

Healthy Living in Ecuador, Part 2



When we talk about having access to fresh food, most folks probably think of fruits and vegetables...and that's true! When we go to the open market, veggies laying in bins have been freshly harvested and are often still covered in field dirt. Clusters of fruit often lie on tables still attached to tree limbs bearing fresh machete marks and of course, peanuts are ground into fresh, warm peanut butter as we watch.

What is rarely mentioned is that our meat is often available as live animals that need to be prepared for the table. Certainly, local butchers and farmers will butcher their hogs and beef before bringing them to market, allowing you to choose custom cuts from whole legs, or whatever. Live chickens are available everywhere and are offered as either egg factories or, of course, meat for the table.

Yesterday, the doorbell rang and it was the Pescadora. He had two 5 gallon buckets, one filled with live jumbo prawns and the other with live lobsters that he had caught a few hours before. The prawns were huge, ranging from 7-9 inches in length. The lobsters were the local small versions most typically found in these waters...much like Florida lobsters.

The prices, as usual, were appealing and after a bit of the usual haggling, we agreed on prices and I bought a fair amount of both the prawns and lobsters. Here's where one has to understand the commitment.

For the next 1.5 hours, more or less, I dispatched and cleaned all these animals, cooking the lobsters in a huge boiling pot and refrigerating the cleaned giant prawns for an upcoming meal. When these meals hit the table, I will remember the purchase, cleaning, and final preparations required to actually turn live animals into food...all done in our kitchen. There will be fresh vegetables to accompany every meal which also began as dirt-covered acquisitions from a local farmer.

Eating fresh food is wonderful and while Fatima is a great help, sometimes, I take on the dirty work. It's strangely satisfying. Tonight, I'm thinking of something with a bit of coconut creme, a splash of white wine and some curry to flavor those giant prawns. I'm practically drooling now!

by Donald Murray Sr. - Dec. 6, 2012