



Dining for Women

Making Connections
August 2006/May 2007
Nicaragua
“Preview Edition”

This preview of *MC* is for the benefit of DFW chapters (and especially chapter leaders) that meet early in the month or want to get a head start.

What to Expect in this Month’s *MC*...

Focus: Women’s Labor and Globalization

This month, DFW is supporting the *Cooperativa Maquiladora Mujeres de Nueva Vida Internacional*, a Nicaraguan women’s sewing cooperative that was begun by the Center for Development in Central America/Jubilee House. In 2005, it became the first worker-owned cooperative to be granted free-trade zone status. This is a success story in-the-making, with the continued help of CDCA and business partners such as Maggie’s Clean Clothes (and supporters like us!). In *MC*, we’ll explore some of the background contexts of this remarkable group of women. We’ll discuss women’s labor in Nicaragua and the challenges that globalization presents. We’ll discuss the women’s cooperative movement in Nicaragua and hear from women “cooperativists” themselves about work, empowerment, and their lives.

Ideas to Rev Up Chapter Meetings:

- 1) Show the film, “Ants that Move Mountains,” an 11-minute documentary about Maquiladora Mujeres, CDCA, and Maggie’s collaboration. You can download it from either <http://www.jhc-cdca.org/> (see icon in the middle of the page) or <http://www.organicclothes.com/nicaragua.asp> (under “Nicaraguan Image Gallery”). *MC* will provide background on the challenges for women and development that this unique partnership is meeting.
- 2) Stage a “clean” fashion show to illustrate the work we’re supporting. Available from Maggie’s Clean Clothes are women’s t-shirts, camisoles, and beautiful criss-cross tops made by Maquiladora Mujeres (very reasonably priced; the catalogue will indicate the items produced in Nicaragua by “worker-owned” or “women’s sewing” cooperative). For other North American organizations and businesses that carry products made by the cooperative (Any Presbyterians out there?), see <http://www.fairtradezone.jhc-cdca.org/order.htm>.
- 3) “Hear” the voices of women in Nicaraguan cooperatives. While we can’t talk directly with them in our meetings (maybe one day!), we can listen a bit to what Nicaraguan women are saying about their lives and work. Ask chapters members to read a series of quotations from Nicaraguan women as a kind of “litany” of voices at your meeting. Their comments will no doubt inspire further conversation and *MC* will provide context to help understand them. (A list of quotations will appear in *MC*.)
- 4) Create more connection between dining *together* and dining *for* women. In the Greenville chapter, we do this by transitioning from our discussion to mealtime with the following affirmation. The leader or another member might read it solo. Or, each sentence might be read by a different member in sequence. It might also be read in unison.

“Now as we share food together, we nurture each other through offering our resources and resourcefulness. These dishes might symbolize our interests, our likes, our families or backgrounds, our creativity, or just our desire to share even when we don’t have time to cook or culinary skill beyond picking up take-out. As

we share food, we share something of ourselves and we honor each other. We recognize the powerful associations of women to food, life, and nurture in all cultures. We honor the importance of those. We also recognize the burdens and struggles associated with them. We remember the women about whom we've learned, the ones they strive to nurture, and the organizations that are trying to nurture them. By eating together as women, we remember and honor those women, who also have creativity, favorite foods, and family recipes. And we express the hope that through our efforts, they may find more sustenance for their lives. May we all be able to feast together someday."

Book of the Month

Gioconda Belli, *The Inhabited Woman (La mujer habitada)*, Warner Books, 1994.

In her recent memoir, Nicaraguan political activist and author Gioconda Belli said of herself, "I have been two women and I have lived two lives." In this acclaimed novel, set against the backdrop of a revolutionary movement not unlike the Sandinista revolt, the life of a young woman of privilege becomes entwined with the life of an ancient Indian woman. More on Belli's life and writing to come...

Dining with Women

A scrumptious dessert with mysterious origins, *Pastel de tres leches* (Three Milk Cake), is something of an oddity as a "traditional food" and yet in some respects so well represents Nicaragua's cultural and culinary history. (Note to Texas chapters: Yep, you probably know this one. But did you know it's Nicaraguan?) More on the mystery later. For now, here's a version adapted for North American kitchens by Texas pastry chef, Dorothy Sobeles:

Pastel de Tres Leches

1 1/2 cups All-purpose flour

1 teaspoon Baking powder

1/2 cup Unsalted butter

2 cups White sugar (divided)

5 Eggs

1 1/2 teaspoon Vanilla extract (divided)

1 cup Milk

1/2 of a 14-ounce can Sweetened condensed milk

1/2 of a 12-ounce can Evaporated milk

1/3 cup Liqueur, Frangelico, Brandy or Chambord, for example (optional)

1 1/2 cups Heavy whipping cream

Preheat oven to 350F degrees. Grease and flour a 9x13-inch baking pan.

Sift flour and baking powder together and set aside. Cream the butter and 1 cup of the sugar together until fluffy. Add the eggs and 1/2 teaspoon of the vanilla. Beat well. Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture, 2 tablespoons at a time, mixing well until blended. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake for 30 minutes.

When cake has finished baking, pierce it in 8 or 10 places with a fork or skewer, and let it cool. Combine the whole milk, evaporated milk, condensed milk and liqueur and pour over the top of the cooled cake. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.

Whipped Cream Topping: When ready to serve, combine the whipping cream and the remaining 1 teaspoon of vanilla and 1 cup of sugar, whipping until thick. Spread over top of cake. Because of the milk in the cake, it is very important that you keep the cake refrigerated until ready to serve. Serve chilled.

From <http://www.texascooking.com/features/sept2002treslechescakerecipe.htm>

For more on Nicaraguan dining and recipes for now, go to http://www.vianica.com/go/specials/2-nicaraguan_food.html

<http://www.nicaragua.com/recipes/>

<http://www.elca.org/countrypackets/nicaragua/recipe.html>

Trudy Espinoza-Abrams, *Nicaraguan Cooking: My Grandmother's Recipes* (Exlibris, 2004; available at amazon.com).

