



Chemical Reactions

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Don't Save that Offal for Biology Class – *Let's eat it!*

Hello! I'm not a Tan, my name is Jen Bodkin and I am a research chemist from Sydney. So how come I'm contributing to this Tan report? Well, for the past two months I have joined the Tan Van in its travels into rural Bolivia, helping out with the homeschooling of the Tan girls, whilst watching and learning from this wonderful missionary family in action. I thought I would share with you my summary of life with the Tans in rural Bolivia.



Coffee. Start the day with this, and make it strong. Then comes

School. It could be in the Van, outside the Van, or in the back of a 4WD with a tarp for shade and inquisitive Quechua boys virtually climbing in through the windows. Three very able and (usually) willing students made school fun. Usually we weren't *too* itchy from

Fleas. Get used to scratching, and de-flea in the city. The city is also a welcome relief from

Dirt. It's everywhere. Think of camping and embrace it. The city is also a chance to have a break from

Carbohydrates. Expect more than one carbohydrate per meal. Rice with pasta and potatoes, with a side dish of corn, is not unheard of. Bread abounds. Did I mention

Potatoes? So prevalent that they deserve their own heading. Bolivians also love their

Meat. All of the animal. In one village, the soup was christened "sopa de todo" because in it was identified lung, spinal column, uterus, urethra, ...shall I go on? Did I mention I am a vegetarian?

Almost all the food is prepared by the women, who have fantastic

Knife skills. They are adept at peeling and chopping anything, no chopping board. At events such as evangelistic weekends or weddings, expect to see a small posse of women rapidly working their way through a 48 kg bag of potatoes... My lack of skills resulted in laughter; I *think* it was good-natured but I couldn't be sure because of my lack of

Language skills. Speak Spanish and Quechua, or you may be frustrated as I was, floundering in really basic conversation with locals. The dictionary-assisted conversation is slow, but rewarding! So lack of conversation can be compensated for by lots of

Smiles. You will probably do this involuntarily, as the Tans are wonderful, Bolivia beautiful, and Christians here abound in

Generosity. Help bake and you will be laden with goodies to take away; help out a newlywed couple and be given several kilos of their wedding meal. Expect to be blown away by the hospitality of Christians everywhere, like the family of seven who sleep all in one room, yet who cook for us every night; the use of spare rooms; invitations to lunch, afternoon tea, or treats such as homemade ice cream being brought to the Van. Sometimes invitations can come without warning, requiring



Flexibility. Be prepared to change plans without warning to go and bake bread, have lunch, or visit the river. Having said that, also required was

Preparedness. Lawrence would often drive for several hours to a town, then preach at church that night without warning! The fact that I could understand most of his preaching in Spanish is testimony to his clarity and ability. Also, prepare to be

Patient. Bolivian time works differently. Church can start two hours late without anyone batting an eyelid. And singing at church or at a wedding can seem to go on forever! When the

wedding, or indeed any day does end, however, it's time for

Sleep. Could be in the room of a house or hostel, a tent, a bunk in the Tan Van, or on a fold-out board supported on the Van seats (ingenious AND comfy!). But don't expect to sleep in. Life begins early, and Bolivian roosters can't tell the time.

There are so many other details of my time here that make this an unforgettable experience, and I am really grateful to the Tans for being so welcoming, from our very first meeting. Indeed, all the SIM missionaries in Sucre have been great at including visitors like myself into their program and social events, and I have not felt lonely.

I also thank God so much for this opportunity to come, and for what I have learned about serving Him as a missionary. Missionary. Sounded a bit scary to me, pre-Bolivia. But I know that I too could serve God, somewhere, somehow, with the abilities He has given me.

Excitement on the bus

We set off for a routine trip to Sopachuy on October 5th. Everything was uneventful until we were about 1 1/2 hours outside Sucre. Liling was driving and smelled something burning. We found some wires behind the dashboard had melted, and as we were trying to figure out where they were coming from they caught alight. The fire then spread below the engine compartment towards the batteries and burnt some of the fuel lines. The dripping diesel kept catching alight because of the electrical short. A passing bus driver stopped and helped us disconnect the batteries and fuel lines from the diesel tank. We used up both fire extinguishers we had on board. Anyway, praise God we're all safe. Liling, the kids and Grandma got a lift back to Sucre on a passing bus, then Liling came back that evening with a friend who is a bus driver, a mechanic and an electrician. They worked for four hours getting the bus safe enough to drive and we arrived back in Sucre late at night. We had to push start it because the electrician disabled the whole electrical system except for some auxiliary lights. He thinks the short came from one of the cables from the solar batteries that got exposed because of the constant rubbing against a metal casing housing the brake fluid. At the time of writing the bus company has promised to send out some electricians to fix the cables and fuel lines so we can travel with a medical team arriving from Australia later this week.

Please pray for:

- Thank the Lord for health and protection on the road as we travel.
- Thank the Lord for the excellent education the girls have been receiving despite their nomadic lifestyle, and pray for another good school year for 2007.
- The Tans as they travel for another couple of months before winding up for the year as rainy season starts.
- Unity among the believers in Sopachuy and for the courses they are starting on understanding and teaching the Bible.
- New Christians in Presto and for their testimony to non-believers in that town.
- Pray for visitors to the Walkabout Project in October and November that the Lord will teach them more about His Kingdom and that they will be able to help in ministering physically and spiritually to the needy in Bolivia.

Please see the Tans' website www.atergram.com.au/TheTans for more photos and details about upcoming trips.

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