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Gulf Coast

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NEXT MONTH

National Park Service Centennial

Texans' passion helped to preserve natural wonders in the national park system.



SNAPPER: JODY HORTON. RANGER HAT: VITAMIN | STOCK.ADOBE.COM



ON THE COVER Oysters on the half shell at Black Pearl Oyster Bar in Galveston Photo by Jody Horton

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Wonderful Memories

On September 3, 1946, James Batsell and I were married at First Methodist Church in Temple. After the ceremony, the wedding party proceeded around the corner to the Kyle Hotel roof garden for a beautiful reception. We were married for 66 years before Jim passed away in 2013. Our love and long marriage were due to our faith and that beautiful beginning in the Kyle Hotel.

Thank you for your article [*Lofty Landmarks*, June 2016]. It brought back wonderful memories.

LODDEL ROBERTSON | BROWNSVILLE
MAGIC VALLEY EC

Our family enjoyed the article on the Texas hotels, including the Kyle Hotel in Temple. There are still some Kyle family members around who remember the hotel.

My mother, Margaret Kyle Hopkins, lives in Seguin, and her sister, Mary Kyle, lives in The Woodlands. They are the two granddaughters of W.W. Kyle. I have always heard about the great bands and what a draw the hotel was to soldiers during the war.

KIM HOPKINS MUELLER | SEGUIN
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

Prompt Storm Recovery

A bad storm swept though Bowie County in May. Trees were toppled and snarled power lines. We felt like we were totally cut off from humanity.

The Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative team was ready to go just after the storm went through. Even though the damage was massive, our power

Delightful Destination

We had a trip planned to the Big Bend area when we saw *Visit a Sky Island* [March 2016]. We decided to visit the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center and



were delighted with the area, exhibits and staff. We hiked the entire outer loop and loved every moment.

Thank you for alerting us to this gem. We look forward to more articles about great vacation spots around Texas.

GUY AND TERRI CHAREST | GRAHAM | FORT BELKNAP EC

was restored the next morning. Kudos to these great workers who worked through the night to take care of us.

BRENDA SLATER
BOWIE-CASS EC

Sustainable Farming

I enjoyed your article on sustainable farming [*A New Crop of Texas Farmers*, May 2016]. However, the bigger the operation gets, the less sustainable it will be—for the farmers and the buyers.

RAY MILLER | RIO FRIO
BANDERA EC



Libraries Thrill

When I was growing up in Garrison, my mother would take me "downtown" once a month where a small library van would be parked for the day [*Community Anchors*, April 2016]. I would select books, which would be returned the following month. The sight of the shelves of books in the van was unbelievably thrilling to me.

JEAN SCHWECHE | CARMINE
FAYETTE EC

Pleased as Pie

I made the featured Cherry Pie today [*Your Best Pies*, April 2016]. It was very good. I drained the water in which the cherries were packed, measured it out and added a little bit of cherry jello for more flavor. I did not use red food coloring as the jello took care of that.

TAMI GIFFORD | BLAIR, OKLAHOMA
SOUTHWEST RURAL EA

Memorable War Effort

Recently I found the August 2014 *Texas Co-op Power*. I saved

it because of the article *United Skies Over Terrell*.

I remember very well the training of the Royal Air Force cadets because during that time, I was working in the control tower at the municipal airport where the cadets were trained. I remember well the motto: "The seas divide, but the skies unite."

DORIS F. HARRIS | TEXARKANA
BOWIE-CASS EC

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HAPPENINGS

“Birds Are Amazing”

A BIRD IN THE HAND is worth plenty of excitement at Lake Jackson during the monthly bird-banding event August 20. Birds are trapped in mist nets at the **GULF COAST BIRD OBSERVATORY** and then banded, aged, sexed, measured and weighed before they are released. “In August, we will be catching mostly resident and breeding birds, including cardinals, chickadees, wrens,” says Susan Heath, avian conservation biologist at the observatory.

Visitors get to see birds up close and in the hand. “Birds are amazing!” Heath says. “You can see features and colors that you can’t see on a bird through binoculars.”

Find more happenings all across the state at TexasCoopPower.com

INFO ▶ (979) 480-0999, gcbo.org

ALMANAC

50 YEARS OF PAISANO

Almost 100 of Texas’ most gifted writers have benefited from Dobie Paisano Fellowships, which for 50 years have provided simple solitude on 254 acres outside of Austin.

J. Frank Dobie, folklorist and one-time University of Texas professor in English, purchased a ranch, which he named Paisano, in 1959 to use as his own retreat. After he died in 1964, his friends wanted to preserve the ranch and honor his legendary generosity to fellow writers.

Houston oilman Ralph A. Johnston bought the property, and other friends of Dobie raised money to cover the purchase price. On August 6, 1966, Johnston signed the deed turning Paisano over to UT.

BY THE NUMBERS

TEXAS SEAFOOD generates **\$846 million** in sales annually and provides **14,134 jobs** for Texans.

(Read *Seafood Quest: Galveston* on Page 8.)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

IS AUGUST THE PITS?

It sure can feel like it. After all, it’s back-to-school month, and there’s bound to be another 100-degree day right around the corner.

Well, it’s not the pits. It’s actually a peach—**NATIONAL PEACH MONTH.**



Tell your teacher what you learned about peaches on your summer vacation:

They are members of the rose family (as are apricots, cherries, almonds and plums).

They originated in China. Spanish explorers brought peaches to America in the 1600s.

Peaches contain a natural sedative that helps reduce anxiety. If you’re stressed about school starting, eat a peach.

BIOGRAPHY

Heroes and Heartache

LAST FOOTBALL SEASON, moviegoers and Texas Longhorns fans revisited the uplifting and tragic story of a past team hero. University of Texas Press published *Freddie Steinmark: Faith, Family, Football* by Bower Yousse and Thomas J. Cryan (available in paperback in early 2017). Then *My All American*, a movie about Steinmark, debuted.

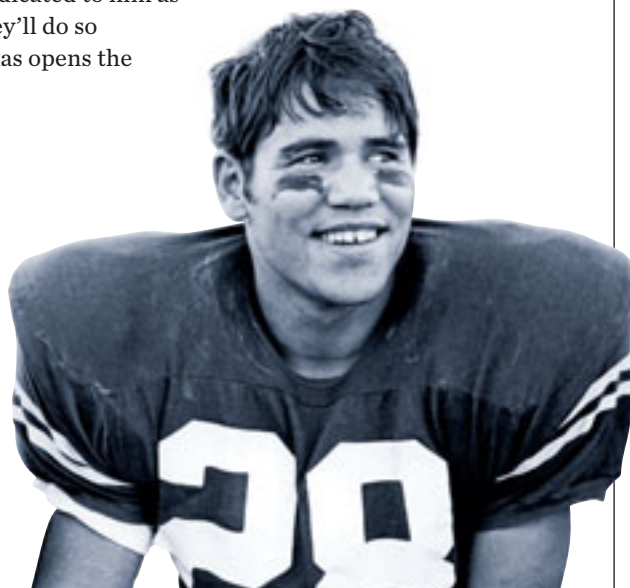
Steinmark, a pint-sized kid from Colorado who became a star defensive back, was the symbol of courage for the undefeated 1969 Longhorns, one of the most heralded teams in college football history. President Richard Nixon declared the No. 1-ranked Horns national champions after the so-called Big Shootout, a 15–14 victory over No. 2 Arkansas.

The Steinmark story tugs at Texas heartstrings, though. As that glorious 1969 season reached its climax—a 21–17 Cotton Bowl victory over Notre Dame—Steinmark lost his left leg to cancer. He died a year and a half later.

The scoreboard at Royal-Memorial Stadium bears Steinmark's name, and UT players tap a plaque dedicated to him as they enter the field before games. They'll do so again Sunday, September 4, when Texas opens the 2016 season against Notre Dame.

Did you know?

UT IS THE ONLY TEAM from Texas to have played in any of the 50 games pitting the No. 1 team vs. the No. 2 team since The Associated Press football poll began in 1936. The Horns are 4–2 in such games.



RODEO is the official state sport of Texas. But don't tell that to the 165,000-plus high school football players, the most of any state in the U.S.

WORTH REPEATING

“Gratitude is a quality similar to electricity: It must be produced and discharged and used up in order to exist at all.”

— WILLIAM FAULKNER

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

MAMMOTH MILESTONE

The National Park Service turns 100 on August 25.

Texas has 16 sites in the park service. Big Bend National Park was the first, established in 1935. Waco Mammoth National Monument, where 24 Columbian mammoths and other ice age creatures have been discovered, is the most recent, established in July 2015.

Look for our tribute to National Parks in Texas next month.

ENERGY SOURCE

Superstore Solar Bowl

TEXAS SUPERSTORE ROOFTOPS offer the equivalent area of more than 11,000 football fields, according to Environment America, an environmental advocacy group.

Filling that space with solar panels, the group claims, could potentially generate enough electricity to power more than a third of the state's superstores and save businesses more than half a billion dollars each year.



The gumbo at Black Pearl Oyster Bar, below, comes topped with blue crab meat. Diners have enjoyed fresh seafood, such as red snapper, opposite page, at Gaido's since 1911.

Seafood

The Gulf's health can
be judged by its bounty

By **Paula Disbrowe** Photos by **Jody Horton**

A woman, likely a waitress, is smiling and holding a large, fresh red snapper on a foil tray. She is wearing a white shirt, a red tie, and a dark vest. A name tag on her vest reads "SANDOS HOLLY". The background shows a restaurant interior with tables and chairs.

Quest: Galveston

When it comes to great seafood in Texas, a trip to the Gulf Coast promises amazing riches. From iconic, time-honored restaurants to casual seafood shacks, there are countless spots to enjoy fresh-from-the-boat catches. Savoring the bounty is easy (please pass the fried shrimp!), but for the industry that ushers it to our plates, maintaining a steady supply poses plenty of challenges.





past

sea life in bays and estuaries. The ecosystems that produce much of our seafood have been threatened. But here's the good news: Recent efforts by industry champions—from building new reefs to recycling oyster shells—have significantly bolstered the seafood forecast.

"There has never been a better time to enjoy Gulf seafood than now," says Jim Gossen, founder of Louisiana Foods and one of the industry's driving forces. "It's handled better, gets to the market quicker and is managed commercially more efficiently and sustainably than anytime in history. Frankly, it's some of the best seafood in the world!"

There's no better place to enjoy the Gulf's riches than Galveston. The town's quaint Victorian architecture, laid-back pace and abundance of stellar restaurants perched on its 32 miles of shoreline make the destination feel like a world unto itself.

"Moving to Galveston really spoils you," says Robb Walsh, an award-winning food writer and cookbook author. "At island restaurants like BLVD. Seafood, you can order wild-caught Gulf shrimp, fresh grouper and red snapper right off the boat—every day."

Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier at sunset, left; an oyster po'boy, above, at Shrimp 'N Stuff Downtown, known for its fried seafood.

few years, the Gulf region dealt with a devastating oil spill, hurricanes that damaged oyster beds and droughts that diminished the supply of fresh water nourishing

When I found myself dreaming about po'boys and salt spray, I knew it was time for my own seafood bender. So on a recent morning, my photographer friend and fellow oyster enthusiast Jody

Horton and I hit the highway early so we could arrive in time for lunch. When we pulled into town, we drove straight to Katie's Seafood Market on Pier 19, the largest fresh fish retailer on the island. Fishing boats were unloading heaps of giant tilefish and snapper onto iced pallets, while a few pelicans shamelessly lurked nearby, hoping for a saltwater snack.

After years as a commercial fisherman, Buddy Guindon (aka Captain Buddy) opened Katie's Seafood Market in 1998 with his wife, Katie, and his brother Kenny. The majority of seafood sold here, including red snapper, grouper, golden tilefish, flounder, oysters, shrimp and blue crab, come from local fishermen and shrimpers.

Thanks to his starring role in the reality show *Big Fish, Texas* on the National Geographic Channel, Guindon reaches a broad audience. Devoted to the sustainability of Gulf seafood, the episodes provide a window into the complex life of today's Gulf fishermen. Viewers follow Guindon and his family on fishing trips as well as on various advocacy missions that range from Austin (where he spoke with politicians) to Mississippi for a meeting with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

"My hope is that *Big Fish, Texas* will help consumers realize their place in sustainable fisheries," Guindon tells me. "What's missing in fisheries management is the consumer—the people who eat the seafood that I catch. Their supply is continually under attack by organizations that represent recreational fisherman."

Guindon and fellow members of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance founded Gulf Wild, a nonprofit, conservation organization that supports U.S. fishermen operating in the Gulf. Their efforts led to the Gulf Wild tags now found on seafood in markets. The tags allow consumers to track the exact source of their fish to ensure that it was harvested by U.S. fishermen and came from a well-monitored and continuously improving fishery. "The best way to participate in the conversation," Guindon adds, "is by letting voting members of Congress and the Senate know that they want their access protected."

Once Guindon shared his short list of favorite haunts, we were ready to dig in. We drove to Black Pearl Oyster Bar, a friendly pub known for its casual ambience and briny bivalves on the half shell. At lunch, the restaurant draws locals for po'boys, gumbo (topped with a generous scoop of snowy lump crab) and salads. In the evening, the lights dim, cocktails are shaken, and specialties such as barbecue shrimp, crab cakes and crawfish étouffée feed a convivial crowd. As we settled into a dozen oysters, manager Angela Clark told us that they were harvested near Anahuac. As we passed wedges of lemon and horseradish, we agreed that these sweet, clean-tasting oysters were some of the best we'd shared.

Po'boys were next on our list. Several locals directed us to Shrimp 'N Stuff Downtown, a casual café that opened in 1976. The restaurant is known for flawless fried seafood—each and

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Most of the seafood sold at Katie's Seafood Market comes from local fishermen and shrimpers.

years, and constantly try to improve them while still offering new ideas and innovations here and there," he said.

Thankfully, the same goes for Gaido's impressive roster of traditional crab preparations: lump meat atop seared flounder, crab cakes, stuffed blue crab, crab salad over avocado with remoulade, and creamy spinach crab dip. Be sure to end your meal with a slice of Gaido's famous pecan pie.

Gaido pointed us to nearby Galveston Island Brewing, where a resident rooster, delicious brews including the crisp, summery Causeway Kolsch, and a convivial taproom encourage guests to squander a few hours. The brewery offers free tours Saturdays at 1 p.m. and a pub grub menu if you decide to settle in for board games and a pint.

We ended our day at BLVD. Seafood. With its open kitchen, striking blue tile bar and plenty of natural light, the stylish spot (a repurposed convenience mart) is one of the newest restaurants on the seawall. Executive Chef Chris Lopez, who also helms the range

at popular Yaga's Café, serves an ever-changing menu of Southern-inspired Gulf seafood, including the Flat Fish Stack (broiled flounder topped with a crab cake and Mornay sauce), shrimp and grits spiked with andouille and redfish broiled "on the half shell" (with its skin on). Don't miss the BLVD. Oysters, the chef's riff on Rockefeller—our favorite dish of the trip.



every shrimp is peeled, deveined and breaded by hand—but chef Juan Cardona also prides himself on seafood salads, broiled and blackened options (think broiled red snapper with citrus butter sauce and jalapeño rice), shrimp and fish tacos, and made-from-scratch gumbo. We dug into quintessential po'boys, the crackly hoagie buns barely able to contain a heap of juicy fried shrimp and plump, crispy oysters, with plenty of tartar sauce, lettuce and tomatoes. Dessert was not a possibility, but we made a note to return to try the sugar-dusted beignets.

Perched on the seawall with views of the water, Gaido's, our next stop, has been an iconic destination since San Giacinto Gaido opened the restaurant's doors in 1911. It's the kind of old-school, swanky restaurant where you expect to hear Sinatra—and you will—but it is the classic seafood preparations and the winning hospitality that have amassed Gaido's loyal following.

Over its 105 years, the restaurant has welcomed celebrities and presidents and served countless special-occasion meals for locals. Owner Nic Gaido explains that, even though he is a self-confessed foodie with his eye on food trends, the beloved signatures like charcoal-grilled and baked oysters (available in variations including Ponzini, Asiago, Bienville, Monterey or Rockefeller) will never leave the menu.

"You need to respect the dishes that have made you famous over the

BLVD. Oysters, left, are the chef's version of oysters Rockefeller at BLVD. Seafood. The giant blue crab, right, helps you know you've found Gaido's.

A day of great eating requires a long walk. An evening stroll along the seawall and eventually the beach—where a jetty of massive flat stones provides the perfect perch to enjoy the moonlight dancing on the water—serves up Galveston's seaside charms.

The next morning we were, alas, homeward bound, but we couldn't leave town on an empty stomach. On Captain Buddy's recommendation, we ordered breakfast on the sun-dappled patio at Sunflower Bakery and Café. A cool breeze, an English muffin topped with poached eggs and jumbo lump crab with Hollandaise sauce, and plenty of coffee fueled us for the drive. We stopped by Katie's for a couple pounds of jumbo shrimp to go. It was time to leave Galveston, but at least we could take the flavor of the coast back home.

Paula Disbrowe is the *Texas Co-op Power* food editor.

WEB EXTRAS at TexasCoopPower.com See a slideshow and check out resources to help plan your trip to Galveston.



Texas Gulf Shrimp

By *Texas Co-op Power Staff*

More than 100 species of commercially available shrimp exist in the world, and two of the tastiest varieties live in Texas Gulf waters. Brown shrimp are the species most often caught by Texas shrimpers, harvested at night in the deeper waters of the Gulf of Mexico. White shrimp (with a gray hue) are found in shallow water closer to shore. On average, Texas lands 45 million pounds of shrimp per year.

Wild-caught shrimp offer a distinctive, briny flavor that distinguishes them from farm-raised shrimp. White shrimp typically have a milder flavor, while brown shrimp are more briny.

Shrimp should smell fresh and mild. The shells should be intact. In most cases, you'll want to remove the shells and devein the shrimp. Remove the shell by holding the tail and carefully separating the shell from the flesh with your fingers or a small knife.

Once the shell is off, use a paring knife to make a small cut along the vein line along the outer curve of the body. When the vein is exposed, wash the shrimp with cold water, washing the vein away with it. If you want to butterfly the shrimp, make a deeper cut along the outer curve of the body—about halfway through the shrimp—and pull the meat apart into a butterfly shape.

If you decide to buy frozen shrimp, always read the label carefully so you'll know the country where your shrimp originated and if it contains preservatives or additives.

The most popular ways to cook shrimp are grilling, boiling, blackening, deep-frying or panfrying. Each cooking method offers a different opportunity to create your own flavor combination.

WEB EXTRAS at TexasCoopPower.com

Enter a drawing to win 5 pounds of Gulf shrimp shipped to your door.

Acadian Dusted Texas Gulf Shrimp

ACADIAN DUST

- 3 tablespoons paprika
- 1½ tablespoons granulated garlic
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon white pepper
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon cayenne
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme

SHRIMP

- Salt
- 24 Texas Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 3 tablespoons canola oil (or other neutral vegetable oil)
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

1. Combine all Acadian Dust ingredients and mix well.
2. Salt shrimp and lightly coat with Acadian Dust.
3. Combine oils in a deep skillet, then heat to smoking-hot. Sear shrimp on both sides to slightly blacken.
4. Remove and allow shrimp to rest for 30 seconds before plating.

COOK'S TIP Acadian Dust can be made in larger amounts and stored for future use.

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"Opal's spectacular play-of-color can display all the colors of the rainbow."

— Gemological Institute of America

"The play of color in opals is so gorgeous they sometimes don't even seem real and yet they are." — from 2015 Couture Show

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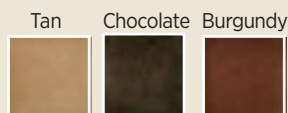
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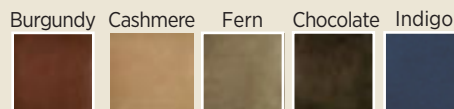
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Canning or Freezing?

ONE OF THE JOYS OF SUMMER is growing and picking the fruits and vegetables we've grown in the garden. But when it comes to preserving the bounty, there is one time-less question: Which is better, canning or freezing?

The answer is: It depends—on variables like preference, time, space and the type of food. But there are other variables that perhaps are worth mentioning, too.

Which has a smaller energy footprint?

Canning involves boiling jars of food to sterilize and seal them, requiring a one-shot—though considerable—burst of energy use. Freezing food requires a long-term consumption of continuous electricity, and the longer you store the food, the more it costs.

A 1980 academic study published in the *Journal of Food Science* calculated the energy use for processing and storing 50 pounds of vegetables. The study determined that freezing them for six months used about three times as much energy as canning them.

However, it's hard to extrapolate this information to today's numbers. New freezers use a third of the electricity used by freezers in 1980, while electricity costs about 2½ times as much as it did then. The numbers also vary significantly depending on whether the freezer is full or



Some prefer to freeze food for storage, while others insist canning is best.

not. Also, chest freezers are twice as efficient as uprights, so the difference can greatly affect electricity use.

A more recent analysis concludes that freezing uses 15 times as much electricity and costs four times as much per pound as canning, once the cost of the equipment is factored in.

Which method has a smaller physical footprint?

Another source, *The Natural Canning Resource Book*, made a couple of relevant points about the issue besides energy use.

Availability of resources is an important factor in the equation: If you often deal with outages or other power disruptions, canned food keeps a lot better than thawed-and-refrozen food. If you live in a small space, or if you're a renter rather than an owner, it's a lot easier to store and move canned food than it is to store and move a freezer.

Finally, the issue of taste: *The Journal of Food Science* study found that people preferred the taste of frozen food over canned by a huge margin. Whatever method you use, the end result is that you want people to eat it and like it.



5 RULES FOR ENERGY SAFETY

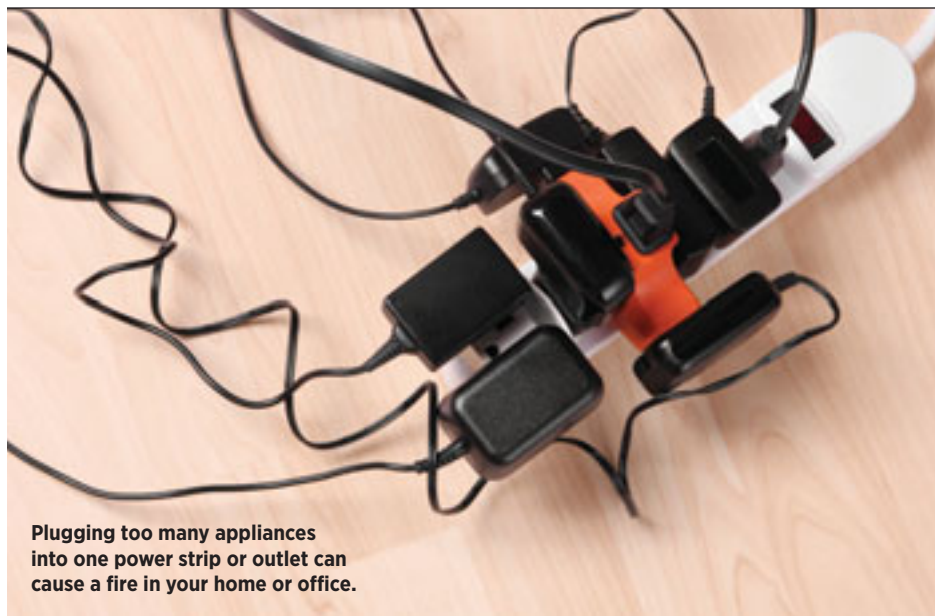
Always ask a grown-up for help when you need to use something that uses electricity.

Don't yank or pull cords from a wall. Pulling cords can damage the outlet, the appliance or the plug.

Ask a grown-up to put safety caps on all unused electrical outlets. This can also help save energy by stopping drafts.

Keep electrical stuff away from water. Water and electricity don't mix. Most electrical accidents in the home happen when people use electricity near water.

Watch out for power lines. Never touch a power line, even if it's on the ground.



Plugging too many appliances into one power strip or outlet can cause a fire in your home or office.

Still Using Old Lightbulbs? Make the Switch

IF YOUR HOME'S LAMPS and light fixtures still house old-fashioned incandescent lightbulbs, it's time to switch to something that's far more energy efficient.

Twisty, compact fluorescent lightbulbs are better. But light-emitting diode bulbs are even more energy efficient and last way longer.

Yes, LEDs cost more than other kinds of lightbulbs—sometimes more than twice as much. But they use about 80 percent less energy than out-of-date incandescents. CFLs use about 70 percent less energy than the old bulbs.

Over time, though, LEDs shine the brightest of the three types when it comes to energy use and cost savings. The average life span of an LED bulb is 25,000 hours, compared with 1,200 hours for a traditional bulb and 8,000 for a CFL.

At about 12.5 cents per kilowatt-hour—the national average, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration—you'll pay \$38 to operate an LED bulb for 23 years. If an incandescent or CFL bulb lasted 23 years (which it won't), you would pay \$201 or \$48.

So make the switch today for a couple of decades of energy savings.

Switch to LED lightbulbs that use less energy than incandescents or CFLs.



3 Ways To Prevent Electrical Fires

THREE OF THE MOST COMMON CAUSES of electrical fires in the home are 100 percent preventable.

More than 1,300 people die or are injured in the 26,000 house fires caused by electricity mishaps every year, the U.S. Fire Administration estimates. Here's how to rid your home of the most common culprits:

1. Extension cords. These handy wire-stretchers are not designed for continuous use. They're made to solve temporary problems: When a Christmas tree is too far from an outlet, for instance, an extension cord could be used for a couple of weeks for a few hours a day.

Too many homeowners use extension cords year-round, and that can cause them to overheat. An overheated cord is a fire hazard.

If you don't have enough outlets, or if your heart is set on putting a lamp out of reach, have an electrician install additional outlets, including one closer to the lamp's ideal location.

2. Old wiring and outlets. If your home is more than 20 years old and its electrical wires and outlets have never been updated, a hazard could lurk behind its walls.

Electrical standards have changed over the years as the experts have become more knowledgeable about electrical safety. Also, the electrical load in your home has grown as computers, phone chargers and mega-sized TVs have moved in.

The electrical systems in older homes were designed to handle less activity. Overloading that system can trigger a fire. Likewise, electrical components don't last forever. If yours are deteriorating, it's time to replace them.

Finally, older homes have few grounded outlets. All outlets in every room that has water or that gets wet—bathrooms, kitchens, basements, garages and laundry rooms, for instance—need ground-fault circuit interrupters. Adding them is a job for a professional electrician.

3. Overloaded outlets. Even if your home is new, you can overload its outlets.

Plugging too many appliances, lamps and electronics into a single outlet can overheat the wires and the outlets. That can lead to a fire.

If your circuits are tripping often, that's a sure sign that something's wrong. Call in a pro to fix the problem.

Madroño Ranch: An Inspired Legacy

A quiet getaway on a family ranch energized writers' creativity

BY MELISSA GASKILL

AFTER STRUGGLING TO CONQUER THE last stretch of a steep, rocky climb, I soaked up my reward: a panoramic view of wooded limestone hills stretching to every horizon under a wide, blue sky. I wanted to keep walking for hours, lost in thought, yet I yearned to sit and write for those same hours, words pouring forth without effort.

In 2011, Heather and Martin Kohout had just launched their dream of creating a residential center for environmental writers and artists on Madroño Ranch, 1,500 acres near Medina (served by Banderita EC). They offered me the chance to be one of the first to experience it, a few days of solitude representing quite a gift for a self-employed writer with a home office and three teenagers.

Heather died of metastatic cancer in October 2014 and, understandably, Martin suspended the residency program, which by then had gifted some 60 individuals with time and space to create. For me, the experience has become one of many legacies Heather left behind.

I arrived at the ranch on a gray winter afternoon and settled into a spacious stone house with a wall of windows overlooking a tranquil lake. My hosts had stocked the kitchen with fresh produce, other staples and a dozen multicolored eggs—produced, I later learned, in the ranch's large and coyote-proof chicken coop, fondly known as the Coop Mahal.

I cooked and ate dinner at a leisurely pace, wandered outside to look at the abundant stars, then curled up in a chair to read some long-neglected reference materials.

My days there followed a natural

rhythm long lost to my regular life. Don't get me wrong, I absolutely love being a mother, and my work brings me much satisfaction. I feel blessed to have been able to meld the two so well as an independent journalist. Before the Kohouts called, I wouldn't have said I needed to get away.

But I did.

At the ranch, I rose more or less with the sun, read, brainstormed ideas and organized my thoughts. I took long walks around the lake, up the hills and through the fields, where a resident herd of magnificent bison grazed. Physical activity always jump-starts my brain, but in this landscape, free of time constraints and obligations, the effect seemed amplified. It worked like a spring cleaning, clearing out cobwebs and dust to let in light and freshness. My mind was left refreshed.

This clearing-out created space for new ideas and energy. For a writer, that leads to words on the page. Fellow resident Juli Berwald came to the ranch with four rambling pages and left with a 30-page chapter of a book that recently sold to a major publisher. "I had this idea but no chance to sit down and work on it. After two weeks, I came home with something whole," she says. "I'm so grateful for that opportunity."

Such creation is what the Kohouts hoped to produce through the residency program. "For both of us, the residencies felt like the satisfaction of being a midwife, helping in a very small way to bring things of beauty and thoughtfulness into being," Martin says. "It is one of the most satisfying things I've ever done."

Martin worked for many years as a writer



and editor with the Texas State Historical Association and Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Heather, a theology teacher and published poet, served for a time on the staff at Seton Cove, an interfaith spirituality center in Austin. The couple met as undergraduate English majors at Williams College in Massachusetts, married in 1985 and had three children. After years of enjoying Madroño Ranch as a family, they became uncomfortable with the idea of keeping such a beautiful place all to themselves, Martin says. A residency program seemed a fitting way to share it.

A few months before Heather died, she and Martin hosted a reunion for the souls lucky enough to have called themselves Madroño Ranch residents. “The reunion was everything we hoped for and more,” Martin says. “We have met so many interesting, bright, wonderful people. It has been a huge pleasure to be of service to creative people in some way.”

The gift of my residency came without strings attached, my midwives laying no claim to whatever I might or might not create while at the ranch or afterward. Unlike Berwald (and probably most of the other residents), I didn’t produce a chapter or article while at the ranch. My experience produced instead a new direction, new life to all my work from that point forward. Anything worthwhile I have written since then owes a portion of its merit to my residency. Heather and Martin gave me a tremendous gift.

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

Catfish and Me

This wily and whiskered denizen of the deep stirs loyalty and hatred

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

CATFISH AND ME GO WAY BACK. WE'VE had a love/hate thing going most of my life. They've jabbed me with their fins, not only in self-defense but also for fun.

For my part, I once libeled the entire species in a national publication. I've misinterpreted the Bible on their behalf. Or, what's the opposite of "on their behalf?" Anyway, I called the catfish "unholy."

The notion originated not with my interpretation of the Bible but rather from a heated argument one Sunday after church in Lubbock when I was 7 or 8 years old. The subject of catfish had come up in that morning's sermon, and that's what started the argument. Two guys were arguing about catfish.

"The catfish is unclean," one of the men said. The other man offered to punch him in the face as evidence to the contrary.

"What's that about?" I asked my parents.

"Get to the car," Mom said.

On the way home, I asked the people in the front seat if the catfish was unclean.

"Don't worry about it," Dad said.

So, naturally, I worried about it. I started out curious and came away confused, which is worse than being curious. If you're curious, there's a chance you'll learn something. But if you're confused, you might never figure it out.

Finally, I decided that divine guidance would let me know if it was OK to eat catfish, and it happened just that way. One day my buddy Ricky and I went fishing at Buffalo Lakes where, in less than an hour, we caught a full stringer of catfish.

We fried those catfish and ate most of

them, right there at the lake. Neither of us mentioned how funny they had tasted until we became deathly ill on the way home. Later, we found out that a nearby livestock facility had spilled some of its spoils into the lake. The catfish apparently confused the spoils for stink bait and feasted.

Ricky and I finally got better, but I accepted the incident for what it was: divine punishment.

Not long after that, inspired by a segment of *The American Sportsman* TV show along with articles in outdoors magazines extolling the virtues of fly-fishing, I put away my spinning rods, cane poles and minnow buckets and replaced them with a fly rod and a box of flies. Then I set about teaching myself how to cast a fly.

That was no easy task in Lubbock, because the wind would come whipping off the Caprock at dizzying speeds, throwing an almost weightless fly into the back of a luckless fly caster's ear with uncanny precision.

Even otherwise-good friends made fun of me. The consensus was that I switched to fly-fishing because I didn't want to get my hands dirty handling live bait. That was almost true. Aside from how cool it looked, I also took up the fly rod because I believed it was all but impossible to catch catfish on a fly. (It's not.)

I took my fly-fishing act on the road, to Louisiana, to the Appalachian and Rocky mountains and back to Central Texas, where I settled. To help finance my habit, I wrote magazine articles about when, where and how to fly-fish. Because I didn't know much about any of those topics, I



was the perfect guide for readers who didn't know, either.

At some point, I wrote a story called *Nine Reasons To Hate Catfish* for a national outdoors publication in an attempt to explain why anything that can live happily ever after at the bottom of a cow pond has no place in my life, adding aspersions on the catfish's appearance (ugly) and intelligence (minimal).

Reaction was swift and largely unfavorable. A couple of readers thought the story was hilarious. Others didn't think that at all. An academic from Kentucky shared results from a master's thesis, which found that catfish were smarter than other fish, and trout are downright stupid. So there!

A fellow Texan, more to the point, wrote, "Do you think we are dumb because

we don't want to fish for bass? If that's the case, then to hell with you."

The kicker here is that after I wrote the story, but before it was published, I went fishing at a favorite spot on Barton Creek in Austin. A development was going in right above my old fishing hole, so I sneaked onto private property for one more go at the fish before they were off-limits forever.

Maybe they weren't biting that day, or maybe the bass and bluegill had already moved on, but the only fish I caught was a big catfish—on a fly! Live and learn, I thought, and was about to release the fish when I stopped a moment to take in my surroundings.

Barton Creek was clear and clean-running in those days, and this was going to be my last time fishing that spot, which

had served me as a refuge from so much and for so long. That big ol' catfish I held in my hands—*careful of those horns!*—felt almost like a sacrament. I took a moment to admire the trees and the sky along with the blue jays, wrens and cardinals swooping through golden shafts of light. I acknowledged my place in the middle of it all.

Too bad it's a danged ol' catfish, I thought. Then I had another thought: *Get over it.*

So I took home my first catfish in more than 20 years, rolled it in flour, seasoned it, fried it and served it with potatoes and onions, pinto beans and a piece of cornbread.

My goodness, it was delicious.

Clay Coppedge, a member of Bartlett EC, lives near Walburg. He still takes the fly rod out from time to time.

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Nicole S.

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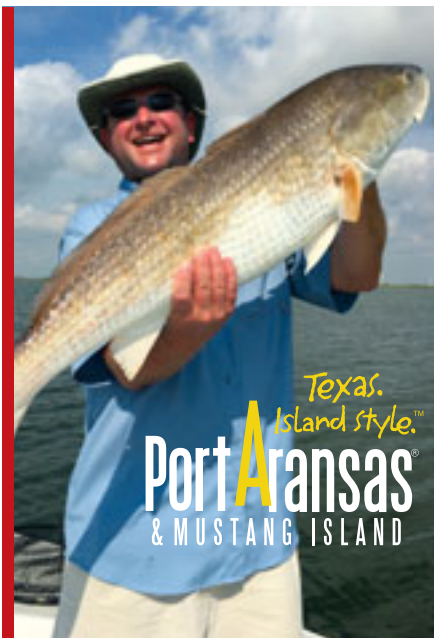
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White House Insider

Texan Edward M. House remembered as influential adviser to President Woodrow Wilson

BY DAVID LATIMER

WHEN THE FIRST WORLD WAR ENDED November 11, 1918, the man representing the United States abroad was an unassuming Texan named Edward Mandell House. He held no office beyond his status as the president's close friend and adviser, but he was in Paris with all the authority Woodrow Wilson could confer.

House's national and international influence grew from a political career that took shape after he moved in 1886 to Austin from Houston, where his wealthy father served as mayor. House played a role in the re-election of Gov. James Hogg in 1892, and Hogg bestowed upon him the honorary title of "lieutenant colonel." Soon reporters referred to him simply as "colonel." By 1910, the Texas political scene seemed too confining, and House moved to New York, hoping to exert political influence on the national stage.

He met Wilson, then governor of New Jersey, in 1911. The two men hit it off immediately. During Wilson's first year as president, he remarked, "Mr. House is my second personality. He is my independent self."

After Wilson's election in 1912, House became a key power. House's behind-the-scenes role in the Wilson administration was summed up by Oklahoma Sen. Thomas Gore's remark, "Take my word for it. He could walk on dry leaves and make no more noise than a tiger."

When World War I broke out in Europe in 1914, House became Wilson's personal emissary in a strenuous attempt to negotiate peace. On one visit he met with Kaiser Wilhelm. House's biographer Godfrey Hodgson describes the event in *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand*:

"From London, on June 13, while waiting to see British officials, House reported: 'I had a most interesting visit to Germany. I have never seen the war spirit nurtured and so glorified as it is there.'"



After the United States entered the war in April 1917, Wilson and House continued to work for a settlement, based on Wilson's Fourteen Points, which included a League of Nations. The challenge for Wilson and House was to secure an armistice that would mean defeat for Germany while moderating the harsh terms demanded by Great Britain and France.

According to historian Margaret MacMillan in *Paris 1919*, "The armistice with Germany ... was made in a three-cornered negotiation between the new German government in Berlin, the Allied Supreme War Council in Paris and Wilson in Washington. House, as Wilson's personal representative, was the key link among them."

Wilson named House as one of the five commissioners representing the United States at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. As the conference went on, the president's dependence on House eroded, due in part to the contrast between Wilson's idealism and House's pragmatism.

Jealousy also played a part. Wilson, a widower, had married Washington socialite Edith Galt in 1915, and she drew a tight circle around her husband. That circle did not

include House. Edith Wilson, not House, became the president's closest friend and adviser and one who, as detailed in Phyllis Lee Levin's book *Edith and Woodrow*, undermined Wilson's confidence in House.

When Wilson left Paris after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919, House saw the president off as he sailed back to the United States. It was the last time they would meet.

Despite his estrangement from Wilson, House continued as one of the country's most important voices in international affairs. He appeared on the cover of the June 25, 1923, issue of *Time* magazine.

House died in 1938 and was buried in Houston, where he had been born 80 years earlier. His elegant Austin home, once as much a center of Texas political power as the Capitol or the Governor's Mansion, was demolished in 1967. A historical marker stands at 1704 West Ave. to mark the spot. House donated land near his home to the Austin school system, and the nearby high school football field is still named House Park.

David Latimer lives in Austin and teaches at Austin Community College.



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Garlic: The Stinkin' Rose

THIS MONTH'S TESTING WAS ODORIFEROUS—in the best ways. Garlic is beloved worldwide for its flavor, which ranges from sharp heat to deep sweetness. One of my favorite recipes is Garlic Confit from Susan Spicer, the chef at Bayona and Mondo in New Orleans. She calls it “confit” because, like the French method for preserving meat, she slow-cooks the cloves in oil and other liquids. This results in a caramelized garlic concoction without the mess of squeezing out the cloves. Try it in Spicer's White Bean Hummus (delicious with blue corn chips), and you'll be hooked.

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

White Bean Hummus With Garlic Confit

For a pretty presentation, Spicer suggests garnishing this hummus with a sprig of fresh thyme or rosemary (which will echo the flavors in the confit), another drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil and a sprinkling of red pepper.

- 1 clove garlic
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) cannellini or other white beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup Garlic Confit (recipe on Page 32)
- ½ cup tahini
- ¼ cup water
- 1 tablespoon sherry wine vinegar
- 2–4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil, plus 1 or 2 tablespoons oil from Garlic Confit

1. Prepare Garlic Confit.
2. Place the garlic clove, salt and red pepper flakes in the bowl of a food processor and process to a rough paste. Add the beans and pulse briefly.
3. Add the Garlic Confit, tahini, water, vinegar, lemon juice, olive oil and confit oil, and process until smooth.
4. Taste and add more salt, lemon or vinegar, as desired. Makes about 4 cups.

MELISSA SKORPIL

Recipes

Garlic: The Stinkin' Rose



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

NANCY DENNIS | BARTLETT EC

This rich, velvety soup is so thick and luxurious it could pass as fondue. It begs to be sopped up with slices of crackly baguette. Feel free to adjust the amount of garlic to your taste; two bulbs might seem like a lot, but the roasting process results in a mellow flavor.

Roasted Garlic and Gruyere Soup

- 2 bulbs garlic
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter
- ½ cup thinly sliced onion
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1½ cups grated Gruyere cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground white pepper
- 2 tablespoons cooking sherry
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme leaves

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Slice the tops off the garlic bulbs and drizzle with olive oil. Wrap them in foil

and roast on a baking sheet 35–40 minutes or until the garlic is very soft. When cool enough to handle, squeeze the cloves into a bowl and set aside.

3. Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until very soft, about 8 minutes. Add the flour and cook, stirring, an additional 2 minutes. Add the garlic and stir to combine.

4. Whisk in the chicken broth, then the milk and cream. Simmer the mixture until thickened, about 3 minutes, stirring constantly.

5. Add the grated Gruyere and stir until melted, and then stir in the salt, pepper, sherry and thyme. Serves 4–6.

COOK'S TIP For a thinner, more soup-like texture, double the amount of chicken broth.

Garlic Confit

- 2 bulbs garlic, stemmed and peeled
 - ½ cup dry white wine
 - ¼ cup water
 - 1 cup good quality olive oil
- Salt**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 stems fresh thyme, or 1 sprig of fresh rosemary
 - 1 small dried red chile (optional)

1. Place the garlic, wine, water and olive oil in a small skillet and season with a pinch of salt and a grind of black pepper. Add the herbs (and chile if using), tucking them into the liquid to moisten.

2. Bring mixture to a simmer over low heat. Simmer 30–40 minutes, until the water and wine have evaporated and the cloves have softened and turned a deep golden color.

3. When it's done to your liking, drain the garlic, reserving the oil. If not using right away, pour oil into a jar and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks. Makes about 1 cup.

From *Crescent City Cooking* by Susan Spicer with Paula Disbrowe (Knopf, 2007), used with permission

Roasted Garlic Macaroni and Cheese

ALI ALLIE | COSERV

America's quintessential comfort dish is infused with the mellow, caramelized flavor of roasted garlic. The crunchy topping of chive breadcrumbs provides a delicious contrast to the bubbling, creamy mixture below. "The recipe is a marriage of some of my favorite ingredients," Allie says. "My mom bought me a clay garlic roaster many years ago, and if you have one, by all means, use it for this recipe!"

BREADCRUMB TOPPING

- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter
- 2 cups panko Japanese breadcrumbs
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

PASTA AND SAUCE

- 1 bulb garlic
- Olive oil**
- 1 pound uncooked pasta (such as cavatappi, shells or rigatoni)
 - ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
 - 6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 - 5 cups whole milk
 - 5½ cups coarsely shredded cheddar cheese (white, yellow or a mix of both)

\$100 Recipe Contest

January's recipe contest topic is **Breakfast for Dinner**. What do you make when you sneak in another breakfast later in the day? The deadline is **August 10**.

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.

- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ teaspoon ground mustard powder
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Butter a 13-by-9-inch baking dish. Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil.
2. **TOPPING:** Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the breadcrumbs and chives, stirring to combine. Cook 1–2 minutes until toasted slightly. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
3. **SAUCE:** Slice the top third off the garlic bulb. Place the bottom portion on a piece of foil, drizzle with olive oil, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Place the top portion back on the bulb and crumple the foil to create a sealed packet. Place the packet on a baking sheet and roast 30 minutes.
4. **PASTA:** Cook the pasta in large pot until al dente. Before draining the pasta, reserve ½ cup of the cooking water.
5. Remove the roasted garlic from the oven and squeeze the cloves into a bowl,

discarding the skin. Using a fork, mash the cloves into a paste then set aside.

6. In a large, heavy saucepot (such as a Dutch oven), melt the butter over medium-low heat. Stir in the flour and garlic paste to make a roux. Cook 3 minutes, stirring constantly, until golden. Whisk in the milk. Bring the sauce to a boil, whisking constantly, then reduce heat and simmer 3 minutes. Stir in the cheeses, mustard powder, salt and pepper until well combined.

7. Add the pasta and reserved pasta water to the pot, stirring to combine (the mixture will be soupy). Transfer the mixture to the buttered baking dish. Sprinkle with the reserved crumb topping and place dish on a baking sheet (in case it bubbles over while baking). Bake 20–25 minutes until it's golden brown and bubbling. Serves 8–10.

Fatal Feta

JUDITH WADDELL | CENTRAL TEXAS EC

Don't be daunted by the name! Fatal Feta is merely a dangerously delicious dip or spread,

thanks to an impressive amount of garlic. A friend shared the recipe with Waddell years ago, and she's been making it ever since. For even more of a kick, add a pinch of crushed red pepper flakes to the mix.

- 1 pound block feta cheese
- ½ cup cottage cheese
- ½ cup plain yogurt
- 6–10 cloves garlic, pressed or minced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

1. Coarsely grate the feta into a large mixing bowl. Add the cottage cheese, yogurt, garlic and olive oil, and stir thoroughly to combine.
2. Refrigerate 4–24 hours before serving.
3. Serve with crusty bread, like French or ciabatta. Makes about 1 quart.

WEB EXTRAS at TexasCoopPower.com

Dozens of dishes in the recipes archive call for garlic, including Chicken Meatballs With Garlic Hoisin Sauce, submitted for this month's contest.



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▲ **DEBBIE NIVISON**, Wood County EC: Eli Nivison and grandfather Ron Davis restored this 1920 John Deere sulky plow. Eli won reserve champion in the Ag Mechanics contest at the 2016 Southwestern Exposition & Livestock Show in Fort Worth.

▼ **JUDY TRUESDELL**, Farmers EC: Texas master naturalist David Powell and community volunteers work to restore 22 acres of endangered blackland prairie in Wylie.



► **BRENDA WEEKS**, Medina EC: A 1956 Chevy during a 2016 sunset near Cotulla

UPCOMING CONTESTS

DECEMBER	NATIVE	DUE AUGUST 10
JANUARY	CHURCHES	DUE SEPTEMBER 10
FEBRUARY	BARNs	DUE OCTOBER 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. **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.



▲ **ERIKA GUERRERO**, Fayette EC: Ryan Guerrero of Bellville FFA restored this Farmall H tractor in 2013.

▼ **JOHN CROUCH**, Nueces EC: Crouch began restoring this 1959 Chevrolet Apache 3100 when he was 15. "Now, four years later, the truck has been fully restored in my garage, and I drive it daily," he says.



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pinecountry-gms.org

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August 12

Bastrop [12-13] Sup Cup, (512) 321-4661,
bastropsupcup.com

Edinburg [12-13] Out of this World UFO Festival, (956) 383-6246, edinburgarts.com

Navasota [12-13] Blues Fest, (936) 825-6600,
navasotabluesfest.org

13

Brenham Chappell Hill Lavender & Wine Fest, (979) 251-8114, chappellhilllavender.com

Edna Flag City Community Market, (361) 782-3122, cityofedna.com

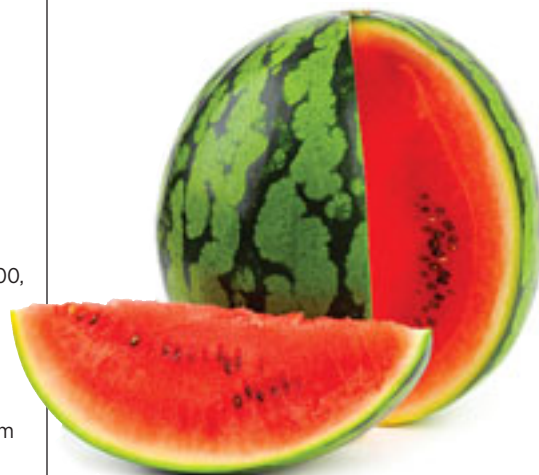
Forestburg Watermelon Festival, (214) 449-8737

Gladewater Main Street Art Stroll, (903) 845-5753, gladewatermainstreet.com

Marshall Second Saturday, (903) 702-7777,
visitmarshalltexas.org

Palestine Dogwood Jamboree presents Pure Country, (903) 723-3014, dogwoodjamboree.org

August 13
Forestburg
Watermelon Festival



19

Grapevine Frugal Farm Wife, (817) 410-3185,
nashfarm.org

Denton [19-27] North Texas Fair and Rodeo, (940) 387-2632, ntfair.com

Kerrville [19-Sept. 4] *Always a Bridesmaid*, (830) 896-9393, playhouse2000.com

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Belton Discovery Day with Charley Chisholm, (254) 933-5243, bellcountymuseum.org

Grand Prairie Hatch Chile Fest at Farmers Market, (972) 237-8110, gptx.org

Lake Jackson Bird Banding, (979) 480-0999, gcbo.org

24

Sherman [24-27] Melody Ranch's Deep Summer Bluegrass Festival, (903) 546-6893, melodyranchbluegrassfestival.com

25

Big Bend National Park [25-27] Big Bend Nature Fest, (432) 477-2292, bigbendnaturefest.com

26

Giddings [26-27] Swap Meet, (512) 581-2802

Wichita Falls [26-28] Hotter'N Hell Hundred, (940) 322-3223, hh100.org

27

El Paso Symphonic Springsteen, (915) 532-3776, epsa.org

Pearland Wine and Food Festival, (713) 436-5595, visitpearland.com

Prairie View Volunteer Fire Department Red & White Ball, (713) 205-3260

September

1

Cleburne [1-3] *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, (817) 202-0600, plaza-theatre.com



September 2-3
Fredericksburg
Vereins Quilt Guild Show

2

Fredericksburg [2-3] Vereins Quilt Guild Show, (830) 997-5597, vereinsquiltguild.org

Bedford [2-4] Bedford Blues & BBQ Festival, (817) 952-2128, bedfordbluesfest.com

3

Coleman Dove Festival Fish Fry, (325) 625-2163

Goodnight Goodnight Under the Stars, (806) 226-2187, goodnightunderthestars.com

Richmond [3, 5] Labor Day Backyard Barbecue, (281) 343-0218, georgeranch.org

Granbury [3-5] Labor Day Weekend Festival, (682) 936-4550, granburysquare.com

4

La Vernia New Berlin Sausage Festival, (830) 420-3185

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Rohan Meadery

Farm near La Grange turns honey and fruit into “mankind’s oldest fermented beverage”

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

EVERY CHANCE THEY GET, NEWLYWEDS Todd and Charlene Weaver of Lake Jackson visit Rohan Meadery on a working farm northeast of La Grange. On a pleasant Sunday afternoon, they’re seated side by side at an outdoor table, watching two brown hens scratching in the grass and some short-legged sheep dozing beneath a live oak. They smile when Ford, the farm’s friendly Great Pyrenees dog, lopes up to greet a black sedan. By a blooming rosemary bush laden with honeybees, Jewels the cat meows for attention.

“It’s fun to be here and out in the country,” Charlene says. “We love to visit and talk to the animals.” The couple also comes to savor and stock up on their favorite beverage, Pear Melomel, a pear mead kissed with lavender. The award-winning label ranks high among the 14 meads, five wines and two hard ciders crafted by John and Wendy Rohan at their Blissful Folly Farm, which is served by Fayette Electric Cooperative. Rohan Meadery is the oldest of eight meaderies operating in Texas.

“Mead is mankind’s oldest fermented beverage,” Wendy explains while a visitor sips her first-ever sample in the meadery’s honey-hued tasting room and gift shop. “In simple terms, mead is wine made from fermenting honey. It predates wine by several millennia. The Vikings were especially known for their mead.”

Making mead with a Czech flair runs in John’s family. A portrait of his great-great-grandparents hangs above the tasting room doors. “Frank Rohan emigrated from the Czech Republic of Moravia in the 1800s and settled in Fayette County,” John says. “My grandfather farmed, kept bees and home-brewed. I made my first mead when I was in junior high school.”

In 2008, the Rohans bought 30 acres in Fayette County and moved their family out of Houston. The couple has three chil-



dren: Malik, 18; Amelia, 13; and Eleanor, 10. “We wanted to start a meadery and raise our children on a farm,” Wendy says.

Using their science backgrounds, the Rohans went into production in 2009. At first, they sold mead at farmers markets and festivals. In 2011, they built the tasting room, which now houses a small bottling machine, a filtering machine and 12 stainless steel fermentation tanks.

Weekdays, Wendy teaches junior high science in La Grange, and John works in Houston’s information technology industry. “We work eight days a week,” John quips.

He’s not exaggerating. After hours and weekends, the family manages a 1-acre vineyard, assorted fruit trees, 30 Nubian goats, two chicken coops, some guinea fowl, two miniature Sicilian donkeys and the aforementioned sheep.

The Rohans also tend 20 beehives, which produce a fraction of the honey needed to make their meads. So they partner with Bee Wilde, a commercial honey producer (and member of Mid-South Synergy) that maintains 2,000 hives in

Conroe. “Just one 150-gallon batch of our blackberry mead calls for 400 pounds of honey,” Wendy explains. “We could never make that much here on the farm.”

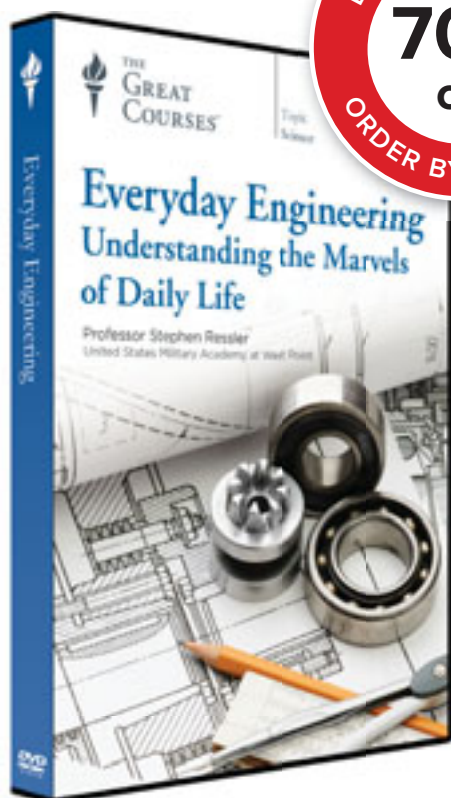
The Rohans meld Bee Wilde’s wildflower- and huajilla-flavored honeys with Texas-grown fruits.

Family friendly, Rohan Meadery hosts live music most Saturday afternoons beneath a covered pavilion. Kids can drop a quarter into a gumball machine on the tasting room’s porch and buy a small cupful of feed to throw to the chickens.

Behind the counter, Wendy pours a sample of Orange Spice mead for a visitor. “We’re already out of space in our tasting room, which is a great problem to have,” she says. “But we’re not interested in being the biggest meadery in Texas. We just want to sustain what we do on our farm and also [for] the families who work for us.”

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers, a member of Peder-nales EC, lives in Blanco.

 **WEB EXTRAS at TexasCoopPower.com**
Learn more about mead and visit Rohan Meadery and other Texas meaderies online.



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