

November 2004

The US election and Thanksgiving in Dakar

We're recovering from the election. The U.S. Embassy put on a nice Election Night Party that went until 5:00 AM Wednesday. Yours truly left at midnight. Music, food, a mock election complete with voting booths, a speech by our ambassador Roth, and a concerted effort to explain our election process to our Senegalese friends.

A couple interesting outcomes:

1. At the registration table guests could choose campaign buttons to wear, either Bush/Cheney or Kerry/Edwards. When I left at midnight, I noted a bunch of Bush/Cheney buttons still on the table. All of the Kerry/Edwards buttons were gone.
2. The results of the mock election: 74% for Kerry.

Viewing the results from afar, we note that Kerry won the northern and coastal states. Anne postulates that the Kerry voters as a whole have a more global perception. They are a group that has traveled some. They understand that there exist people like us, with the same problems, hopes and dreams all around the world. Whereas, the Bush States, the Midwest and the South, consist of a population that suffers from xenophobia. They don't trust anything or anyone more foreign than a pizza. Bush promised that he would protect them from those foreign terrorists. Even if they live in East Armadillo, TX (pop. 256), they take this promise to heart. At a time when we need more alliances we can look forward to further steps on the road to isolationism.

But, not to worry. We, the American people will make it on through to the other side!

Happy Thanksgiving from Senegal.

We are not used to being somewhere warm for the holiday - but we are certainly not complaining. Chuck organized a golf scramble tournament this morning. We had 3 four-somes. A good time and some good golf were had by all.

In an hour we are going for a Turkey dinner at an American home - he is the Deputy Chief of Mission (second to the Ambassador) and very nice people. Then tomorrow night we have invited one French couple and 2 Senegalese couples here for real Thanksgiving - Turkey with stuffing, a honey baked ham for the non-Muslims that we had shipped from the states, traditional veggies and pumpkin and apple pie. It's probably exactly what you are eating right now.

In the end we had two Thanksgiving Dinners: Thurs. at friends' house with 14 mostly embassy people. We did some readings, including a wonderful children's story, " The Night Before Thanksgiving", and a quasi-news story about Bush-dodgers escaping over the border into Canada ...a farmer catches one sneaking through his cornfield. "He was dying of thirst. He didn't have any water. He did have a nice little Cabernet Sauvignon, though."

Last night, Friday, we threw a Thanksgiving dinner here for French and Senegalese friends, nine total. We had turkey, Honey-Baked Ham (yea! It made it here without spoiling), a mix of root vegetables, creamed onions, peas, pumpkin pie and apple pie. We and our cook, Amadou, were very busy.

We also featured Mama Stamberg's Cranberry Relish from Susan Stamberg of NPR fame. Susan e-mailed us to reply to our question about modifying the recipe to coincide what was locally available ... cranraisins instead of fresh cranberries, crème fraiche with a little vinegar instead of sour cream. She was thrilled to hear from us in Africa, as we were thrilled to hear from her.

Dinner was a hit. Three of our guests were Muslim, so we had plenty of ham left over. For the Senegalese, it was their first taste of horseradish and cranberries. I wrote to Susan to say her recipe went over big.

During dinner we repeated our family tradition of breaking bread and speaking individually about what we're thankful for. These are such wonderful people!

A la prochain,

Chuck