

MALTIOX

News of the Slow Food AMIDI Scholarship Program

Number 4

Winter 2010

Our AMIDI Stove Program Goes National—From 41 to 6,041 Stoves!!!

The 41 fuel-efficient stoves we donated to AMIDI (Association of Indigenous Women for Holistic Development) have had an enormous, positive impact on the village life in Pachay las Lomas. We now have learned that these stoves have also set a regional standard of efficiency and safety in the Guatemala Highlands.

Ever since AMIDI received the Slow Food International Award in 2002, the women have been contacted by a wide variety of groups interested in their successes. Government officials from Huehuetenango, in the northern regions of Guatemala, heard about our fundraising program that provided a fuel-efficient, wood-burning stove in the home of each AMIDI member.

Ana Maria Chali Calan, AMIDI's leader and consummate networker, invited these officials to visit and see the stoves in action. As a result, they decided to start a program to install 6,000 (yes, 6,000!) similar stoves in their region. The stove foundations will be made from local stone quarried by each recipient. The metal venting chimneys and the cast iron cooking surfaces will be donated by the municipal government. Each family will be shown how to construct its own stove.



AMIDI women serving *subanik*, a ceremonial soup, at one of the new stoves. Ana Maria is at center, left.

Maltiox, pronounced mal-ti-osh, is a Kakchiquel Mayan word that means “thank you”. Kakchiquel Mayan is the language spoken by our scholarship students, and the sentiment is theirs.

In Guatemala Celebrating Scholarships, Stoves, and More

Every year in December, the scholarship students, all children of the AMIDI women, honor our mutual relationship by hosting a day-long celebration at their community center. Using a makeshift altar and stage decorated with pine boughs and flowers, they express their gratitude through Mayan prayers and blessings, well rehearsed skits, heart-felt speeches, live music and dance, silly games, traditional food, piñatas, and gift presentations. Marilee Wingert attended the festivities this year along with her husband Steve and her sister Barbara Bowman.

[The Scholarship Program](#)

Last year's fund drive was so successful that we were able to present a check in the amount of \$11,035.00 to the AMIDI Scholarship Committee whose members select the students, monitor grades, disburse funds, and maintain bookkeeping accounts. Our donation ensures the continuation of our greatly appreciated scholarship program for 36 deserving students. The fund's annual bookkeeping report was impeccably prepared by scholarship recipient Mario Gonzalo Boror Martin as part of his community service, a requisite for all the students. His mother, Francisca Javiera Martin Tuvac, a Mayan religious elder, expressed her appreciation to the donors in the following translated letter:

"The reason for this note is to thank you for the economic and moral help you have given my son Mario for his education over the years. I, as a mother, am convinced that education is the best inheritance for one's children. Unfortunately we are of few economic resources; but with the help you give us each month we are able to cover the rest of the

costs of his studies. Thanks to God, this year my son has completed the 11th grade in bookkeeping. I leave you with these humble words. I took my pen to write you in the spirit of joy and simplicity. I think about you even though we have not ever seen each other. I feel a love for you like family."



Scholarship students blessing the donors.
Mario Gonzalo Boror Martin is at upper right.

The Stove Celebration

It is a Mayan custom to hold an inauguration when a new program is created and when those responsible for the program can join and enjoy the festivities. So they waited for our arrival to inaugurate their 41 fuel-efficient, wood-burning stoves, even though the stoves have been in use for months. The middle-school students presented a heart warming reenactment of the *tiempos antiguos*, “old days”, when the women had to cook on the floor, get burned frequently, suffer from smoke inhalation, and use twice as much firewood. There was a light spirit about the skit; but there was no question that the women were unbelievably grateful for the new stoves. Many women invited us into their homes to see the stoves in use.

The Fruit Trees

Through a special donation, we presented the village with nine fruit trees purchased from a beautiful nursery in Antigua, Guatemala. The trees are adapted to that climate and will thrive on the grounds of the AMIDI community center.

Our gift of trees included three different types of lemons, a calamondin, a sour orange, a fig, a pomegranate, a guayava and, surprise of surprises—a Santa Rosa plum, a tree originally created by Luther Burbank! The women were especially touched by the plum as they knew that Ana Maria had visited Santa Rosa as a guest of Slow Food Sonoma County North in November, 2008.



The audience enjoying the celebration.

Weavings

When Ana Maria visited Sonoma County, we asked her to bring table linens woven by the expert AMIDI weavers. The sale of these linens was very successful, and we placed another order for their fine, 100% cotton pieces woven on indigenous backstrap looms. Each weaver, honored that her weavings would be sold in America, formally presented us with her napkins, placements, and table runners.

At the end of the celebration, the women—carrying their carefully folded weavings—accompanied us down the steep hill to our rental car where, with total trust, they gave us hundreds of hours of their handiwork to take to the United States. There were hugs, tears, and kisses as we said *adios*. The children and their mothers waved farewell as we drove away down a rutted dirt road. Barbara said, “I feel bathed in love.” Exactly.

The high quality linens we received that day were later sold in Healdsburg at a Slow Food holiday tamale class. We will continue to sell weavings at other events. Contact Barbara Bowman, who at present has a small inventory, at msbrix@aol.com, if you are interested in purchasing handmade linens from the women of AMIDI.



Lucia Sunuc presenting her weavings.

Should you be interested in making a tax deductible donation to the AMIDI scholarship fund, please make your check payable to Global Community Works, a local 501 (c) 3 non-profit that manages the funds at no cost.

Please send the check to
Slow Food Sonoma County North
P. O. Box 1494
Healdsburg, CA 95448
Thank you.

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