

Fourth Trimester Podcast

Episode 126 - Sacred Postpartum Traditions with Pānquetzani

Sarah Trott: [00:00:05] My name is Sarah Trott. I'm a new mama to a baby girl and this podcast is all about postpartum care for the few months following birth, the time period also known as the Fourth Trimester. My postpartum doula, Esther Gallagher, is my co-host. She's a mother, grandmother, perinatal educator, birth and postpartum care provider. I've benefited hugely from her support. All parents can benefit from the wisdom and support that a postpartum Doula provides. Fourth trimester care is about the practical, emotional and social support parents and baby require, and importantly, helps set the tone for the lifelong journey of parenting.

When I first became pregnant, I had never heard of postpartum Doulas, let alone knew what they did. So much of the training and preparation that expecting parents do is focused on the birth and newborn care. Once a baby is born, often the first interaction parents have with medical or child professionals, other than the first pediatrician visits, is the six-week checkup with the OB/GYN. *What about caring for mama and family between the birth and the six week doctor visit? What are the strategies for taking care of the partner and the rest of the family while looking after your newborn?*

Our podcasts contain expert interviews with specialists from many fields to cover topics including postpartum doula practices, prenatal care, prenatal and postnatal yoga, parenting, breastfeeding, physical recovery from birth, nutrition, newborn care, midwifery, negotiating family visitation, and many more.

First-hand experience is shared through lots of stories from both new and seasoned parents. Hear what other parents are asking and what they have done in their own lives.

We reference other podcasts, internet resources and real-life experts who can help you on your own parenting journey. Visit us at <http://fourthtrimesterpodcast.com>

Sarah Trott: [00:00:00] Hi, this is Sarah Trott and welcome back to the Fourth Trimester Podcast. I'm here with a special guest today who I will introduce in a moment. And before I do, I'd like to remind you to please go ahead and hit subscribe or follow wherever you're listening so that you can hear from us every time we release a new episode.

Sarah Trott: [00:00:19] Today's topic is amazing. We're talking about traditional healing practices that will help you thrive in your fourth trimester, including some simple yet very powerful practices that you can put into place right away. Things that will really help you increase lasting wellness after your postpartum period. And my special guest that I'm introducing today is Pānquetzani. She's an ancestral healer, and she draws from the over 4000 year old traditions of her foremothers.

She is a women's indigenous health care practitioner, and she follows the traditions passed down from many generations of women's wisdom, which she has then integrated into her own modern practice over the last 16 years. She comes from a matriarchal family from across the Valley of Mexico, La Comarca Lagunera and Zacatecas. As a traditional healer and birth keeper and herbalist, Pānquetzani has touched over 3000 wombs and bellies. She also has her own learning platform called Indigemama, where she teaches others in the healing arts.

Sarah Trott: [00:01:38] She's also authored the book *Thriving Postpartum*, which I really appreciate. I've learned a lot from her book. We're going to talk more about it. And in this book, she shares the sacred ritual of La Cuarentena, or the quarantine, that honors, nurtures, and empowers a birthing person's Transition into their new life. She is here with us today to talk about how women and families can put some of these rich traditions that she teaches into practice and truly thrive during their fourth trimester. Welcome.

Pānquetzani: [00:02:14] Thank you. Sarah. That was beautiful.

Sarah Trott: [00:02:19] Well, we're really excited to have you on the show today and share more about what you're teaching others in your book and on your platform. And I

would love to just give you a moment to introduce yourself in your own words and share a little bit more about your lineage.

Pānquetzani: [00:02:36] Yeah. No question. My name is Pānquetzani and my mother's side is from northern Mexico. My father's side is from central Mexico, and both of my families practice very distinct forms of healing, and I've had the privilege of integrating the two and using what I have available around me on the land in my geography to help the folks around me, in my community for the past 16 years. I began womb healing when I had my first child in 2008.

And in 2008, right after I gave birth naturally, orgasmically I saw a giant sun in the hospital room, and that sun told me that it was my job to help women do what I just did, and I accepted my role at that time. I was already practicing herbalism. I grew up as a herbalist. I've been growing herbs and cooking healing foods, preparing herbal medicine since the time I was a child. And it wasn't until I experienced in my body the power of the womb that I was really fully able to integrate what I had learned throughout all of these years.

Sarah Trott: [00:04:19] So your birth experiences, combined with your history and what you've learned from your family, have led you to where you are now?

Pānquetzani: [00:04:28] Yeah, it's been a journey. A lot of people ask me the question, what made you decide to do this? And I tell folks, I didn't go out looking. I didn't go out searching. I never decided to do something. I just became who I am, I became myself. This is what I was always supposed to be doing. And there's a lot of responsibility in that.

This is why when I teach about La Cuarentena, I don't just teach you how to protect your womb and how to create herbal medicine and herbal foods, I also teach you the worldview behind it because it's because of my ancestors, the ones whose names I know and the ones whose names I don't know that this medicine is alive. During the Spanish conquest, a lot of our doctors and our medical books were burned. And so the

the doctors were punished. If they wouldn't convert, then they were massacred. And what we were left with is what we have today.

And so people bled, people hid. They practiced this in hiding because for many years we weren't able to practice our own religion, and a lot of people don't realize that, like herbal medicine, everything in thriving postpartum is a part of our religion. Because women are sacred, because birth is sacred, because protecting families are sacred. So it is these are rituals, right? Spanish conquistadors saw these rituals as bad, evil, wrong. They called us witches. They said they were old wives tales. They said that it was dangerous and useless. And a lot of us still believe that today. But the only reason it survived is because it's so useful.

Sarah Trott: [00:06:41] Yes. And integrate it into modern practices as well. Increasingly so in many cultures, in fact.

Pānquetzani: [00:06:49] Yeah, that's something that I hope that my book, Thriving Postpartum will do. In 2008, when I gave birth, I asked my nurse midwife, who was an older white woman. She was a senior midwife and I asked her, my abuela came after during the birth, but afterwards she was going to wrap me and I asked my midwife, Will this rebozo, this faja help me? And she said, well, it doesn't harm you, but it won't help you either, right? So she said it wouldn't harm and it wouldn't help.

And if you don't know, a faja or a rebozo is something that you wrap around your hips and your womb, and especially after giving birth. This helps you feel supported and it helps keep everything aligned and centered so that things aren't smooshing about as you grow for nine months. You're growing a new fascial network, and in those short hours of labor, that is all torn. So you have zero support for your organs. The only thing holding it up are your 24 different muscles in your pelvic floor, which are already exhausted from giving birth, and nine months of pregnancy. So that also really helps you feel supported.

So I listened to my midwife instead of my abuela, and I got up to take my first postpartum pee, and as soon as I stepped on the floor, I could feel my organs just like if

I felt like like a deflated balloon. Like just everything inside of me was just sagging and it almost hurt, you know? It was like a downward pressure. And I was like, oh, okay. My midwife was wrong and my aunt was right, and I was like, wrap me, please, quickly. And she wrapped me up and I was able to walk to the bathroom comfortably. And yeah, little things here and there where a lot of traditional medicine is not understood.

Pānquetzani: [00:09:09] So especially folks with a Western framework, they tend to minimize it, say it's not helpful, it's useless. But even that not challenging your own understanding is a form of ethnocentrism. Medical professionals are not willing to stop and take a look, even if you leave religion and belief out of it. Just the physiology of my organs are dangling and it hurts, right? What can I do to help my. My organs as I walk across the room to the bathroom. And so a lot of these things I learned going just through the process and challenging my own. Well, this is what my abuela's taught me. This is what my ancestors say. What? What happens if I don't do this? And learning the hard way.

Sarah Trott: [00:10:15] And your own voice as well. How does self-trust play a role in this? And what does your own instinct tell you as well?

Pānquetzani: [00:10:25] I tell people that I was raised in a matriarchy, and my inner voice is very like, I know what's best for my body. I wouldn't have been able to do the work that I do had I not had a loud inner voice. And so a lot of us are taught when we walk into these institutions, like got our six week postpartum appointment. You're okay. Stamp here. You're good to have sex. Actually. How do you feel? Do you feel emotionally, physically? Spiritually ready? What steps have you taken to even test out if you are ready?

So just coming back and tuning into yourself is the biggest gift. And I do have so much in this book, but in my book I tell you that you are a sovereign being and I could give you a framework, but it's up to you to implement every single thing.

Sarah Trott: [00:11:34] And do what's right for you. Right? Reflecting back what you've just said, and I want to ask you, in your perspective, you're teaching others. You've

written a book that's now out in the world. Who are these traditions for? Are they for everyone?

Pānquetzani: [00:11:54] They're definitely for everyone. Everybody who has given birth needs to guard their uterus. Everyone who has given birth needs to stay warm. Staying warm allows your entire organism to function optimally. Oxytocin cannot flow through your body if you're not warm. Oxytocin prevents hemorrhage. Oxytocin. Oxytocin helps you bond with your baby. Oxytocin helps your uterus come back to its. I don't want to say pre-pregnancy size because it kind of stays a little larger, but post-pregnancy size. And so these traditions are for everyone.

Pānquetzani: [00:12:48] I do have a section that's called an Open Letter to White birth workers because as indigenous folks holding this medicine, we've experienced a lot of violence from the white birth worker community. One of those things is some white birth workers have gone out into indigenous communities and extracted teachings come back and they package it and sell it for exorbitant prices that are not in reach for a lot of black indigenous people of color communities, and then teach it for a higher price.

When there are people who grew up and belonged to the lineage and don't have the privilege of traveling back and forth, either because they're displaced and they don't have papers, they don't have citizenship, or because they don't have finances or time or the resources to travel back to their own indigenous lands. And so there are aggressions like this that happen. So I do not give permission to people who don't belong to the lineage, to package anything and to resell it, to repackage and resell it, especially because these are things that I learned in my Abuela's kitchen. These are recipes from my family, and there are instances where things like this are taken, repackaged, and sold.

So as we challenge patriarchy, we're also challenging the arm of patriarchy, which is capitalism, right? So capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, we're challenging all these things as we heal our bodies because all women, we all have so much to heal our inner colonialist, our inner capitalist. We all have so much mending to do.

Sarah Trott: [00:14:50] Yes. And here on the Fourth Trimester Podcast, one of the things that we do is we give platform to voices such as yourself, and we share information freely. We share information for the benefit of anyone who wants to listen. We're all humans on this planet who are related to birth because we've been born into this world. So we all have information that we can learn around perinatal topics and birth and fourth trimester. And so I hear what you're saying is that what we're going to talk about are some practical takeaways and some things that women and families can put into practice in their own lives, regardless of their Background and it's information we're sharing for free.

Pānquetzani: [00:15:43] Yes, that's beautifully said.

Sarah Trott: [00:15:46] Okay, perfect. Would you mind telling us a little bit about your own fourth trimester or should I say trimesters? You've had four. You have had four babies, is that right?

Pānquetzani: [00:15:58] I've had four. I feel like my first and third were my hardest postpartum times. My first was difficult because I actually wasn't prepared. Even with all of my ancestral knowledge. There's just no preparing for sleepless nights and no. Yeah. And, you know, breastfeeding issues and nipple soreness and just the challenges that you go through. I feel like I believed that everything would come naturally to me because I knew so much, but knowing it and living it are two different things. And so I got super humbled by creator, and I learned a lot of important lessons.

Pānquetzani: [00:17:06] You talked about our inner voice. That was my first challenge in having my mama bear inner voice, the inner voice that tells me I know how to protect my child. I know what's best for my child. And now, 15 years later, I'm able to see the fruits of my labor and people who thought I was doing things the wrong way. They see, they're able to see how well adapted, intelligent, creative and just really confident my children are. And it's not because I did things in the way that I was raised, or the way that mainstream society tells you to do things. It's largely because of the initial attachment that I chose to give to my children - wearing my baby, sleeping with my baby, nursing my baby, talking to my baby, treating my baby like a human being.

Pānquetzani: [00:18:13] I was at a retreat with a friend, and she told me she heard me on the phone talking to my kids. And she was like, how do you do that? Like all of my friends, kids who are teenagers hate them. They they don't have these, like, free and open conversations. And I could hear that they're truly enjoying you. You guys are laughing back and forth. And I said, honestly, it's just treating them like they're not my property or not my animals treating them like human beings. It's so.

Sarah Trott: [00:18:50] Respect.

Pānquetzani: [00:18:51] With respect. It's so simple. But in mainstream society, this is not how we're taught to be with our children. We're taught to sleep train, put them on a schedule so that they're not ruining your life or demanding from you. But actually, this is a normal, natural thing. Babies get hungry at whatever rate that they're digesting, and that's different for every baby. And every person's milk has a different amount of fat and protein, and the baby knows when they need more. So let's trust, trust our chest, our breasts. Trust our babies and create harmony instead of trying to control and oversee a situation.

Sarah Trott: [00:19:49] Yes. That's such a wonderful perspective on parenthood and self-trust. We've had some topics some episodes on that topic specifically. So I'll link to those in the show notes, too, for anyone who's listening and is really eager to learn more about how you can develop one's own self-trust, because that doesn't come naturally for everyone. And so I'm very happy for you that that was part of something that was very normal for you and your family of origin. Thank you.

Sarah Trott: [00:20:25] And so let's talk about some of the postpartum traditions of your ancestors, things that any of our listeners who are curious to learn more they might want to put into place for themselves. I know you talked about quarantine.

Pānquetzani: [00:20:41] Yeah. So the two things in La Cuarentena, which is the quarantine, the 40 day quarantine after you give birth are one you need warmth, which means you keep the post-partum person warm. You keep the home warm, you feed the

postpartum person warm foods, warming foods, easy to digest foods, lots of liquid, lots of broth.

Pānquetzani: [00:21:10] And the second thing is moist. You want everything that you put in your mouth is moist. Pregnancy and postpartum are considered wet states. The state of the woman. We call it ICAO, which literally is vaginal discharge. But really we call the ICAO is the woman's essence, which is wet and slippery. So in order for us to heal our feminine bodies, we need ICAO. We need a lot of wetness. Slippery moisture.

So we give a lot of mucilaginous herbs like malva or mallow. We call it a waxy ciguapa a la waxy in Nahuatl means women's slippery medicine. And you drink it as a tea, or you eat it in food. And it helps. It helps you. Especially with your first poop. It helps it come out nice and smooth. If you have hemorrhoids, you're going to love it, because it's going to bring down inflammation and prevent you from pushing.

After giving birth, you're going to have a really tired, sore pelvic floor so you don't want to strain. You've already done your straining. You just want to breathe out the poops, right? Just allow them to move. Can we talk about poop on this podcast? Yes. Just breathe out the poop. It sounds like I'm talking about a baby, but it's actually just poop.

Pānquetzani: [00:22:56] And so we give slippery herbs and food that's mucilaginous food. That's food that's really high in collagen, elastin, lots of bone broths, a lot of the parts of the animal that are discarded, like the feet, the hooves, the joints, the shoulders, the marrow. Those are the parts that we consider delicacies. In Spanish we call them nervios. I don't know if they're actually Nerves, but they're really, really soft mucilaginous parts, almost softer than cartilage, softer than cartilage.

And that's another thing that we consume a lot of that is in my family, we save that only for elders and pregnant and postpartum people. No one else gets it. Everyone else just might get a taste. But it's a delicacy. It's not as abundant in the animal like muscle meat. And so you give them warming also warming herbs, ginger, cinnamon, clove. Think about the types of teas that you make in the winter, like cider, all the herbs that you put in cider.

Those are the warming teas that you want to also consume postpartum year round, because this is when you're trying to warm the body, just like you're trying to warm the body in the winter time. So we have warming teas, we have warming soups, we have physical warmth keeping everybody warm and covered.

Pānquetzani: [00:24:43] And then we have specific practices like sobadas or massage that are vigorous but also light that warm the body. Think about the way you rub your hands together and generate warmth. A lot of the sobadas are very, very quick and they generate warmth in that same way. We follow specific channels. We also follow the tendons, the ligaments, the musculature, so that everything at the same time as we're generating warmth, everything is coming back even better, more aligned, better positioned, more blood flow than Before.

Pānquetzani: [00:25:27] Our goal as postpartum practitioners is to get you to feel better than the way you felt before having a baby. So many people say my body was never the same after having my baby, right? Well, we want you to say that your body was never the same, but in a good way. We actually will feed you so much that we expect you to gain weight. It's like fattening up an animal to eat them. We're just feeding, feeding, feeding. and the point is, you have lost so much throughout this, throughout this gestational period. So we're giving you back nutrients, vitamins, minerals.

And there's no body shame in that weight gain. We expect you to gain weight. We need to see you gain weight just like the baby gains weight. And of course you're going to lose that weight naturally as you breastfeed throughout the next couple of years. And so we also do vaginal steams to warm the uterus. We use aromatic herbs in a pot and we have the postpartum person sit over it. And these warming herbs not only warm the mattress and the uterus, but they also heal tissue. They're also emollient. So they soften and relax the pelvic floor. There's so much tension. Imagine, you know, going and working out at the gym so hard that the next day you're so sore and just having the best recovery massage, heat, steam, rest.

Pānquetzani: [00:27:23] And this is what we do for your postpartum body. Except the recovery is not one day, two days, three days. It's actually 40 days long. We're helping you recover. And so there's the vaginal steam. We also bathe the postpartum person. We bathe the postpartum person, and we exfoliate them with a bundle of herbs, aromatic herbs. And I talk about exactly how to do this in my book, how to put together your bundle. And we slap. It's a slap bath.

And the reason that we slap the person's skin is the slapping motion with the herbs. Yeah. We slap them with the herbs. And the reason we do this is because the slapping motion actually stimulates blood flow. It warms the skin and it opens your pores. So as your pores are opening, the herbs are actually breaking down. The cell wall of the herb is breaking down directly onto your skin and releasing volatile oils directly onto your pores. So you're getting herbal medicine not only through your digestive system, not only through the womb steam, but also on your skin directly and fresh on your skin.

So this is like the ultimate all around holistic healing. Your body feels so good afterwards. I never want my cuarentena to end and I do this also for clients, even if they're past their 40 days, if they have muscle soreness, if they're really difficult to work on because a lot of us are nervous, systems are just really activated and we can't relax.

Pānquetzani: [00:29:39] So you have to if you can't get the mind to relax, you get the body to relax and then the mind will follow, right. And so all of these practices support postpartum. People will wrap them in their muscles and squeeze the bones. This is called the bone closing. If you suffer from overthinking from anxiety then we wrap the person's head and we give it a nice little tug, a nice little squeeze, and we keep their eyes and their ears covered.

And this is like a sensory deprivation to give them some relief for while they're getting worked on. And so there are so many different things happening on your body. Postpartum to help you heal. But the number one premise is that we are paying homage to you, because only through you does life become life here on Earth. So honoring a postpartum person is not just, hey, let me help my friend. Honoring the postpartum

person is paying homage to all of creation. We're honoring the Earth. We're honoring the cycle of life and death.

And this is why I'm telling you. Like, these practices are a ritual, and it's a part of our religion, because it's a part of our worldview to see all life as sacred. So we pay reverence to this person. And in paying reverence, you're not only helping her, you're not just helping the baby, the family, the community. This is bigger than all of us. This is participating in a worldview where every person is a microcosm. We are all tiny little planets, and this is our place.

Sarah Trott: [00:31:59] So you're bringing together a lot of context alongside these rituals, alongside these practices that obviously are going to have some practical benefits reducing overstimulation, helping someone stay warm so that they can relax and heal and rest, giving people time and space and calm that they need.

Sarah Trott: [00:32:21] I really like that you talked a little bit in your book about the concept of deserving, which can be a challenging topic for some people, especially if they have grown up in a mindset of having to do things themselves, be independent, you know? Or maybe it's hard to ask for help because it feels like weakness. But I'd love to hear you talk a bit about the concepts of deserving care, the concepts of indebtedness. What really wealth is how that relates. Because you've spoken about it so beautifully.

Pānquetzani: [00:32:59] Yeah. Thank you. In my language, people are called masala. And masala means the deserving ones. We're not deserving because we earn trophies. We're not deserving because we worked hard. We're deserving because we're humans. And in this concept of being humans who are deserving of joy, of food, of music, of ritual, deserving of family.

In this concept, we practice social debt, right? Like a social reciprocity where you have given birth and you are deserving of this standard of care. You deserve this standard of care. So I'm going to give it to you. I'm going to give you everything that I can give you.

Right? So whole communities come together. The more people who participate in the mindset, the easier it is to be implemented because it doesn't land on one person.

Pānquetzani: [00:34:14] And this is something that I really had to work through actually in all four of my postpartums because I was raised by a teenage mother. She was 16 when she got pregnant with me. And so she had something to prove to the world. She wanted to do everything alone. She did everything alone, but it was at the cost of her body, her mental health, her nervous system, her relationship with her family members, friends, partner. Right. At what cost? But growing up with this, I learned that this is the way that you should be a woman taking charge. You can't get something done right unless you do it yourself. Type of attitude. Move aside. Let me do it. You did it wrong.

Sarah Trott: [00:35:17] Yeah, sounds familiar to a lot of people.

Pānquetzani: [00:35:23] And I remember feeling like my friends and family did so much for me that I couldn't ask for them to do anything more. I couldn't ask for them to do anything different because I already felt like you're doing so much. It would be wrong and selfish of me to ask for more on day three postpartum. After my second postpartum, is it my second? Yeah, after my second postpartum, I remember strapping the baby to my back and getting up and making myself some eggs, even though there were so many people in the house. But I felt so ashamed of asking them because they had just cleaned up. They did a lot. They did so much. But I was hungry and I couldn't say, hey, can you make me some food? I couldn't.

Sarah Trott: [00:36:24] And they were there to do that for you.

Pānquetzani: [00:36:26] They were literally there to help me. But I felt so much guilt. And as I was making the eggs, I'm like, what am I doing? Why am I doing this? But I can't, you know, I literally felt frozen, like I just, I couldn't and it took me my whole postpartum to feel like actually Pānquetzani you could ask for things a different way. You could ask for things exactly when you want them and not to wait until they're offered to you. Right? You could ask for more.

Pānquetzani: [00:37:09] And that's something in my third postpartum I was really strong and adamant about. And with my third postpartum, what I learned is actually boundaries. Practicing boundaries and how your boundaries could actually destabilize relationships. In my third postpartum, I didn't want my mother in law there at the Cuarentena. Her and my then husband had a whole situation happening that was really impacting me. My body, my wellness, my baby. Hearing them talk on the phone. Sometimes I would throw up when I was pregnant because my body would just react.

So I knew I needed space from this person. And when we talked, everyone was fine with it. It wasn't until the end where my ex mother in law panicked and she called me over and over and she had dinner with my then husband to try to convince him. Well, what do you want? It's both of your birth. So what do you want? Do you want me there? Oh, yeah. Yeah. It was really difficult. And actually, it hurt her. It put stress on him, which put ended up stressing me out anyways because he couldn't contain the situation. He couldn't take over. And I learned that sometimes when you have boundaries, like a lot of us think that boundaries are good, boundaries are healthy, so only good will come of boundaries.

Pānquetzani: [00:39:01] Actually, they can be very difficult to implement. And this was one of the reasons, one of the the start basically of the deterioration of my ex-partner and I's relationship because I couldn't see him holding, holding my boundary for me. Eventually he sided with his mother and then it was like a whole triangulation thing, and it just felt really unhealthy and unsupportive of the the seed, the being who I was trying to protect in the first place. Right. And so that was my third postpartum.

Pānquetzani: [00:39:45] And all of this goes back to am I deserving? It's so hard for us to feel deserving when we feel like we're we're requesting what we deserve and then we're met with. Were met with other people's reaction to our boundaries. One thing I say in my book is you don't have to agree with a boundary to respect it. You don't have to agree with the boundary to respect it.

And when we come from this framework of you are deserving of respect, you could disagree all you want, but at the end of the day, you're still going to respect the person's

choice. It's things get really difficult, especially I know, in communities of color and indigenous communities because we have a lot of different ways of being in La Cuarentena. And for me, on both sides of my family, this is the way we observed it. We quarantine. We don't have guests or visitors. The only visitors or guests are here to help, to serve, to uplift, to drop food off, to pick up kids, to help make your life easier. But there's no one who's a guest, who's expecting to just visit and be served, right?

Sarah Trott: [00:41:25] I couldn't agree more. it's okay to take the support that people want to give you. You don't have to feel guilty or indebted. You can accept the help in the loving nature that it was intended, and that's okay. Just say thank you.

Pānquetzani: [00:42:20] Yeah. And this happens in communities who have years of relationships together, where you show up for each other and you take turns taking, you take turns giving. And throughout the span of decades, it's a beautiful balance.

Sarah Trott: [00:42:40] Yes, you can give that back to someone else. You can remember what was given to you. Someone brought you soup, and you can make soup for someone else when it's appropriate,, you don't have to jump up and immediately reciprocate.

Pānquetzani: [00:42:58] Yeah. And that whole thing I had to decolonize from my mind because I was realizing, actually, I'm making this more about myself because I'm seeing this as a transaction. You give me something and I immediately have to give you something back. But relationships are not transactional, right? That's a business deal. And so I had to figure out how to decolonize and just deconstruct that whole let me give you back immediately so that I could feel better about myself so that I could feel like I don't owe you.

Sarah Trott: [00:43:44] Right. Yes. To get that off your chest.

Pānquetzani: [00:43:47] Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:43:49] So this has been fantastic. We've talked about what quarantine is. It's a quiet time of rest and recovery of warmth. You've talked about herbs and food and support, being surrounded by support and not being in isolation. Are there any other examples of really nutrient rich food that's part of these traditions? What can really help support recovery and breastfeeding?

Pānquetzani: [00:44:28] Yeah. One classic is chicken soup. And postpartum for us in Mexican cuisine we will make pozole is like whole hominy corn, cooked into chicken soup with herbs and spices. And the corn actually helps you. It has amino acids. It helps balance your electrolytes. And it actually just like the way that some oats and beer does. It helps you with breast milk to produce more milk. And the soup. The fact that it's warm, your body doesn't have to work extra hard to warm it up. So that's a simple food. Simple, easy to digest. It also helps coat your intestines. It helps coat your intestines so that you're not experiencing gas and cramps.

Pānquetzani: [00:45:30] If you eat anything cold or hard to digest, you're likely going to have stronger after pains. A lot of people don't realize that sometimes your uterus will still contract after giving birth, especially when nursing, and sometimes those after pains feel worse than labor pains. And So when you have soothing foods, your uterus and your intestines are nuzzled up closely to each other, their neighbors, what impacts one will impact the other.

So if you have soothing foods, it'll also soothe and warm your uterus. Also, your mucosa is sympathetic to one another. So your mucosa is not only your intestines, your mouth, but also your vagina and your uterus. So if you have foods that are soothing to the mucosa, that means all of the mucosa in your body will feel it, including your uterus. It's going to benefit from this soothing, warming, healing broth.

Pānquetzani: [00:46:54] A lot of traditional foods are warm, slippery, and also not only in temperature, warm, but warming. So ginger, clove, cinnamon, all of these warming herbs, they help you reduce your the amount of cramps, colics after pain, and even overall physical pain in your body. Cacao is one of the herbs that we use. We drink it in atole. Atole is like a corn gruel with cacao and cacao. A lot of people don't realize it's a

smooth muscle relaxant. What's made of smooth muscles? Your uterus. So it relaxes your uterus.

Remember, we can't heal if we're tense. We can't heal if we're overworked. You want to relax? Calm your uterus. You don't want to feel after pains. You just want it to seamlessly. You want your uterus to seamlessly shrink, right? And recover. When you give birth, your placenta detaches, and that is a wound that actually needs to heal. A lot of folks will describe it when it first detaches from being the size of a dinner plate. And so it's shrinking back. It's closing. You don't want to disturb it. You don't want to add more stress to the uterus. And so all of these warming healing foods will speed your recovery. Your body already knows what to do. Those beautiful blood vessels in your uterus that literally shut off and detach. Can you believe that? That's, like, almost alien right there. They're open blood vessels in your uterus. That sense, when the placenta detaches and they close themselves off.

Sarah Trott: [00:49:17] It's brilliant.

Pānquetzani: [00:49:18] It's brilliant. And so in order for all of this to work, in order for your body to do what it already so innately knows how to do, you need to give what is best for your body so that it can function optimally, because postpartum is already hard. So it is.

Sarah Trott: [00:49:37] And I'm hearing dark chocolate is part of that picture, which is. Did I cut you off? What were you.

Pānquetzani: [00:49:48] Saying? No, no. That's good. I'm fantasizing about chocolate now.

Sarah Trott: [00:49:52] Okay.

Pānquetzani: [00:49:53] Perfect.

Sarah Trott: [00:49:58] Okay. And then, somewhat related to food. placenta. Are there traditions around placenta? Any wisdom here that you'd like to share with our listeners?

Pānquetzani: [00:50:09] Yeah. In Mesoamerica, we plant our placenta. The placenta. If you look at it, it looks like a tree. And we plant our. We bury the placenta near a tree. And this is the metaphorical umbilical cord that connects your child to the earth who is their first mother. So when you leave as a parent, when you leave this earth, you tell them you will always have a mother. You can always come back to your tree, talk to your tree, hug your tree, leave offerings to your tree. You can talk to me and you know I will be that tree because my flesh, my blood, our flesh, our blood that we created together is there. And it's said that the baby, as they grow, they're always going to have a connection to that physical space where they were, where their placenta was planted.

Sarah Trott: [00:51:16] And what about encapsulating the placenta itself? Yeah.

Pānquetzani: [00:51:22] That I know it's a traditional Chinese medicine. I have heard, but I can't verify of other indigenous nations consuming placenta. I did hear that certain nomadic peoples did consume their placenta, which would make sense to me. I consumed my placentas. Not all of them. Some of them I did. Half-sies, half buried. Half consumption. One of them I just ate completely. One. Another one I fully buried intact. yeah. I could tell you from experience that there are so many benefits to consuming your placenta. I felt happy they were like happy pills. I felt happy when I took them.

I had them as, like, chicharones, like fried little pieces. I had them raw in my smoothie. Like raw placenta. I had it in tincture, and I had it in pills, and I had placenta tacos. Oh, wow. Thanks to my grandmother. She just cooked me a placenta. She's like, don't forget, you have to put all the blood. That's the best part. Never throw out the blood. So she made me fajitas. Fajitas. The placenta. It just feels so good. It feels so nourishing. I would crave it. Like, I would literally want to eat it. Like, if you ever crave a good steak. That's how I felt. Like I was, like, just so ravenous for it. yeah. So I really yeah, it really helped the hormonal transition and the nutritional needs that I had.

Sarah Trott: [00:53:18] Well, I mean, it's going to be iron rich for sure.

Pānquetzani: [00:53:22] Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:53:23] With all that nice blood.

Pānquetzani: [00:53:25] Yeah. Iron minerals, nutrients and hormones, our hormones drop, especially estrogen drops, right as soon as we deliver the placenta. And when we consume the placenta, we're also consuming those same hormones that were in the placenta. So instead of experiencing a drastic drop, there's a little bit more of a buffer as we get back to our quote unquote, normal hormones. Post pregnancy hormones.

Sarah Trott: [00:53:54] Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. Well, we've covered a lot of ground. I do want to just ask one question. as it relates specifically to what are some ways that all of us can help improve maternal care in the United States? for all communities and specifically for women's indigenous communities. because I'd love to hear your perspective on that. And if there are things that listeners can do who are interested in this, what would you say?

Pānquetzani: [00:54:33] So two things. The first thing is show up for each other, understand how crucial it is not only to the one person, but to the baby and to all of the future generations. What does it look like when a baby is born into a family and a community where they feel cared for, where they feel valued, where they feel invested in and supported? How does that change the baby and how does that change our world? How does it really shape the world that we're creating for ourselves? So that's the first thing.

Get a copy of Thriving Postpartum. And don't think this is just for postpartum people. This is for everybody because postpartum impacts everybody. And so we should all be reading this. Uncles, aunts, friends, teachers, social workers, doctors, single men. Everybody. And then I would also like for us to look at what other governments are doing and ask ourselves, what do we need to do? Where can we divest and invest in traditional postpartum care?

They have postpartum houses in Korea and China. They've done studies, and they've found that when these postpartum people are supported in these postpartum houses, it's like a maternity ward, but a postpartum ward where they're cared for 24 over seven and they see their rates of postpartum depression declining, of course, because the postpartum person has all the support and the care that they need.

Sarah Trott: [00:56:26] And it's not just for a day or two.

Pānquetzani: [00:56:28] Yes, it's for 20 days or 40 days.

Sarah Trott: [00:56:32] Right?

Pānquetzani: [00:56:33] Yeah. An extended paternity maternity leave or parental leave? I should say extended parental leave. Parental leave for everybody, not just for certain people in all professions across the board. And more parental leave for difficult cases like caesarean or multiple children or a child who's been born ill. So when we start to look at what other governments are doing and seeing that, hey, actually this stuff is really fixable, and postpartum mortality and anxiety and mental health and mood disorders are actually manageable if we put forth resources into these things. Right? So once we start to do that, I think things will change.

Pānquetzani: [00:57:35] But first and foremost, I don't I wouldn't wait for any government, any program, any other person to save us. This is a situation where we just need to save ourselves and it's so simple. When I supported my postpartum family members, I was a child and I knew nothing about birth and pregnancy and postpartum, I would just sit there and keep them company. I would keep my aunt company and pass her whatever she needed, just keeping her company and give her whatever she needed.

And I remember I was 18 and I would you know, because I had so many family members, my, my, my grandmother had eight, eight children and I was the oldest of all the grandchildren. So I got to see all of my cousins come into the world. And I remember sitting there with my aunt at 18, you know, going and, you know, going to her

house after school and just hanging out with her, passing her things, talking to her, hanging out with the babies, letting her nap. Go take a nap. And I'd literally just lay with the babies and watch TV.

It's so simple. It's so ridiculously simple. You don't have to be skilled. I do teach postpartum trainings, but you don't have to attend a postpartum training to fluff a pillow.

Sarah Trott: [00:59:00] I love this point that you're making so much. I will also link to obviously your book in the show notes, because I'm sure you have a lot of guidance on this there, but also to an episode where we talked about how if you want kind of social emotional care and maybe you don't have a big family, but you have a willing friend or neighbor, and how people in your life and your community can step in and help support you. Maybe you can't afford a postpartum doula. Maybe that's a factor. So there are ways, as you're pointing out, simple ways. Even children.

Sarah Trott: [00:59:41] Which it sounds like you were. But young people and people around you can help, so we'll link to that in the show notes as well.

Pānquetzani: [00:59:50] One thing I want to mention too is in the book I have a list. It's called the doorstep drop off list. So if you don't have time, if you want to just drop off 1 or 2 things, there's a whole list of really useful things to choose from. One idea is just Instacart some chamomile tea. So simple. Right? Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [01:00:16] Yeah. And also, you know, you might think that's a small thing. And in some respects, it is. But to be the receiver of a gift to be thought of feels so good regardless of the gift, you know? So you're really helping support someone in that kind of way as well.

Sarah Trott: [01:00:36] Any final thoughts that you'd like to share with listeners.

Pānquetzani: [01:00:40] Yeah. In that light, someone posted on my page, I remember everyone who helped me postpartum, and I remember the feeling of everyone who didn't.

Pānquetzani: [01:01:03] Yeah. It's such a powerful, vulnerable time. If you're postpartum, please reach out to your family, community, friends, and if you are capable of supporting a postpartum person, then do one small thing for them today.

Sarah Trott: [01:01:23] Wonderful. We're going to stop there. That's such a beautiful place to end. Thank you so much for being on our program today. Thank you. And we'll see you next time on the Fourth Trimester.

Pānquetzani: [01:01:35] Thank you.

Sarah Trott: You can subscribe to this podcast in order to hear more from us. [Click here for iTunes](#) and [click here for Spotify](#). Thank you for listening everyone and I hope you'll join us next time on the Fourth Trimester. The theme music on this podcast was created by Sean Trott. Hear more at <https://soundcloud.com/seantrott>. Special thanks to my true loves: my husband Ben, daughter Penelope, and baby girl Evelyn. Don't forget to share the Fourth Trimester Podcast with any new and expecting parents. I'm Sarah Trott. Goodbye for now.