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Tex-Mex dishes in the service window at Blue Moon Mexican Restaurant.

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By Gene Fowler

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By Ken Roberts

NEXT MONTH

Palo Duro Love Letters Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings captured the Panhandle; her wistful writings brought it to life.



TEX-MEX: JODY HORTON. BRUSHES: SANJA | STOCK.ADOBE.COM



ON THE COVER Lunch at Blue Moon Mexican Restaurant: crispy pork cutlets and tender short ribs. Photo by Jody Horton

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Love and Recoiling

I know this article [*A Snake To Love*, April 2020] is full of truth and facts, but I'm not reading it. I don't care what kind it is or how beneficial—my (somewhat) reasonable mind just hates them.
LISA FLOWERREE BIGON | VIA FACEBOOK

I hate snakes, but if they're moving away from me, I let them go.
JANE TALCOTT | VIA FACEBOOK

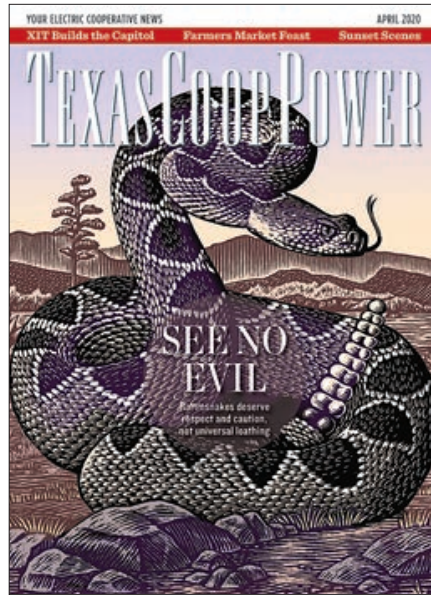
Last summer, one was in my kitchen a foot from where I was standing while I investigated the weird noise that sounded like water running or static. I finally glanced under the counter, screamed and ran. My husband put him in a trash can and released him far away.
SUZANNE ROTH FULTON | VIA FACEBOOK

I've learned to respect and give them their space. A rattler will warn you before it strikes out of self-defense. A human snake will strike without warning out of pure malice.
JON RUNNELLS | VIA FACEBOOK

They will bite horses, cows, dogs, you name it. They are kind of like reptile land mines.
SAM YEATES | VIA FACEBOOK

The rattler is one of Mother Nature's mistakes. A rattler can kill creatures, including humans, that it cannot eat.
DONALD DIETZ | BOERNE BANDERA EC

Growing up in Louisiana, in my youth I dispatched poisonous snakes, usually water moccasins. As I aged, I began to see my actions as those of a person ignorant of the ecosystem.



Rattler Respect

When I laid eyes on the April cover, Mike Leggett immediately came to mind [*A Snake To Love*, April 2020]. I enjoyed his column so much in the *Austin American-Statesman*. Back in the day, I learned from him to appreciate rattlers, along with other snakes, and have always let them be because he made clear their importance in my own slice of the Hill Country ecosystem.

MELODIE GREIDER | DRIPPING SPRINGS | PEDERNALES EC

Now, I make amends for the sins of my youth by teaching my children (5 and 9) these lessons, without any animals being harmed.

You also might be pleased to know that your article has turned into a science lesson for my children while they home-school during the shelter-in-place policy of March and April.

LORNE DAVISON | CEDAR PARK PEDERNALES EC

Mike Leggett repeats a dangerous myth that I have heard all my life and have been guilty of spreading myself.

I am a physician and have been involved in the treatment of coral snake bites. The stories told me by the victims caused me to research the capabilities of these small reptiles beyond what is "common knowledge." These beautiful little guys, while shy and nonaggressive, can

bite you and envenomate you in less than a heartbeat. No chewing required.

BILL CLARK | GEORGETOWN BARTLETT EC

Recipes to the Rescue

The Zucchini Taco Boats With Chicken was an excellent recipe [*Farmers Market*, April 2020]. It was easy to make and made a

lot. We had enough to share with our next-door neighbors.

I appreciate these easy recipes during the COVID-19 threat. We had everything we needed to make a delicious meal during these tough times.

AL MAGNESS | AUSTIN PEDERNALES EC



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Texas Co-op Power

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THE ARTS

Heads of State

David Adickes, who created the 67-foot-tall Sam Houston statue in Huntsville, is donating 44 presidential busts that he sculpted, each 18–20 feet tall and weighing 11,000–20,000 pounds, to the **H.E.A.R.T.S. VETERANS MUSEUM OF TEXAS**. The museum, in **HUNTSVILLE**, is in the midst of a fundraising campaign to install a park and display the busts.

This is the third set of presidential busts Adickes has created. The other two were in parks in South Dakota and Virginia, though the parks have since gone, well, bust.

They are made of foam, layers of concrete and reinforced steel. Adickes, 93, has said Abraham Lincoln is his favorite and the easiest to create because his features are so distinct. Gerald R. Ford's facial features lacked sharp details, making him the hardest to depict.

INFO ▶ (936) 295-5959, heartsmuseum.com

NATURE

The Crape Crusader

Our February feature *Crape Murder* caught the eye of Neil Sperry, perhaps Texas' foremost expert on gardening and horticulture, who says there is hope for severely pruned crape myrtles.

"I thought you might enjoy seeing how a formerly topped crape myrtle can be restored," wrote Sperry, a member of Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative and resident of McKinney. "Cut it flush with the ground in the winter. Let the many new sprouts regrow the first season. Thin them to 10–12 [sprouts] the second spring. Leave the 3–5 best ones to become the new trunks going into the third year."

Sperry, a board member of the Crape Myrtle Trails of McKinney, included this photo of Beverly Cain's tree in Lubbock in its third summer, below.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

To me, being a Texan means . . .



► **Tell us how** you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your city and co-op.

Below are some of the responses to our April prompt: **I never should have told my parents ...**

I know what I'm doing.
VICTORIA LANGLEY | BRAZORIA | JACKSON EC

You can send me to college, but you can't make me think.
VAL LOFTIN | CISCO | CECA

That I could fix the toilet, so there was no need to hire a plumber.
ANGELA BRUCE | HUNTSVILLE | MIDSOUTH EC

About my job as a radio tower climber in Nacogdoches.
ANTHONY PIWETZ | VICTORIA | NUECES EC

That a dachshund puppy "just followed me home." That was a lie!
PATRICIA HEFTI | BRYAN | BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

To see more responses, read Currents on our website.

HISTORY LESSON

Mother of All Parks

Mother Neff State Park, one of Texas' first state parks, opened in 1937 near Temple. Check out the photos readers sent us from state parks in Focus on Texas, Page 34.

ACADEMICS

More Critter Care

The **Texas Higher Education** Coordinating Board in December paved the way for Texas Tech University to open the state's second veterinary school. The campus, in Amarillo, will open in 2021.

Did you know?

Texas A&M University opened the state's first vet school in 1916.




BY THE NUMBERS

June 3 is
NATIONAL EGG DAY.
Texas chickens
produced more than
6 billion
*eggs in 2018.**

***6,108,500,000 to be eggsact.**

BUST: SCOTT OLSON | GETTY IMAGES; GRAPE WYRILE; COURTESY NEIL SPERRY; HAT: OLIVIER LE QUEINEC | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; ANIMALS: ERIC ISSELEE | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; EGGS: SARYRENKO3 | DREAMSTIME.COM

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS
ILLUSTRATION BY TRACI DABERKO

EXPERTS AROUND THE STATE
ARE TRYING TO REVIVE
POPULATIONS OF THE BELOVED
AND THREATENED

HORNY TOAD

THE LIZARD BRIGADE

INCH BY INCH, wildlife biologist Jim Gallagher eyeballed the grassy turf around his boots. So far, several days of scouring the same plot at Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area had turned up nothing. Still, he kept up his search. Alert to any movement, Gallagher scanned dry patches of dirt, clumps of buffalo grass and trailing morning-glory vines.

Then a spiny critter no bigger than a quarter scuttled across the clay loam. “Oh, my God,” he exclaimed. “There’s a horned lizard!”

The tiny reptile was the first of several that Gallagher would count in April 2019. For the first time, Texas horned lizards—captive-bred at the Fort Worth Zoo in 2018 and released as hatchlings into the wild—had successfully hibernated through winter and survived into spring. Researchers celebrated the news.

“We were jazzed,” says Diane Barber, the zoo’s curator of ectotherms (coldblooded animals). “That meant more of the 132 that we released probably survived, too.” Since 2000, she and her team, in collaboration with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Christian University and other Texas zoos, have pioneered care and breeding techniques for wild-caught horned lizards. Together, the coalition is working to reverse the dwindling numbers of the threatened species, which are also called horned frogs and horned toads.

More than 40 years ago, “horny toads” thrived in Texas. Back

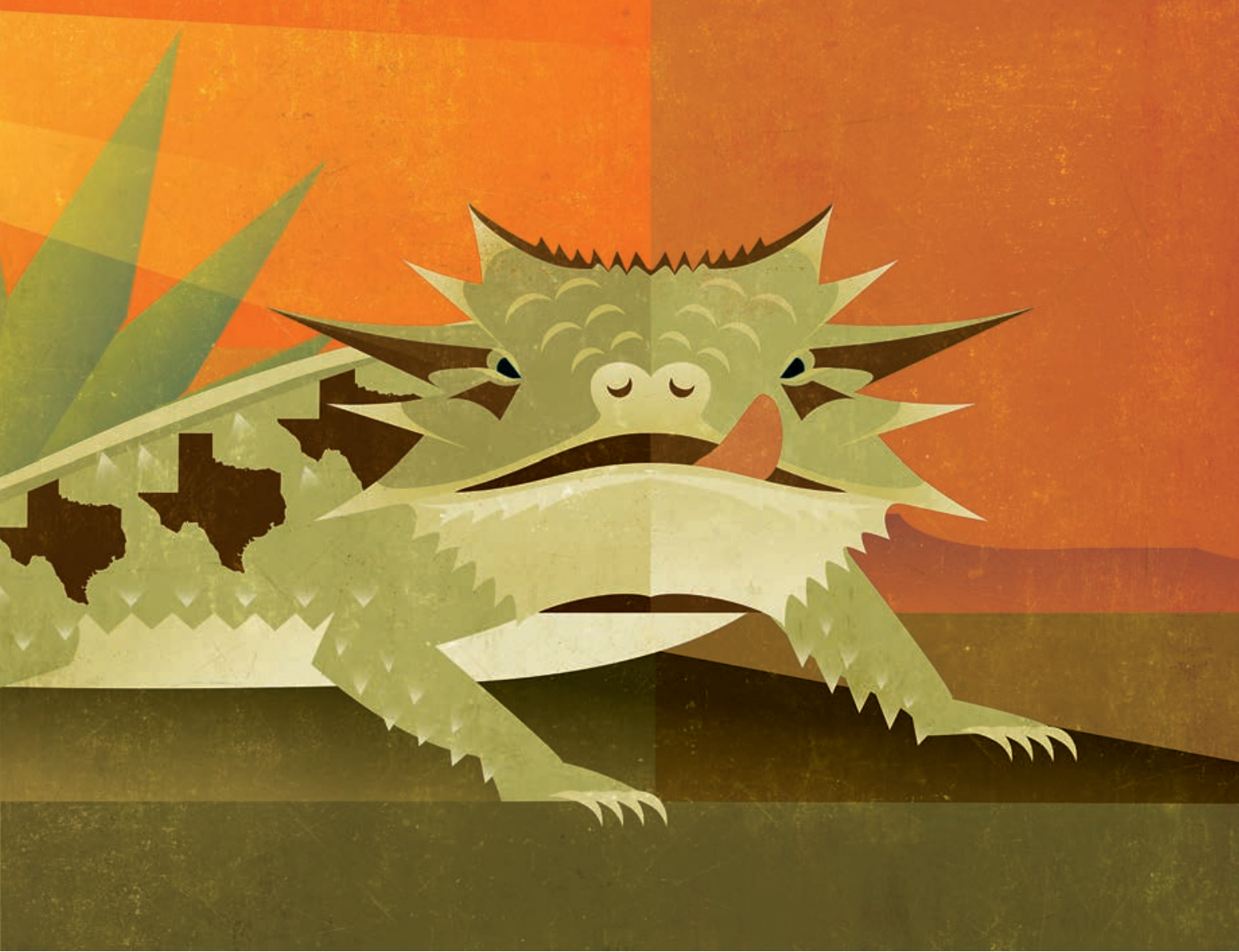
then, the fierce-looking mini dinosaurs ranged across the state. Countless youngsters caught them near their homes. Few people realized the lizards ate the red harvester ants that bulldozed bald spots in yards and landscapes.

Enter pesticides, urbanization and fire ants, to name a few culprits. Horned lizards began to disappear. Today, they’re mostly gone east of a line that can be drawn from Fort Worth to Corpus Christi. “I believe loss of habitat is the biggest reason for their decline,” says Leslie Nossaman, president of the Horned Lizard Conservation Society. “Plus, people still kill harvester ants, which provide a lot of food for horned lizards.”

Since 1991, the conservation society has spread awareness of 17 North American species of horned lizards, found from southern Mexico into southern Canada. Most are protected. Texas claims three species. Best known is the Texas horned lizard, designated as the state reptile in 1993. Two other species live in far west regions: the greater short-horned and the roundtail horned.

“We have permitted handlers who rehabilitate injured lizards and relocate ones that get picked up,” Nossaman says. “People should never pick up horned lizards in the wild. They do not make good pets and will not survive if taken out of their environment. But if they’ve accidentally picked one up, we’ll help them relocate it to the right habitat.”

The conservation society also funds horned lizard research



and conservation projects. For example, one of six grants awarded in 2019 underwrote a pilot project that's training dogs to sniff out horned lizards in the field. "We plan to use these detection dogs to determine if a site already has an existing population of horned lizards," says Andy Gluesenkamp, director of conservation and research at the San Antonio Zoo. "They'll also help us find wild lizards for our breeding program and search for released lizards so we can monitor their success."

Conservation efforts at the zoo have focused on southern populations of horned lizards, while similar projects at the Fort Worth and Dallas zoos work with northern populations. The populations differ genetically, according to biology professor Dean Williams, who's mapped out lizard genetics across the state and leads TCU's Horny Toad Project.

MEANWHILE, Gluesenkamp aims to produce hundreds of hatchlings in the zoo's "lizard factory," a climate-controlled laboratory for breeding and rearing baby horned lizards. Females typically lay clutches of 12–30 eggs once a year. "Our plan is to release 100 young lizards per site per year for three years," he says. "Then we'll follow up with 25 hatchlings every other year." Sites must be 200–250 acres in size and encompass high-quality lizard habitat of native grasses, shrubs, harvester ants or desert

termites, and few or no fire ants. So far, two locations in Blanco County are being managed for horned lizard releases.

In 2019, San Miguel Electric Cooperative donated \$10,000 toward Gluesenkamp's research. "Since the 1980s, we have surveyed for horned lizards in areas we plan to mine," says Dave Burris, fuels manager with the San Miguel Lignite Mine in Atascosa and McMullen counties. "We perform relocations for potentially affected species and also make our sites available to horned lizard researchers at Texas Christian University."

So do folks who live in Kenedy, the horned lizard capital of Texas. Oodles of the reptiles once lived in town. Though their numbers have shrunk, local love for them hasn't. "Every summer, we host scientists from TCU who do DNA studies on horned toads here in Karnes County," says Wade Phelps, a dentist who oversees the Horned Toad Club of Kenedy. "We're also carving out a horned toad habitat demonstration site in our new Escondido Creek Parkway project."

The future looks brighter for the Texas horned lizard. "They're a keystone species," notes Nathan Rains, a wildlife diversity biologist with the TPWD. "The habitat they prefer benefits quail, turkey and songbirds, too. Since we all love horned lizards, it's a win-win for everyone."

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers of Blanco spent many hours as a child playing with horned lizards found around her Corpus Christi home.



WE BRAKE FOR *Queso*

Story by Paula Disbrowe | Photos by Jody Horton

A belt-busting, cheese-topped tour of the best Tex-Mex dishes in San Antonio, ground zero for the beloved cuisine

Spend any time away from the Lone Star State, and chances are you'll begin to crave bubbling cheese-and-onion enchiladas, potent margaritas and spicy salsas. We're talking Tex-Mex, of course, the regional cuisine that was born in Texas and has become our most beloved comfort food. Although the cuisine's popularity has spread well beyond our borders, we love what we get at home.

San Antonio is the epicenter of Tex-Mex

culture and cuisine. The hearty, homey recipes there were created in restaurants run by first- and second-generation Mexican immigrants during the first third of the 20th century.

“Tex-Mex is a glorious yet overlooked cuisine,” says Edmund Tijerina, contributor for *San Antonio Magazine* and former food editor for the *San Antonio Express-News*. “A lot of people look down on it because it’s not ‘authentic’ Mexican. Here’s the thing: It’s not Mexican. It’s Mexican American, and it reflects the history, geography and cultures of South Texas, San Antonio specifically.”

The cuisine’s influences are broad, Tijerina tells me, and range from the indigenous use of corn and beans and techniques of pit cooking to the processed foods of the 20th century. “There’s the home cooking of South Texas and northern Mexico,” he says, “simple dishes that many Mexican Americans like me grew up on, and there’s the Mexican-inspired restaurant cooking created by Anglo business owners a century ago of greasy enchiladas and queso dip.”

Until the early 1970s, the cuisine was generally referred to as “Mexican.” Then the term Tex-Mex emerged, stuck and gained national attention, bolstering the dishes with regional pride and a sense of place.

With the enviable charge of tracking down the best incarnations of eight iconic dishes in one day, photographer Jody Horton and I left Austin before dawn and headed toward breakfast in the Alamo City.

◀ An enchilada combination plate at Jacala.



El Milagrito Cafe

HUEVOS RANCHEROS



Years ago, I asked my friend Elizabeth Fauerso, a San Antonio native, where locals go for the best huevos rancheros. She sent me to El Milagrito Cafe, and it’s been a favorite ever since. Since 1969, the casual, diner-style restaurant has been griddling homemade tortillas and serving breakfast and lunch plates to a loyal clientele. El Milagrito is best known for hefty breakfast plates like huevos rancheros (two eggs cooked to order, served on crispy corn tortillas and bathed in bright red sauce) served with additional tortillas (for scooping up everything else on the plate), smoky refried beans and the arguable star, *papas con chorizo*—potatoes fried with crumbled chorizo.

▲ Huevos rancheros at El Milagrito Cafe.

Teka Molino

CRISPY TACOS



Established in 1937, Teka Molino is one of San Antonio’s oldest restaurants. The friendly counter service and tidy, welcoming space make it easy to see why friends gather in groups and solo diners settle in with laptops. Foodie friends urged us to have crispy tacos because the real star here is the masa. The restaurant has milled its own corn since it opened, so naturally it’s known for corn-centric specialties like guacamole and bean cups. The “cups” are corn tortillas shaped into a single-serving cup, fried until crisp and then filled eponymously. The crackly, flavorful shells are packed with moist, shredded chicken (or ground beef), crunchy lettuce, chopped fresh tomatoes and yellow cheese and served with stellar homemade green and red salsas.

◀ Crispy beef tacos at Teka Molino.

Garcia's Mexican Food

CARNE GUISADA



Co-owned by brothers John and Andrew Garcia, Garcia's Mexican Food is a family affair and has been a San Antonio mainstay since it opened in 1962. We arrived midmorning to find the small space dense with cowboy hats at the counter, babies in car seats and friendly banter between staff and regulars. And, of course, wafting aromas of sizzling meat.

Top sellers on Garcia's comfort-driven menu include *carne guisada*. Loosely defined as a beef stew, guisada is typically made with meat that's simmered in a broth thickened with roux and flavored with chiles, spices and aromatics. Andrew's son, Joseph, served us plates of the warm, tender meat in a peppery gravy. Between bites scooped up with freshly made flour tortillas, John tells me his secret is keeping it simple—simmering the meat with their signature blend of spices for an hour and a half until it is as tender as a Sunday pot roast.

▼ Joseph Garcia serves carne guisada, a favorite at Garcia's Mexican Food.



Jacala

ENCHILADAS



Rudolph Quiñones was a young GI when he and wife Adel opened Jacala in 1949. Its current location is a former grocery store that has been adorned with additional dining rooms, a patio and an outdoor courtyard. The restaurant is run by the couple's three daughters, Cynthia Klauss, Lucille Hooker and Yolanda Showalter. Jacala is as much about family memories as their award-winning enchiladas and combination plates.

"Four generations of our family have been regulars at Jacala, starting with my parents in the 1950s and continuing through today," says Therese McDevitt, a San Antonio native who worked much of her career in New York before returning home.

For McDevitt, no visit to San Antonio was complete without at least one dinner at Jacala featuring the No. 7 Ladies Special (cheese enchiladas with chili gravy and puffy tacos).

▲ The interior at Jacala; inset, co-owner Lucille Hooker.



Ray's Drive Inn
PUFFY TACOS



Puffy tacos—discs of masa that puff and balloon into delicate shells when fried—were born in San Antonio, though their exact origin is the stuff of local legend. The late Arturo Lopez claimed to have invented the deep-fried tacos at Ray's Drive Inn. His brother, Henry Lopez, claimed that he was the first, at Henry's Puffy Tacos.

I'm partial to Ray's because of the vintage Western setting. With its neon signage and stone- and wood-paneled walls, the restaurant looks much like it did when it was founded in 1956. To taste a textbook example of the perfect puffy, order a basket of beef or chicken, but try an avocado, too. Topped with fresh, creamy slices that balance the crunchy shell, the tacos, yellow Spanish rice, creamy pintos and pickled jalapeño create a bucket list meal.

▲ Puffy tacos at Ray's Drive Inn.



WEB EXTRAS

► Friends in Co-op Country recommend Tex-Mex favorites.

Blue Moon Mexican Restaurant
FIDEO (Y PLATOS DEL DÍA)



We ran through the rain to meet chef Johnny Hernandez at Blue Moon Mexican Restaurant, one of his favorite neighborhood haunts. Housed in a cheery yellow house on South Flores Street, the restaurant is known for its *fideo*, a South Texas dish of spiced vermicelli noodles and beef that's served here on Wednesdays. We followed Hernandez's lead and ordered the *platos del día*—the daily specials, crispy pork cutlets with beans and rice, cheese enchiladas with chili gravy and meltingly tender short ribs braised in guajillo chile sauce.

"Blue Moon café takes me back to my childhood days on the west side of San Antonio," Hernandez tells us. "The aroma of freshly rolled flour tortillas is heaven, and they happen to make my favorite menudo with pig's feet."

▲ Crispy pork cutlets, a daily special at Blue Moon Mexican Restaurant.

Lala's Gorditas

GORDITAS



Less common than tostadas or tacos, gorditas are deep-fried pockets of cornmeal dough filled with savory ground beef or chicken and lettuce, tomato, and cheese.

Steven Pizzini, owner of Lala's Gorditas, has Tex-Mex in his DNA. His restaurant's namesake was his maternal grandmother and culinary muse. In 1938, Ernestine Pizzini Chapa, Steven's paternal aunt, founded the original Teka Molino and relied on her mother's recipes. After a successful run there, Steven's father, Herman Pizzini, and his Uncle Eddie opened the beloved Taco Hut in 1958, which served generations of San Antonians until it closed in 1998. The object that drew Steven back into the food business is the heart of Lala's operation—the original corn mill created by his Uncle Eddie in the 1930s.

These days, that mill gets a daily workout grinding nixtamalized corn (dry corn that's soaked in a mixture of water and lime) to create the fragrant masa used to make gordita shells. Pizzini's gorditas are packed with traditional fillings—beef or stewed chicken, lettuce, tomato, crema and a garnish of *curtido* (Salvadoran slaw).

▼ A gordita with cabbage slaw at Lala's Gorditas.



La Fogata

CHILE CON QUESO



Chile con queso was our last stop and the holy grail of our tour.

With its pretty courtyard, massive wooden doors and festive atmosphere, La Fogata provides an instant holiday, no passport required. The restaurant serves authentic queso *flameado*, a dish from northern Mexico made with molten white cheese and roasted poblanos—as well as the classic Tex-Mex version made with tomatoes, green chiles and a Velveeta-like loaf of pasteurized cheese that melts into a silky smooth consistency.

One could argue the basic elements of queso are more or less the same in every restaurant, so memorable bowls are the result of the company, the setting and the flourish of a topping or two. What sets La Fogata's apart is a dollop of its smoky, fire-roasted salsa; a basket of warm, freshly fried chips; and its potent, made-to-order margaritas—each garnished with an orchid.

▲ Chile con queso at La Fogata.

Paula Disbrowe is the author of seven cookbooks, including her latest, *Thank You for Smoking*. She spent four years as a cowgirl chef on a ranch in the Texas Hill Country. She never met a flauta she didn't like.

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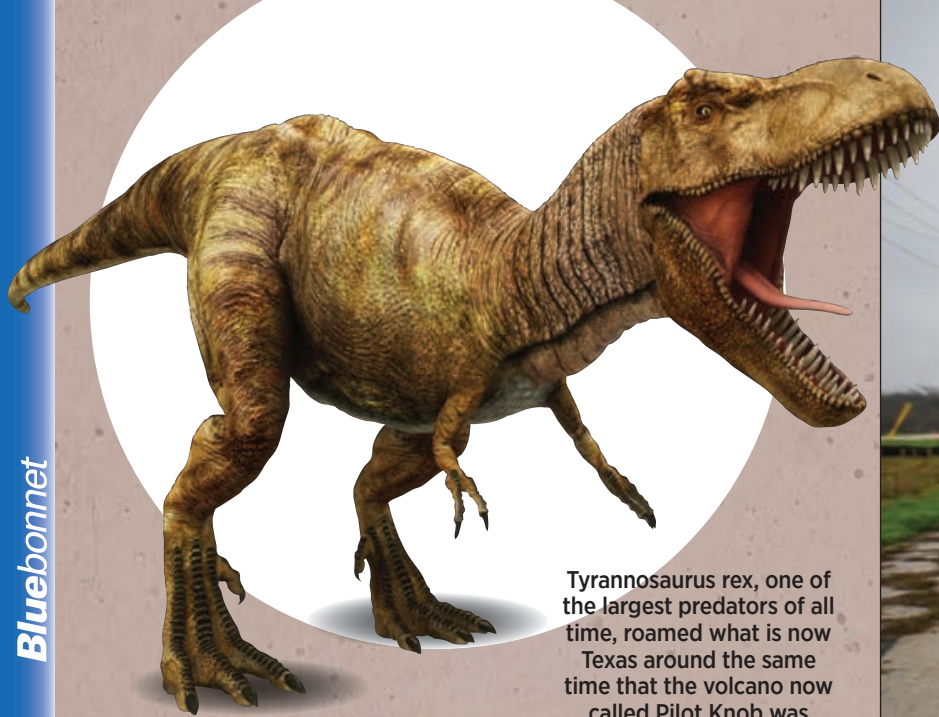
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Tyrannosaurus rex, one of the largest predators of all time, roamed what is now Texas around the same time that the volcano now called Pilot Knob was active, about 80 million years ago. T-rex lived during the Cretaceous period between 66 million and 145 million years ago.
iStock photo illustration

the
explosive
origins of

PILOT KNOB

Today it's just a hump, but 80 million years ago, it was a massive volcano that shaped our surroundings

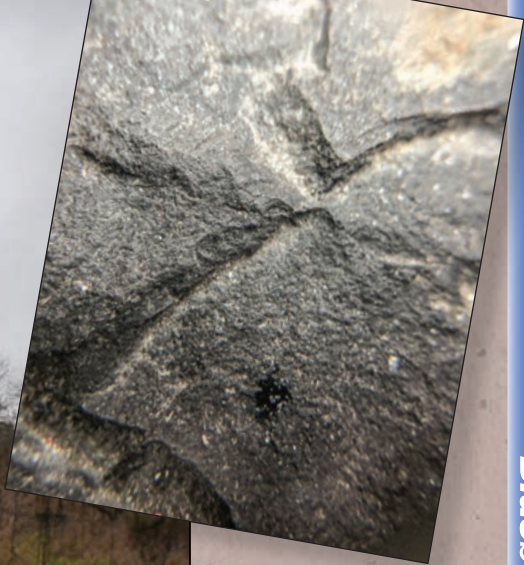
By Patrick Beach

Not far from Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and McKinney Falls State Park, a mound rises on the landscape, maybe 150 feet above the flatter land surrounding it in southeastern Travis County. It is called Pilot Knob, and it doesn't look like much.

But about 80 million years ago — the day before yesterday in geologic time — this hump was a very big and active volcano. It is believed to be Texas' only example of an exposed volcano that was formed underwater.

Lots of people who live and work in the area, even along the





At left, Leon Long, professor emeritus of geology at the University of Texas at Austin, holds a sample of volcanic rock found at the Pilot Knob site. The extinct volcano is the hill behind him. It's also visible from Newton Collins Elementary School in southeastern Travis County. Above is a close-up of the volcanic rock, which Long, who retired in 2015, collected many years ago.
 Sarah Beal photos

In the shadow of the extinct volcano, less than a century ago, another amazing era began: a rich legacy of black gospel music born in Pilot Knob. **Page 20B**

tellingly named Lava Hill Road, don't know its history. Pilot Knob was spewing lava during the Cretaceous period, which began about 145 million years ago and ended 66 million years ago (right after the Jurassic period). In the late to middle part of the period, Texas — like much of western North America all the way north to the Arctic — was covered by a shallow sea.

The water was warm and the climate tropical here. Dinosaurs such as the 50-foot-long, 30-ton Alamosaurus (named after the Ojo Alamo formation in New Mexico) could have waded from Dallas to Austin and farther south, if they were so inclined. Pilot Knob was one of dozens of igneous hot spots along a roughly S-shaped line from modern-day Waco to Austin, San Antonio and points west. There is another dead volcanic spot five miles to the east near the community of Elroy, and a scattering nearby, but Pilot Knob is the largest and most exposed of what remains.

Continued on next page

Pilot Knob: Then and now

When it was active, the Pilot Knob volcano towered thousands of feet tall. Today, it tops out at 150 feet above the surface. Dips that formed around the base of the volcano are called 'moats.' *From illustration courtesy of Leon Long*

Continued from previous page

It's been so long since Pilot Knob exploded that it's not just dormant, it's extinct. But back in its day, some experts speculate the formation rose several thousand feet high. Erosion has taken a toll, making it difficult to guess its original height. It now stands 711 feet above sea level and is little more than a mile in diameter.

Millions of years ago, seawater ran into its lip and mixed with magma — molten rock the consistency of toothpaste. Explosions blasted into the sky. When the debris landed on the ground, it was still hot but already solid. This igneous rock with fine volcanic ash built up the formation. It also helped form rich, fertile soil. At the time, earthquakes probably accompanied the relatively frequent and violent explosions, which eventually formed a crater that could have been more than 1,000 feet deep.

Finally, the volcano quieted over time, and erosion wore its mighty peak down to a humble, unremarkable bump.

Leon Long knows a good deal about Pilot Knob. The University of Texas at Austin professor emeritus of geology describes the humble hill as a “geologic wonder.”

For more than 50 years, Long explained the eras of the Earth to almost 33,000 students. He retired in 2015.

A recent visit near Pilot Knob flipped Long's professor switch back on: “Long ago, the world was vastly different,” he said. “How did the Pilot Knob volcano get there? What happened to it subsequently? To understand some simple geology helps us to understand ourselves and, importantly, how we humans relate to everything else in our environment.”

“All of the volcanic and sedimentary (deposits) associated with the Pilot Knob volcano took place . . . between 145 and 66 million years ago.”

What's left of the peak of Pilot Knob isn't accessible to the public, but it is near the tiny community of the same name, not far from the intersection of U.S. 183 and Dee Gabriel Collins Road.

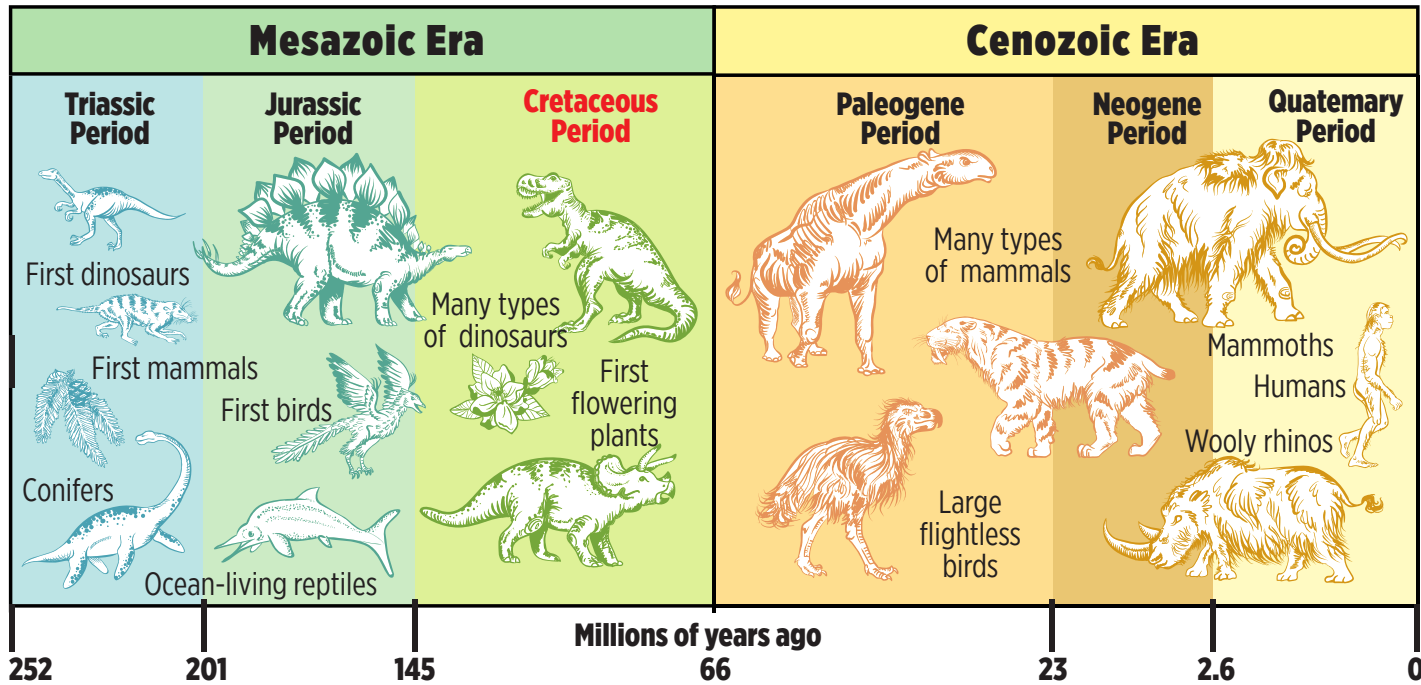
Pilot Knob (the volcano, not the small

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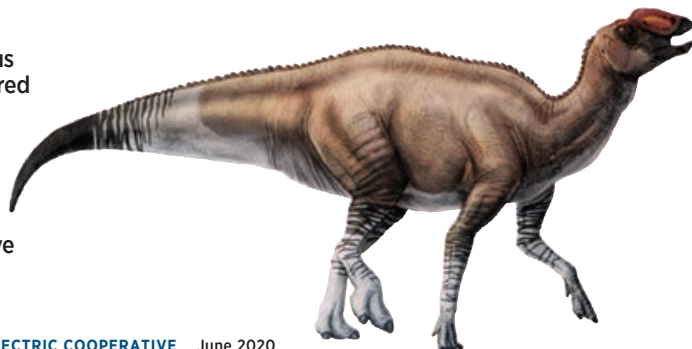


The Cretaceous Sea, also known as the Cretaceous Interior Seaway or the Western Interior Seaway, was a narrow, shallow body of water that stretched from today's Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean and at one time covered the entire state of Texas. This image shows the sea as it appeared about 80 million years ago. Joe Stafford illustration

Life on Earth: From dinosaurs to humans



The fossilized bones of a duck-billed dinosaur named *Aquilarhinus palimentus*, at right, were discovered in the Big Bend area by Tom Lehman when he was a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin. The creature lived in the area about 80 millions years ago, when Pilot Knob was an active volcano. *International Catalogue Raisonné Association illustration*



The Cretaceous period is when many of the most well-known dinosaurs roamed. They included *Tyrannosaurus rex*, *Triceratops* and *Paluxysaurus Jonesi*, which is the official state dinosaur. It was up to 70 feet long and weighed 20 tons. At the end of the era, an “extinction event” wiped out dinosaurs on Earth. *iStock illustration*



Leon Long examines the crystal structure of a volcanic rock sample he had previously collected from the Pilot Knob area. *Sarah Beal photo*

Continued from previous page

community) in a sense marked a dividing line between the more ancient part of the western continent and the more recently formed land to the east. Prehistoric streams flowed south and east, depositing deltas into what is today's Gulf of Mexico, forming what we might broadly call East Texas at the expense of the gulf. The snaking boundary of ancient volcanic activity very roughly parallels the Balcones Fault, although that didn't develop until tens of millions of years after the volcanoes. The fault essentially marks the separation between today's Hill Country to the west and the flatter lowlands to the east.

By the time humans stopped hunting and gathering and took up agriculture, it was clear the land on the east side of the Balcones Fault was better suited for growing crops. The soft volcanic material around and east of Pilot Knob made for rich soil while Hill Country farmers cursed and busted rocks.

There are tales of an exploratory oil well or two near the knob sometime in the early

20th century, but those apparently came up dry. Stories of buried gold and diamonds in the rough around Pilot Knob persisted for decades, but no one ever turned up with any evidence.

In 1919, a UT professor declared that Pilot Knob's dome was made up of tough "nephelinite basalt" (trap rock) that was the best material for road building ever found in Texas. By the next year, San Antonio businessman Arvid Franke held a 50-year lease to mine Pilot Knob, according to the March 13, 1920, edition of *Rock Products*, a trade publication. "Mr. Franke is planning the construction of a crushing plant to prepare the material for the market," it reported. "There is every reason to believe that on account of the quality of the trap rock found in the deposit near Austin that demand will be large for it and the construction of more permanent highways in Texas will increase."

Another 1920 trade bulletin estimated the trap rock deposit atop Pilot Knob was 5 million to 50 million tons. However, the International & Great Northern Railway never built

Getting there

Pilot Knob is easily seen from the road. Travel south of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport on U.S. 183. Past Onion Creek, the hill is visible on the right, near a large white liquid storage tank. You can see it if you turn west onto Dee Gabriel Collins Road off U.S. 183 or from McKinney Falls Parkway near its intersection with Dee Gabriel Collins Road. The knob is also visible from Newton Collins Elementary School at 7609 Apogee Blvd. Admire it from a distance, though. The land around Pilot Knob is privately owned.

the spur line that would be needed to haul the rock out.

Today, you can see rock-solid signs of the once-active volcano. Along Onion Creek in McKinney Falls State Park, the rippled remnants of beach rock deposits and a shallow sea that formed when volcanic activity waned are visible. Visit the state park and look for the greenish-gray, crumbly volcanic ash beds below the limestone overhangs of the upper and lower falls.

If you've ever cooled off there on a hot summer day, you have a volcano to thank for it.

Creatures inhabiting the Cretaceous Sea included giant ancient mollusks and squid-like creatures called belemnites. Sharks and marine dinosaurs were also abundant during the era. *From the Milstein Hall of Ocean Life, American Museum of Natural History*



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Look for this story and a link to the coloring book at bluebonnet.coop.

the **powerful** voices of PILOT KNOB

In the not-so-distant past, the area around the extinct volcano gave birth to many great gospel singers

By Denise Gamino

Perhaps the fertile volcanic soil around Pilot Knob has a secret spiritual ingredient that helped create a joyful noise.

More than a few who grew up in the shadow of the dormant volcano in southeast Austin — and their children — have hit stardom in the soulful world of black gospel music in America.

The musical legacy of Pilot Knob helped create Grammy-winning The Mighty Clouds of Joy, The Paramount Singers and “girl” group The Chariettes. Singers with roots there backed up Ray Charles and made gospel music stir the airwaves in Central Texas.



E.M. Franklin



A.C. Franklin

their gospel group after the ornate Paramount Theatre on Congress Avenue just blocks from the state Capitol, even though racial segregation prohibited them from entering the renowned venue. The all-male group had a radio show on KTBC and their live performances could draw more than 1,200 fans.

The Paramounts recorded for the Library of Congress in 1941 and toured until World

Continued on next page



The Chariettes, billed as an ‘all-girl group,’ shown in 1953, has performed for decades. Photo courtesy of Bill and Evelyn Martin and the Texas Music Museum



The Paramount Singers were co-founded by E.M. Franklin Sr., second from right, and his brother, A.C. Franklin, far left. The group’s live performances could attract more than 1,000 fans. Photo courtesy of the Rev. A.C. Franklin and the Texas Music Museum

Continued from previous page

War II disrupted their lives. After the war, some of the original members reorganized the band in California without the Franklins.

The Franklin brothers became singing pastors. The Rev. E.M. Franklin Sr., known as the “Big Hearted Preacher,” pastored St. James Missionary Baptist Church in East Austin for 39 years. The Rev. A.C. Franklin, a singer known as “Uncle Koot” who could move listeners to tears, was pastor in Los Angeles for decades before returning to Austin in the 1970s.

E.M. Franklin Sr.’s son — E.M. Franklin Jr., known as “Junior” — was an early member of The Mighty Clouds of Joy, formed in the 1950s in Los Angeles. The New York Times called the group “one of the most successful gospel quartets of all time.” The Clouds won three Grammy Awards.

The daughters of E.M. Franklin also were prominent gospel singers. Evelyn (known as “Tutter”) and Dorothy Franklin were part of the “all girl spiritual group” (as a 1955 ad in Billboard described them) called The Charities. They had a hit that year with “Step By Step.” Their bubbly sister, Barbara Franklin, sang in the 1960s with the Raelettes, backup singers for Ray Charles. Radio at that time pro-



Ermant 'Junior' Franklin



Elmer Akins

pelled the influence of gospel music.

Elmer Akins was born in Pilot Knob in 1911 to sharecropper parents. He got his big musical break in 1947 as host of a 15-minute gospel show on Austin’s KVET. His Gospel Train show grew to 90 minutes and aired for 51 years.

“Akins was recognized by the Texas Association of Broadcasters as the longest-continuing radio host in the United States; the association honored him as a “Texas Broadcast Legend” in 1998,” according to “The Handbook of Texas.” Akins also wore the titles “Voice of Austin” and “Deacon of Austin Gospel Music” during his half-century of broadcasting.”

A short, 1989 documentary about Akins called “Radio Man: Elmer Akins” can be viewed on YouTube.

After Akins died in 1998, his protégé, Austin mailman Bill Martin, became the revered deejay of black gospel music. Martin, who hosted a slot on KIXL, helped Akins promote gospel shows by playing records on an Austin street corner. Martin’s gospel show aired for 34 years.

Martin married “Tutter” Franklin to join the list of gospel music legends with ties to Pilot Knob. ■



A former slave who settled in the Pilot Knob area, Newton Collins had a big impact in the region and recently had a school named after him. Photo courtesy of Lisa Collins

Who was Newton Collins?

Those who live anywhere near the Pilot Knob area southeast of Austin may have heard the name Newton Collins.

Newton Isaac Collins Sr. was born a slave in Alabama and was freed by his white father who owned him. He then moved to Texas in the 1840s as a literate carpenter only to be enslaved again. He was freed after the Civil War in 1865.

With freedom at last, Collins began buying Central Texas farmland, including 157 acres that later became Austin’s municipal airport and is now the site of the Mueller master-planned neighborhood. In 1891, he bought 506 acres of farmland in Pilot Knob. To each of his seven children, he deeded about 72 acres and helped them build homes.

He built a schoolhouse, supplying the desks, books and teacher. His great-granddaughter, Austin civil rights activist and civic leader Ada Anderson, became the first African American elected to the Austin Community College Board of Trustees and the first black woman on a bank board in Austin.

The Del Valle Independent School District opened Newton Collins Elementary School in 2018.

The man who was twice a slave and insisted his children stay in school — even during harvest season — continues to play a key role in Texas education.

— Denise Gamino



Bill 'The Mailman' Martin

The gospel group The Mighty Clouds of Joy expanded to soul, R&B and rock, and scored numerous Grammy Awards and nominations, along with several hit albums.

All photos courtesy of Clay Shorkey and the Texas Music Museum

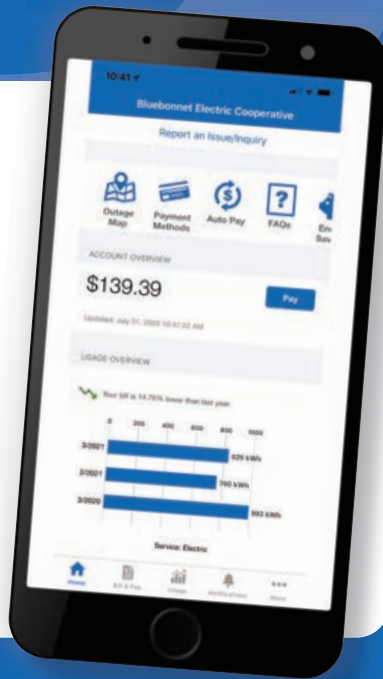
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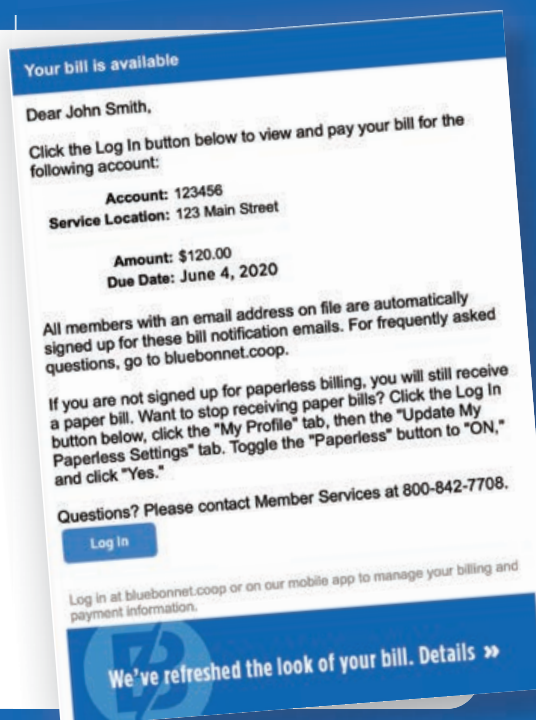
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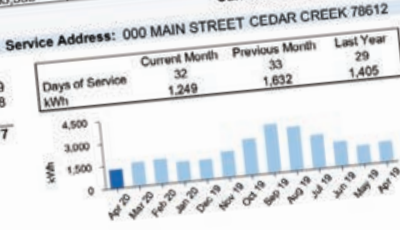


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Account Name: JANE DOE
Account Number: 000000000
Bill Date: 04/14/2021

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE
04/17/2021
\$131.77
After Due Date \$138.36

Meter Number	Rate	Meter Readings	Days	Multiplier	kWh	Charge
00000000	Residential	94,106 - 95,355	32	1	1,249	\$131.77
Current Charges						\$131.77



Meter: 00000000
Service From: 02/24/2021 To: 03/27/2021
Wholesale Power Cost 1,249 kWh \$67.99
Bluebonnet Residential Service 1,249 kWh \$63.78
Bluebonnet Residential Service (Includes \$22.50 Service Availability Charge) \$131.77
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Account Summary as of April 14, 2021
Previous Balance \$165.27
Payment Received 03/06/2021 -\$165.27
Balance Forward \$0.00
Current Charges \$131.77
Total Amount Due \$131.77

KEEP
SEND Please mail this portion with your payment.



Please check box to indicate mailing address/phone number changes, enter changes on the reverse side, and return by mail.

JANE DOE
000 MAIN STREET
CEDAR CREEK TX 78612-3488

ACCOUNT # 000000000 BILLING DATE 04/14/2021

ACCOUNT NAME	JANE DOE
TOTAL DUE BY 04/17/2021	\$ 131.77
AMOUNT DUE AFTER 04/17/2021	\$ 138.36

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, Inc.
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Account Overview

the HEAT is ON

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Set the thermostat to 78 degrees or higher, especially from 3 to 7 p.m. Save as much as 10% on your bill. You can notch up the thermostat a degree per week to help everyone get used to it.

ENJOY THE BREEZE

Let your ceiling fan compensate for the higher temperature, but turn it off when you're not in the room.

TURN 'EM OFF

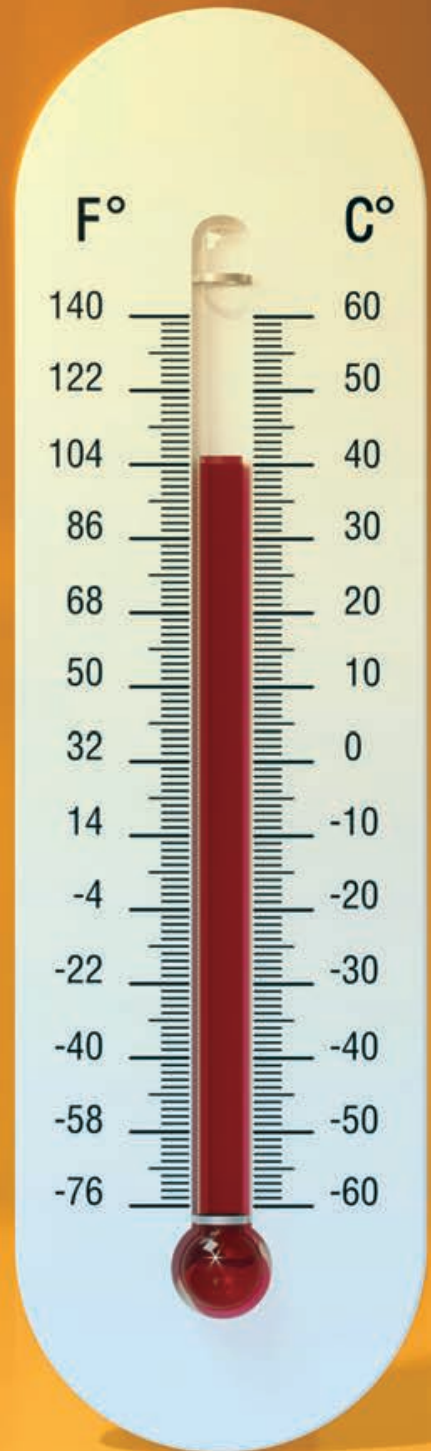
Lights can eat up a chunk of your electric bill. Save a little more by switching to LED bulbs. Close curtains and blinds during the day to block the sun's heat.

WISE UP

Upgrade to a programmable or smart thermostat to better control your temperature settings. A smart thermostat lets you remotely adjust the temperature, and some can even learn and adapt to your habits.

KILL THE VAMPIRES

Gadgets silently eat electricity, even in standby mode. Plug them into an advanced power strip and turn them off when not in use.



2020 SCHOLARSHIPS OF EXCELLENCE

Bluebonnet awards \$2,500 scholarships to 60 high school grads

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative has awarded \$150,000 in scholarships to 60 eligible high school seniors who graduated in 2020.

Half of the \$2,500 scholarships went to students who are pursuing bachelor's degrees, and the other half to students pursuing trade or technical certificates or associate degrees in a vocational field.

The scholarships were awarded in April. In the past five years, Bluebonnet has given out \$679,500 in scholarships to students from across the cooperative's service area.

Look for applications for 2021 scholarships on the cooperative's website, bluebonnet.coop, by Nov. 1.

Academic Scholarships

- Alexandria Countouriotis**, Burton High School
- Alldyn Schroeder**, Brenham High School
- Bailey Lyon**, Giddings High School
- Brooke Vasquez**, Smithville High School
- Cade Weiss**, Burton High School
- Carolina Barboza**, Manor New Tech High School
- Colby See**, Snook High School
- Erica Cepeda**, Manor Senior High School
- Ethan Thomas**, Navarro High School
- Fritz Anton**, Lockhart High School



- Hailey Thornton**, Seguin High School
- Harley-Anne Horn**, Manor Senior High School
- Jenna Johnson**, Caldwell High School
- Jordan Kelm**, Brenham High School
- Kate Kibby**, Bastrop High School
- Kate Urbanovsky**, Caldwell High School
- Kaylin Krebs**, Bellville High School
- Layne Tharp**, Somerville High School
- Lettie Morris**, Lexington High School
- Lillian Hohlt**, Bellville High School
- Macy Alexander**, Giddings High School
- Macy Sweat**, Lexington High School
- Madison Cotton**, Concordia High School
- Malorie Sanders**, Lexington High School
- Marlizeth Castaneda**, Cedar Creek High School
- Mia Aschenbeck**, Brenham High School

- Payne Allen**, Cedar Creek High School
- Sarah Cook**, Manor Senior High School
- Ty Patterson**, Manor High School
- Zoey Croft**, Bastrop High School

Trade and Technical Scholarships

- Adriane Isabelle Justus Carvin**, Giddings High School
- Alysia Saldana**, Dime Box High School
- Caitlyn Harman**, Bastrop High School
- Caroline Frerich**, Smithville High School
- Cecilia Fletcher**, University of Texas at Austin High School
- David Davis**, Snook High School
- Emily Rivera**, Lockhart High School
- Florencia Nava**, Lexington High School
- Hayley Castillo**, Round Top-Carmine High School
- Jayce Cox**, Elgin High School
- Jordan Boecker**, Brenham High School
- Kalep Toney**, Dime Box High School
- Kalyn Springer**, Lexington High School
- Katherine Banda-Segura**, Lockhart High School
- Ke'Asia Butler**, Caldwell High School
- Kennedy Martin**, Manor New Tech High School
- KyMBER Dean**, Caldwell High School
- Kyndal Coufal**, Burton High School
- Logan Schwartz**, Brenham High School
- Luke Dallmeyer**, Round Top-Carmine High School
- Marissa de la Rosa**, Giddings High School
- Marti Roper**, Bastrop High School
- Megan McCarthy**, Caldwell High School
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- Trey Marroquin**, Elgin High School

CAPITAL CREDITS

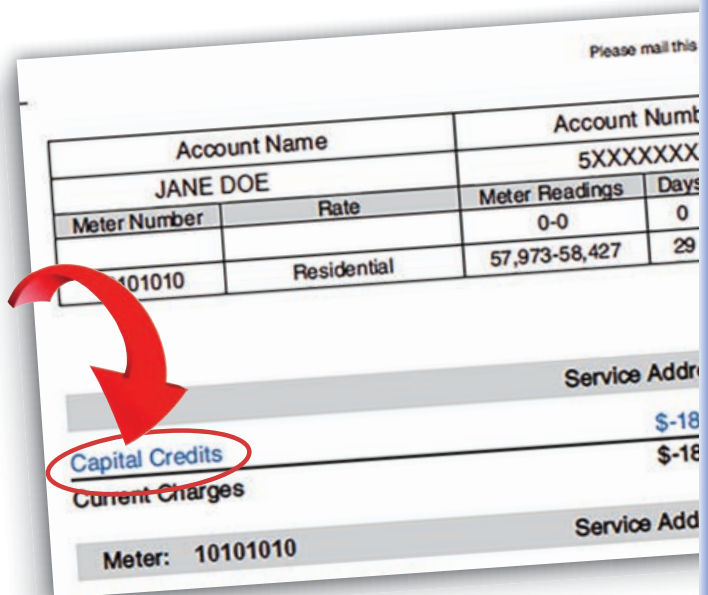
Bluebonnet members receive excess revenue of \$4.2 million

Most Bluebonnet members saw a credit on their May bill. It's called "capital credits," and it is one of the benefits of being a member of an electric cooperative.

The co-op shares with its members the money it collects above what is required to run the business. The amount that members receive depends on how much electricity they used in previous years and how long they have been Bluebonnet members. In April, Bluebonnet's Board approved returning \$4.2 million in capital credits, an increase of \$500,000 from last year's amount.

"It's always good to see a credit on your electric bill, but especially now when so many families and businesses are struggling financially because of the coronavirus outbreak," said Ben Flencher, Bluebonnet's Board chairman.

Questions? Contact a member service representative at memberservices@bluebonnet.coop or 800-842-7708.



CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONS



Keeping the lights on

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative employees have been working to maintain operations during the coronavirus crisis. Because our employees provide essential services and maintain critical infrastructure across a large portion of Central Texas, everyone has made adjustments. Our member service representatives still answer the phones, but most have been handling calls from home. Amy Carroll, above, helps a member on a call, while her son, Michael, studies on the couch. Line worker Michael Guajardo, below, dons a mask. All field employees wear face coverings when they are required or needed. Those who work to maintain our equipment and restore power follow additional safety steps, including daily health checks, social distancing with the public, fewer crew members in individual trucks and sanitary precautions. *Amy Carroll photo, Joe Stafford photo*



Assistance targets families struggling to pay electric bills

Bluebonnet's Board of Directors voted in their April meeting to provide assistance to several nonprofit organizations that are part of the cooperative's energy assistance program. More than 24 such organizations provide financial assistance to Bluebonnet members who need help paying their electric bills.

Their aid is significant now that many Bluebonnet members are facing hardship due to the coronavirus and its economic fallout.

"We recognize the value that these organizations bring to our members and communities," said Matt Bentke, Bluebonnet's general manager. "We track the payment assistance that they provide to our members. Throughout the year, we look for opportunities to support them in return for their ongoing assistance to our members."

For information about Bluebonnet's energy assistance program and a list of nonprofit groups that provide assistance, visit our website at bluebonnet.coop/assistance.

The assistance approved by Bluebonnet's Board of Directors on April 21 is part of the co-op's overall efforts to help its members and communities during the coronavirus crisis. Bluebonnet is also helping families and businesses by temporarily suspending disconnections for nonpayment, waiving late fees, deferring payment due dates and making payment arrangements for members in need.

Bluebonnet has also increased support to the 15 food banks in the co-op's service area that are providing meals to families who have lost income due to the coronavirus shut-down.

"Everyone at Bluebonnet is proud to be able to support our communities and offer our members options to help them through this difficult time," Bentke said. "We have planned a multimillion-dollar package this year to help our members and communities. Additionally, our members are benefiting from a December rate reduction that will save them \$4.8 million this year. We will continue to seek opportunities to support our communities and help our members in need."

Bluebonnet members who need assistance with their electric bill, or need to request a payment arrangement, should call Bluebonnet's member services at 800-842-7708 or visit a drive-through lane at one of the cooperative's member service centers in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart or Manor.

15 food pantries serve area in time of need

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative is working to support 15 food pantries that serve those in need within our 3,800-square-mile service area. Their work is especially important during the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

The Bastrop County Emergency Food Pantry experienced a 59 percent increase in requests for services starting in April. They said they have been able to keep up with demand, although the loss of more than 50 hours of weekly volunteer help a week and increased travel expenses have posed challenges.

Joe Franks, treasurer of the Giddings Food Pantry, has seen an increase in demand since the coronavirus's economic impact began, but added that the pantry has several programs available to assist residents of Lee and surrounding counties.

Here is a list, locations and contact information for many of the food pantries helping those in need in the Bluebonnet area.

Lockhart area

■ Caldwell County Christian Ministries,

901 Bois D'Arc St., Lockhart; 512-376-6661; caldwellfoodpantry.com. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Monday-Thursday.

■ **The Luling Food Bank**, 402 S. Mulberry St., Luling, 830-875-2863; on Facebook as Luling Food Bank. Open 8 a.m.-noon; check with them about dates food is distributed.

■ **Hays County Food Bank**, 220 Herndon St., San Marcos, 512-392-8300; haysfoodbank.org. Their pantry is open 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Thursday, and 8 a.m.-noon Fridays.

Bastrop area

■ **Smithville Food Pantry**, 301 Lee St., Smithville, 512-237-2322, smithvillefoodpantry.com; 9-11:30 a.m. Wednesdays.

■ **Bastrop County Emergency Food Pantry**, 806 Fayette St., Bastrop, 512-303-0033, bastropfoodpantry.org; 8-11:30 a.m. and 1-3:30 p.m., Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and first Thursday of the month, by appointment.

■ **In the Streets-Hands Up High Ministry**, 987 N. Texas 95, Bastrop, 512-317-7503, itshuh.org. Their drive-through soup kitchen is open 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Monday-Friday. Learn more about distribution locations and times on their website.

Manor and Elgin area

■ **Manor United Methodist Church**, 510 Burnet St. North, Manor; speak to Nancy Boatwrights at 512-925-1813; manorumc.org;



Taylor Andry, program manager, prepares disaster relief boxes for delivery at the Bastrop County Emergency Food Pantry, one of many food assistance programs around the Bluebonnet region. Laura Bartleson, below, takes food boxes to families waiting in cars. Gabby Silva photos



a.m.-7:30 p.m. Wednesdays, with to-go times available.

■ **Community Cupboard**, 114 Depot St., Elgin, 512-285-4552, on Facebook at facebook.com/ElginCommunityCupboard; 10 a.m.-noon Tuesdays (closed fifth Tuesday of the month.)

■ **First Baptist Church of Elgin**, 205 W Second St., Elgin, 512-285-4161, fbcelgin.org/ministry/food-pantry; 5-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays (closed fifth Tuesday of the month.)

Giddings area

■ **Giddings Food Pantry**, 190 N Harris St., Giddings; call Joe Franks at 979-820-5863; on Facebook — search for Giddings Area Care

Center; second and fourth Friday of the month, and pick-up times available 3-6 p.m. Thursdays and 8 a.m.-10 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

Brenham, Burton and Washington County area

■ **Faith Mission**, 500 E. Academy St., Brenham, 800-845-8035, faithmission.us. Help center open 9 a.m.-noon, and 1-5 p.m., Monday-Friday; food pantry open 10 a.m.-noon and 1 p.m.-4 p.m. Thursdays.

■ **Bread Partners of Washington County**, 1305 E. Blue Bell Road (Washington County Fairgrounds), Brenham; Joe Williams at 979-830-0886, on Facebook at facebook.com/BreadPartners. Food distributed Tuesdays beginning at 8 a.m.

■ **Burton Bridge Ministry**, 12607 W. Washington St., Burton; Susie Tommaney at 979-337-3370; burtonbridgeministry.org; hot meals provided to seniors noon-12:30 p.m. Fridays; mobile food pantry was scheduled to open May 22.

Other community resources

■ **Drive A Senior in Elgin**, 512-281-6553, driveasenior.org/elgin. Provides medical and health-related transportation for non-driving seniors in the Elgin community; call 9 a.m.-noon, Monday-Friday.

■ **Meals on Wheels** has pick-up locations in Bastrop, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays and Lee counties; call Noelia Buck, senior nutrition program director, 800-333-6325 or 979-540-2980; caction.com/community-action/meals-on-wheels.

— Alyssa Dussetschleger

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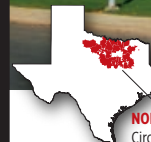
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An Alternate Reality

John Howard Griffin darkened his skin to try to understand racial attitudes in the South

BY MELISSA GASKILL

WITHOUT BECOMING A BLACK MAN, author John Howard Griffin inquired in 1959, how could a white man hope to learn the truth about racial suppression? So, Griffin used medication to temporarily darken his skin and then traveled through the South as a black man for more than a month. His experiences formed the basis for *Black Like Me*, his 1960 book that has sold more than 10 million copies.

June 16 marks the 100th anniversary of Griffin's birth in Dallas. He was educated in France and spent time in an abbey contemplating a religious vocation, then served in the U.S. military 1942–1945, suffering a shrapnel injury that caused him to lose his sight.

He lived with his parents in Mansfield until he married Elizabeth Holland in 1952. Five years later, Griffin's sight returned, and he described the experience in the book *Scattered Shadows* and in stories for *The Dallas Times Herald*. He also wrote syndicated columns for the International News Service and King Features and became an accomplished photographer.

In an epilogue for a later printing of *Black Like Me*, Griffin wrote, "I learned within a very few hours that no one was judging me by my qualities as a human individual and everyone was judging me by my pigment." Motivated by that injustice, he gave hundreds of lectures and befriended civil rights leaders, in-

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to see more photos.



John Howard Griffin, left, shares a meal at Sterling Williams' shoeshine stand.

cluding Martin Luther King Jr. Griffin received death threats and was hanged in effigy in Texas, causing him to move his family to Mexico for nine months. He eventually cut back on his speaking, saying he found it absurd to presume to speak for black people when there were superlative black voices to do so.

Griffin developed diabetes and died in 1980 at age 60. His friend Robert Bonazzi, who later married Elizabeth, wrote several books based on Griffin's journals. "He felt like he had an effect with his efforts, certainly back then," Bonazzi says from his home in Austin. "Not too many white men would take on a black look and venture out into the world. It was brave and reckless, but he thought it was time for a white man to experience what a black man did, and there was only one way to do that."

Julie Hudson specializes in African American women's literature at Huston-Tillotson University in Austin. "I think the book is important," she says, "especially for a white audience, because it provides some insight into what it means to be black in America and into the issue of race and the implications of racism and hatred. There was so much anger in his community [in response to the book] because he was presenting the truth to people who didn't want to face it, or didn't care, or were embarrassed by it."

Of course, she adds, Griffin always knew that he could return to his white life, which likely informed his writing. And while his family did have to flee, the furor died down and they were able to return home.

"The book still resonates today," says Bonazzi. "He is much less known than he should be."

Read more about Melissa Gaskill's work at melissagaskill.blogspot.com.

Texas Wine Harvest

A FEW YEARS AGO, I WAS LUCKY enough to go on a tour of Lubbock-area wineries. Because of the High Plains' semiarid climate, the region is ideal for viticulture and is now one of the top wine-producing areas in the country.

Mediterranean varietals love the Texas heat, so look for viognier, roussanne, marsanne, vermentino and trebbiano for white wines and tempranillo, tannat, mourvèdre, grenache and sangiovese, among others, for reds, says certified wine educator Denise Clarke. While these wines may not be as familiar or easy to pronounce, give them a try and see what Texas has to offer.

A great way to add wine to your table is with sangria, the ultimate summer drink that is endlessly customizable. Sangria is most often made with red wines, but here I've used a Texas rosé to pair with juicy summer fruits. Making it ahead of time ensures the flavors from the fruit and wine are well blended.

MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Rosé Sangria

- 1 bottle (750 milliliters) rosé wine
- 1 cup orange juice
- ¼ cup vodka
- 1 cup quartered strawberries
- 2 peaches, sliced
- ½ cup raspberries

1. Combine all ingredients in a large pitcher and stir well. Cover and chill at least 2 hours or until ready to serve.
2. To serve, stir sangria to recombine any settled juices. Fill glasses halfway with ice, then pour in sangria. Use a ladle or serving spoon to add an extra scoop of fruit from the pitcher into each glass and serve. ▶ Serves 6.

Follow along with **Megan Myers** and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Lemon Sage Mustard.

MEGAN MYERS

Recipes

Texas Wine Harvest



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

MELODY YUHN | CENTRAL TEXAS EC

This succulent lamb stew is even better the next day, so don't worry about any leftovers going to waste. Yuhn recommends using a sangiovese or tempranillo in the stew and to pair with the final dish.

Lamb Stew

- 4 ounces bacon, chopped into ¼-inch strips
- 2 pounds boneless leg of lamb or lamb shoulder, trimmed of excess fat, cut into 1½-inch pieces
- 2½ teaspoons sea salt, divided use
- 1½ teaspoons ground black pepper, divided use
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ cups Texas red wine
- 1 pound button mushrooms, thickly sliced
- 4 cups beef broth or stock
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 1½ pounds small yellow potatoes, halved or quartered into 1-inch pieces
- 4 medium carrots, peeled and cut into ½-inch pieces
- ¼ cup finely chopped parsley, for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. In a 5-quart Dutch oven over medium heat, sauté bacon until browned and fat is released. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a large plate. Do not wipe out pot.
2. While bacon cooks, season lamb pieces with 1½ teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Sprinkle with flour and toss to coat.
3. Cook lamb in two batches in hot bacon grease over medium heat until browned (3–4 minutes per side) then transfer to the plate with bacon. Add diced onion to the pot and sauté 2 minutes. Add garlic and cook another minute, stirring constantly. Add wine, scraping the bottom of the pan to deglaze. Add sliced mushrooms, bring to simmer, then cook uncovered 10 minutes.
4. Return bacon and lamb to pot and add broth, tomato paste, 1 teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, dried thyme and bay leaves. Stir in potatoes and carrots, making sure potatoes are mostly submerged in liquid, and bring to a boil.
5. Cover, carefully transfer to oven and cook 1 hour 45 minutes. Garnish with parsley when serving. ▶ Serves 8.

COOK'S TIP Prepare this recipe in a pressure cooker to save time. Use the sauté setting for the first few steps and set for 40 minutes at high pressure with a natural pressure release.

\$500 Recipe Contest

The holidays are a perfect time for a **Cookie Swap**. Share your go-to swap recipe with our readers. Enter our November contest by **June 10**. Featured recipes will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

ENTER ONLINE at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.

Plum Sorbet With Wine

BARBARA REISS | PEDERNALES EC

Taste the plums before making this; their sweetness will determine the amount of sugar to use.

- ¾–1 cup sugar, depending on the sweetness of plums
- 1 pinch kosher salt
- ¾ cup water
- 3 cups peeled, pitted and chopped red plums (about 3–4 large plums)
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 tablespoon orange zest
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup chilled dry white wine, such as sauvignon blanc

1. In a large saucepan over medium heat, dissolve sugar and salt in water, then bring syrup to a boil.
2. Stir in plums and cook, stirring frequently, while mashing plums with a potato masher until the mixture is the consistency of very thick honey, about 5–10 minutes.
3. Let cool, then purée using a standard or immersion blender. Pour mixture into a bowl that has a pour spout and refrigerate 2–3 hours or overnight.
4. Once chilled, add juice, zest, vanilla and cinnamon to mixture. Whisk to blend well.
5. Transfer mixture to an ice cream maker and process according to manufacturer's instructions. After about 15 minutes (when mixture is beginning to freeze), pour wine into mixture slowly. Process until entire mixture is frozen. Serve immediately, or transfer to another container to freeze. ▶ Makes 2 pints.

Chicken Breast With Sun-Dried Tomato Cream Sauce

LAMONT PETERSEN | NAVARRO COUNTY EC

Petersen recommends pairing with McPherson Cellars albariño, a white wine that is perfect for chicken dishes.

- 1 pound skin-on chicken breasts or thighs, fat trimmed on thighs
- ¼ teaspoon salt, divided use
- ¼ teaspoon pepper, divided use
- 2 tablespoons oil from jar of sun-dried tomatoes



- ½ cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained and sliced
- ½ cup finely chopped shallots
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

1. Sprinkle chicken with half the salt and pepper and set aside.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chicken skin-side down to skillet and cook until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Turn chicken and cook another 15–20 minutes, until it reaches 165 degrees in the thickest part. Transfer to a plate and cover to keep warm.
3. Add sun-dried tomatoes and shallots to the pan. Cook, stirring, 1–2 minutes.
4. Add wine to pan and scrape up any browned bits to deglaze. Continue to cook until the liquid has mostly evaporated, about 2 minutes.
5. Reduce heat and stir in cream, any accumulated juices from the resting chicken and the remaining salt and pepper. Simmer about 2 minutes, until

slightly thickened.

6. Serve chicken over pasta or rice with the pan sauce and top with parsley. ▶ Serves 4.

COOK'S TIP You can use onion in place of the shallots. If you do, add a finely chopped clove of garlic.

Gary's Wino Burgers

GARY HEATHCOTT | SAN PATRICIO EC

While the recipe calls for zinfandel or cabernet sauvignon, Heathcott recommends serving the burgers with a pinot noir.

- ½ cups red wine, such as zinfandel or cabernet sauvignon
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped sweet onion
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter
- 2 teaspoons chopped rosemary
- 1½ teaspoons brown sugar
- 1½ tablespoons olive oil
- 4 ounces portobello mushrooms, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ pounds lean ground beef
- 1 teaspoon salt

- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ cup blue cheese crumbles
- 4 large sesame buns
- 4 lettuce leaves
- 1 tomato, sliced

1. In a medium saucepan, bring wine, onion, butter, rosemary and brown sugar to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer about 30 minutes, until liquid is reduced to ½ cup. Remove from heat.
2. In a small skillet, heat oil. When shimmering, add mushrooms and sauté until tender. Stir in the garlic and sauté for another minute or until fragrant. Set aside.
3. Place ground beef in a medium bowl and mix with salt, pepper and wine sauce. Form into 4 patties and place on a hot grill. Cook burgers to about 145 degrees. Place a spoonful of blue cheese on top of each burger and continue to cook to about 155 degrees for medium-well doneness.
4. Dress burgers on toasted buns with mushrooms, lettuce and tomato. ▶ Serves 4.

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

NEXT MONTH

PALO DURO LOVE LETTERS Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings captured the Panhandle; her wistful writings brought it to life.

NO LONGER A YANKEE After a half-century here, a Michigan native decides she can call herself a Texan.

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WEB EXTRAS ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



▲ **APRIL COKER**, Wood County EC: Coker's 1962 Scotsman Scotty "Miss Millie" all decked out for the holidays at Tyler State Park.

◀ **CHARLES BAXTER**, CoServ: "Capitol Mesa and moon in Palo Duro Canyon State Park."



▲ **STEVE COYLE**, Pedernales EC: "Anyone who says Texas doesn't have nice fall colors just hasn't looked in the right place. Although the fall colors were past their prime in many parts of Martin Dies Jr. State Park during our visit, there were still a few pockets."

▶ **ELLEN BEAR**, Concho Valley EC: "I was at San Angelo State Park when these javelinas appeared to snack on the birdseed."



AROUND TEXAS ▶ TCP's monthly list of local events has been suspended due to COVID-19 cancellations. Always call or check an event's website for scheduling details.



◀ **TRAVIS LACOSS**, Pedernales EC: "Hiking to Big Cave at Palo Duro Canyon State Park."



▲ **CAROLINA BURGOS-CALDERON**, Bluebonnet EC: "McKinney Falls State Park was magical with fall color and snow and crystal accents."



▲ **VALERIE JOHNSON**, Pedernales EC: "Quiet and shade on Caddo Lake."

UPCOMING CONTESTS

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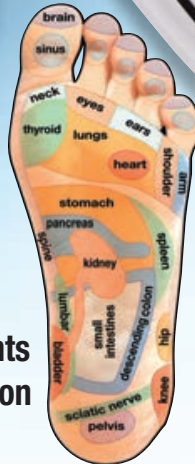
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Item 61910 62447/83068 shown

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TYPE ITEM Item 47873 shown

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Orange Inspiration

Houston folk art installation is a mashup devoted to its creator's favorite fruit

AS SOMEONE WHO GREW UP IN Southeast Texas, I know the heat and humidity can drive a person to the brink of insanity. I believe it can also fuel an intense creativity and artistic vision. Mix this inspiration with lots of vitamin C, and you have the formula for one of the strangest art installations in the world: the Orange Show.

After navigating Houston's urban maze, I turned into a neighborhood near the University of Houston, searching for a building-sized work of art. Even though I could see only modest midcentury houses, my phone assured me I was headed in the right direction. Then I found it: one of the state's preeminent folk art installations. From the street, its colorful wrought-iron railings and white stucco walls made it resemble an abandoned carnival attraction. I imagined circus music as I stepped inside the Orange Show, but what I experienced was beauty and intrigue.

The installation began to take shape in 1956, when postal worker Jeff McKissack decided that the world needed to know about the health benefits of his favorite fruit and how hard work and good nutrition were the secret to a long and productive life. Even though he had no formal training in the arts, McKissack picked up scraps of lumber from trash piles and shopped flea markets and, piece by piece, created a maze of staircases, doorways and stages. It's an orange-themed fantasy world.

Past the front gate, every turn revealed diagrams of orange-promoting propaganda. Phrases like "Go Orange. Be Strong" and "Love Me Orange" were inscribed in mosaics across the walls. Dioramas housed a half-dozen mannequins dressed in seemingly



Orange is the new Chet at Houston's Orange Show.

unrelated clothing: One with a hook for a hand stood near a clown who had found happiness by drinking cold, fresh orange juice. Another was Santa's son, in full Christmastime regalia, hoping to plant oranges for everyone. Each display balanced between charmingly whimsical and downright creepy.

Outside, I climbed strange staircases and discovered two open-air stages surrounded by 80 metal tractor seats. Above the stages fluttered 45 metal birds and 10 waving Texas flags. The largest arena was a "pond" that didn't hold water but did hold a stationary boat. What baffled me more than the art was the fact that McKissack had welded, paved and painted the entire experience by himself.

McKissack lived next door to his creation and worked tirelessly on the project until his death in 1980. Soon after, Houston's art community formed a trust to steward the property. Today, the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art makes the

art experience—and visionary art—accessible to the public. Nearby is the foundation's newest project, Smither Park, with meandering paths and bright, mosaic-covered walls created to honor McKissack.

Some folks might wonder why this mashup of materials should be considered art, but that's what makes folk art so amazing. It's usually created by artists without formal training. Did McKissack know that he was creating art? Maybe not. But there's no doubt he loved building it and sharing both his talents and love for citrus with the world.

Walking through the Orange Show is a stroll through the creative process. It's weird. It's wonderful. And it's confusing. I left not really knowing what I had just experienced, and I was thirsty for a big, cold glass of orange juice.

Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

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