
Venture Strategies for Health and Development



Project Title: Venture Strategies for Health and Development

Location: Burma, Myanmar

Grant Amount: \$11,568

Grantee Website: www.venturestrategies.org/

Areas of Impact: Health

Mission of Venture Strategies for Health and Development

To combine scientific evidence about tractable problems in health with opportunities inherent in the power of local market forces around the world and use business approaches to find ways to help large numbers of low income people.

Project Summary

Venture Strategies for Health and Development (VSHD) works with medical leaders, government officials and pharmaceutical manufacturers around the world to make high quality, low cost, off-patent products available to low income people through market distribution systems. Venture Strategies focuses on projects that will be sustainable on a large scale – change must be able to continue in the future without dependence on public sector financial support. DFW donations will help Venture Strategies' misoprostol project. This project will increase women's access to the life-saving drug, misoprostol, which is used in developing world to treat postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) due to its heat-stable, low cost, easily administered tablet.

Why We Love This Project

PPH is a leading killer of women worldwide. Venture Strategies unique position as a global leader in the introduction of misoprostol for PPH allows workers to identify and accurately assess worthwhile community-based projects with local organizations and to train community health workers, clinic workers and traditional birth attendants to use misoprostol to prevent and treat PPH. An opportunity along the Thai-Burma border has recently presented itself that will be a meaningful way to use the generous donation from Dining for Women to effectively reach 24,000 Burmese women with misoprostol for a safe delivery over 3 years.

Location Map





Dining for Women

Program Fact Sheet: December 2007

Featured Program: Venture Strategies for Health and Development (VSHD)

Childbirth is the number one killer of women. A woman dies every single minute from pregnancy or childbirth. For every woman that dies, thirty more become injured or sick. Ninety-nine percent of all maternal deaths occur in developing countries, and postpartum hemorrhage (PPH) accounts for twenty-five percent of worldwide maternal deaths. Every year, PPH is the cause of almost 15,000 of the 55,000 maternal deaths. (Source: UC Berkeley Press Release, March 2006)

Misoprostol is an effective, heat stable, low cost generic drug used to prevent and treat postpartum hemorrhage; the devastating bleeding experienced by thousands of women after childbirth. Venture Strategies is currently working to facilitate the registration and distribution of misoprostol in developing countries throughout Africa and Asia.

Dining for Women is participating in a joint effort with BlogHer, a women's blogging community, to impact global maternal child health. We will be featuring programs that directly impact maternal child health in December, February, April and June. Venture Strategies for Health and Development is our first featured global maternal health program. For more information on the BlogHer's Act Initiative, please visit www.blogher.com/.

Web Site: www.venturestrategies.org

Mission: Venture Strategies for Health and Development (VSHD) is a unique nonprofit organization combining scientific evidence about tractable problems in health with opportunities inherent in the power of local market forces around the world. They use business approaches to find ways to help large numbers of low-income people.

History: Martha Campbell founded Venture Strategies in 2000, drawing on the expertise of the Berkeley School of Public Health, to help low-income people in developing countries. With the scientific base of a Berkeley technical team, Venture Strategies is organizing arrangements with drug manufacturers and distributors to make misoprostol and other products available.

Venture Strategies was launched in 2001 as a program of Population and Development International (PDI), the United States affiliate of the Population and Community Development Association (PDA). PDA, founded by Senator Mechai Viravaidya in 1974, is Thailand's largest nonprofit organization, and coincidentally, is also partnered with Prevent Human Trafficking Institute, DFW's September featured program.

In 2002, Venture Strategies achieved its current status as an independent, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, incorporated in California.

How They Work: Government health services frequently do not have the capacity to reach most of their low-income populations. The sad reality is that in developing countries the poorer people are, the higher percentage of their health care is paid for out of their own pockets. Often the products they need to achieve better health are not available to them at affordable prices.

Venture Strategies is working with medical leaders, government officials and pharmaceutical manufacturers around the world to find ways to make high quality, low cost, off-patent products available to low income people through market distribution systems.

To qualify as a *venture strategy*, a project must have reasonable odds of achieving helpful systemic change in one or more developing countries on a significant scale in the near term, using opportunities offered by existing market

structures. In doing this, a *venture strategy* is creating, implementing or expediting a *selected lever of change*.

Levers of change are needed, low cost technologies or changes in systems that, when made available, can help very large numbers of people. An example of technologies is the off-patent, low cost drug misoprostol, which has the potential of reducing a vast number of maternal deaths.

Venture Strategies focuses on projects that will be sustainable on a large scale, and this means the change must be able to continue in the future without dependence on public sector financial support.

They work in collaboration with the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley, which provides the health and economic data describing the needs and a variety of opportunities for improving health in the developing world.

December DFW donations will specifically support Venture Strategies' misoprostol efforts.

The Misoprostol Project: In the United States and other developed countries, the treatment for postpartum hemorrhage involves intravenous medication, which requires refrigeration and must be administered by a medically trained individual in a clinical setting. Misoprostol, on the other hand, is a heat stable, low cost generic tablet which allows for alternative administrative routes (oral, vaginal, rectal, sublingual).

In order to prevent deaths from PPH in the developing world, medications like Misoprostol need to be made available. And, in order to be globally distributed, each country requires that the drug be registered (a process similar to obtaining FDA approval in the United States). Misoprostol is currently registered in Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania. Venture Strategies is working to obtain registration in targeted project areas including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and Zambia.

After Misoprostol is registered in a country, the next step is to train birthing assistants and midwives in the proper use of Misoprostol.

Who They Serve:

Flagship countries: Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania (already registered and approved)

Project Areas: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and Zambia

Fiscal Efficiency: Venture Strategies reports that 79% of expenses are directed to programs while 21% is spent on administrative functions. VSHD recently received a very large grant to assist with expanding their Misoprostol programs, which will in turn expand their operating budget and their overall impact on global maternal health.

DFW History: New program

Please refer to the VSHD slide show and the VSHD Web site for further details of the misoprostol project.

Making Connections

December 2007

Millennium Development Goal #5: Improve maternal health. Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

“A number of middle-income countries have made rapid progress in reducing maternal deaths. Nevertheless, maternal mortality levels remain unacceptably high across the developing world.... In sub-Saharan Africa a woman’s risk of dying from complications over her lifetime is 1 in 16, compared to 1 in 3800 in the developed world. Health-care interventions can reduce maternal deaths but need to be made more widely available.”

-United Nations Millennium Development Goals “Midpoint” Report, 2007

When the dragon saw that it had been thrown down to the earth, it pursued the woman who had given birth.... But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth and swallowed the flood that the dragon spewed out of its mouth.

In an ancient story, a woman “clothed with the sun” endures the travail of labor while being terrorized by a fierce red dragon waiting to swallow up the child she is birthing. The child is saved by divine intervention as it is born, but the mother’s peril continues as the dragon attempts to “wash her away.”

It’s one of the many stories from many traditions and cultures in which the imminent threat of death and oblivion are symbolized by the dangers of birth and the critical period following it for mothers and babies. Such stories are at the heart of most of the major world religions. This month, Muslims going on haj will ritually re-enact Hagar’s frantic search for water in the desert to revive her dying baby Ishmael. Christians will celebrate Jesus’ birth to an inexperienced young mother under far from ideal conditions who had to flee her barnyard childbed for his life. Hindu stories tell of mothers birthing deities under threat of sword; and though the Buddha’s mother births peacefully enough, she dies only a few days afterward. Jews remember Rachel, who died giving birth to Benjamin and is said to weep for all the sorrows and sufferings of mothers and children down through the ages. These ancient stories are real and powerful for the faithful who remember them. In them they find both the acknowledgement of suffering and the comfort of hope, for inevitably these stories lead to triumph, to life.

Today, every minute of every day, a mother and baby somewhere, but almost always in a developing country, go through their own harrowing birth drama and the mother does not survive, often due to post-partum hemorrhaging. Red dragons still threaten to wash mothers away, but unlike in the sacred stories there is no higher purpose, no silver lining in these tragedies, most of which are preventable with access to medication.

So as we often must do as DFW members, we remember with sadness the women and their children who are usually forgotten by the world at large. But we also have cause to celebrate. It’s the time of year many of the traditions from which these dramatic birth stories come celebrate the triumph of light over darkness—Hindu Diwali, Jewish Hanukkah, and the Christian journey to nativity from advent (in which that story of the mother and the dragon from Revelation 12 is sometimes part of the liturgy). Whatever our own traditions, this month as DFW members we can celebrate the hearty recoveries of mothers made possible by the work of Venture Strategies. Creating access to life-saving medication in developing countries may not require divine intervention, but it can certainly produce miracles in the lives of hundreds of thousands of women each year who would otherwise give birth under the dark shadow of maternal mortality.

FYI: Birth Customs

Like sacred stories, rituals and traditions speak much about a people and are integral to community cohesion and definition. They die hard, though they often are adaptive to new situations, technologies, etc. Below are four examples of birthing customs from four countries in which VS works. They deserve far more detail and explanation than I've given here. These are not "ignorant" superstitions but highly symbolic gestures with long histories. In modern "rational" terms, are they helpful or harmful? A difficult question to answer, impossible to answer adequately in one way. Perhaps a better question is, how can modern life-saving medical interventions not only adapt to facts of life in developing countries (like transportation difficulties during rainy seasons) but also work with customs that are just as much a part of reality for the people who hold them as muddy roads? VS has many strategies for getting misoprostal to mothers who need it, but among the most important is working through traditional birth assistants, village women who may already be midwives and who can be cultural bridge builders, translators or agents for change depending on what the situation requires. You might try to imagine how they might work in the following situations.

1. For many cultures birth is a community experience, especially for women. But it also involves boundaries. Among some Ethiopians who practice Coptic Christianity and tribal traditions, the custom is for the birthing mother to return to her mother's home to give birth surrounded by kinwomen and neighbors. She is confined to a hut because she is considered "unclean" (meaning she cannot enter a church for 40 days after the birth). Anyone touching her becomes unclean as well, although that is usually remedied with holy water dispensed by a priest. During labor, village women put boulders on their shoulders and process around the hut to take on some of the mother's pain. After the birth, the women dance and sing in the hut and try to make the mother laugh in order to forget the pain. They recognize the 10 days following birth as a particularly vulnerable period for mother and child. She's never alone with the baby, lest she become "possessed" and harm it or herself.
2. Most Bangladeshis give birth at home with the aid of a *dai* or midwife. When the *dai* arrives at a birthing mother's home, the mother washes her feet at the door to symbolize that she yields to the *dai*'s control and care. Some of the traditional medications a *dai* may use, such as neem, are known now to have antiseptic and pain-relieving properties. But a lot of bleeding is considered a good sign that "polluted" blood is being expelled from the body. Little bleeding is a sign that pollution is still in the body and may cause the mother to have chronic pain or become fat (swell).
3. In the markets of Tanzania, bags of clay are regular items for sale. People eat clay in many parts of the world (including the U.S.) and reports especially of pregnant women craving clay or dirt come from a variety of cultures. Scientists are still stumped about this phenomenon and divided on whether or not it is harmful or helpful. Anemia and clay eating are associated, but it's unclear which comes first: does eating clay cause anemia or is it the other way around? Tanzanian women aren't sure either, but the custom persists. A particular kind of clay is preferred. It's also sometimes used to make houses and some women do literally eat the house during pregnancy.
4. In the 7th month of pregnancy, mothers in Indonesia may undergo the perut ceremony, a ritual massage that has protective and communal associations. Relatives and friends attend, bringing sweets and boiled eggs and chanting as the midwife performs the massage. The massage is supposed to assure a safe delivery and performing it commits the midwife to the continued care of the mother. It's also part of the process through which the child becomes part of society. As the participants chant, the midwife rolls a coconut over the mother's exposed belly. As she proceeds, she determines the position of the fetus and attempts to adjust it if necessary. When she stops,

everyone looks at the position of the coconut's eyes. That reveals the child's sex, the first sign of who he or she will be in the community. The eggs are more than snacks; they are also rolled on the mother's belly to protect against evil spirits.

Recommended Books and Films/Socially Responsible Shopping

In this season of shopping frenzy, some gifts give more than others. How about a contribution in honor of someone you love to one of the DFW-supported charities that especially touched you this year? Or, review the lists of shopping sources, books, and films in this year's (or last's) *MCs*. I've listed a few of my favorites below. And don't forget if you shop via amazon.com to do so through our website to give a little gift to DFW. Put a few of these on your wish list too.

Camisoles and criss-cross tops from the women of COMMUNAVI in Nicaragua:

<http://www.maggiesorganics.com>

A film to enjoy and to raise awareness about the MDGs:

<http://www.hbo.com/films/girlinthecafe>

What's on our plates and everybody else's: Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio, *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* (Ten Speed Press, 2005).

A remarkable story from India: Baby Halder, *A Life Less Ordinary* (HarperCollins, 2007)

And another from Tibet and China: Xinran, *Sky Burial: An Epic Love Story of Tibet* (Doubleday, 2004)

Unusual cards, etc. fr. a great Guatemalan project: <http://www.fotokids.org/shop.htm>

Tasty Thai Recipes: Nancie McDermott, *Real Thai: The Best of Thailand's Regional Cooking* (Chronicle Books, 1992)

A Memoir Bridging Two Worlds: Marie Arana, *American Chica: Two Worlds, One Childhood* (Delta Book, Random House, 2001)

For those who love artisanry and justice: Paola Gianturco, *In Her Hands: Craftswomen Changing the World* (Powerhouse Books, 2004)

For the fashionista you want to spoil: <http://www.katespade.com/sm-thought-bubble-hat--pi-2779330.html> (Bosnian-made hats)

Unforgettable: Zainab Salbi, *The Other Side of War: Women's Stories of Survival and Hope* (National Geographic, 2006).

And some favorite general sources: www.tenthousandvillages.com www.oneworldprojects.com
www.novica.com www.globalgirlfriend.com

Dining With Women

It's the time of year when everyone is happy, always in a party spirit, and full of verve. Yeah, right. Some of us are already tired (of it all). Women do most of the work of celebrating—the planning, shopping, cooking, decorating, and cleaning up afterward. But we seldom have – or take—the time to do for each other as women, to celebrate and honor each other. In the midst of all our busy-ness, let's take a little time for that in our meetings this month especially—*because we need it*. Maybe you could make a dish that's special to you and that you know women generally like. Something that you might like serving, if you could, to the women we're supporting this month in honor of their healthy deliveries and to cheer your DFW friends who could use a little comfort food during this “labor-intensive” time. It could be something that reminds you of a woman who has “mothered” you or one you have mothered in some way along the way. Or maybe a tasty dish from a DFW member who sends her good wishes along with a good recipe (see below).

I'm suggesting a menu of appetizers and desserts this month—it's festive and most women I know enjoy eating small bites of good things. (And let's face it—you can easily double most appetizer/sweet recipes, store them a few days, and have enough for the *next* party!) Some of our members have shared their favorites *and they are good*. In doing that, they've also shared

something of themselves that is really nourishing for us too. You'll find the recipes and more below. I've also included bread and cake recipes to "spice up" our meetings in seasonally appropriate ways (cinnamon, cloves, etc) that are enjoyed in celebrations in Ethiopia and Indonesia, two of the countries in which VS works. If you'd like to do dishes from other VS countries, check out past issues of *MC* on Tanzania/East Africa and Tibet—the killer rice pudding recipe in that one is actually Nepalese. Or review past *MCs* for recipes from any of the countries we've "visited." It would be nice to have those taste memories in the mix as well.

Recipes from DFW Members

Roquefort Walnut Spread

The Eastern Shore DFW meals are becoming legendary and no wonder since chapter leader Carolyn Mayers is a consummate gourmet, host, and organic gardener to boot. This easy, sophisticated and just downright good spread from Carolyn's repertoire is also brilliantly versatile. Enjoy all the options.

Serve on thinly sliced dark rye or pumpernickel bread. Especially good on Boston Brown Bread. May also be served with sliced apples or pears dipped in lemon juice to prevent browning.

1 stick of unsalted butter, softened
1/2- 3/4c or blue cheese, preferably Roquefort, softened (more=stronger flavor)
3-4T Cognac, Armagnac, or Calvados—esp. if serving with apples
1/4 c plus 1 tablespoon finely chopped walnuts
1T walnut oil (optional)

1. Heat oven to 300 degrees and toast walnuts in a small pan for about 10 minutes, watching carefully so they don't burn. Remove and cool to room temperature.
2. Combine butter, cheese, Cognac (or other liquor), and walnut oil, if using, in a food processor and process until smooth. Stir in 1/4c walnuts. Allow to rest a few hours. Sprinkle with remaining 1T walnuts before serving AT ROOM TEMPERATURE.

Other options: Try making the spread with Stilton instead of Roquefort, using tawny port instead of Cognac, and serving with apples/pears, and/or stuffing soft pitted prunes with it.

I made it with gorgonzola dolce and a little sweet marsala and served it on Italian bread made with dried cherries and yellow raisins. Buonissimo!

Ithaca member Donna DeLuca sent two terrific recipes, perfect for the season. The first one also comes with a perfectly inspiring story...

Cranberry Chutney

Donna says: "This recipe came from my best friend from the time when we were nontraditional-aged (read: old!) undergraduates at Smith College. She was raising four young children as a single mom after a very difficult marriage, living way below the poverty line in order to educate herself and improve her children's lives – yet she always served the tastiest, most nutritious and creative meals, with a frugal hand and a generous heart. She has since gone on to receive a Masters in Public Health, find meaningful work, remarry, and build her dream home in an intentional community. Here's to her!"

For the chutney:

4c cranberries
1c raisins
1c sugar
1T cinnamon
1 1/2 t ground ginger
1 1/2 t ground cloves

1 t salt
1c water (or more as needed for desired thickness)
1c minced onion
1c finely chopped apple
1/2c thinly sliced celery
Optional garnishes: chopped cilantro, coconut flakes, toasted nuts

For the presentation:

1 8-oz. package of cream cheese
1 box Triscuits
Celery sticks (optional, but if you use, cut so that the central hollow remains intact)

Cook first seven ingredients until the berries pop. Add the remainder and cook 15 minutes, or until well thickened, stirring often. Can be kept refrigerated for about a month, or frozen indefinitely.

To serve as an appetizer: place a block of cream cheese on a large plate, pour 2 cups or so of the chutney over it, sprinkle with optional garnishes, arrange Triscuits and optional celery sticks attractively around the plate.

Leftover chutney makes a wonderful glaze for roasted chicken or salmon.

Cranberry Salsa

“I love cranberries, even the can-shaped jelly I grew up with in the South! But when I moved North (I’m *still* sorry, Mama), and first saw the miraculous maroon bogs of ripe cranberries floating under the autumnal blazes, I resolved to increase my cranberry repertoire. This one is a very forgiving and versatile recipe, and always a big hit!”

12 oz. fresh cranberries
1 jalapeno chile, seeded and minced (or more, depending upon your taste)
4T chopped cilantro (again – to taste)
3 green onions, thinly sliced
1/3c lime juice, preferably from fresh limes
1/4 to 1/2c sugar
Salt and pepper to taste

Roughly chop the cranberries and bring a pot of water to a boil. Parboil the cranberries no more than 1 minute, drain immediately and rinse with cold water. Using a wooden spoon/spatula, combine berries, chile, cilantro and onions. Add lime juice, sugar, salt and pepper. Chill at least two hours before serving.

Serving suggestions: My favorite is cranberry salsa nachos: place blue and/or white corn chips on a heat-proof serving plate, sprinkle with grated cheddar cheese, broil briefly until the cheese is melted, scatter small clumps of salsa over all and serve asap. Better warm, but still delicious cold. You can also do a canapé: place a small slice of cheese on your favorite cracker, broil until melted, top with a teaspoon of salsa and serve, or serve cold without the melting, still good! Of course, it is also an unusual and delicious accompaniment to the traditional baked fowl, or even a nice tofurkey!

Eggplant Salad (or dip)

Ithaca Chapter Leader Miriam Bisk loves Middle Eastern food. And I love this take on eggplant salad with its “secret ingredient” for balancing flavor and improving texture—good ‘ole mayo! That may not seem a very Middle Eastern addition, but as Miriam reminds, eggplant salad varies from country to country and cook to cook. She also gives a good tip for ensuring that your eggplant won’t be bitter: Pick one that has a shallow indentation on the blossom end (bottom) rather than a deep one. This indicates the eggplant has fewer seeds and should be less bitter. Look for a dark, shiny, and firm exterior too.

1 eggplant
2 cloves garlic, minced
2T olive oil
2T vinegar (I prefer rice Vinegar)
1/2t salt
1/8t pepper
2T chopped parsley
Juice from 1/2 lemon
2-4T mayonnaise

Grill or Broil whole eggplant until tender to a fork. Let it cool down covered. Skin the eggplant, put the flesh in blender or food processor along with the other ingredients and puree. Taste and correct to your liking. Serve with pita bread, crackers or cut vegetables.

Stuffed Zucchini

Miriam’s main dish makes a great appetizer as well. For appetizer portions for a buffet, cut the stuffed zucchini halves into thirds after baking and cooling slightly.

4 Medium Zucchini (about 2 lb)
1 lb ground beef
1/4c olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 medium chopped onion
1/2c chopped green pepper
1t chopped fresh mint
1c bread crumbs (or Saltines cracker crumbs)
1T chopped parsley
1 3/4c tomato sauce
1/4c parmesan or Pecorino Romano cheese
salt and pepper

Slice zucchini in half lengthwise. Scoop out the pulp with a melon scooper and chop it up. Sauté the ground meat in the olive oil until it loses its pink color. Add the garlic, onion, green pepper and cook for 5 more minutes. Remove from heat. Add to the meat mixture the zucchini pulp, mint, breadcrumbs, parsley, 1/4 cup tomato sauce, cheese, salt and pepper to taste. Mix well.

Stuff the Zucchini shells with the mixture. Put the Zucchini halves in a 13x9x2" baking dish, and pour the remaining 1 1/2 cups of tomato sauce over the zucchini.
Bake at 350* for 40 Minutes. Makes 4 main dish servings.

It took Jell-O awhile to “set” in turn-of-the-century (19th-20th) American kitchens, but since it did, it’s barely wiggled. DFW founder Marsha Wallace says, “it just wouldn’t be Christmas” without the salad that has always been on the table as long as she can remember. That’s true for many families in many variations, colors, and flavors. We have two versions here: Marsha’s family’s

and Herndon, VA Chapter Leader Sheila Herndon's. Like me, I bet you at least remember these or something like them even if you don't eat them very often now. To me they are quintessential woman food of my childhood—red for one aunt, green for another, pecans for my mother, pineapple for grandma. I honestly don't think I ever saw a brother, father, or uncle touch them. It was something we made for ourselves and our own delight!

Marsha's Family's Christmas Salad

1 box lime Jell-O
8 oz. cream cheese
1 flat can crushed pineapple
1 stalk celery, diced
1/3c of diced pecans
1 container Cool Whip
1/2t salt

Heat undrained can of crushed pineapple in a saucepan and add Jell-O and cream cheese. Stir until melted. Remove from heat and add celery, pecans, and Cool Whip and salt. Pour into 8x8 pan and chill until set.

Sheila's Jell-O Salad

Sheila says she usually makes two bowls for Christmas—one with strawberry Jell-O and the other with lime. She places them on either end of the table for edible holiday decorations. She also reminds that liquids, blenders, loose lids, and high speeds can lead to wall-to-wall Jell-O. Hold down that blender lid and blend gradually.

1 large box or 2 small boxes of Jell-O
1 package of cream cheese

Place the cream cheese in the blender. Boil 2 cups of water and add the Jell-O to it, mixing well. Pour the mixture carefully into the blender. Blend well. Add two cups of water, blending on low speed at first, gradually increasing until well blended. Pour into a pretty glass bowl and chill for at least 20 minutes. Stir once just to ensure the gelatin isn't settling to the bottom. Allow to set completely before serving.

Miriam also loves to bake. Thanks, Miriam, we really couldn't do this without chocolate.

My favorite Chocolate Tart

Swoon. If you like to bake and don't own a 9" tart pan, get one. The crust forms more easily than a standard pie shell, is easy to cut and serve, and oh so elegant.

Pastry

1c all purpose flour
1/4c powdered sugar
6T (3/4 stick) sweet butter, chilled and cut into pieces
1T chilled whipping cream

Filling

1/2c whipping cream
1/4c milk
10 oz bittersweet chocolate (like Verona, Lindt or any other good chocolate) chopped
1 egg
2T Grand Marnier, or other orange liquor

For pastry: Blend flour and sugar in processor. Add butter and using on/off turns, cut in until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add cream; process until moist clumps forms. Turn out dough onto work surface. Gather into a ball; flatten into a disc. Wrap dough in plastic and refrigerate 15 minutes. Preheat oven to 350.

Roll out dough on lightly floured surface to an 11" round disc. Transfer to 9" tart pan with removable bottom. Press gently into place. Fold edges over to form double - thick sides.

Tip: Roll off any excess along the top with your rolling pin. The top of the sides should be even with the rim. (Can be prepared one day ahead. Cover and chill.)

For filling: Bring whipping cream and milk to a simmer in heavy medium saucepan. Reduce heat to low, add chocolate and stir until melted and smooth.

Beat egg to blend in medium bowl. Gradually whisk 1/4 of hot chocolate mixture into egg to temper it. Whisk in remaining chocolate mixture and liquor. Pour filling into crust.

Bake 35-40 minutes or till you noticed slight cracks on top. Cool Tart. It can be decorated with powdered sugar sprinkled on a stencil or with a topping like berries or chocolate ganache.

Diplomatico Cake

Kaye Martell of the Greenville chapter got this recipe from one of my favorite sources, la maestra della cucina italiana Marcella Hazan. As with so many fine things, this improves with age—make it days ahead and frost it the day you serve it. It's definitely a party on plate. (If you're concerned about uncooked eggs, use an equivalent volume of pasteurized whole eggs for the yolks here and pasteurized egg whites found in the dairy section of many grocery stores.)

For the Rum and Espresso Soak:

1 1/2 c strong espresso

5T dark Rum

5t Sugar

One 16 oz. Pound Cake, cut into 1/4 in. pcs.

For the Chocolate filling:

4 large eggs, separated

1t Sugar

6 oz. Semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped

For Frosting and Garnish:

1c very cold heavy cream

1t Sugar

Fresh berries, walnut halves, chocolate shavings, *or use your imagination*

Make the rum and espresso soak: In a small bowl, combine the espresso, rum, sugar, and 5 tbs. Water.

Moisten a sheet of cheesecloth large enough to line a 9X5X3 inch glass loaf pan with plenty of overhang. Lint the pan with the cheesecloth. Dip the pound cake, slice by slice, in the rum and espresso soak, and then use the slices to line the bottom and sides of the pan. (Dip the cake slices very quickly, or else they'll become too soggy to handle; let any excess liquid drip from each slice before lining the pan.) Leave no gaps, patching where necessary with pieces of soaked pound cake.

Make the chocolate filling: In a large bowl, beat the egg yolks with the sugar until they turn pale yellow, about 4 minutes.

Melt the chocolate in a double boiler over gently simmering water. Gradually pour the melted chocolate over the beaten yolks, mixing quickly with a rubber spatula until smoothly combined.

In a medium bowl, beat the egg whites until they form stiff peaks. Stir a rounded tablespoon of the beaten whites into the chocolate mixture to loosen it, and then gently fold in the remaining beaten whites.

Spoon the chocolate filling into the cake-lined pan. Cover the filling with more slices of soaked pound cake. (You may have some cake left over.) Fold the moistened cheesecloth over the top of the cake. Refrigerate the cake for at least one day and up to a week.

When you take the cake out of the refrigerator, unfold the cheesecloth and pull it away from the top of the cake. Invert the loaf pan onto a platter and shake it firmly to free the cake. Peel off the cheesecloth.

Make the frosting and garnish the cake: In a very well chilled bowl, using chilled beaters, whip the heavy cream with the sugar until stiff. Frost the top and sides of the cake with the whipped cream. Garnish with berries or walnuts. I have used slivers of chocolate also.

Sallie's Icebox Cookies

A true heirloom. Sarah Manly, a member of the Greenville chapter, inherited this recipe from her great grandmother, Sarah Elmore Clippard, for whom she was named. Thanks for sharing a special part of your history with us, Sarah.

1lb butter (do not use substitute)
1c white sugar
1c brown sugar
3 eggs
1t vanilla
1/2c raisins
1c nuts (I use pecans), chopped
7c all-purpose flour
1c crystallized red and green fruits, chopped

With a mixer, cream butter, add sugars and cream. Add eggs, one at a time and beat well. Add vanilla. Next dredge the raisins, nuts and fruit in some of the measured flour. Add the remaining flour to the mixture and, last, the fruits and nuts. Divide into 8 portions, roll into logs approximately 2" thick and roll in Saran Wrap or wax paper. Store in the refrigerator overnight. Slice into 1/2" thick rounds and place on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake at 350 F until very lightly browned. Remove from sheet when still warm. Note: Sarah says this is good size for parties, but she rolls the logs bigger and cuts the round thicker for family.

Two Recipes from VS Countries

Warm spices such as cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg seem to go with celebrations no matter what the tradition or location. Ethiopia has a fascinating culinary history and richly varied celebrations with its Coptic Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities as well as its tribal customs. As far as I've been able to determine *Yemarina Yewotet Dabo* is something enjoyed by all Ethiopians and is quite a departure from their well-known daily flat bread, *injera*. It reminds me of the yeasted Christmas breads of many European and Middle Eastern Christian traditions. It also reminds me of the use of honey and the Challah bread in Jewish tradition. And the honey again is appropriate to Eid, the end of the Muslim fast period, Ramadan. Ethiopians enjoy this with some sweet butter. Since the recipe appears online, I'm just going to give the link here. A tip not in the link: you can make this in an ovenproof pot or casserole (about 3 quart capacity and at least 3" high). If you like ginger, add a little; some recipes also include a pinch.

<http://www.globalgourmet.com/destinations/ethiopia/yamarina.html>

Bangladesh is one of the countries in which VS works. Given its recent tragedy of massive flooding (something that seems to plague Bangladesh perpetually), it hardly seems appropriate to think about celebrating there. But in January it is traditional for Bangladeshi women to out-do themselves in *Pitha Utsab* (cake festival). It's a rural tradition, but has in recent years been adopted in cities as a way of keeping indigenous traditions alive. It's also a form of income for many Bangladeshi women who set up shop in the streets. Just as the Bosnian women we learned about last month managed to come up with their "war cakes," I can imagine that many Bangladeshi women will carry on with *Pitha Utsab* as best they can. For most of us, however, trying to adapt their *pitha* to our kitchens is probably more than we can manage. (I was unable to find a practical and translatable recipe.) It's quite an art, passed down through female generations and usually involving rice flour, frying or steaming, and hand shaping. So let's remember them and their ingenuity and instead try something from another VC location, Indonesia. *Lapis Legit* is a spice cake usually composed of many very thin individually baked layers. It probably originated with Dutch colonialism but it's been heartily adopted and adapted. Now it's associated with Muslim Ramadan and Eid. Fortunately for us, there are versions that keep the spices but forego the layering. (After all, we don't need to exhaust ourselves in taking care of and celebrating each other this month.) Here's one from an interesting new cookbook found at a wonderful food website:

http://www.leitesculinaria.com/recipes/cookbook/indonesia_spice_cake.html .

VOICES

Mothers inevitably take second place to their illustrious or divine sons in the birth stories of most religious traditions. Some disappear from the official stories altogether—no doubt in part because those have tended to be recorded by men in authority. Yet faithful women and men down through the ages have often hungered for more about these mothers and revered them as special and especially accessible protectors. In the Yoruba tradition indigenous to Nigeria (where VS works), the story of the mother goddess Osun has been preserved in chant by women "praise singers" through the generations. Since we began with a dragon threatening to wash away a mother, we'll conclude with the "voices" of Nigerian women lifted in celebration of a mother who creates and delivers through water. Osun has made it across the water too with the transplantation of Yoruba-based traditions from Cuba to Brazil to the Bronx. It's especially appropriate to hear about her this month since such chanting is often remembered in Kwanzaa, the African American and pan-African celebration that takes place December 26-January 1. If you'd like to actually hear some new world chanting to Osun (Ochun/Oshun), check out the music of women's groups such as Women of the Calabash (*Kwanzaa Album*) and Ase Drumming Circle (*Souls A'Gathered*) or the recordings of late, incomparable Celia Cruz (esp. *Azucar Negra*).

Osun is many-faceted. The only female among the *orisa* deities, she is central to the smooth going of many aspects of life from governance to childbirth. Only she can bestow children to supplicants. Her flow delivers, protects, and nourishes. She moves with ease and grace, power and energy. Her waters, used ritually, are believed to be healing and bring harmony and peace. Osgobo (mentioned in the chant) is her special city. Some scholars believe that the traditions about her may reflect an ancient matriarchal past or the mutual leadership of men and women there.

According to the chants, the male *orisas* tried to do an end-run around Osun, leaving her out of the boys club. But when they did, they found all their efforts fruitless. When they came begging Osun for forgiveness and to make it all better, she was circumspect. Pregnant at the time, she decided to allow the sex of her child to determine her response. It was a boy, so she decided to restore the powers of the male *orisas* but insisted on the mutual and harmonious

running of things by both women and men. Here's what the male orisas learned: "In anything we do, if we do not guarantee the place of women, that thing will not succeed. We should acknowledge the power of women. If we acknowledge their power, the world will be peaceful" (fr. Roland Abiodun in Murphy and Sanford, eds., *Osun Across the Waters*, IU Press, 2001).

Excerpts from *Praise Poem for Osun*

translated by Diedre L. Badejo in Esi Sutherland-Addy and Aminata Diaw, eds., *Women Writing Africa*, Volume 2 (Feminist Press, 2005).

Osun Osogbo ooo
The child is secretly created, Osun Osogbo!
The one who is flowing majestically along hits her body against the grass.
The one who in flowing majestically along hits her body against the rocks.
Praise-worthy owner of the secrets of life.
The wealthy one who wears a crown! The effervescent one!
I again salute the Great Mother Osun, Osun Osogbo.
My Mother, Osun Osogbo,
Who gives birth like a female animal with ease and grace,
My mother, please deliver and rescue me!
The wealthy one who wears a crown! The effervescent one!
I cried "deliverance" through the water,
Osun Osogbo, please deliver me!
I cried "deliverance" to you!
Osun Osogbo ooo!
I stand to wait for Osun's blessings, my hands are not deep enough.
Osun Osogbo!
Osun Osogbo greetings, I spread my clothes,
I will certainly receive more.
My Mother, owner of the medicinal healing pot.
In the dead of night, please do not sleep!
I salute the Great Mother, Osun!
I receive money, I receive children.
I salute the Great Mother Osun!
Osun Osogbo is the one who will help me
Accomplish my goals.
Osun Osogbo is the one who will definitely help me
Accomplish what I cannot accomplish on my own!
Because of children she eagerly listens to noise!
Because of Sango (her consort) she masters the art of cooking spinach!
The wealthy one who wears a crown, the effervescent one!

***May you make inspiring, empowering, and enlightening connections this season!
May the holidays flow smoothly and harmoniously for you!
May joy and happiness overflow for you with effervescence!***

Resources

United Nations, MDG Report 2007 @ at www.un.org/millenniumgoals/
Joseph M. Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford, eds. *Osun Across the Waters: A Yoruba Goddess in Africa and the Americas* (Indiana University Press, 2001).
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