

Nicaraguan Microentrepreneur Benefits From Improved Cookstove – 2010

Johana Castellón, a teacher, small business owner, and resident of Terrabona, Matagalpa, with the technical assistance of two Peace Corps Volunteers, built an improved oven.

Johana, who previously baked bread in a traditional Nicaraguan oven just a couple of times a week, is now baking on a daily basis and sells baked goods from her own home. Baking in her improved oven saves Johana time: she can put in one pan of bread right after the other and cut back on the amount of time needed to pre-heat the oven. As opposed to a one to three hour pre-heating process with the traditional oven, the improved oven heats in about 30 minutes and stays heated for a longer period of time. Whereas the traditional ovens burn firewood in the same area as the baked goods, the improved oven has a separate wood-burning chamber so Johana does not have to sweep out the ashes beforehand and has less clean-up after she is finished each day.



She spends significantly less money on firewood, making it convenient for her to bake and sell more, which means she makes more money for her household. Less firewood also means reduced deforestation that helps preserve Terrabona's natural environment and maintain its diverse flora and fauna.



Not only has the improved barrel oven increased sales for Johana's small business, but she has been a significant resource for other oven owners. She knows when more firewood is needed, how to repair the oven, and where to get materials. She is a go-to person in her community.