

# Good Memories From Hometown Barbecue

by Angel Escamilla



Angel is a native Mexican. He has lived in the U.S. for 40 years. He is attending Metro Adult Ed and is getting his high school diploma. He is also in PAR to improve his literacy skills so he can attend college in the future.

When I first came to the United States of America from Michoacan, Mexico, I arrived in San José, California. My first nightmare was the language. I was like a disabled person. I wasn't able to be myself because I couldn't speak English. People couldn't know me because I couldn't communicate and was confronting the American culture and gradually adjusting with difficulty to the new adopted country. During these hard times, it helped to remember the good times I had back home, especially when I thought about Mom and Dad's barbecue that was so tender and had the greatest smell in the world.



I don't really know how Mom prepared that beef for the barbecue. All I am remembering is it took my mom three hours to cook it before serving, and in the meantime my older brothers, sisters, and I all helped by picking some fresh vegetables and fruit from the

farm to wash and cut up  
to make salads to  
accompany the delicious  
barbecue and the best-  
tasting Spanish rice. After  
we all had dinner and  
helped each other pick up all the dirty dishes  
and wash them off for Mom to put away, then  
we would all go out to the backyard and play  
basketball, including Mom and Dad.



Soon I will become more social with the  
American culture and be part of this great  
community. When I was able to see this  
reality and was beginning to ask people to  
help me learn the language, I found many  
patient people to help me leave behind all the  
difficult times and think ahead to my future,  
to take advantage of what this great country  
has to offer.

Now here I have a beautiful family, a son and  
daughter, and I also have my own house.  
Through the years I have accomplished some  
of my American dreams which I originally  
came here for long ago. Now this is where I  
call my hometown, even though I am still  
missing Mom and Dad's cooking. These are  
some memories I always will keep through my  
life.

# An Interesting Deal

by Lisha Ke



Lisha recently came from China and lives with her mom and her uncle. Her favorite things are dancing and sleeping. She and her mom joined PAR together. She has met with tutors Gail and Matt. They meet together as a group of four people.

This story is about a five-year-old girl with long hair.



Her grandpa wanted her to get a haircut because she couldn't take care of it. Then they made a deal. If the girl agreed to have her hair cut, her grandpa would cook her favorite food. I am that girl and I had my hair cut. I liked the meal so much that my grandpa cooked it for me every time I visited him. I miss the food that my grandpa cooked.

The first thing I asked for from my grandpa was pork ribs. They were swimming in a sticky, deep brown sauce. When my hands got covered with the sauce, I would lick my fingers. If my grandpa caught me, he would criticize my behavior with a smile. But if I finished licking my fingers without being caught, I felt like I was winning a game.



The second thing I asked for was sweet taro paste. The taro root was mashed by my grandpa until it was very thick. Its color was a shade of purple that is unlike anything else. It was so delicious that I finished it every time except once. I took the leftovers home in a plastic bag and hid them. Because I didn't want to share them with any others, I snuck out at midnight and finished the taro paste all by myself.

Every day I think about the food my grandpa cooked for me because I miss it very much. But I miss my grandpa much more than the food.

The third thing I asked for was spring rolls. They were always golden like the rice paddy fields in autumn. Their shape was perfectly round and neither too big nor too small. They were the perfect size. If you saw them, you would know that my grandpa made them carefully and full of love in his heart.



# Sweet Dumplings for Special Occasions

by Helen Liao



Helen has been a PAR learner since October, 2009. She works with autistic children. She enjoys cooking, gardening, and reading books to her children.

My favorite food is Tong Yuen, a delightful sweet dessert from my Canton Province in China. In English, it is described as sweet dumplings served in syrup. The dumplings are made from sweet rice flour that is kneaded into golf-ball-sized dough. Each ball of dough is then stuffed with sweet filling and boiled in water until cooked.



Tong Yuen is only served on special occasions such as New Year's, the Moon Festival, weddings, and birthdays. For each occasion, Tong Yuen represents a special meaning and is prepared with a different filling. For New Year's, Tong Yuen is normally prepared using crystal rock sugar for the filling, to symbolize family union and harmony. During the Moon Festival, Tong Yuen is served with sesame filling, which symbolizes abundance and wealth for generations to come. For weddings, prunes are used as the filling to represent best wishes for fertility and the ability to produce many children.

As a tradition, we all need to learn the process of making Tong Yuen growing up, in order to carry on the culture. In my memory, it was always such an exciting moment when I was able to join in the kitchen for the preparation process. The joy of mingling with the adults to hear their tale-telling and gossiping was one of my many long-lasting memories during these events. Today, I continue this tradition and hopefully will be able to pass it on to the next generation.

# Humming Drove Me Bananas

by Debbie Hodge



When I was at church I usually liked to sit in the same place every week. There was a lady who always sat behind me.

The pastor was teaching, and when he started to speak about something that she did not like what he was saying, she started to hum. To me she was humming very loud, and that drove me bananas!



This went on for quite a long time. It was the same thing every week!

I would go to hear the pastor teaching, not to hear her hum. I could not concentrate on what the pastor was teaching about.

How did I solve this problem that was driving me bananas? I just moved to the other side of the church. And now I can enjoy the Word!



Debbie likes PAR because she can read her Bible now. She reads recipes and goes grocery shopping with new reading skills. Her husband and children are very supportive of her. They see a lot of improvement in her reading and writing.

# Writer's Block

by Emelia Gomez



These are some of the things that totally drive me bananas: when I go to write and can't think of anything to say. I know what I really want to say but can't think what I was going to write. I think I get so nervous and then I forget what I was going to write, and I have so many ideas but when I go to write them then I forget what I'm going to write down. Sometimes I have to turn the TV or music off and get a magazine or dictionary to get some ideas to write down.



If this drives you bananas too, maybe you can try also to look at a book or the dictionary to get some ideas too. And do not look at TV because that will distract you very much.



# A Rooster

by Vicky Nguyen

In February 1976, my new year (lunar year) was coming, so I decided to go to the supermarket to buy some food to celebrate my new year.

I went to the supermarket, straight to the meat station to buy a chicken. I told the man there,



"I want to buy a chicken please." The man there showed me some chicken but not the kind I wanted. So he asked me, "What kind of chicken you want, mama?" I looked at him and said, "A chicken man, like you please." The man turned around, looked at me, and raised his voice, "A chicken

man like me. I am not a chicken man." I hurried to tell him, "No, no. I did not mean like that, I want a chicken with a comb of a cock, sir." Now he understood what kind of chicken I wanted. He was laughing a lot and told me that was a rooster.

Now I know the male chicken is called A ROOSTER.

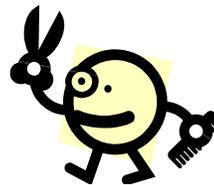
# I Don't Want to Be a Chia Pet

by David Cornejo



My hair drives me bananas, and it's been that way since junior high school, when I was fourteen. I used to wear a hat all of the time. I stopped wearing hats when I was in high school, and that's when I started to get haircuts on a regular basis. My hair grew so fast it drove my parents bananas too. They were the ones I would ask for money to get my hair cut.

When we didn't have money for my haircuts, I would go without a haircut for two to three weeks. That may not be a long time for others, but my hair seems to grow overnight. By the time I would finally get a haircut, my hair would look so crazy that my friends nicknamed me "Bobble Head."



As the years went on, my hair continued to drive me bananas. Now that I'm an adult, I thought I wouldn't need to get haircuts weekly.

The only reason I get haircuts now is because of my girlfriend. When my hair is not trimmed, she calls me a chia pet and then she sings the song, "Cha cha cha chiaaaa!!!"

# Wasting Water

by Virginia Olivo

Virginia has been with the PAR program for over six years. She grew up in downtown San Jose. She is a devoted grandmother and aunt to Jacob and Adrian. Virginia enjoys her tutor, Julia, greatly.



Many things drive me bananas. At the top of the list would be people washing dishes, wiping down counters, and brushing their teeth while the whole time the water is running.

It is very wasteful in two respects. Firstly, it wastes valuable water, and secondly, it's costly. I've seen, on Oprah, the process of taking sewer water and making it into drinking water. We need to conserve, use it wisely and sparingly.



People say, "Water, it doesn't cost that much," but to me, if you're wasting a dollar, then it's a waste. It seems like I am nit-picky, but when I wash my school bus in the driveway at times I am being wasteful myself. At least I am watering the grass.



I don't go to Earth Day. I'm not like that. I think it's just the waste of energy that affects me. Why waste energy if you don't have to?

# Childish Parents

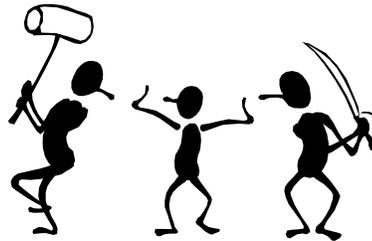
by Nyunt



My name is Nyunt. I work at a local retail store. I do a lot of work in my store and I clean the floor every day, aisle by aisle. Some customers' children drive me bananas because first, some

customers bring their children and they play and open items in the store, then they take the items anywhere. Some parents don't teach their children how to behave in a store. Also, some parents will shop nearby and send their children to my store. Some parents don't like when we complain about their children.

For example, some customers bring their children and their children go to the toy section. They play, open and make a mess with our merchandise. They bring items anywhere. Some parents play with their kids,



like throwing a ball around or fighting with plastic or foam swords. They don't teach their children. When we see this, we tell their parents but they don't like it.

In conclusion, this drives me bananas! I think some parents need to teach their children how to behave. We always work hard and are busy. Some customers complain about the store being messy. The boss gets mad. We are working under stress. Customers should be more considerate.



# What Drives Me Bananas?

by Balbir Singh



Balbir is from India and came to the U.S. in 1980. She completed the 3rd grade in India and has been working with PAR for over 1½ years. She is an extremely motivated learner. She has four children and three grandchildren. She hopes to speak, read and write English well, so that one day she can teach others and help her grandchildren as well.

This is a question that can be best answered with one word—messy. It drives me crazy when I clean my house from top to bottom and in less than an hour my children make it into a disaster area.



When my children were young, I was working full time. They had two dogs and a cat. They all used to run around in dirty water where we lived.

When they would come home from school, they would leave their backpacks in the middle of the living room, their shoes a little bit farther. One would be in the hallway and another probably somewhere else in the house. After they ate their snacks they would go outside to take the dogs into the ditch and get wet and dirty.



Dirty clothes and feet and wet animals would come back in the house. Everywhere in the house they went, they left a trail of dirty feet. That used to drive me nuts.

No matter how many times I told them that when you use something, you should put it back in its proper place, it seemed as though nothing ever made it all the way back to its place.

I learned to live with my children, their pets, and the world around being messy. But today, I couldn't be happier to say that I am very proud of them. They got their education, they have good jobs, and they are all leading very happy and healthy lives. They did drive me bananas, but it was worth it.

