

Report on the Pastry Ministry in Diriamba

On Tuesday afternoon I was able to spend the afternoon watching Maria's new pastry ministry in action. Maria has developed an eight-session course in making different kinds of pastries. At each session they work on a different recipe. I observed two kinds of donuts being made.

Maria takes attendance at each class. As you can see there are 25 enrollees. At this session 22 were in attendance. Given the difficulties for women to break away from the home for an entire afternoon, that is quite good.

Grupo # 1		Repastera	
Nº	Nombre	8	15/22/08
1.	Maribel Rivera	•	•
2.	Meyling Hernandez	•	•
3.	Deysi Umaña	•	•
4.	Rolando Portillo	•	•
5.	Martha del Socorro	•	•
6.	Karla Carolina Lara	•	•
7.	Susie Isabel Aleman	•	•
8.	Melina Yohanna Garcia	•	•
9.	Kimberly A. Garcia	•	•
10.	Michelle Denise Molina	•	•
11.	Gabriel de los A. Gonzalez	•	•
12.	Elizabeth Sanchez Romero	•	•
13.	Emilinda Sanchez	•	•
14.	Jandra Sanchez	•	•
15.	Rolando Maria Garcia	•	•
16.	PA Auxiliadora Puerta	•	•
17.	Martha Mendez	•	•
18.	Maria Lina Sanchez	•	•
19.	Yolene Rosales	•	•
20.	Katherine Reyes	•	•
21.	Daniela Alejandra Zedeno	•	•
22.	Martha Mayorga	•	•
23.	Heisel Gonzalez	•	•
24.	Melina Nieto	•	•
25.	María Montañez	•	•

The women ranged in age from rising ninth grader to 55. Many had to bring their children who ranged in age from three months (Maria and Eliezer's baby) to 11. During the four-hour class, these children were amazingly well-behaved, and I was so impressed with how they took care of and played with each other and how little they distracted their mothers. (Maria told me it is because they know that if they behave, they get a freshly baked treat at the end.)



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Knead the dough.



Create uniform balls of dough.



Turn the balls into rings of dough.



Wait for the dough to rise. While they are waiting, Eliezer gives a devotional at every session. This one was about how a very small ingredient can make a huge difference – for good or bad – in a recipe. So too in our lives. A small sin (little white lie) results in a major negative consequence. And the smallest acts of kindness result in a huge positive difference.



Fry the rings of dough over a flame. Note that they are using a new stove. This was a gift from some supporters of Maria who heard about this ministry. Although she uses the stove for some of the recipes (cakes, for instance), she also teaches them to fry over a flame whenever possible since most of them do all their cooking over an open fire.



Add sugar coating.



They were also taught how to make a cream-filled donut, called a merlina. After frying them they use a long, thin stick to create a small hole in which to insert the cream.



Then they add a white chocolate topping that has been cooked on the stove top.



Finally, sprinkles are added and the merlinas are ready for consumption.

A final group photo with the finished product.



One woman in the class told me that one day she decided to try making and selling a product that they had learned to make in a previous class. She realized a profit of \$8 that day. This doesn't seem like much to us. Children in the U.S. selling lemonade make more than that. But if these women can make that much (and over time they can realize greater profits) three or four times per week, that will make a huge difference in the lives of these families.

The class sessions take place in a community room next to Maria and Eliezer's church. It serves not only families in Diriamba but in their church community, a suburb of Diriamba, as well. I believe they have created a wonderful ministry that has the potential to grow in size, to help families grow spiritually and economically, and to help 516NOW grow its outreach.

I attended the fourth session of an eight-session program. Once all eight sessions are completed, Maria is considering offering a class in managing a small business. She would like to make available to those who attend, without their knowledge beforehand, some raw ingredients to get started in a business. The cost of providing these materials will likely be modest and she will provide me with a budget when she has time.

