rica in 2001. We are fortunate enough to be able to walk nearly everywhere that we need to go and there is a bus that goes in and out of town once a day. Why not look into public transportation in your area or even better how to get around on a bicycle. It may be easier than you thought! In our library read **"The Permaculture City"** by *Toby Hemenway*

TIP #4

**"Let us be the
ancestors our
descendants will
thank".**

- Winona LaDuke

*Make conscious decisions about your actions, research
them, make sure they support your values.*

START SMALL & EASY



◀ Grow food

We try to grow as much food as we can. Although the tropics have year round warm weather, there are still distinct seasons for growing different types of annual crops. Just like in a temperate climate, you would not plant your beans at the end of the fall and in Costa Rica you would not plant them in the middle of the rainy season. Learn about growing food in your climate and grow what you can. If you live in an apartment building then this may simply involve some herbs in a pot on the window ledge. If you have a small yard why not try and grow something in it. Look into allotments or community gardens in your area. There are a whole wealth of options and opportunities out there! You will meet great people and there is nothing more rewarding than growing your own food. In our library read "**The Intelligent Gardener**" by Steve Solomon

▶ Buy second hand

Maybe you noticed or maybe you didn't, but the majority of people who live at the Ranch get many of their clothes from people who leave them at the Ranch. It is kind of like our own thrift store!! The clothes industry accounts for a huge amount of pollution and waste production. Simply buying your clothes second hand or from a thrift store is a great way to reuse old, unwanted clothing rather than buying something new. If you do have to buy something new, consider what it is made of and where it comes from. All of these steps are part of being a conscious consumer.



◀ Build something

You will have noticed that the majority of our structures have been built using natural materials. We love building with earth and using natural finishes on top of our earthen buildings. Next time you are going to repaint your house or do some work on it, why not consider some natural alternatives. Use natural insulation rather than fiberglass, use a clay paint or plaster rather than conventional paints, or put an earthen floor in the new extension of your house rather than carpet. There are many options out there. You just need to explore them. You don't have to be building a new house in order to use them either. Take a "day workshop" with us or have a read of "**The Natural Paint Book**" by Julia Lawless

TIP #5

**"Every moment is an
organizing
opportunity, every
person a potential
activist, every
minute a chance to
change the world."**

- Dolores Huerta

*Become active in your community, local politics, and local
businesses. Start your own climate or social justice
group. Organize your neighborhood.*

START SMALL & EASY



◀ Join a movement

The Ranch integrates with the local community whenever possible. We buy locally, participate in local organizations and government, and support our regional economy at every turn. When you get home, do a search for local organizations that share your ethics and interests. For those groups that are organizing fundraisers, protests and other events, join in. You may also consider organizing your community to better be able to address environmental and social challenges in your own neighborhood. We're at a critical moment in history and it's time to take initiative. Check out Extinction Rebellion, 350.org, and Democracy Now! for ideas on where to start.

▶ Demand climate action

Climate change is an existential threat that affects every living creature on this planet. Much of our work at the Ranch is informed by global environmental destruction. It is past time for everyone to become active in some way to combat the negative impacts of our warming climate. This could mean calling your representative in Congress to demand progressive legislation, marching in the streets to ask for swift and immediate climate action, or organizing a work party to plant 1,000 trees on degrade land. Non-violent, direct action is one of many ways to affect change on local, state and national platforms. Check out books in our library such as **"This Changes Everything"** by Naomi Klein and **"Drawdown"** by Paul Hawken.



◀ Run for local office

Tim and Robin have been members of the local government, sports committee and school board on many occasions over the years. Direct participation in community organizations can be the best way to influence local policy. Become an active member in a local organization or political party. Run for city council. Join the PTA. Go to a town hall meeting to see what's it about. Join the revolution to supplant politicians and leaders that are not serving your community or the environment. We need to muster the courage to join forces and apply pressure wherever and whenever we can to begin to turn the tide in favor of our communities and the environment. Check out the book **"On Fire: The Case for a New Green Deal"** by Naomi Kelin.

DEPARTING THOUGHT

"In any dark time, there is a tendency to veer toward fainting over how much is wrong or unattended in the world. Do not focus on that. There is a tendency, too, to fall into being weakened by dwelling on what is outside your reach, by what cannot yet be. Do not focus there.... We are needed, that is all we can know."

- Clarissa Pinkola Estes
