

Could you make some rondon and send it to us by servientrega, please?

This is an interview made to one of the Sanandean hostesses who participates in the English Immersion Programme: Caselita Forbes. In her interview she makes it evident that it is through traditional foods that relationships are established during the course. After having teachers from different places in Colombia, she now makes *arepas* (a typical kind of bread from Antioquia) for breakfast on the island, and the participant teachers that have been at her home usually call her and ask her to send them *rondon* (a typical dish from the island).

Q: When did you start as a hostess with the Program?

A: The first time I worked in the Program was in 2006. During this first time working as a hostess I spent 28 days together with 4 female teachers. They were from Tunja, Cartagena and Barranquilla. I always receive women at home. It was wonderful. Ever since I have kept working for the program and I have to say I have no complains. Everything during all this time has been wonderful. The teachers always have a nice time during the program and at home with me.

Q: How did you get in the program in the first place?

A: Vicenta (another hostess that works for the program) invited me to work for Pamela Newball. They were looking for some homes and Pamela sent Vicenta to invite me. Since I had had other guests before then they invited me to participate in the program. Everything started 18 years ago with a German couple who were in a hotel on the island and they talked to me and asked me if

I could receive them the following year because they were not very happy in that hotel and it was really expensive. One year later they came over and stayed with me. Then they started to send other people to my home recommending them to stay here. Since then I usually work with European people; people from Italy and Holland. Last year I had a guest from Israel. And they always come back. So being a hostess was not really my idea. It all started with this couple. Becoming a native lodging and offering this service was actually a coincidence.

Q: What is the first thing you do when the teachers arrive?

A: The first thing I do is welcome them with some typical food. It would be something typical from the island like a juice or some sweets. It depends on what time they come. But I always receive them with something typical. Most of them when they taste it, they always like it a lot. Sometimes some of them are very excited and they always have a positive feeling when they first arrive because they don't expect to have this view from

the ocean. At home I can see the ocean from the backyard. So they say the backyard is actually the ocean. They tell their family “we are staying in a home where the backyard is the ocean”. In some cases, like last year, there are people who have never seen the ocean before. So it is always a great first impression when they arrive.

Q: What is it like having teachers from different places in Colombia at your home?

A: The experience is nice. They normally bring things from their regions. They share typical things with me. I did not know how to make *arepa* for example. One Saturday evening a teacher said: “Tomorrow I am going to prepare breakfast for everyone”. I told her “you tell me what to bring”. She then showed me how to make *arepas* and I now make them two or three times a week. I like them a lot. So as you see, I learn from them too.

Q: What do you think is the most difficult part for them in the program? What do they usually struggle with?

A: They usually ask me questions about their homework. I think the most difficult part for them is that they sometimes do not know much

English. I spend more time with those who do not know much, you know? Teaching them what they do not know. The most difficult part is the pronunciation of some words. I practice every day with them. During the program they often have to go to different homes in the afternoons and do homework, and then they come back and sit down, and maybe I try to help them. They sometimes use Spanish but I normally let them know that they have to speak in English all the time. It is hard for them. If I hear them speaking Spanish I try to correct them.

Q: What happens when they leave?

A: When they leave I miss them. I live with them for a month so they become part of my family. You get accustomed to living with them. When they leave I feel very uncomfortable because I am alone again. I really miss them. Most of them call me constantly and I call them too. We keep in touch very often. They usually tell me that they miss my food. Some of them told me once “could you make us some *rondon* and send it to us by Servientrega? Please? So I guess we have created pretty strong bonds through our sharing food and daily experiences.