

NEWSLETTER 2: HANNAH CARR/TENING FAYE

JAM SOOM (PEACE ONLY)

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FAMILY/ PASIL NE/ MBIND NE

I have officially been with my host family for over a month, which means I have gone through several cultural adjustments and somewhat have my place figured out in my family. I live with Pastor Jean Noel Faye, his wife Sesyl Faye, a niece Elisabeth, and nephew Bakari/Babar and three siblings: Ren Dibour/ Marie (7 years old), Marie Prosper and Marie Benedict (twins who are 3 years old). However, as families work here we have a revolving door of nieces, nephews, friends and family members staying with us. While they can be crazy at times, my siblings and family, especially Sesyl, are the ones who keep me sane when I have no idea what is going on (which is usually the case). They make sure I "eat big", are patient with my terrible Serer, and make sure I rest ("day off"/"wondu") in the insane heat.

FATICK/ SERER

I live in Fatick, Senegal, a relatively major city surrounded by the Sine Saloum River Delta, and several villages. My name is now Tening Faye, a family name (Tening= Monday).

The Fatick region is occupied by the Serer people, my family is Serer and while they live in the city, the traditions of the Serer culture are central, they come from the village Mbedit. The majority of my time is spent hanging out with my family on plastic mats outside under their three trees (all of which are medicinal in a variety of ways), or at work, trying to navigate through the language barriers. Everyone speaks Serer and French, if not one of the other Senegalese languages. I am currently learning French and serer, learning how to teach with no language skills and how to be a Serer woman.



Sine Saloum River Delta



Foyer des Femmes, with some Bissap plants and a Baobab tree in the background)



MY WORK (JAL/ CELLA)

I have two jobs that I split time between in Fatick: the Department of Diaconia and the Foyer Des Femmes. The first job is with the Lutheran Church of Senegal's Department of Diaconia. This is essentially like a social service department, that provides funds to those in need of immediate funds "Aide d'urgence". They are also working on developing programs within the villages, one of which is aiding and educating awareness of the capabilities of disabled children. This allows families within villages to send these children, who otherwise would be stuck inside the home, to schools that provide effective care and accessibility for disabled children. Truly amazing what is being done with the cultural taboos being fought, by leaders within the village communities.

The second job is at the Foyer Des Femmes. The Foyer des Femmes is a secondary school, almost set up like a technical school for women and girls. At the Foyer Des Femmes, you study: restaurateur (catering), tailleur/ couture (sewing/tailor), and teinture (batik/ fabric dying). In addition to these courses they have now added informatique (computer basics), which I am the professor of. Somehow I hope to be teaching them something, because I do not understand French or Serer and they do not understand English. However, I am learning a lot and get to sit in on some of the classes. The education system is still based on the French system, as it is a post neo-colonial state.

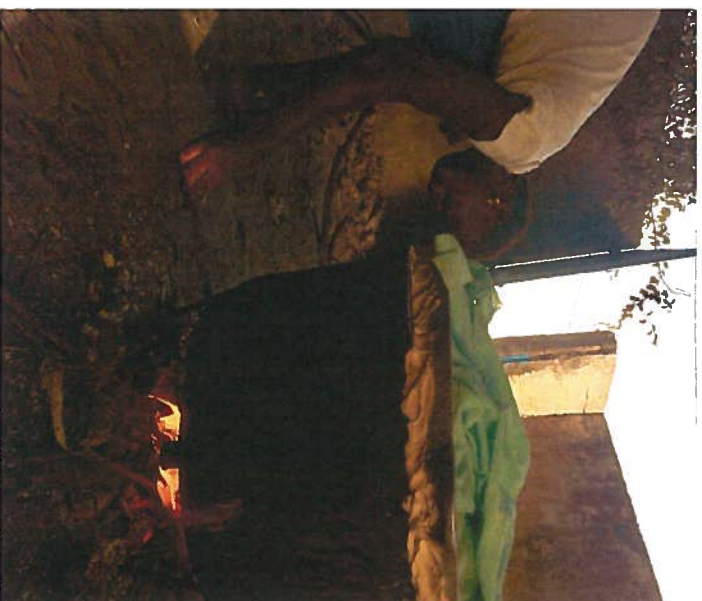
HOME/MBINA

Since I have found that the majority of the Serer culture is centered around the family and the different roles of people within each family, I have spent a huge chunk of time trying to watch Sesyl and my siblings cook and perform the daily tasks required by women and children for a household to function. Each day we have baguettes with butter or chocopain for breakfast, rice with one of the traditional sauces (usually always with fish) for lunch, and a serer style cous cous/ Saj/ Saig with a stew like sauce for dinner. My favorite food overall, would have to be the Serer cous cous/ Saj/ Saig. The production of Saj is extremely labor intensive, as is every lunch and sauce served with the cous cous. So while trying to learn the art of Senegalese cooking I have picked up the bulk of the process required in making this amazing cous cous, that sort of looks like grainy sand/dirt/mush. ALSO important to randomly note that every meal is eaten around the same bowl, with your hands, so you don't really know when to stop and they always yell at you to eat more if you say "ginaam" (aka I'm done eating). The Senegal staples cebb u gen, mafe, and yassa are all delicious. However, the Serer have unique traditional touches to all of these dishes. All of these include using pretty much every part of the different plants like baobab and bissap, to add to sauces/rice/saj etc. And ALL of these are "medicama" as in traditional medicine. Moringa, Baobab and Bissap, are used in mostly everything and for foodies out there they are all varieties of super foods. FUTURE newsletters will include detailed descriptions of all of these things....

BO JAF LAKAS (Until next time)- Tening Faye
Pounding Roasted Peanuts to be used
in a variety of dishes



One step in many making Cous Cous/ SAJ/
SAIG



My siblings cleaning a chicken to
prepare for dinner

