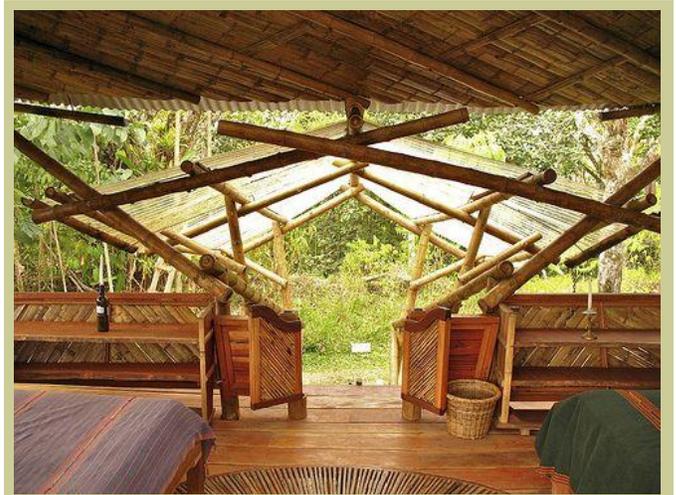


Rancho Mastatal Updates

October 2007

For those of you out there spending time with family during the holidays, enjoy the festive season. We continue to take great pleasure in our visit with relatives and friends. We recently had the opportunity to spend twelve days with pals in the Seattle area, our old stomping grounds, and had the luxury of hooking up with dozens of people while there. It was amazing to be back after such a long hiatus. We return to Mastatal in early December and are starting to look forward to getting our hands dirty once again. We have an enormous to-do list waiting for us. We'll be



The view looking out the front of the Hooch

returning with five members of Tim's family, including his brother KEITH and niece KATIE who will be seeing the Ranch for the first time. His sister DEB, her husband DAVID and his mother BONNIE will be returning after a large gap between visits. We'd like to thank GREG, JOEY and SINEAD, and TOM, along with the other volunteers and workers that dedicated their time and energy at the Ranch in our absence, for holding down the fort and affording us our yearly escape from our duties in Mastatal. I'm convinced that we wouldn't be able to do what we do without stepping away these few months every year. We greatly appreciate your commitment to the Ranch and the community for the past many weeks.

I guess I should give you a little fair warning before you read too much further. Arguably, while home, I've been listening to too much [Democracy Now!](#), watching an excess of PBS, and following an overabundance of politics. I should know better. As a result, I've grown a bit despondent about the state of affairs in the US and much of the world. It shows in a few of the entries that follow. I would of course encourage you to browse the newsletter in its entirety, but if you're not particularly excited about reading a few rants about the present state of our world, you may want to pick and choose as you move ahead. There you go. You've been warned. This newsletter will most likely resume its toned down nature next month, after networking with nature and life without mass media once again, so my apologies to any of you out there that are offended by my opinions. With that said, enjoy.

This month's update includes:

[RM Program News](#): Permaculture and Yoga Starter in February

[Conservation Report](#): Free Trade

[Building Report](#): Community Learning and Sharing Center

[Volunteer/Guest Gossip](#): Politics

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Fútbol Follies: Stateside

Inspirational Impressions: Shiva and Zinn



*Jenny Pell &
Michael Suzerris*

RM Program News: Permaculture and Yoga Starter in February

February will mark something new at the Ranch. Never before have we hosted a Permaculture or a Yoga workshop, yet early next year, we will be offering both, at the same time. Michael Suzerris, a respected yoga instructor based in the Seattle area and coincidentally Robin's former teacher when we lived there, and Jenny Pell, a leading Permaculture designer, also hailing from the Evergreen State, will join forces to offer a one-week introductory course on both of these increasingly popular areas of interest. The course will run from February 2 through February 9. Each day will commence with Michael leading yoga. Jenny will follow by directing both practical and theoretical classes on Permaculture. The program is named Living On Earth. Details follow:

- Earth Yoga with morning yoga practice, walking meditation, connection to nature through yoga and harmonic chanting.
- Permaculture Design with fundamentals of sustainable design, patterns in nature, ecoliteracy, and fun skill-building hands-on projects.
- Vacation! Jungle hikes, beach excursions, and evening programs.

Price: Adults \$895. Includes beautiful accommodations and all delicious meals. Airfare not included. Secure your spot now - \$300 deposit due per person by November 30th. Deposit refundable until January 15th.

For more information please call (206) 529-0581 or visit <http://www.yogalife.com>.

We hope that you can join us.

Conservation Report: Free Trade

Costa Rica recently approved a free trade agreement with the United States named CAFTA. It passed by means of Costa Rica's first referendum ever on a topic of such significance. As is common with many free-trade agreements that the US is involved in, adversaries were split between environmentalists, unions, indigenous groups and small businesses on one side, and large corporations, the wealthy, and government (arguably put in place through coercion from our lovely government) on the other side. The free trade agreement was one of the most hotly contested issues ever debated in Costa Rica and threatens to polarize the country. Massive protests against the treaty were launched on a half dozen occasions, packing the streets of downtown San Jose with student, native and small business advocates pleading with the government and others to oppose the pact. Oscar Arias, the recent winner of a highly controversial presidential election and backed by the US government, campaigned forcefully for a treaty that would undoubtedly make him and his massive plantations in Northwestern Costa Rica even richer. The "Yes" campaign outspent the "No" movement by a preposterous amount of money and government officials threatened to withhold funding for municipalities unless they promoted the treaty within their districts. It was another disgusting example of large corporations both in the US and Costa Rica forcing an unpopular treaty down the throats of an oftentimes poor and ignorant population. The US and Costa Rican government-backed campaign won with a 52% to 48% margin. Polls the day before the referendum were still predicting for the "No" vote to win with 55% of the vote, but as has happened over and over in recent history, the interests of the rich and privileged won using often times dubious tactics.



Kendal with his dog Layka

Costa Rica, one of the world's most democratic countries, is being threatened in ways that it will not fully appreciate for years to come. The disparity between rich and poor continues to widen as is the case in so many other countries throughout Latin America, and this in a country that has traditionally been so proud of its significant middle class. Development along the Pacific coast has gotten totally out of hand as Florida developers build at a rate that has most of us up in arms as they strong-arm the government into damming more rivers to fulfill the increased demand for hydroelectric power and potable water. Perhaps by now you have a sense how I feel about this recent development. It makes me intensely sad on one hand and on the other it motivates me to speak out against the interests of the large corporations that are destroying smaller and weaker countries across this planet. When will we as voters and consumers wake up to the destruction that's being wreaked all around us? Our complacent acceptance of government and corporate policy is sickening. We're becoming slaves to our corrupt political leaders and filthy-rich corporate boards of directors, all at the expense of social and environmental justice. Have we learned nothing from NAFTA? Free-trade in its current form is detrimental to all of us who care about this planet and the majority of people that inhabit it. Educate yourselves. Stop listening to the rhetoric and lies of our CEOs and current administration, and then edify yourselves and stand up for your rights and those

of the defenseless billions around the world.



Gilberth applies a lime plaster to an exterior wall

Building Report: Community Learning and Sharing Center

A heartfelt thank you to everyone out there that made a recent donation toward Mastatal's future Community Learning and Sharing Center.

We still have a long way to go but have collected enough money to begin working on some drawings and plans in preparation for breaking ground in late 2008 or early 2009. We are hoping to dovetail next year's Yestermorrow Design/Build Class with the framing of the new structure as well as utilizing the talents of 2008's core of interns and volunteers to keep the project moving forward.

Thanks DESA and everyone else out there that who has contributed to this dream for keeping the project alive and well. Each day we move closer to the reality that we've been working on for over two years now. We'll keep you posted up on any progress.



Our bean field

Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Politics

I admit it. I can't get away from politics on these stateside visits. Fall not only marks the time when the various shades of green leaves on our NE deciduous trees change to stunning shades of red, orange and yellow; the necessity to pull out fleece and flannels as the mercury drops to chillier temperatures; and for better or for worse the beginning of American football; it also means politics. During even years of Congressional and Presidential elections, the coverage can get downright overwhelming. Endless meaningless news clips that tell us little about a candidate, multi-million dollar ad campaigns that focus on digging up dirt from opponent's elementary school years, and of course debates that only serve to fool the electorate about the real issues of our times. This year, an odd numbered year on the calendar and in the world of politics though one leading up to an important election in 2008, has been anything but dull, especially on a Democratic side that boasts a black, a Latino, and a woman Presidential candidate battling for Iowa and the nomination.

I admit it. I listen to NPR whenever I go anywhere in the car. I watch the Jim Lehrer News Hour on PBS if I'm home at 7 p.m. And yes, shamefully, I've watched the two nationally-televised Democratic debates that I was around for. This newsletter has been mostly apolitical since we sent out its first edition six years ago and I apologize to any of you reading this that find this an inappropriate venue for such a dialog. A few of you last month made it clear that you weren't impressed with my Bush-bashing comments. Perhaps I owe you an apology. But I just can't bring myself to it. We've never used this as a forum to try and sway readers into voting for one candidate or another and it should probably stay that way. But I can't resist, at least while in the throes of a national debate that's focusing on some intensely important issues such as an illegal war in Iraq, disintegrating civil liberties, and a leadership more interested in attacking Iran and Venezuela than poverty, our pitiful health care system, and the crumbling natural environment all around us. What surprises me most perhaps about this whole phenomenon is the seeming disinterest by the majority of this country's population. Has 200 years of relative peace on US soil made us complacent? Are we anesthetized by our televisions, computers, PS2s and a mass media that never really tells us anything of importance? Flipping through any of the news channels offers an overwhelming experience: 10-second news clips, one sentence "stories" running along the lower band of the screen, and a mind-blowing array of colors, sounds and "flashes" that does everything to and for the viewer except inform. Citizens must work diligently to get to the heart of real issues that places that CNN, ABC, and Fox rarely venture. Maybe it's getting time to return to Costa Rica.

I admit it. I'm becoming bitter as I always seem to around Thanksgiving. What will it take to mobilize our constituencies to demand substantive change in the way that our governments treat those in this country without health care, AIDS/HIV patients throughout the world and the millions that wallow in poverty both here and abroad? How can we as the general public begin to understand the dangers of the Patriot Act, our foreign policy in the Middle East, and the threats that companies like Blackwater not only pose to innocent citizens in Iraq, but also to all of us here at home. One way of course is by taking the time to read well-researched publications. The tragic reality is that reading has jumped on to that slide that we all had at elementary school. Not the ladder but the chute. Our computers and TVs have replaced what was once our unique opportunity to learn about issues that were most important to us. Most of us now depend on the government or gigantic transnational corporations to decide for us. The result: toys that kill our children, a populous totally uneducated about where the food in our grocery stores come from, and a complete disconnect with war and its tragic affects on those fighting in and living through them. I do

apologize for the rant. I'm getting older and perhaps therefore a bit more cynical. Call me an asshole, a raging liberal or whatever you'd like. I don't really care. But I'm no different than most people out there. At least those of you that are not running our nation's government and our largest profit-driven corporations. Whatever happened to the concept of "social profit"? Like you, I give a shit about other people. About the future that we'll be leaving our children. And about the quality of life that's attainable to everyone on this planet if we can wake up, educate ourselves about issues that are important to us, and speak up and act. Our generation is living the reality of global climate change, unjust and illegal wars, and grinding poverty around the world. We have the capacity and resources as the people of the most powerful country in the world to influence this planet in a dramatically positive manner. In fact it's our responsibility. Extract yourself from the fear-invoking machine that has become big government. An airport TSA agent or the Homeland Security Department don't care about your safety.

So, where can you start? For one, strive to watch less television, even if just 30 minutes less. Read more. Vote with your conscience. Eat locally. Drive less. And read one of the following enlightening books that might educate you a little about our current reality.

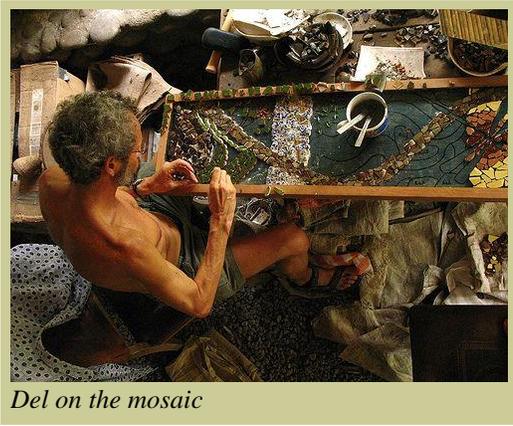
- *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* by Barbara Kingsolver, Camille Kingsolver, and Steven L. Hopp
- *Targeted: National Security and the Business of Immigration* by Deepa Fernandes and Howard Zinn
- *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan
- *The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot* by Naomi Wolf
- *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* by John Perkins
- *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* by Vandana Shiva

For those of you that have read this far, we encourage you to add to this list.

Also check out the following excellent websites: <http://www.democracynow.org> and <http://www.commondreams.org/>

And I know that because Dennis Kucinich admits that he saw a UFO makes him unelectable in the eyes of most Americans, but if you're going to vote in the Democratic primary this year, you should check this guy out. He's got it right. <http://www.dennis4president.com>. Whoops. Alright, I did it. Maybe it doesn't matter who's in the White House, but what a novel concept to have someone in there that tells the truth and cares about humanity.

Happy voting and don't forget to turn off the lights on your way out.



Del on the mosaic

Community Facts/Stories: Emerald Visit

After our recent return from Seattle, we now have a better grasp on how extensive the Ranch community has become in the Pacific Northwest. We were also reminded of the mind-blowing beauty and the high incidence of amazingly cool people in this corner of the US. It had been 6½ years since ROBIN and I, along with our close friend MIKE DOYLE, pulled out of our friends DENNIS and ALANE's driveway in our packed Toyotas near Lake City Way on our way south to warmer weather and our new home in Mastatal. The then recent memory of 9/11, our country's impending attack on Afghanistan, and over five years of

sweet memories made the departure a difficult one. At that time we were confident that the Pacific Northwest would still play an important role in our lives, but little did we know then how it would play out. Instead of traveling back to Seattle each year as we had originally intended, the Emerald City and its surroundings began coming to us in Costa Rica.

Little by little, our new business grew and overwhelmed our lives, not allowing us to get back to see our friends as we had hoped. We slowly became immersed in our new lives in Mastatal, leaving us little time to think about stateside trips to the West Coast. Moreover, family and friends on the other coast always won out when we could travel. Over the years something fascinating and wonderful began to happen. Our networking prior to departing our last home at 701 N. 61st St. started to pay off. My bi-weekly visits to Phinney Ridge coffee shops with TIBURON, the outlandish man with a chunk missing from his arm, began to pay off. And word began to spread around Seattle about this little town in Costa Rica where two former Seattlites were working to spread the ideals of sustainable living. Even today, I'd venture to guess that over half of our guests, students, and visitors hail from the Pacific Northwest. We presently work with the University of Washington, Seattle University, the Center High School, Lakeside School, and Tropical Adventures in Education amongst other Northwest institutions, and the number seems to grow each year.

While in Seattle, we saw well-known former Mastatal icons ERIN HANLON, MEGHAN VITA, GUS and EMILY SINSHEIMER, SPARKY, NATE SANDER, ROB and ANNIE from the Lakeside School, TIMOTHY and KIMBERLY, KATIE OKAMURA, JOEL GREEN, SUSAN, KAREN WATSON, TYLER and GREG SEE, DELFINO, MICHELE and MATT and AMANDA STONE, JACK VISCO, MIKE DOYLE, BRIAN and MARY, MICHAEL SCHEISSER, REBECCA BEAR, DENISE, GREG SHUCK, ED KRANICK, DAN MYERS, KAT HALLORAN, TIBURON and ANDRA and many others in addition to numerous great friends that we made in Seattle while we lived there. Our thanks to all those mentioned and to the others that made our recent trip both inspirational and unbelievably fun. We hope to be able to make it back there in near future.

Comida Corner: Pumpkin Nut Cheesecake

SKIP and LIZABETH turned us on to this wonderful fall recipe during our recent visit to their home in Worcester, VT. It hails from *Mother Wonderful's Cheesecakes* and goes something like this.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Ingredients need to be at room temperature

Crust (for 10" springform):

- ¼ pound (1 stick) lightly salted butter
- 1 cup finely ground vanilla wafer crumbs (or you can use Graham crackers)
- 1 cup finely ground spiced wafer crumbs
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts
- ¼ cup sugar

Melt butter over very low heat. Combine butter with crumbs, nuts and sugar in a food processor or with a fork until thoroughly blended. Press small amounts of crust mix all the way up the sides of an ungreased 10-inch springform and then press remaining crust mix over bottom of springform.

Filling (for 10" springform):

- 1 ½ pounds (three 8-ounce packages) cream cheese
- 1¼ cups sugar
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 1 teaspoon brandy
- 1½ tablespoons Irish Mist, rum or Drambuie
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon mace
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ cup chopped walnuts
- 1 ounce crystallized ginger, minced
- pinch salt
- 4 large eggs

In a mixer, whip cream cheese on the highest speed for 5 minutes, then add sugar and beat for 2 minutes more. Add maple syrup, pumpkin, brandy, Irish Mist, cinnamon, mace, nutmeg, walnuts, ginger and salt and blend together thoroughly. Add the eggs, one at a time, keeping the mixer on the lowest speed in order to prevent too much air from destroying the proper consistency of the

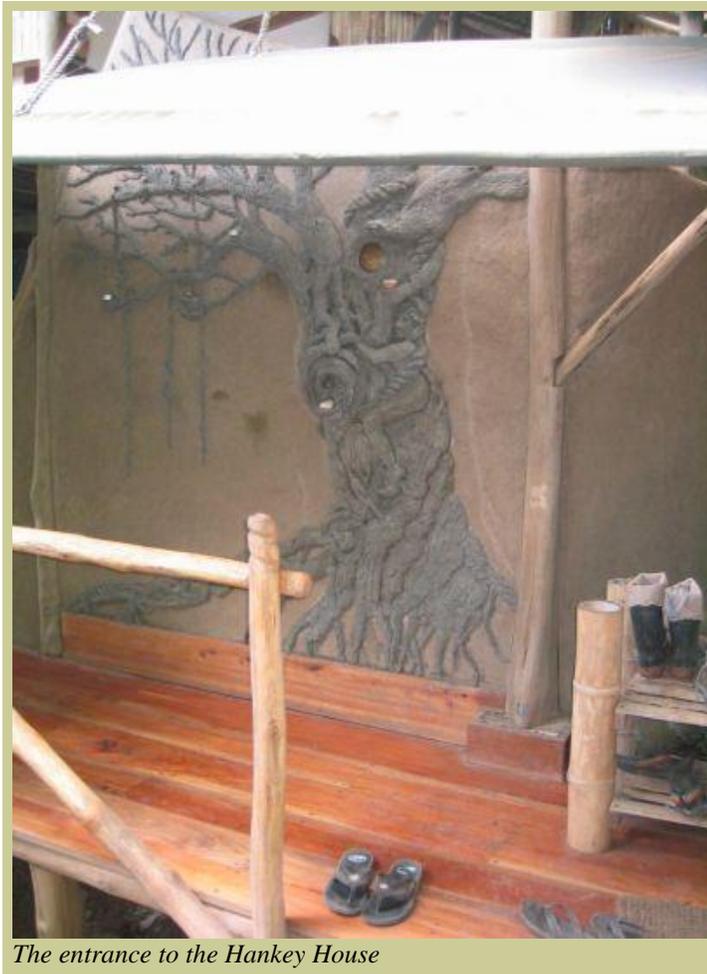


Bagels baking in the cob oven

better; mix just until each egg has been incorporated into the batter. Or: If using a food processor put the sugar in first. Cut each 8-ounce block of cream cheese into eight 1-inch cubes and add the first 8 cubes to bowl. Process using on-off pulse about 25 times and then add the rest of the ingredients and add the eggs one at a time until all eggs are incorporated. Bake at 400 degrees until done (about an hour).

Make for the holidays and prepare for cheers from everyone.

Happy Holidays *y buen provecho*.



The entrance to the Hankey House

F?tbol Follies: Stateside

Due to the fact that I know little about what's been going on in the *fútbol* scene in and around Mastatal, I can't very well report about news down there. Being in the United States has given us the opportunity to see a bit more soccer than we're accustomed to being exposed too when living in Costa Rica. Twenty-four hour soccer channels and the increase in the popularity of soccer in the US makes it relatively easy to catch up on our new favorite sport while here. God bless the fact that there aren't any commercials during soccer games outside of halftime. European Cup Qualifiers are currently underway (sorry to you Brits out there) and the English Premier League, the Italian Serie A and many other leagues throughout Europe and other parts of the world are all catching their stride as the United State's Major League Soccer wraps up with Houston taking their second title in two years. A big win over New England. So much for the New England sweep a lot of people have been talking about around here. I'm looking forward to start

kicking the ball around again with the girls and boys of Mastatal.

Until then, keep on kickin' it yourself. More local soccer news will be on the way soon.

Inspirational Impressions: Shiva and Zinn

"It is often too late by the time the government reacts."

----- Vandana Shiva

"There is no flag large enough to cover the shame of killing innocent people."

----- Howard Zinn