

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

## FIESTA SAN ANTONIO TURNS 125

Explosion of color  
and music takes over  
city every April



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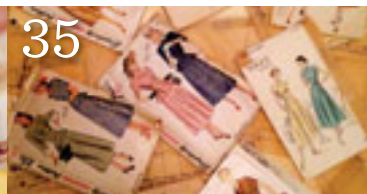
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RV: LAURA JENKINS. GLOVES: NOAM ARMORN | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

**ON THE COVER** *Much like Fiesta San Antonio itself, Sherri Kamp's hat is over the top with flair and color.* Photo by Julia Robinson

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 MADE IN AMERICA

## Descriptive Dobie

I enjoyed the article about J. Frank Dobie [*J. Frank Dobie Rides Again*, October 2015]. In the 1930s, my mother was in one of his classes at the University of Texas, and she must have been perpetually late. She recalls Dobie's admonishment: "Miss Nail, you remind me of a snail."

LINDA WILCOX | MCKINNEY  
COSERV ELECTRIC

## More on "Mr. Texas"

I take umbrage with Lonny Taylor's article *J. Frank Dobie Rides Again*. The article was fine until the last paragraph: "... but his [Dobie's] books did make Texans, with their inherited cultural inferiority complex, realize that their native soil was fertile with literary inspiration ..."

What on the "thank your lucky stars you are from Texas" Earth is this author implying by this very demeaning comment about an inferiority complex? As a proud Texan, never in my life, my travels or my experiences have I had an "inherited cultural inferiority complex" because I am from Texas. Just the opposite, *sir*.

The windows to the world are much wider and brighter because of Texas.

I think Taylor may have spent a bit too much time at the Smithsonian—a little too far north.

LISA WARD | TARPLEY  
BANDERA EC

LONN TAYLOR RESPONDS: *This reader is undoubtedly too young to remember the pre-Dobie days, when Texans who went east were considered to be yokels who had just fallen off a cotton*

## On Memory Lane

I enjoyed *Gone But Not Forgotten* [December 2014]. It really brought back memories from my childhood on my grandparents' farm in Brenham, which was served by Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.

There were many horny toads that I played with, and I cannot remember



how many times those big red ants bit me. My father or grandpa put tobacco juice on the bite to help with the pain.

That was back in the 1940s. I am now 76, but I still have a recollection of when electric power came to our farmhouse.

CHARLES SKWERES | MAGNOLIA | SAN BERNARD EC

*wagon. Even in our home state, Texans hungry for culture were directed to Boston, New York and Paris rather than to Fort Worth, Austin and Houston. When Dobie first proposed his college course in life and literature of the Southwest to the University of Texas in 1930, he was haughtily told by a dean that "there is no literature in the Southwest." Both the reader and I owe part of our pride in Texas culture to Dobie for revealing it to us.*



## My Way on the Highway

Goodness! I read *My Way*, [October 2015] with a great deal of interest, as I have property between Rocksprings and Brackettville, just south of where the West Nueces River crosses 674. The only thing I would disagree with is his low vehicle count. My trailer is close to the highway, and during the night there is quite a bit of traffic.

I traveled the road a week ago between 8 and 9 p.m. and played dodgeball with 25 deer in 40 miles. That's the only thing that makes this road scary.

But the author's assessment of the fantastic scenery is right on. That is truly "God's country."

JOYCE D. SCHAEFER | PORT LAVACA  
PEDERNALES EC, KARNES EC AND VICTORIA EC

## Charles Goodnight's Legacy

The legacy of Charles Goodnight was an exceptional article [*The Goodnight-Loving Trail*, March 2015]. I enjoy reading

anything about Texas history.

My husband is one of many descendants of Charles Goodnight but only through one of Goodnight's siblings. Goodnight had no children. We have also visited the Goodnight museum in Goodnight, Texas, and learned much more about his legacy.

STARLA GILBERT  
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# Perfect Fit for Guinness

WHOEVER TRIES TO TOP ARTIST BOB “DADDY-O” WADE will have some big boots to fill—the biggest boots in the world.

Wade’s supersized cowboy boots, which have been turning heads at San Antonio’s North Star Mall since 1980, are now turning pages in the 2016 edition of *Guinness World Records*. The faux ostrich-skin boots, standing 35 feet 3 inches tall, are listed as the biggest cowboy boot sculpture in the world.

Wade has made a career of dreaming up eccentric, oversized pieces of art. (Read *The Curious Creations of Daddy-O Wade*, February 2015.) *Dino Bob* in Abilene, *Big Six Shooter* in Del Rio and the Carl’s Corner dancing frogs that used to amuse travelers on Interstate 35 near Hillsboro are Wade creations.

The boots, though, step to the front of the line. As Wade told Guinness, “I’m mighty proud to have the world’s biggest cowboy boots, and for anyone that thinks I’m totally crazy—well, I am, just a little!”



A WHOPPING 35 FEET 3 INCHES TALL

(The boots, not Bob)

## PHILANTHROPY

### CHOOSE TRUSTWORTHY CHARITIES

**VERIFY** When you donate money to charities, you’d like to believe it provides the help you intended, but that isn’t always the case. As you think about what charitable organizations fit into your 2016 budget, the Better Business Bureau can help verify whether they are trustworthy stewards of your money. The BBB produces reports about national charities based on detailed questionnaires and copies of supporting documents.

**BE LEERY** Charities that refuse to disclose the requested information could be hiding something. The BBB advises donors to steer clear of charities that do not disclose. To see these reports and get advice on charitable giving, visit [give.org](http://give.org).

### Did you know?

#### BLESSED BY GENEROSITY

Religious groups historically receive the largest share of charitable donations. In 2014, that amounted to \$114.9 billion, 32 percent of all donations.





HAPPENINGS

## When It Rained Oil

**From the moment oil spewed out of the ground** at Spindletop 115 years ago, Texas' economy and reputation became linked to the oceans of petroleum beneath the state and the quest to bring it to the surface. The Lucas Gusher at Spindletop, south of Beaumont, started streaming oil 100 feet into the air January 10, 1901, and didn't stop until the well was capped nine days later. "A new age was born. The world had never seen such a gusher before," according to The Handbook of Texas Online.

**Within a Year:** More than 500 oil companies were operating at Spindletop. Oil production continued there into the 1990s.

**By 1985:** More than 153 million barrels of oil had been drawn from Spindletop field.

**This Month:** The Spindletop-Gladys City Boomtown Museum at Lamar University in Beaumont commemorates the 115th anniversary of the occasion January 9-10 with a re-enactment of the gusher—using water—and the oil rush that followed. The event includes demonstrations and craft making from the period.

**INFO** ▶ (409) 880-1750, [spindletop.org](http://spindletop.org)

Find more happenings all across the state at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com)

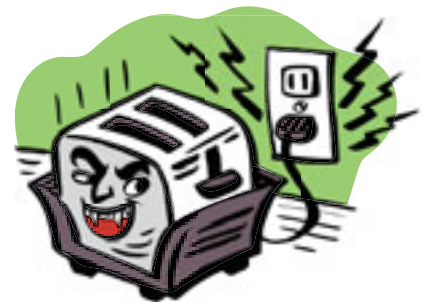
STUDIES SHOW

## BATS ... GOOD

**HOW GOOD?** They're worth more than \$1 billion to the worldwide corn industry. Bats eat pests that threaten corn crops, most notably the corn earworm, whose larvae feed on ears, directly damaging a crop's yield, according to a recent report about a two-year experiment at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. The larvae also contribute to the infection of corn by fungi that produce compounds toxic to humans and livestock.

## VAMPIRES ... BAD

**HOW BAD?** They could cost you hundreds of dollars a year. Vampire devices—appliances that are always plugged in and sucking power, even when they're not in use—account for 10 percent of the average American electric bill. The vampires in your house are everywhere. They include: electric shavers, hair dryers, curling irons, coffee makers, microwaves, toasters, cable TV boxes, DVRs, laptops, desktop computers, printers and cellphone chargers. Eliminate the vampires by using power strips or unplugging devices until they are needed.



SYNC YOUR CALENDAR

## DO WE GET THESE DAYS OFF?

If someone tells you that National Opposite Day is coming up, would you believe it? [Nationaldaycalendar.com](http://Nationaldaycalendar.com) says it's true. National Opposite Day is the 25th of January, which also contains these nutty national days:

**JANUARY 4**  
National Trivia Day

**JANUARY 9**  
National Static Electricity Day

**JANUARY 14**  
National Dress Up Your Pet Day

**JANUARY 15**  
National Hat Day

**JANUARY 16**  
National Nothing Day

**JANUARY 31**  
yaD drawkcaB lanoitaN  
(Oops, that's National Backward Day.)



# MARDI GRAS

# SAN ANTO







# ANTONIO STYLE



## EVERY APRIL, EXUBERANCE BLANKETS THE RIVER CITY

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JULIA ROBINSON

**S**an Antonio's winding downtown streets and time-textured historic sites serve as a backdrop for an explosion of color and music that takes over the city for 10 days every April. Traffic patterns change, and all normal routines make way for the spectacle that is Fiesta.

Fiesta started in 1891 as a parade organized entirely by women to honor the heroes of the Texas Revolution and raise money to preserve historic sites. Two lines of horse-drawn wagons passed in front of the Alamo, the occupants pelting those in the opposing wagon with fresh flowers. From that initial "Battle of the Flowers" parade, Fiesta has grown steadily, now drawing 3.5 million participants who spend an estimated \$284 million.

Former volunteer Anna Catalani notes that the Battle of the Flowers is "a celebration to honor the heroes of the Alamo. It's not just an excuse for a party."

Fiesta actually is one giant fund drive that still manages to feel like the celebration of the year. More than 100 local nonprofits, charities and military organizations sponsor the parades and events, raising money for philanthropic causes.

All across the city, organizations shut down streets, commandeer conference rooms, host theatrical presentations and transform urban spaces. More than 100 official events tout a cause and a culture.

Early in the week, I attend the Texas Cavaliers River Parade, which started in 1941 after the Works Projects Administration improved what is now the Riverwalk. I climb down the steps of the Arneson River Theatre and take a seat as the sun sets on a balmy spring evening. Hundreds of people have gathered here, with 250,000 more sitting along the shores of the Riverwalk for miles in each direction. Dozens of floats pass by on the San Antonio River below, with musicians performing and others waving and sending volleys of confetti and glitter onto shore.

The Cavaliers raise money for more than 50 children's charities, with the 2015 total approaching \$500,000. King Antonio, crowned each year from among the Cavaliers' membership, presents the funds. The king appears to a standing ovation with the 2015 grand marshal, former Dallas Cowboys running back Emmitt Smith. Mariachis trumpet from the shore, and children dance in their seats as the floats

continue down the river. Next come the Fiesta Queens in their sequined finery, then a bevy of Marilyn Monroe look-alikes who blow kisses to the audience. As the evening deepens, the floats become moving islands of illumination, noisy neon worlds on the still, black water.

**Clockwise from far left: Rudy Gonzales shows off his piñata hat and Fiesta medals. Cascarones, confetti-filled eggs, are a Fiesta mainstay. The Texas Cavaliers River Parade begins.**

CONETTI, M. PHOTOS | DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB



# FIESTA **actually is one giant fund drive that still manages to feel like the party of the year.**

**More than 100 local nonprofits, charities and military**

**This page, clockwise from above: A Night in Old San Antonio takes over downtown's La Villita for four nights. Mariachis herald the start of the 2015 river parade, which stars Alixandra Peña, Miss Fiesta San Antonio. Opposite page: The coronation of the Fiesta Queen**

A few nights later, I head to the city's historic La Villita arts district for A Night in Old San Antonio. NIOSA started in 1948 and is run by 12,000 volunteers from the San Antonio Conservation Society. The society takes over the

neighborhood, where 85,000 people stream through the gates over four nights. NIOSA is divided into sections, each honoring one of the cultures that helped establish the city of San Antonio.

The warm weather in the Mexican Market section enhances the aroma of tamales, fresh tortillas and fajitas that wafts through La Villita. Colorful *cascarones*, confetti-filled eggs, seem to be everywhere. A group of kids pools all their cash for two dozen, and as soon as the money changes hands, eggs fly, color bursting on heads and covering the ground. The kids run down the street, pummeling each other with cloudbursts of rainbow paper.

Patti Zaiontz is a four-decade veteran of NIOSA, originally drawn into the fold by the camaraderie and family atmosphere. She is careful to point out there are few paid vendors here: Volunteers run everything, from concessions to carnival games.

"It's a big family reunion for the volunteers. You see people you haven't seen all year and maybe won't again for another year, but for that week you're all together," Zaiontz says.

I can feel that atmosphere walking among the booths. The

people serving food and pouring beer for the crowds look as though they're having just as much fun as the attendees. Many volunteers participate with their entire family.

"Volunteers come back year after year because you can see the tangible results of the efforts," Zaiontz says. "The money we make selling tamales and gorditas translates into a worthy cause. You can walk through downtown or the Riverwalk and see places we have saved."

The Conservation Society raises roughly \$1.4 million for local projects, education programs, tours and scholarships during each year of Fiesta. The society was a key player in last year's UNESCO World Heritage designation for the five San Antonio missions. The effort cost more than \$1 million.

"The seed for that application was planted at one of our society meetings," says Zaiontz. Five years of hiring grant writers, courting the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and working behind the scenes were funded by NIOSA to achieve the honor.

I turn the corner from the Mexican Market to Frontier Town and meet Sherri Kamp, who wears a towering Fiesta hat draped with sparkling tulle, colored flowers, rhinestones and multiple tiaras. She poses for a photo as she makes her way.

Down the street in Clown Alley, I find Jules Guest in a bright yellow outfit, draped in beads and medals, fanning herself dramatically. She dances for the stream of visitors passing the booth where she sells Frito pie. "You've gotta really *sell* it," she tells me, invoking a vaudeville style of showmanship.



**organizations sponsor the parades and parties, raising money for a range of philanthropic causes.**

For 10 days a year, San Antonians vamp it up, and no one is shy about the attention. Other costumed festivals can feel voyeuristic and mysterious with people hiding behind masks, but people at Fiesta want to talk and make a connection.

**T**he following evening, I don more formal attire and head to the Majestic Theater for the coronation of the Fiesta Queen by the Order of the Alamo. The coronation of the queen started in 1909 to raise money and celebrate each year’s debutantes.

Today the spectacle is as impressive as ever, with 24 duchesses, a princess and a queen, each wearing a bejeweled dress and train that might cost as much as \$50,000 and weigh 50 to 100 pounds.

The evening’s emcee describes the history and artistry behind each woman’s gown. Each enters the long runway to the stage in shadow as assistants dole out her train, which can be 15 feet long. The duchesses, princess and queen each assume a regal pose as they are introduced. Then spotlights flood the gown, and it comes alive with sparkle and shimmer in a tour de force of opulence.

Linda Blount, “mistress of the robes” for the 2015 coronation, says, “I’ve never worked as hard on anything. And there is no dress rehearsal. I feel a huge responsibility to the audience, family and friends of the women. It’s like I have a new family with 26 new daughters.”

This black-tie event, one of the most heralded of the year, is also met with shrugs from those not impressed. Just down the street, another Fiesta tradition offers more sarcastic observers

a place to celebrate their own causes.

In the 1950s, the director of the San Antonio Little Theater attended the coronation of the queen and found the whole thing hilarious. The following year, he started Cornyation as a way to poke fun at the upscale event. Originally a part of NIOSA, the event gained momentum and notoriety during the 1960s when outspoken groups from other parts of San Antonio found a voice. The event was shuttered in 1964 but revived in 1982 and now hosts its event on the same night as coronation.

The two major Fiesta royals, King Antonio and the Order of the Alamo Queen, have been joined over the years by seven other kings, queens, princesses and misses, representing various cultures and causes.

The Rey Feo line of royals was started in 1947 as a king elected by the people. Based on the Spanish tradition of appointing “the people’s king,” Rey Feo became an official part of Fiesta in 1980.

Fiesta is an inclusive festival for everyone, and the party seems bigger every year. “Fiesta unifies the whole city for 10 days. You see people from all walks of life come together and celebrate,” Blount says.

In fact, if you don’t like any of the more than 100 events, anyone at Fiesta would encourage you to find your cause, strike up your own line of royalty and join the parade.

Julia Robinson is an Austin photojournalist.

**WEB EXTRAS at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com)** Collecting souvenir medals.



# GET'AWAY GALS

*A sisterhood of campers  
keeps the good times rolling*

Story and Photos by LAURA JENKINS

# YOU'D BE

hard-pressed to categorically define a Get'away Gal. She's a school superintendent and a chef. She's a judge, a biologist and a zookeeper. She's even a former exotic dancer who was known in the 1960s by her stage name, "Pinky Dare."

A Get'away Gal is a "girly girl," but she also knows her way around a truck. She's 21 and 83 years old (though she's most often in her 50s and 60s). She typically lives in Texas, but also resides in Louisiana, Oklahoma and Arkansas. She's married, single, widowed and divorced. She has grown kids and grandkids, and is childless.

Most of all, a Get'away Gal—or "GG," as she is often called—is a member of an abiding sisterhood that convenes monthly to camp in customized trailers. It's become known as "glamping" (short for "glamour camping"). Glamping offers the thrill of adventure without sacrificing comforts like cozy beds, a bathroom or a functional kitchen.

In recent years, a number of all-female, trailer-toting glamping groups have emerged, including Sisters on the Fly, Florida Floozies, the Louisiana Belles and, of course, the Get'away Gals. To compare them, you could look at basic differences such as activities and locations, but the most discernible distinction lies on the inside. When I asked what sets the Get'away Gals apart, each member eventually landed on one essential factor: the group's founder and leader, Dixie Taylor.

After buying a trailer in 2010, Taylor—a Brownsboro native and retired dress shop owner—spent nearly a year trying various camping excursions. She learned that she wanted to camp more often and closer to home. She put the word out to her camping buddies, who told others, and the Get'away Gals were born. Taylor was 71 when she started the group. By the first campout in April 2011, she had recruited more than 300 members. Although camping was the initial reason for convening, Taylor says some peripheral activities have become almost as important as the getaways themselves.

"When I started my club, I wanted to have a theme with a costume party at each campout," says Taylor, a member of Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative. "I grew up going to costume parties with my parents. It was so much fun. Of course, that's what the GGs are all about now. If I decided not to do it anymore, they would kill me!"

She's probably right. Over the last four years, the GGs have selected whimsical themes, including a Hippie Happening, Barbie Bash and Pirate Getaway. Another GG tradition that has emerged is a night of dancing in petticoats. By all accounts, the bright, ruffy skirts extinguish inhibitions and fuel merriment.

When the Get'away Gals set up camp, it's like a cross between a neighborhood block party and a parade of homes. These women are lavishly hospitable. Whether they know you or not, they're offering you a seat by the campfire, a beverage or a tour of their camper.

One evening, I approached Canyon Lake resident Karen Wigginton to ask if she'd mind my snapping some photos of her setup. Not only

**The décor inside Get'away Gals' campers is the artistic reflection of each owner.**





**The Get'away Gals thrive on the group's companionship and fun activities, such as costume parties, which flourish under the leadership of founder Dixie Taylor, top right.**

did she enthusiastically agree, she was just taking two baked chickens out of the oven and invited me to stay for dinner. I'd known her all of 10 minutes.

As I explored Wigginton's trailer and visited with her, I began to see deeper reasons why these women love the GGs. When I commented on how much I loved the pale aqua theme in her camper, she revealed that it was her late son's birthstone color. Wigginton, who lost her son in 2008, explained that surrounding herself with memories of him was a source of great joy and comfort. She's also incorporated the birthstone colors of her other two grown children in her décor to embrace and express what's important to her.

"For me, the common thread amongst us all is that we're trying to regroup ourselves in our identities. You see the personalities come out in the trailers."

As I walked through trailer after trailer, I marveled not only at the broad diversity of décor but also at how delighted the ladies were when others visited their spaces. To the GGs, the trailers aren't just campers; they're artistic reflections of the owners.

Although the Get'away Gals has only been around for five years, the emotional bonds among members resemble those of childhood friends. The GGs all appear to be deeply devoted to one another. When a fire destroyed Susan Stinnett's Houston townhome and claimed the lives of her two beloved dogs, GGs drove to town and helped her sift through the rubble. When a brand-new member had unexpected lung surgery, many of the

*"FOR ME, the common thread amongst us all is that we're trying to regroup ourselves in our identities. You see the personalities come out in the trailers."*

GGs showed solidarity by wearing pearls in her honor and then posting selfies on the group's Facebook page so she could see them.

Wigginton didn't know any of the Get'away Gals when her son passed away, but she'll tell you unequivocally that the GGs have been

a vital part of her healing. "For the longest time, I'd felt guilty about having fun and enjoying life," says Wigginton, a member of Bluebonnet and Pedernales electric co-ops. "The GGs have taught me that it's OK to have fun, to be silly and to laugh again."

Even though their love and laughter is apparent, I wondered if these women always get along. Not to perpetuate stereotypes, but as a mother of three daughters, I found it difficult to believe that so many women could regularly convene without any squabbles. I asked several members about it and got pretty much the same answer: It's truly not a problem.

Wigginton attributes a lot of that to Taylor, whom she calls "Mama."

"She herds us all together," Wigginton says. "There's never any dissension in the GGs because she wants everyone to have fun. If you can get this many women together, and everybody just has the time of their lives and comes back for more, there's no need to fix what's not broken."

Laura Jenkins is a writer and photojournalist based in Austin.

**WEB EXTRAS at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com)** Learn more about the GGs.



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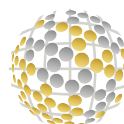
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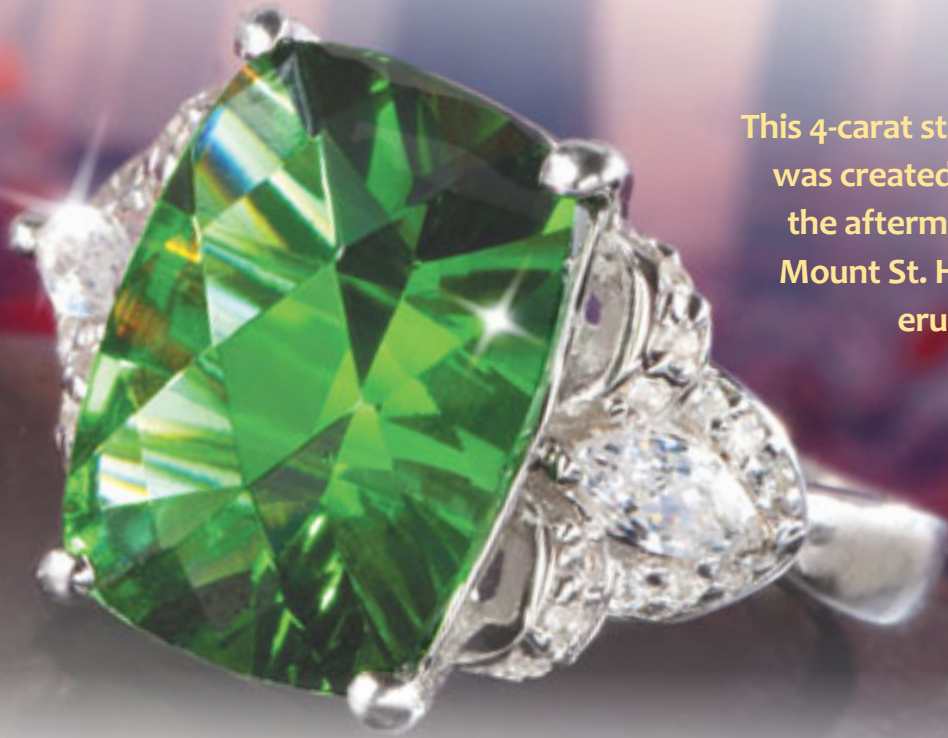
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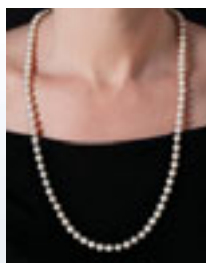
This stunning, romantic necklace never goes out of style. In a world where some cultured pearl necklaces can cost thousands, shop around and I doubt that you will see any jewelry offer that even comes close.

Stauer has had a very good year and it's time for us to give back. That's why we're offering this stunning, 26" strand of genuine cultured white pearls for **FREE!** You pay only \$24.95 for shipping & processing, our normal fee for a \$295 necklace...and we'll even **pay you back with a \$25 Discount Certificate— that's our BETTER THAN FREE Shipping!**

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We did find a magnificent cache of cultured pearls at the best price that I have ever seen. Our pearl dealer was stuck. A large foreign luxury department store in financial trouble cancelled a massive order at the last minute, so instead, we grabbed all of those gorgeous pearls. He sold us an enormous cache of his roundest, whitest, most iridescent cultured 6 1/2-7 1/2 mm pearls for only pennies on the dollar.

**But let me get to the point:** his loss is your gain. Many of you may be wondering about your next gift for someone special. This year, we've really come to the rescue.



*"Each Mitsuko® cultured pearl is harvested, polished and strung by hand."*

— James T. Fent,  
Stauer GIA Certified  
Gemologist

For the next few days, I'm not offering this cultured pearl necklace at \$1,200. I'm not selling it for \$300. That's because I don't want to **SELL** you these cultured pearls at all... I want to **GIVE** them to you for **FREE!**

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# A Year of Saving

**GOT CABIN FEVER THIS WINTER?** Spend some time making your home more energy efficient—and start saving for your summer vacation!

You can trim your electric bill all year long by taking a few simple steps throughout the year. Here's a list of your electric cooperative's recommendations for year-round energy and money savings:

**January:** Lowering your thermostat just a few degrees during winter months can save as much as \$85 per year. Bundle up and save! Programmable thermostats make it easy by offering

more than \$200 per year.

**May:** Make sure your refrigerator is on your spring cleaning to-do list. Throw out expired items; clean the refrigerator inside and out; and check the temperature gauge. For maximum operating efficiency, a refrigerator's temperature should be between 37 and 40 degrees.

**June:** When was the last time you changed your furnace and air-conditioner filter? Replacing HVAC filters regularly can have a big impact on a home's energy use. Dirty filters can restrict airflow and reduce the overall efficiency of your cooling system, forcing it to work harder on hot summer days.

**July:** During summer months, your home's cooling costs can skyrocket right along with the temperature outside. Keeping your thermostat set between 78 and 80 degrees can save up to 8 percent on monthly cooling bills.

**August:** Heading out of town on vacation? Be sure to unplug all of your electronic devices, including computers, monitors, printers, TVs, cable boxes, DVD players and microwaves. Electronics with digital displays and instant-on features consume energy even when they're not in use.

**September:** Be a "fan-atic." Although it doesn't replace an air conditioner or a heat pump, a fan moves the air so everyone feels more comfortable. On a milder day, a fan is a much more energy-efficient choice than cranking up the air conditioning. Fans cool people, not rooms, so turn them off when you leave.

**October:** Get ready for winter by insulating your attic. Adding 9 or more inches of insulation could save you more than \$150 a year.

**November:** As the weather cools down, pull up your window shades during the day. Keeping blinds open during cold weather lets in heat from the sunlight, reducing the need to turn up your home's thermostat.

**December:** Put a new Energy Star appliance at the top of your Christmas wish list. Upgrading appliances such as washing machines to Energy Star-rated models can save up to \$140 per year.



**Need to seal your ducts? Don't reach for the duct tape. Use a mastic sealant or metal tape.**

preprogrammed settings to regulate a home's temperature throughout the year.

**February:** Adjust your water heater. Turning down the temperature gauge to 120 degrees can heat up your savings. Insulation around the tank also can help your water heater work more efficiently.

**March:** Stop air from escaping your home and money from escaping your wallet. Head down to your home's basement and seal those leaky ducts.

**April:** A little caulk can go a long way. Air leaks in your home add up. Caulking cracks and openings to the outside could save



The third prong on a plug is there to protect you, so you should never remove it.

# Stop Electric Shock Before It Stops You

**ELECTRICITY SEEMS SO EASY TO USE** that you probably take it for granted. But you might be surprised to learn that each year, electricity-related incidents in the home cause approximately 200 electrocutions, 4,000 shock injuries and 45,000 fires.

Most people think injuries happen by chance or “accident”—a word that implies an event that can’t be foreseen or avoided. Electrical injuries typically can be foreseen and avoided. Take time to learn how to avoid electricity’s hazards at home.

## How Shock Happens

Avoid electric shock by learning how electricity travels—and how to stay out of its path. Electricity always seeks the easiest path to the ground. It tries to find a conductor, such as metal, wet wood, water—or your body. The human body is 60–70 percent water, so if you touch an energized bare wire or faulty appliance while you are grounded, electricity will instantly pass through you to the ground, causing a shock that can be harmful, if not fatal.

## Grounding: The Third Wire

When you use a plug with three prongs, the third prong connects inside the outlet with a ground wire, which usually connects to a water pipe or a ground rod at the service panel. As a result, in case of a short circuit, electricity should flow through the grounding system instead of through you. To ensure this safeguard, you should never remove the third prong from a plug.

## Use GFCIs for Extra Protection

Ground-fault circuit interrupters are found in some outlets and service panels. They monitor the flow of current to and from appliances. If there’s an imbalance in the flow, current may travel through you, and the GFCI will immediately cut power to prevent serious injury. Use GFCIs in bathrooms and garages, near kitchen sinks and outdoors.

## Appliance Safety

Remember the most important rule for appliances: Electricity and water don’t mix. Keep all appliances away from bathtubs, sinks, puddles and wet hands. Wet skin increases the risk of shock, so unplug an appliance before cleaning it—even if it’s off, it can shock. If an appliance overheats, unplug it and have it checked. Don’t overload outlets. Use only appliances that are approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories.

## Keep Flashlights and Batteries Handy

**THAT TOY TRAIN YOU GOT** for Christmas was inspired by the same inventor who created the first flashlight in 1898.

The story goes like this: Joshua Lionel Cowen, who owned the American Eveready Battery Company and the company that made Lionel toy trains, used a metal tube with a lightbulb and a dry-cell battery to illuminate flower pots. He handed the device over to a salesman at his company, Conrad Hubert, who used it to make the world’s first flashlight.

Every home needs at least a couple of flashlights, so you’ll be prepared if a winter storm knocks your power out temporarily. Here are a few tips for keeping them “ever-ready”:

**Stock up on batteries** that fit your flashlight, so you’ll be prepared if harsh winter weather leaves you in the dark.

**Store flashlights and fresh batteries** in multiple locations around your home so they’ll be close at hand if the lights go out.

**Invest in a rechargeable flashlight** that plugs into the wall and stays charged until you need it.

**Know where your home’s circuit breakers are located**, and learn how to check for tripped breakers and blown fuses. If your power does go out, it could be a problem with your electrical panel. Turn on your flashlight and check there before calling your electric cooperative.

**For safety and comfort, a flashlight can be a critical resource during a power outage.**



# Me and Jerry Lee

Budding interviewer gives rock 'n' roll renegade his best shot

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

HERE'S HOW STUFF HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE a teenager: You see a new magazine with a photo of a rock icon on the cover, and you think, "Gimme!" You buy it and read it cover to cover.

In the spirit of making conversation at the supper table, you mention that it's now possible to write articles about musical performers and get paid for it. Then you add, "That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to write for Rolling Stone."

My dad, a copy editor at the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal, knew all about Rolling Stone, or thought he did. A headline he composed a few days prior for a story about Mick Jagger's arrest read: "Rolling Stone Gathers Grass." It was one of his favorites.

Editor that he was, Dad came through with a tough question: "Who, in Lubbock, are you going to interview?"

That was a puzzler, but the answer came via my AM car radio that afternoon in an advertisement for the Bigger 'N Dallas nightclub, about a mile from my house.

*"Live! And in person! One night only! The Killer! Jerry Lee Lewis!"*

So that was it. I would interview the rock 'n' roll legend and send it to Rolling Stone. Because that's how it is when you're a teenager. You say you're going to write for Rolling Stone; a few days later you're on the verge of making it happen. A few days after that, you've forgotten about the whole thing.

But my dad didn't forget.

Not only did he approve of my now-forgotten plan but came home one day with news that my interview with Jerry Lee Lewis was "all set up."

"What interview?"

"The one you're going to do with Jerry Lee Lewis. For the Rolling Stones."

"What?"

"I set it up for you. Just go in, tell them who you are, and Jerry Lee will take care of you. And you're welcome."

Truth was, I didn't actually know much about Jerry Lee Lewis except *Great Balls of Fire* and *Whole Lotta Shaking Going On*. Heck, he was already a throwback to an earlier time, and he played hard-core country music now. What if Rolling Stone didn't think Jerry Lee was still cool?

My mom was up on Lewis' erratic personal life and kept mentioning something about a 13-year-old cousin and a shooting or two. I wasn't sure this was something anyone wanted to read about. But I kept it in mind.

This would be the third time I'd been inside a nightclub and the first time without my parents. A waitress in a miniskirt greeted me at the door. She asked, "Do you have some ID?"

When I told her I was the reporter who was there to interview Jerry Lee Lewis, she muttered something about merit badges and led me to the back of the club where I spied Jerry Lee Lewis sitting on a leather couch embroidered with colorful cows, cowboys and cacti.

Jerry Lee had been drinking. I should have written down what kind of whiskey he was drinking, but I didn't notice, not even when he offered me a sip to "settle my nerves."

The interview started poorly and quickly deteriorated. I asked him why they called



him “The Killer,” and he assured me it wasn’t because he ever killed anybody.

When I asked him what he thought about the Beatles, he said, “Ringo’s the only one I’d care to have a drink with.” Then he added, “Don’t put that in your story,” in a way that made me want to comply. The Beatles always said nice things about him, he explained. Wouldn’t be polite to talk bad about them.

Ditto the Rolling Stones. His comments on all the “Bobbys” that ruined rock radio—Bobby Vee, Bobby Vinton and Bobby Rydell—were likewise off the record. He tempered his vitriol toward President Lyndon B. Johnson with the acknowledgment that LBJ had given him the watch he was wearing, and it wouldn’t do to badmouth him in the face of such generosity.

That got us to talking about presidents, and one member of Jerry Lee’s band mentioned that George Washington smoked opium, at which point Jerry Lee jumped up from the couch, assumed a defiant, spread-legged stance, and declared the statement a lie.

A menacing silence followed, broken only when the mild-mannered 16-year-old reporter in the room asked, “So, Mr. Lewis, what do you think of Buddy Holly?” He actually liked Buddy Holly a lot and said so. He lamented not making it by to see Buddy’s momma while he was in Lubbock.

Just when it looked like we were getting somewhere, the interview was over. A man came and told Jerry Lee it was time, and The Killer made his way to the stage and played all the great old songs. And the

new ones, too. I watched in amazement—*I know that guy!*—until the waitress in the miniskirt said it was time for me to go home, reminding me that tomorrow would be a school day.

“Well,” my dad said when I came home smelling like cigarette smoke and stale beer, “at least you didn’t get shot.”

Or stabbed.

Jerry Lee shot his bass player not long after that and reportedly stabbed an interviewer in the neck with a broken whiskey bottle. That interviewer learned the same thing I learned but without the bloodletting: Any interview with Jerry Lee Lewis that you walk away from is a good interview.

**Clay Coppedge**, a member of Bartlett EC, lives near Walburg.

# Los Ciboleros in the Panhandle

Texas, My Texas book excerpt: 18th-century buffalo hunters were wild in their own right

BY LONN TAYLOR

MOST 21ST-CENTURY TEXANS WOULD probably be surprised to learn that long before the Texas Panhandle was famous for cattle and oil—in fact long before the boundaries were drawn that made it the Panhandle—it was Far Eastern New Mexico to the Hispanic settlers along the upper Rio Grande. In the early 1700s, men and women from Taos, Santa Cruz, Chimayo and other villages north of Santa Fe began to venture out onto the eastern plains each year to hunt buffalo and occasionally trade with the Comanches who lived there. They were known as *los ciboleros*—the buffaloers—and the more sedentary settlers to the south thought they were absolute wild men. A ballad from the early 1800s describes “the people from Chimayo with their braided hair, who have left their looms.”

The *ciboleros* wore wide-bottomed, knee-length leather pants, high leather boots, leather jackets, and peaked leather caps with feathers in them and they carried eight-foot-long lances with foot-long iron tips as well as bows and arrows. Every fall, after the crops were harvested and when the buffalo were fat and the wool was thick on their hides, the *ciboleros* went out onto the plains on horseback, accompanied by ox-drawn carts which carried the dried meat and hides back to the settlements.

A single party of *ciboleros* might include 150 men and women, 500 horses and pack mules, and 50 carts. Some of the nineteenth-century *ciboleros* who survived into the 1930s told Federal Writers’ Project interviewer Lorin Brown how the hunt worked. The men elected a leader, a

*comandante*, who was in absolute charge of the group. When they spotted a herd of buffalo, the *comandante* called all the men together and had them recite the Apostles’ Creed. Then he gave the order to charge by shouting “*Ave Maria Purissima!*” and the hunters fanned out across the prairie, with the fastest horses and the most skilled hunters on the flanks. When the killing was over, the women helped to skin the buffalo and cut up and dry the meat. They frequently got as far as the Canadian River in the Panhandle and brought back an astonishing amount of meat and hides; an 1812 report estimated that the *ciboleros* killed 10,000 to 12,000 buffalo each year.

Sometimes the *ciboleros* brought back more than meat and hides. One of the more colorful characters around Santa Cruz in the nineteenth century was a man called *El Guero Mestas*, who died in his 80s about 1890. *El Guero* had blond hair and blue eyes—thus his nickname—and he had been brought to Santa Cruz as an infant by some *ciboleros* who had traded buffalo meat for him with a band of Comanches they had met in the breaks of the Canadian River. The Comanches had killed his parents and were taking him back to adopt into their tribe. Instead, he was adopted by a family named Mestas and grew up to be a prosperous farmer and prominent man in Santa Cruz, famous for his poetry, his practical jokes and his piercing blue eyes.

The *ciboleros* didn’t always get what they went after. Vicente Romero of Cordova told Lorin Brown about a trip he made to the Texas plains. He and his companions met up with a group of



Comanches and camped with them to do some trading. The wife of one of the [natives] turned out to be a young Mexican girl from San Antonio, Texas, who had been taken captive a few years before. She pleaded with Romero to rescue her, and Romero considered the sensation it would cause at home if he brought the beautiful captive back as a bride. But the comandante told him, “No, it can’t be done. Any effort to free her might destroy our whole party.” When Romero’s friend Anacleto Mascarenas continued to argue with the comandante, he was seized and bound until he promised to obey the leader’s orders in everything. “So,” Romero concluded, “the *pobrecita* stayed there with the Indians, perhaps for life. *Asi le toco* [thus it happened].”

As the buffalo herds diminished, the ciboleros turned to trading with the

Comanches, taking salt, tobacco, Navajo blankets, strips of iron, dried fruit and sacks of a hard bread called *pan de Comanche* out on the Texas plains and coming back with horses, stolen cattle and, sometimes, captives like El Guero Mestas. Santa Fe trader Josiah Gregg met a group of these traders on the plains in the 1820s and claimed that they spent so much time with the Comanches that they pointed at objects with their chins, like Indians, instead of with their fingers. By the 1850s and ’60s *comancheros*, as these traders were called, were meeting with Comanches at springs and creeks all over the Panhandle, and some people were unkind enough to say that they even accompanied their trading partners on raids to ranches in the Cross Timbers and the Hill Country so they could pick out the cattle they wanted.

In 1876 a former comanchero from


Mora, Casimero Romero, decided to settle permanently in the Panhandle, and he brought his family, 100 servants, and 5,500 sheep to Atascosa Creek in Oldham County, where he built a big adobe house, dug irrigation ditches and gathered several other families from Mora and Las Vegas around him. He and his neighbors prospered as New Mexican sheep ranchers in Texas for a few years, but then cattlemen began to crowd them out and they pulled back across the plains to New Mexico and left the Panhandle to the cattlemen, who are still there. But the next time you drive to Lubbock, think not about ranchers and wildcatters, but about the ciboleros from Chimayo with their braided hair and leather jackets and lances.

Excerpted from *Texas, My Texas: Musings of the Rambling Boy*, TCU Press; prs.tcu.edu [Original column: September 14, 2006]

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# The Short History of Fredonia

The East Texas republic that failed without a battle

BY MARTHA DEERINGER

AN UPRISING NEAR NACOGDOCHES IN 1826 foreshadowed the Texas Revolution years before Sam Houston's army defeated Mexico's forces. In September 1825, empresario Haden Edwards acquired a grant from Mexico to settle 800 families in an area of East Texas that included Nacogdoches. Edwards' contract allowed the settlement to be "bounded by a line that began at the intersection of the coast and border reservations and ran north to 15 leagues from Nacogdoches, thence west to the Navasota River, south in an irregular line along the Navasota and east to the point of beginning."

Edwards posted notices in Nacogdoches demanding that all landowners show evidence of their claims or forfeit the land. His threatening behavior raised the hackles of these settlers, some of whom held earlier grants from Spain and Mexico. Even though these grants dated back more than 100 years, not all the settlers possessed legal documents to prove ownership.

A questionable election for *alcalde*, or mayor, of Nacogdoches in December propelled Edward's son-in-law, Chichester Chaplin, into office. Tensions escalated dramatically.

The tempest raged until authorities in Mexico annulled the 1826 Edwards land grant and ordered Edwards to leave Texas. Lt. Col. Mateo Ahumada, Mexican military commander in Coahuila y Tejas, set out from San Antonio with 20 dragoons and 110 infantrymen to enforce this resolution. Edwards vowed to recruit an army and win independence from Mexico.

Edwards christened his disputed land grant the Republic of Fredonia, based on a concept first articulated in New York by Dr. Samuel Latham Mitchill in 1800. He had simply added a Latin ending to the word "freedom" to create "Fredonia."



Edwards appropriated the name and designed a flag with two red-and-white parallel bars and inscribed with the words "Independence, Liberty, Justice." The red-and-white bars represented the Native American and white inhabitants of the region, and Edwards hurriedly sought to finalize a treaty with the nearby Cherokee to strengthen his claim.

Amid the turmoil, Edwards petitioned Stephen F. Austin for aid. Not only did Austin refuse, but also he sent 100 soldiers to support Ahumada. At the same time, Peter Ellis Bean, a Mexican Indian agent, convinced the Cherokee to side with Austin, who wanted no further part of it. "It is my candid opinion," Austin wrote to Edwards, "that a continuance of the imprudent course you have commenced will totally ruin you."

Edwards appointed his brother, Benjamin, to lead the colony, and then he left for the United States to raise support. Benjamin gathered 30 men loyal to the Fredonian cause and rode through a December blizzard to Nacogdoches. There

they seized control of the Old Stone Fort and ripped down the flag of Mexico, replacing it with their own. The residents of Nacogdoches, most loyal to Mexico, moved out when they learned that the Mexican military was en route.

The newly minted republic survived only a few weeks. When Mexican military forces and Austin's militia arrived on January 31, 1827, the revolutionaries retreated across the Sabine River. Not a single Cherokee warrior had shown up to join the revolt. Mexican authorities eventually offered amnesty to all who had participated in the revolt except the Edwards brothers.

The Fredonian Rebellion accomplished little, but some historians consider it the true beginning of the Texas Revolution. Citizens of Nacogdoches, inspired by the taste of freedom, welcomed Sam Houston to their city and elected him to the first colonists' convention in 1833, setting a course for liberty that would be realized in less than a decade.

**Martha Deeringer**, a member of Heart of Texas EC, lives near McGregor.

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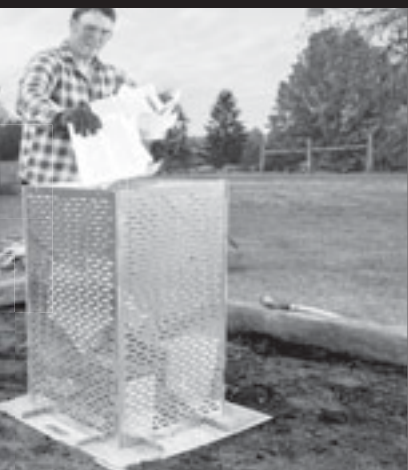
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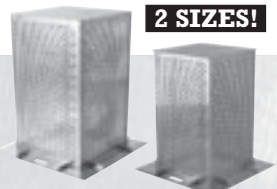
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## Creative Chili, Soup and Stew

AS I LEARNED WHEN I MOVED TO TEXAS 13 years ago, chili making is serious business. So it's no surprise that we received deeply flavored chilis and warming soups and stews from readers this month.

I couldn't resist including my favorite bowl of red—from my first cookbook, *Cowgirl Cuisine*. This chili is best made the day before, so the flavors can meld and mellow, and it makes it easier to skim off the excess fat before reheating. Shredding the meat is an important step; it helps to create a thick, luscious texture. Consider serving this chili with your favorite cornbread recipe and all the traditional condiments.

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

### Texas Beef Chili With Poblanos and Beer

- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided use
- 2 large sweet onions, diced
- 3 poblano peppers, stemmed, seeded and diced
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 4 ½ pounds beef chuck, cut into 2-inch cubes
- 2 bay leaves, preferably fresh
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ cup ground New Mexico chile powder
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon ground chipotle chile powder
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 12 ounces amber or bock beer
- 8 cups beef broth
- Mexican-style crema or sour cream
- 1 medium red onion, chopped

- 3 medium tomatoes, chopped
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh cilantro

**1.** In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the sweet onions and sauté until softened and translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the poblanos and sauté for an additional 10 minutes, reducing the heat if necessary to prevent the onions from browning. Add the garlic and salt and cook, stirring, an additional 5 minutes; set aside.

**2.** Meanwhile, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a large Dutch oven (preferably a cast-iron pot with enamel coating). Add the beef in batches to avoid overcrowding the pan, and brown the cubes on all sides until brown and crusty. Remove the beef with a slotted spoon and transfer to a plate. Repeat with remaining beef.

**3.** Return all cooked beef to the Dutch oven. Add the spices and cook, stirring until they form a thick paste on the meat,

## Creative Chili, Soup and Stew



### THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

GERI HUPP | DEEP EAST TEXAS EC

During cold weather, there's nothing more comforting than a bowl of something hearty to warm your bones. This month, our readers shared a wide range of chilis, soups and stews, adding a few Texas variations, to boot.

### Deep-Dish Turkey Chili Pie

#### FILLING

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup diced red onion
- 1 cup diced red peppers
- 1 jalapeño pepper, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon parsley flakes
- 2 pounds ground turkey
- 3 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 tablespoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon each ground cumin, cumin seeds, oregano and salt
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ teaspoon dry mustard
- ⅙ teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1⅓ cups beef broth
- 1 cup tomato purée
- ¾ cup Mexican beer
- 1 can whole kernel corn (12 ounces), drained
- 1 teaspoon honey

#### CRUST

- 2 cups coarsely crushed saltine crackers
- ½ cup yellow cornmeal
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- ¼ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 cup warm water

#### TOPPING

- 2 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided use
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

1. **FILLING:** Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. When oil is hot, add the onion, peppers, jalapeño, garlic and parsley flakes; and cook, stirring until the vegetables have softened, about 5 minutes. Add the turkey and cook, stirring until browned.
2. Add the seasonings and cocoa powder. Stir until the meat mixture is evenly coated with spices. Pour in the

beef broth, tomato purée and beer, and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

3. Add the corn and honey, and simmer an additional 30–40 minutes until thickened, stirring occasionally. While the chili mixture simmers, prepare the cracker pie crusts.

4. **CRUST:** Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease two 9-inch deep-dish pie dishes. Use your hands to combine the crushed crackers, cornmeal, vegetable oil, shredded cheese and warm water in a large mixing bowl until a coarse “dough” forms. Divide the mixture in half, and then press each half evenly into a pie dish. Bake the crusts 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Set aside to cool briefly on wire racks.

5. Remove bay leaf from chili mixture. Sprinkle ½ cup Monterey Jack cheese into each warm pie crust. Divide the chili mixture between the prepared crusts, sprinkle the remaining cheese over pies, and bake 10–15 minutes or until cheese is melted. Let stand about 5 minutes before slicing.

about 4 minutes. Watch the pan carefully to avoid scorching the spices. Add beer to deglaze the pan, and simmer until slightly reduced and the meat mixture is thick.

Add beef broth, reduce heat to low and simmer the mixture, partially covered, for 3 hours, stirring occasionally.

4. If not serving immediately, chill overnight. The next day, skim the fat from the top of the mixture. Using a slotted spoon, remove about 2 cups of the beef cubes to a plate. Shred the meat with a fork (it should be very soft) and return it to the pot. The shredded meat will help create a thicker-textured chili.

5. Serve with a dollop of crema and bowls of onion, tomatoes and cilantro on the side.

From *Cowgirl Cuisine: Rustic Recipes and Cowgirl Adventures From a Texas Ranch* (William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2007)

### Tina's Garden-Fresh Tomato Soup

TINA MARIE RUSS | SAN BERNARD EC

- 20 medium-large ripe tomatoes, or more as desired
- 2 cans chicken broth (14.5 ounces each), divided use
- ½ cup butter (1 stick)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 cup finely chopped celery
- 1 cup finely chopped carrot
- ½ cup finely chopped bell pepper (choose red, yellow or orange for the best color)
- 1 teaspoon salt, or more to taste
- 2 teaspoons ground black pepper

### \$100 Recipe Contest

June's recipe contest is **Peaches**. The sweet, juicy jewels go perfectly in pie, ice cream and savory dishes. Send us your favorite peach recipes. Deadline is **January 10**.

There are three ways to enter: **ONLINE** at [TexasCoop-Power.com/contests](http://TexasCoop-Power.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.





- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 1 cup flour
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste, or more as desired
- 3 teaspoons chicken bouillon granules
- 1 cup heavy cream or evaporated milk

**1.** Core the tomatoes, chop into 1-inch chunks and place them with their juice in a large stockpot. Add 1 can chicken broth and bring to a boil. Lower heat, cover pot and simmer until tomatoes are soft. Allow to cool slightly, then pour the tomato mixture through a large colander or sieve, pressing with a wooden spoon to extract all possible liquid. Discard seeds and peels. This should yield about 3½ quarts of liquid.

**2.** Heat butter and oil in another stockpot over medium heat. When the butter has melted, add the onion, celery, carrot and peppers, and sauté until soft, about 6–7 minutes. Add salt, pepper and basil and sauté an additional 5 minutes.

**3.** Reduce heat to low and gradually add the flour, stirring constantly to make a very thick paste. Slowly add 1 quart of tomato liquid, stirring until the mixture is smooth. Stir in tomato paste along with the remaining tomato liquid, remaining can of chicken broth and chicken bouillon. Simmer mixture about 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

**4.** When you're ready to serve, remove soup from the heat and stir in the cream. Taste and adjust seasonings, adding more salt or pepper as desired.

**COOK'S TIP** Consider garnishing this soup with fresh garden herbs such as basil, parsley or oregano.

## Flip'n Texas Chili

STACY FLIPPEN | SAN BERNARD EC

- 1½ pounds chili-grind beef
- 1 pound chili-grind pork
- 1 cup beef broth
- 8 ounces tomato sauce
- 2 beef bouillon cubes
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- 4 tablespoons light chili powder, divided use
- 2 tablespoons paprika
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 3 jalapeño peppers, chopped

- 2 habanero peppers, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon white pepper
- 2 tablespoons cumin
- 8 cloves garlic, minced

**1.** Brown all the chili meat in a large pot and drain excess fat. Add the broth and tomato sauce and simmer 30 minutes.

**2.** Add the bouillon cubes, 1 tablespoon light chili powder, paprika, onion powder, cayenne, peppers and salt, and cook, stirring until well blended.

**3.** Add the remaining chili powder, white pepper, cumin and garlic, and simmer 50 minutes.

## Janet's Pork Green Chili Stew

JANET HENDERSON | TRINITY VALLEY EC

- ½ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground sage
- ½ teaspoon dried parsley
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2½ pounds pork country ribs or pork stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 32 ounces chicken broth, divided use
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped
- 7 cloves garlic or more as desired, chopped
- 1 small bag fingerling potatoes (1½ pounds), quartered
- 2 cans chopped green chiles (4.5 ounces each), or more depending on desired heat
- 2 jalapeño, serrano or habanero peppers, depending on desired heat, seeded and chopped
- 1 can Rotel tomatoes and green chiles (10 ounces)

**1.** Combine the first 6 ingredients in a sealable plastic bag or container with a lid. Add the pork cubes in batches and shake to coat thoroughly. Remove the pork from the flour, shaking off excess, and set aside.

**2.** Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the pork in batches and brown on all sides. Transfer the pork to a plate and add a small amount of chicken broth

to the skillet, scraping up the brown bits.

**3.** Place the onion, garlic, potatoes, peppers, Rotel, browned pork and bits with remaining chicken broth in a 5-quart slow cooker and stir to combine. Cover and cook mixture on low heat 8–12 hours, or on high 4–6 hours. Add water if stew cooks down too quickly or if you prefer more broth in the final stew.

**COOK'S TIP** Serve this spicy stew with lime wedges and fresh chopped cilantro.

## Kale and Meatball Soup

MICHELE WERTZ | BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

- ½ pound ground beef (sirloin or round)
- ¼ pound ground pork
- ½ cup diced onion, divided use
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon coarse sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ teaspoon of your favorite herb/spice mixture, divided use
- 1 slice white bread (crusts removed)
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 8 cups beef or chicken broth
- 1 can small white beans (15 ounces), drained
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 3 cups kale, or more to taste, washed and chopped

**1.** Heat oven to 350 degrees.

**2.** Combine beef, pork, ¼ cup onion, garlic, salt, pepper and ¼ teaspoon of the spice mixture in a large bowl.

**3.** In a separate bowl, moisten the bread with the milk and then add to the meat mixture. Make small (about 1-inch) meatballs and place them in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet.

**4.** Bake the meatballs about 20 minutes, until firm and lightly browned. Drain excess grease from meatballs and pan.

**5.** Combine the broth, remaining onion, white beans, diced carrot and remaining ½ teaspoon of spice mixture in a large soup pot over medium-high heat. Bring the mixture to a boil, then add meatballs and chopped kale. Reduce heat and simmer about 15 minutes, until vegetables are cooked through.

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# Patterns

WE SPOTTED THESE SHOTS that have certainly earned their stripes. Not to be repetitive, but this competition shaped up nicely.

GRACE ARSIAGA

**WEB EXTRAS** at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com) You want more of the same, right? Check out our online gallery.



▲ **BECKY WESTMORELAND**, Big Country EC: “As a longtime seamstress, the word ‘pattern’ suggests to me something necessary to construct a dress. These patterns are from a collection from the 1940s and 1950s given to me by an aunt.”



▲ **MARVIN PATTERSON**, Brookston: Some skylights let in more than light.



◀ **PAT DUNNUCK**, Sam Houston EC: The bloom of a male sago palm



▲ **CELINA EASTERLING**, Houston County EC: These peppermint swirl dresses, full of patterns and prints, are hanging out on the clothesline with “the girls.”

◀ **PATTI SCHOBEY**, Victoria EC: An eye-catching tree frog

## UPCOMING CONTESTS

MAY HOME SWEET HOME	DUE JANUARY 10
JUNE BY MOONLIGHT	DUE FEBRUARY 10
JULY THE OLD WEST	DUE MARCH 10

All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo.

**ONLINE:** Submit highest-resolution digital images at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](http://TexasCoopPower.com/contests). **MAIL:** Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We do not accept entries via email. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.

**Pick of the Month  
Parrot Festival**

**Houston** [January 29-31]

(713) 444-6500, parrotfestival.org

The National Parrot Rescue and Preservation Foundation's annual conference and fundraiser features educational sessions and an art workshop, this year featuring a galah, an Australian bird also call a rose-breasted cockatoo.



**January**

**7**

**Rockport** [7-10] Gospel Music Festival, (361) 205-2789, gospelforce.org/festival

**8**

**Boerne** [8-9] Kendall County Jr. Livestock Show, (830) 249-9343, visitboerne.org/calendar

**Waco** [8-9] Quilt Show: Quilts Made in America, (254) 224-2177, wacohomespunquiltguild.org

**9**

**Kerrville** Symphony Pops: A Night at the Movies, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

**10**

**San Angelo** Chamber Music Concert, (325) 653-3333, samfa.org

**14**

**San Antonio** [14-17] San Antonio Cocktail Conference, (210) 569-6921, sacocktailconference.com



January 16  
Edna  
Brackenridge Winter  
Carnival & Snow Day

**16**

**Edna** Brackenridge Winter Carnival & Snow Day, (361) 782-5456, brackenridgepark.com

**Coleman** [16-19] Coleman County Livestock Show, (325) 625-2163, colemantexas.org

**18**

**Freeport** MLK Celebration Parade and Rally, (979) 202-7590, mlkcc.org

PARROT: BIJOUSTARR | DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB. SNOW: YANLEY | DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB. GUMBO: UCKYO | DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB

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Texas. For a complete listing, please visit [TexasCoopPower.com/events](http://TexasCoopPower.com/events).

22

**Amarillo** [22-23] Amarillo Symphony Concert, (806) 376-8782, amarillosymphony.org

23

**Bastrop** Big Chill Adventure Race, (512) 775-1503, toocoolracing.com/big-chill

**Luling** Viva Las Luling! Casino Night, (830) 875-3214, discoverluling.com

**Victoria** The Texas Tenors in Concert, (361) 576-4500, victoriasymphony.com

24

**Eagle Pass** [24-30] Maverick County Junior Livestock Show, (830) 513-0398

27

**Galveston** *Curious George*, 1-800-821-1894, thegrand.com

28

**The Woodlands** Taste of the Town, (281) 367-5777, tasteofthetown.org

**Tyler** Shaping Sound: Dance Reimagined, (903) 566-7424, cowancenter.org

29

**Lindale** [29-February 7] *Daddy's Dyin' (Who's Got the Will?)*, (903) 638-0402, lindalecommunitytheater.org

**Cleburne** [29-March 12] *Beauty and the Beast*, (817) 202-0600, plaza-theatre.com



January 30  
Palestine  
A Taste of New Orleans:  
Mardi Gras Celebration

30

**Kemah** Yachty Gras Boat Parade, (713) 882-4040, yachtygras.com

**Palestine** A Taste of New Orleans: Mardi Gras Celebration, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

## February

2

**George West** Brush Country Music Jamboree, (361) 786-3334

**Orange** *Tommy: A Bluegrass Opry*, (409) 886-5535, lutcher.org

3

**Laredo** [3-6] Birding Festival, (956) 718-1063, laredobirdingfestival.com

### Submit Your Event!

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event for March by January 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar!

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# East Texas Outdoors

Kayaking and hiking in the Pineywoods defines a visit to Beaumont

BY MELISSA GASKILL

HALF THE POPULATION OF BEAUMONT seems to be packed into **Rao's Bakery** on this Friday morning, and when I bite into my Zummo's sausage kolach—warm, yeasty bread wrapped around a juicy sausage link—I understand why.

Dean Conwell stops here often on his way to work. "It's a gathering place where you'll find lawyers, nurses, plumbers and financial advisers all sitting together," he says. "I go there to get the pulse of what is happening in town."

Rao's opened in 1941, and current owner Jake Tortorice Jr. took over about 20 years ago. His stamp on the place includes Sicilian-style cheesecake, frozen coffee and Lolly Waffles. Tortorice fell in love with these Belgian waffles-on-a-stick a few years ago. "They are lighter and fluffier, with a smooth taste, and the stick turns them into a take-out thing."

Kolache and Lolly Waffles consumed, I start my outdoorsy Beaumont weekend on the paddling trail from **Cook's Lake** to **Scatterman Lake**. I join **Big Thicket Outfitters** guide Gerald Serta and three others on the 4.8-mile loop, paddling up the left fork of the Neches River to Cook's Lake, then across a cypress swamp, part of the **Big Thicket National Preserve**. Ripples and splashes in coffee-and-cream-colored water hint at fish beneath the surface, and the calls of pileated woodpeckers, kingfishers and ducks fill the woods. We emerge onto Scatterman Lake and trace its edge, sneaking close to herons and egrets, scanning the trees for ospreys and kites.

Serta also guides kayakers on the Village Creek Paddling Trail, which covers 21 miles through the Big Thicket to **Village Creek State Park**.

I explore the Big Thicket on foot, too, hiking trails such as the Sundew, 1.5 miles through longleaf pines that harbor several types of carnivorous plants, including



Stands of East Texas hardwoods offer habitat for birding as they shade Big Thicket hiking trails.

the sundew, for which it's named. The Woodlands Trail crosses the Big Sandy Creek floodplain and dense stands of hardwood, running 5.4 miles. Pick up a trail map and guide to both hiking and paddling trails at the Beaumont visitor center.

The Big Thicket harbors dozens of species of birds and makes it easy for them to hide—but at **Cattail Marsh**, a 900-acre wetland constructed by the City of Beaumont Water Utilities Department in 1993, birds strut in plain view. Karin Warren, who manages the property, tells me that more than 350 species have been recorded here, and she points out egrets, wood ducks, ibis, herons, roseate spoonbills, teal, gallinules, black-necked stilts and a wood stork in a matter of minutes.

I can't leave without seeing an alligator, and that need is easily met at **Gator Country**. This facility makes no bones about its theme-park appeal, but underneath it is a rescue and educational operation. Owners Jana and Gary Saurage say they love alligators and explain they would rather rescue the creatures from storm drains and neighborhoods than see them killed. More than 400 of the intimidating critters call

Gator Country home, including Big Al, a 13-foot-4-inch, half-ton fellow.

Gator Country also runs swamp tours leaving from **Pine Tree Lodge**, where you'll find alligator on the menu along with a variety of seafood and steaks. I recommend the catfish. I also recommend lunch at **Willy Burger**, where meat is ground fresh daily, or its neighbor, **Crown Pizza**, where pies include Beaumont-centric ingredients such as crawfish tails. Rather than choose, I sat on the patio and ordered from both restaurants.

Those gathered at Rao's on Friday morning seemed to have reconvened Saturday night at **Suga's Deep South Cuisine & Jazz Bar**. Suga's serves slightly elevated Southern cuisine, featuring hand-cut steaks, fresh seafood and bison. I savored a juicy pork chop and greens accompanied by smooth saxophone music then thought: Beaumont knows how to have a good time.

Melissa Gaskill is an Austin writer who specializes in travel and nature topics.

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See more Beaumont information and Big Thicket photos online.



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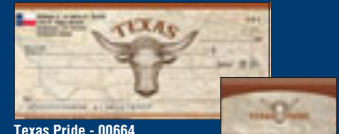
German Shepherd - 00014  
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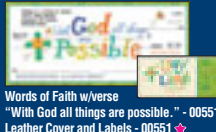
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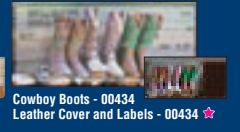
Words of Faith w/verse  
"With God all things are possible." - 00551  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00551



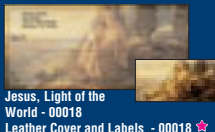
John Wayne:  
An American Legend - 00204  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00204



Cowboy Hats - 00965  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00965



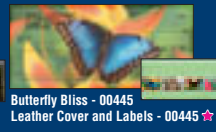
Cowboy Boots - 00434  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00434



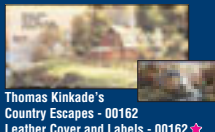
Jesus, Light of the World - 00018  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00018



Prayers of Serenity w/verse  
"Trust in the Lord with all your heart" - 00194  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00194



Butterfly Bliss - 00445  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00445



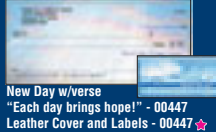
Thomas Kinkadee's  
Country Escapes - 00162  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00162



Winter Calm - 00017  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00017



Live, Laugh, Love, Learn w/verse  
"Life is not measured by the breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away." - 00332  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00332



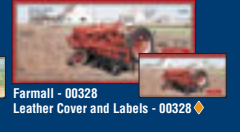
New Day w/verse  
"Each day brings hope!" - 00447  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00447



Challis & Roos  
Awesome Owls - 00337  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00337



Sunflowers - 00334  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00334



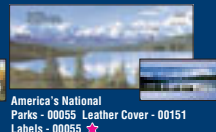
Farmall - 00328  
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Moments of Majesty - 00001  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00001



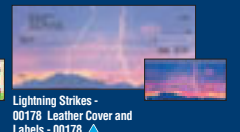
Thomas Kinkadee's Faith for All  
Seasons w/verse "Believe all things are possible with God" - 00105  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00105



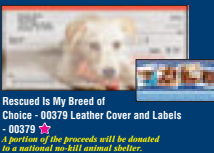
America's National  
Parks - 00055  
Leather Cover - 00151  
Labels - 00055



Grandkids Rule! w/verse  
"I'd rather be with my grandkids." - 00437  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00437



Lightning Strikes - 00178  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00178



Rescued is My Breed of  
Choice - 00379  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00379



Lena Liu's Morning  
Serenade - 00029  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00029



Lena Liu's Floral Borders - 00088  
w/optional verse "Lord bless and keep you." - 00117  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00088



Spirit of the Wilderness - 00024  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00024



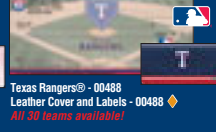
Footprints in the Sand - 00008  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00008



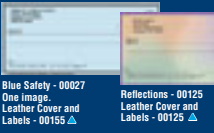
Tropical Paradise - 00052  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00052



On the Wings of Hope - 00384  
One Image.  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00384  
A portion of the proceeds will be donated to fight breast cancer.



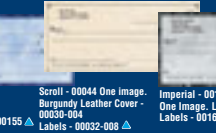
Texas Rangers® - 00488  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00488  
All 30 teams available!



Blue Safety - 00027  
One Image.  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00155



Reflections - 00125  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00125



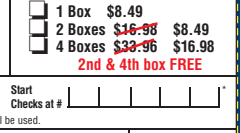
Parchment - 00612  
Burgundy Leather Cover - 00030-004  
Labels - 00032-008



5th Avenue - 00155  
One Image, Leather Cover and Labels - 00155



Scroll - 00044  
One image, Burgundy Leather Cover - 00030-004  
Labels - 00032-008



Imperial - 00165  
One Image, Leather Cover and Labels - 00165



Chevron Chic - 00578  
Fabric Cover and Labels - 00678

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