



Finca la Isla's Newsletter



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Eating Locally, Part II

We're lucky here in Puerto Viejo to have such a variety of good quality, local fruits and vegetables, especially at the Farmers' Market. So, when I read about Food Miles and the average distance food travels between field and plate, I can get a little complacent. From Michigan University's original study discovering the average US meal has travelled over 1,500 miles, to the many websites dedicated to reducing Food Miles (Local Harvest, Sustainable Table, Food Miles Calculator), there's a growing push to study the miles (read fossil fuel used) hiding in one's larder.

This morning I took a serious look in our refrigerator: my complacency is unfounded.

We have 4 ranges of food: very local (30 miles), nearly local (150 miles), national and international, looking roughly like this,

- Very local: most of our daily diet – vegetables, fruit, poultry, fish, chocolate, black pepper.
- Nearly local: coffee, dairy, sugar.
- National: salt, rice, corn tortillas, honey, oil.
- International: a surprising amount, and not just luxury items: whole wheat flour, oats, tea, almond butter, rice noodles, pickles, curry pastes, wine, nuts and seeds, tomato ketchup, maple syrup . . .

Even though our fruits and vegetables are locally grown it looks like our food miles 'bill' could be just as high as in the States.

So what to do? It's got to be a compromise, we're not ready to give up oats - or wine, but we can be more conscious in our choices, and more open to finding local alternatives. And I suppose I'd be willing to eat more chocolate.

Useful eco-art in Puerto Viejo: CARTS

The new recycled art collective in town is called **CARTS** (*Colectivo Artístico Reciclando en Talamanca por la Sostenibilidad*) and its artists are producing a variety of unique, handmade pieces of art by re-using materials from the community. Purses made from umbrellas and baskets made from newspapers are some of

our featured items. They make good gifts or household items and are a great way to support local talent and the local environment. Finca la Isla's Botanical Garden, ATEC and KIO are the co-organizers and distributing points for these products. We are also at the Second Saturday extended

silver baskets out of recycled tetra brik, and in January we will be making crochet purses from used plastic bags. We have a catalogue coming soon and also hope to be online! We are still collecting your used items at ATEC including: la nacion newspapers, umbrellas (please remove wire), used paper, used clothes in good condition, flip flops, used sheets, hammocks, mosquito nets, clean dog food bags, rice and flour sacks.

For more info contact Alaine at ATEC 2750-0191, Ashley at the Botanical Garden 2750-0046 or Karla at 8884.0093.

Puerto Viejo local market on the second Saturday of every month: Second Saturday, November 14th we're doing a recycled paper-making workshop, December we're doing



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Pejibaye Ceviche- Serves 8
Pejibaye is rich in vitamin A, each portion supplies 40% of the daily vitamin A requirement.

Cook 15-20 pejibayes in water with salt until you can prick it with fork, about 10 minutes.

Remove from water, peel the pejibayes and dice in small chunks.

Add one onion, finely chopped, one red pepper finely chopped, a bunch of chopped cilantro and mix in a large bowl. Add the juice of 4 limes, a pinch of salt and black pepper and finely chopped hot chilies to taste.

Let sit, covered in the bowl at room temperature for 1 hour or longer. Enjoy!

ReciCaribe Information

Our local recycling company, Recicaribe, is still getting back on its feet so we are still looking for volunteers to go to the centre in Patiño EVERY Tuesday to help sort out recyclables and learn how the recycling process works. This is a great way to help out and get to know others in the community! Contact Manuel Pinto from Caribe Sur at 8826-3998 for more info.

Recicaribe is currently accepting: squished Plastic #1 and #2, aluminum, and topless glass bottles. For all other inquiries about the recycling service please contact the Biological Corridor (Spanish only) at 2756-8136 or Maurizio from Café Viejo at 8882-0304.

Worms, the feria, and a new mascot!

Worms are incredible creatures. Their movement through the soil creates passageways for air and water, bringing oxygen and water to plant roots. The tunnels help keep soil fluffy and light making it easier for roots to spread and allowing maximum nutrient uptake. Through their tunneling the earthworms turn the soil, literally ploughing the land slowly and gently with every movement. And while they are doing all this they are leaving behind them nutrient rich compost delivered in 'slow release' castings.

There can be as many as one million earthworms per acre of soil, and with each worm eating up to their own weight in organic waste each day, this can mean a lot of compost! One million worms can eat 10 tons of leaves, stems and dead roots a year, turning that waste into 'black gold': castings have five times as much nitrogen, seven times as much phosphorous, eleven times as much potassium and one thousand times as many beneficial bacteria as

the food they ingest.

Not only do earthworms turn organic waste into great quality topsoil, they are also capable of neutralizing – or removing – many of the toxins in that waste. In Sydney, Australia, 40 million manure worms are employed in the city's sewage treatment plants, turning city sludge into natural fertilizer. The enzymes and bacteria-cides in their gut render human pathogens harmless.

Worm compost:

- improves soil quality; boosts plant productivity; prevents plant diseases; speeds up seed germination; combats soil erosion;
- increases the soil's ability to store water (thereby diminishing the amount of water needed by the trees and plants);
- fixes heavy metals and reduces mineral leaching from the soil.

Raptor Migration

During the past few weeks we've been "raptured" with the sight of flocks of birds gliding in circles through the air above our home and garden. Raptors represent over 300 different species of birds of prey, including hawks, eagles and falcons. Unlike other migratory birds, raptors and vultures travel by day, floating in large circles powered by thermals and updrafts to gain altitude using minimal "flapping" energy. Twice a year during the species' autumn and spring, literally millions of these birds fly through Talamanca on their intercontinental journey, fleeing the cold winters of North America, just as many of our North American, human part-time residents choose to spend their winters with us in the south Caribbean.

In fact, the Keköldi mountain range is one of the world's elite raptor migration watch sites. Up to 187,000 can be observed in a day and over 3 million birds have been recorded in a single season, making it one of the three best raptor hotspots in the world!

After Talamanca, these birds continue their route through the Darien lowlands and on to northwestern Colombia. From



here each species continues towards their preferred wintering climates: most of the broadwinged hawks head to the Amazon, while the larger Swainson's hawk prefers the pampa region in Argentina. The vultures, although with less studied habits, are thought to mostly migrate to the Venezuelan llanos area. Many rarer species are also sighted, and recent studies have noticed the increase in their numbers after being seriously threatened by heavy pesticide use in the 50s and 60s. Still today, however, approximately 17% of the migrant raptor population are threatened by environmental hazards including pesticides, and many more are threatened by habitat loss and direct persecution.

In Talamanca, migration season is coming to its end in early December, so there are still many chances to view this phenomenon, perhaps from your home, too. Beyond observing, much is yet to be learned about these birds' ecology, posing both an opportunity as well as a duty for the local ecotourism industry and the community at large.

The farmers' market has a new name: Puerto Viejo Local Market, and a new mascot, Gussy the earthworm (the wonderful inspiration of Aldo at exclusivedesignsola@gmail.com). Look for Gussy t-shirts and recycled, reusable grocery bags for sale at the market. And enjoy the Gussy cartoons featured in this newsletter!



Help Needed!

CARTS (see article overleaf) is working with the farmers' market to produce recycled, re-usable cloth bags for market and other produce. We need your old clothes and used, good quality, sheets! Bring them to ATEC, and make Gussy smile!

What's in Season: Duku

Duku and Langsat are closely related members of the same family. Both come from S. E. Asia. The Duku is larger and has a thicker skin. Inside you'll find 5 translucent segments which taste like a mild, sweet grapefruit, but don't bite the bitter seed! Duku lovers can get their's at the Farmers' Market, or see the beagle at the Garden.

Botanical Garden Information:

The garden is open Friday through Monday 10am to 4pm. Admission is \$5 per person, a self guided tour booklet is \$1 and available in Spanish, English, French, German and Dutch. Guided tours (\$10/person or minimum \$30) available, please book in advance. Telephone: 2750-0046. There are a lot of fruits to sample at our sampling table and the garden is full of the wonderful scents, colors and activities of harvest time.