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July 2022



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Prized Fibers

Cotton gins still turn sweat and tears into a treasured commodity.

Story and photos by Julia Robinson

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Because Kreuz Market has perfected the once-scorned barbecued bird.

*By Joe Nick Patoski
Photos by Wyatt McSpadden*

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Photo by Wyatt McSpadden

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Photo by Julia Robinson

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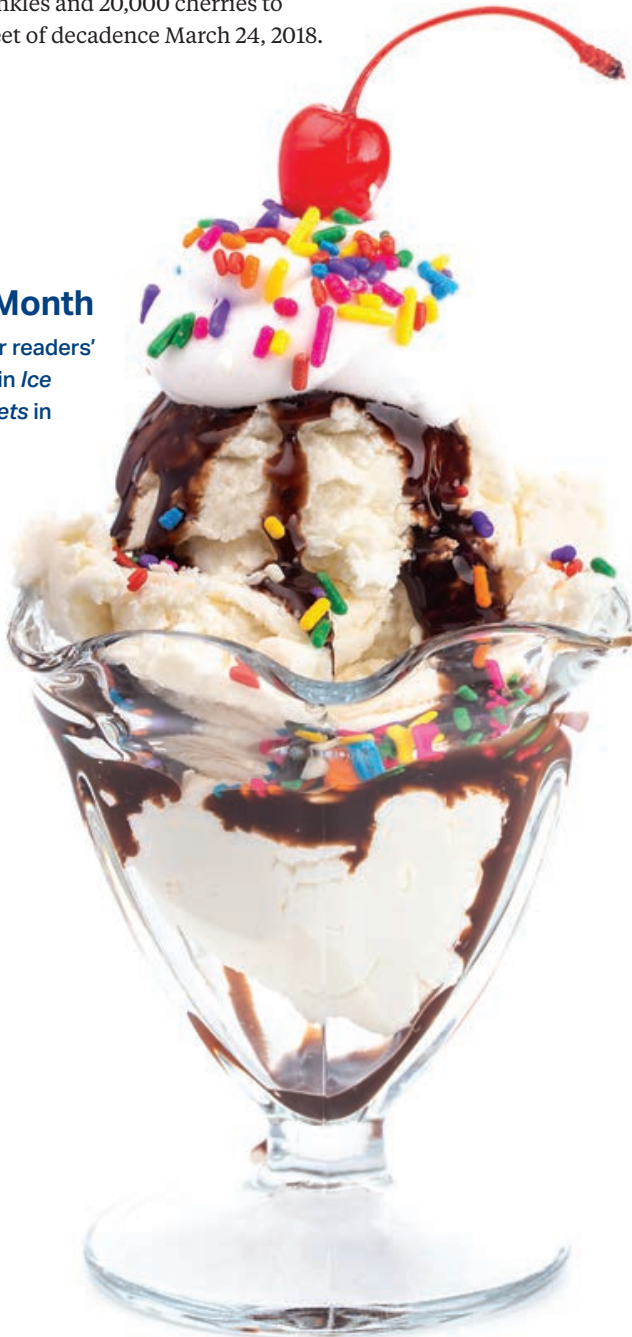
Sundae Best

THE WORLD'S LONGEST ice cream sundae—more than 15 football fields long—was concocted four years ago in College Station.

The creators at the Spirit of Texas Festival used 500 gallons of H-E-B Texans Tackle Crackle ice cream, 2,000 cans of whipped cream, 300 gallons of chocolate and strawberry syrup, 25 pounds of sprinkles and 20,000 cherries to assemble 4,549 feet of decadence March 24, 2018.

July National Ice Cream Month

Celebrate with our readers' recipes, featured in *Ice Creams and Sorbets* in July 2021.



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Dig This

Texas Co-op Power readers ... well, they rock.

One reader, inspired by an October 2021 story, donated \$20,000 to a research program in South Texas.

Learning Rocks featured a Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center program, above, involving high school students in Comstock. The donation will help Shumla purchase a camera with accessories, scaffolding to help students photograph rock art and tablets for data entry.



TCP Contests and More

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News Flash

LIGHTNING OVER TEXAS reached a long way, though not to the ground.

A storm April 29, 2020, produced a bolt that stretched a record 477 miles, from Southeast Texas to Mississippi. Scientists used satellite technology to confirm the record in February.

Also this year, Flatonia, a small town about halfway between Houston and San Antonio, was announced as the lightning capital of the U.S. Vaisala, a weather measurement and analysis company, determined that Flatonia received 1,043 lightning events per square mile in 2021—more than any other city in the country.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I FEEL
PATRIOTIC
WHEN ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our May prompt: **Three words that brighten my day are ...**

I love you.

SANDRA BOWEN
BIG COUNTRY EC
HAWLEY

Ice cold beer.

STEPHEN SEWELL
PEDERNALES EC
KEMPNER

I've got this. (A nice young man ahead of me in line at 7-Eleven this morning decided to pay for my juice and coffee.)

LINDA RIDEOUT
VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents online.



A Deep Dive

“What a fascinating story about a fascinating aspect of our state. I was amazed to learn such a unique place exists in the Lone Star State.”

DONALD HAHN
HAMILTON COUNTY EC
HICO

Hope Lives On

To find that the photo of the Wantland family was taken inside what was the old Hope Lutheran Church of Buckholts really took my breath away [*'A Little Source of Joy,'* May 2022].

Our family were members of Hope Lutheran, and our daughter's wedding was the last one before the old church was hauled off to the pasture of the man who purchased it to use as a barn. The building was later cut into several pieces and moved to Round Top to be restored and used as a children's library.

Lamerle Zajicek
Lucas

I love Ms. Dolly, not only for her music [*'A Little Source of Joy,'* May 2022]. She has done so much for the community she grew up in.

SHERRI CONSTABLE
VIA FACEBOOK



ERICH SCHLEGEL

It Takes the Cake

The Texas Praline Sheet Cake featured in March was one of the most amazing cakes I've ever made. It was a big hit on our Easter table.

I've made several of the recipes featured in the magazine over the years and really liked them all, but this cake takes the cake.

Cindi Boyd
Medina EC
Freer

A Great Mix

I love your magazine. I am always surprised at how much you get into so few pages. And it's a great mix of heartfelt stories, usable information, wonderful recipes and beautiful pictures. You represent our state well.

Anita Askew
Pedernales EC
Wimberley

Along Those Lines

As a child in the 1940s and '50s, we would travel between Vernon and Amarillo. There were always hundreds of scissor-tailed flycatchers on the electric lines [*Scissortail Signals,* April 2022]. My favorite bird. I love them.

Penny Haulman
Via Facebook

WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor
Austin, TX 78701

Please include your electric co-op and town. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

Texas Co-op Power

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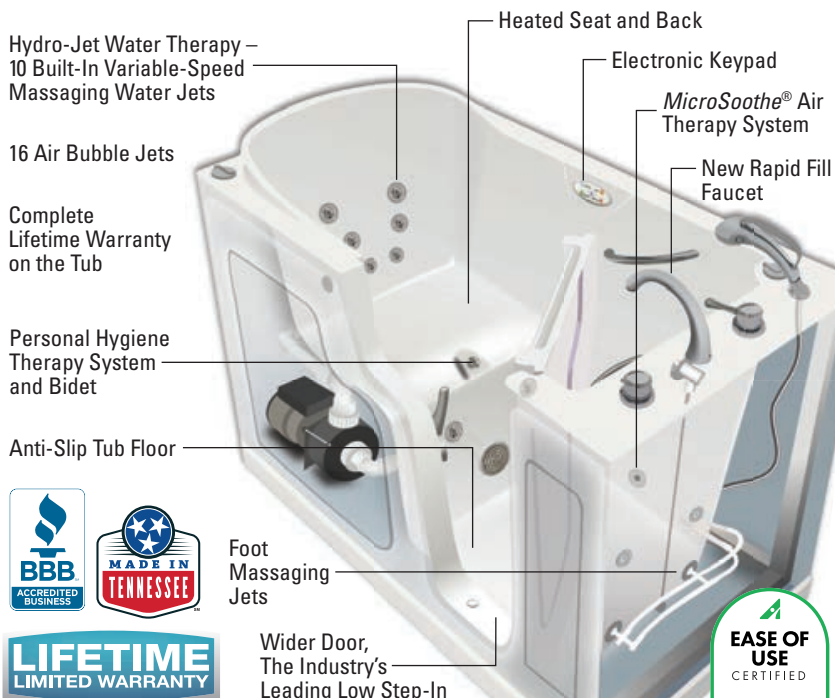
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Texas' cotton gins have turned more sweat and tears into lint than

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JULIA ROBINSON

At times the fabric of Texas' economy has been 100% cotton. The availability of cotton products, though, belies a complicated transformation.

"Blood, sweat and tears," says Kirk Tidwell, a cotton farmer in Lamesa, about halfway between Lubbock and Midland. "There's a lot of tears sometimes."

"There's just so much risk; we don't know from the day we plant it if it's ever going to make it to harvest or not," says Tidwell, who also serves on the board of directors at Lyntegar Electric Cooperative. "We may lose it to a hail-storm or a sandstorm or an early freeze. We're always just hopeful."

That cotton-hope blend—formed by a lot of hard work and a little luck—has not frayed much over two centuries. Times are still tough for cotton farmers, but cotton gins are still going. Texas had 4,300 gins in 1900; 185 operate today,

according to the Texas Cotton Ginners' Association.

"I would guess half of those are on the way out," says Jerry Harris, general manager of King Mesa Gin in Lamesa.

"As the number of gins go down, the number of bales ginned stays the same or goes up," Harris says as 18-wheelers pull onto scales with round bales bound in colorful plastic. "There used to be a gin every 6 miles because that's as far as people wanted to carry their crop, but now people will come hundreds of miles with a crop."

Spanish missionaries were the first to raise cotton in Texas. By 1821, Anglo colonists turned to the crop in earnest, reaping profits and building an industry by relying on the labor of enslaved people. Cotton drove the state's economy until the 20th century. Today it thrives in several areas of the state, and the South Plains region around Lubbock, where Tidwell farms, devotes more land to growing cotton than any other part of the world—as much as 3 million acres some years. Irrigation and easy weed control make

F I B E R S =



any other state for 150 years—and they're still innovating

growing cotton there more productive than in other parts of the state.

Starting at Odessa and going north up the Panhandle, the soil turns reddish brown as fields of cotton spread beneath the pump jacks and wind turbines that dominate the horizon. It's a geography of vast spaces—"so flat that your dog can run away, and you'll still see him a week later," a Texas congressman once said—and the white bolls in tidy rows are set off dramatically against unblemished blue skies.

Since 1850, Texas has led the nation in cotton production, tallying 8 million bales in 2021, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Every one of those bales is processed at a cotton gin, where bolls move through machines that separate the embedded seeds, which are about the size of a grain of rice, from the prized fiber, which is called lint. Cotton production at this scale is possible only because of the gins that dot the state.



TOP The South Plains region around Lubbock devotes more land to growing cotton than any other part of the world. **ABOVE** A handful of cotton seed left over after the ginning process.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Kirk Tidwell raises cotton on 6,500 acres in Lamesa. An 1833 hand-operated cotton gin. Jerry Harris runs King Mesa Gin in Lamesa. Curtis Stewart, manager at Spade Co-op Gin northwest of Lubbock, catches cotton seeds as they fall through a gin's spinning blades.

The largest gin in the world, Adobe Walls Gin in Spearman, about 35 miles from the Oklahoma border, produces 300,000 bales per year. Operations were much smaller during fall and winter harvests generations ago, when cotton gins became gathering places where farmers socialized and shared news while waiting their turn to have their crops baled. Those days could be stressful.

"There was a lot riding on the processing and selling of your cotton," says Andrew Torget, a University of North Texas professor and author of *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800–1850*. "This is an industry where you basically have one payday. The emotional tenor of that was tremendous. How much profit you had, what you could buy your kids or couldn't for the coming year—all these things got concentrated in this one location and this one experience for farmers.

"Today we like to look back with a sort of bucolic romanticism about things that are unfamiliar to us, but I think we forget the terrors and the fears and the helplessness that sometimes accompany those experiences."

Still, gins greatly eased much of the anxiety of cotton farming, which in the early days of our state was only possible because of labor by enslaved people. It takes 10 hours for one person to remove enough seeds by hand to get 1 pound of lint. "Cotton has this problem that the seeds are stuck inside this prison of fibers," Torget says. "How you get those out is a real bottleneck because doing it by hand means you can't do it at scale."

Early gins used hand-cranked stone or iron rollers to separate the seeds from the fiber and could process 5 pounds of lint per day. In 1794, Eli Whitney designed a machine, a cylinder with spikes that pulled lint clean from the seed as it was cranked, that increased production to 50 pounds per day.

Two years later, Henry Ogden Holmes patented a design that increased the output to thousands of pounds per day with a set of spinning saw teeth on a circular steel blade that pulled lint from seeds in a continuous motion. This design



Since 1850, Texas has led the nation in cotton production, tallying 8 million bales in 2021.

year. In 1915 it pressed nearly 1,000 bales.

“We would have been serving 60 farmers in a really good day,” says Tynan Shadle, the museum’s programs coordinator and a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. Teams and wagons full of cotton would wait their turn—first come, first served—in the yard. Some farmers camped out the night before; some would unload in the morning and return in the afternoon with another load.

The gin featured pneumatic tubes that inhaled the raw cotton and blew it through the entire ginning process, an innovation that came from Robert Munger of nearby Rutersville. The system is still used today in gins around the world.

Nothing from cotton was wasted in those days. Seed was separated from the lint and delivered back into the farmer’s wagon to plant for the next year. Sometimes the gin bought it to use as livestock feed or to press into oil.

The Burton gin continued operations until 1974, when it closed its doors after producing only seven bales that year. Lint cleaning, feed milling and other services had kept the facility going longer than most, but its time had come.

“We’ve seen boll weevil infestations lead to crop failures, two world wars taking men off the farms, and then the GI Bill, which gave those returning men better opportunities,” Shadle says. “We saw a mass exodus from farms.

“Cotton was just not able to make enough money, and so it was more profitable to switch back to cattle. Not too long after that, they began finding natural gas in the area, too.”

A community group formed a nonprofit and began restoring the Burton Farmers Gin in 1990. It’s the oldest operating cotton gin in the U.S. and is a Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Out in Lamesa, King Mesa Gin, which operates around the clock at times to keep up with the 7 tons of raw cotton delivered several times a day by truck, is the only gin in the U.S. to offer DNA tracing to its producers, ensuring the same cotton that’s sent overseas for manufacturing is the same cotton in the finished product on store shelves.

In 2019, Texas growers were responsible for three-quarters of all American organic cotton, which is grown using more sustainable practices. “Where you’re sitting right now is in a hundred-mile circle of the most organic cotton grown in the U.S.,” says Harris, a member of Lyntegar EC.

For Tidwell, becoming part owner of King Mesa just made sense for ensuring his livelihood.

“We went in together as a community to keep the gin in the community, under our control and to do it the way we’ve always done it,” he explains from his knee-high cotton field. “I only get paid once a year, and this is my payday right here.” ■

is still used in modern cotton ginning. Gin designs and innovations proliferated across the South, and daisy chains of gins began to be operated by animal and water power.

Visitors to the Texas Cotton Gin Museum in Burton, halfway between Austin and Houston, can see some of this history up close, including an open stand that reveals 80 saw blades that spin vertically through metal ribs. A group of local German farmers sold \$50 shares, raising \$10,000 to build the Burton Farmers Gin in 1913. The gin fired up for the first time August 3, 1914, and produced 82 bales that



Roy Perez, general manager and head pitmaster at Kreuz Market in Lockhart.

WHY'D THE CHICKEN CROSS THE PIT?

Because Kreuz Market has perfected the once-scorned barbecued bird

THE **poor barbecued chicken.**

The holy trinity of Texas barbecue consists of beef brisket, pork ribs and sausage. Other meats pulled from pits around these parts include prime rib, pork chops and giant beef.

Barbecued yardbird? Not so much. Even the generic turkey breast gets more 'cue love.

Traditionally, slow-smoked chicken has been regarded as too tricky to cook consistently, the end product either undercooked with too much red visible or overcooked to a dryness rivaling jerky.

Chicken, it would seem, is meant to be fried, roasted on a rotisserie or grilled in the Mexican style of the El Pollo Loco and Pollo Regio franchises.

For the past 10 years, however, the best barbecued chicken in Texas has been turned out quietly, as something of an afterthought—an almost under-the-counter thing—in one of the most obvious places on Earth: Kreuz Market in Lockhart, one of the temples of Texas barbecue.

Moist and tender, every morsel packs savory-sweet smoked flavor, enveloped by deep-bronzed skin that's crispy, not greasy.

Full disclosure: "Best barbecue" is a loaded phrase, I know. But that's how my friend Wyatt McSpadden described the whole chicken wrapped in butcher paper he brought me when I was bedridden following a hospital stay last year. I didn't open the sack until about three hours after he left. When I did, bells rang and the lights started flashing.

Chicken!

I was part of the original *Texas Monthly* barbecue team for the magazine's top-50 barbecue joints ranking in 1997 and 2003. Barbecued chicken was never part of the discussion on either top-50 quest.

McSpadden photographed some of the top-50 locations, and today he's known as one of the foremost photographers

of Texas barbecue, capturing pitmasters including Austin's Aaron Franklin and Lexington's Tootsie Tomanetz and sampling their esteemed meats.

I met him at Kreuz Market to gauge his assessment, and now I'm willing to stick my neck out and declare it's the best.

Roy Perez chuckles when he hears that.

He says he started tinkering with yardbirds 10 years ago, after noting a number of customers—typically first-timers—asking about chicken. "It wasn't on the menu for years," he says. "We got tired of people asking, 'You got chicken?' and 'You ain't got chicken?' In my head, I went, 'You want chicken? We got Golden Chick, Chicken Express, all these chicken places.'"

But those are fried, not slow-smoked.

"There's something about barbecued chicken that's different," he says. "It just came to me: 'Can I do chicken?' I thought: Let's throw it on there and mess with it, see how it turns out."

As general manager and head pitmaster at Kreuz and with 35 years' experience, the mutton-chopped Perez is renowned for turning out top-shelf brisket as well as exceptional pork ribs, dino beef ribs and sausage.

But a hands-on approach to minding the pit and trial and error led him to consistently turn out slow-smoked birds that are moist and flavorful throughout. His favorite part? "I've always liked the thigh," he says. "We're old-school. As you can see, I'm sitting here keeping my eyes on this fire instead of sitting in an office somewhere."

Perez says he learned the pitmaster trade from Rick Schmidt, one of the owners at Kreuz Market when he started, back in 1987. Chicken takes as much skill as any of the cuts that Kreuz is known for.

"You've got to stay on it, take care of it," Perez says. "Keep an eye on it, twist on the leg to see if it's still tender and still needs more cooking. It's all visual. We don't use thermometers."

Still, most barbecue pit bosses don't share his respect for the craft.

"These guys laugh when we're cooking the chicken," Perez



CHOICE CHICKEN

We asked electric cooperative employees where they get their barbecued bird. Here are a few of their favorite spots.

Mimsy's Craft Barbecue, Crockett
Lockhart Smokehouse, Dallas
Iceman's BBQ, Edgewood
Stiky Ribz, Forney
Bar-B-Que To-Go, Ganado
Heavy's Bar-B-Que, Hondo
Back Porch BBQ & Grill, La Grange
Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que, Llano
The Smoking Oak, Mercedes
Mack's Split Rail BBQ, Mineola
Judge Hunt's BBQ, Quitman
Hickory Roots BBQ, Terrell

Slow-smoked chicken
at Kreuz Market.

Roy Perez's method emphasizes simplicity: about two hours of cooking time at about 300 degrees.

says. "I'll say, 'Those are ready.' 'No, they're not!' I'll say 'OK, get a thermometer so we can check the internal temperature.' Sure enough, they'll poke it and say, 'How did you do that?'"

"With my years of experience, I don't need nothing to tell me this is done or this is not done. You got to make sure how it all comes out because people travel from all over. Even the locals—you don't want to let them down."

His method emphasizes simplicity: about two hours of cooking time at about 300 degrees.

"Put it in the back, let it cook slowly. When you know it's ready, take it off, put it in a container with the lid to keep the moisture in," Perez says. "It's such a little piece of meat; you have to keep an eye on it. You can't walk away like you can with a brisket."

The wood that provides the heat in Perez's pit is post oak. The seasoning, he says, "is no secret: just salt and pepper, a little cayenne, chili powder—same way we do our brisket." But timing is everything. "You can't sell it too early. If it's got blood in there, people might get sick. You can't sell it too late."

Kreuz was famous for not providing barbecue sauce as a condiment; the establishment has never used sauce in the cooking process, no matter the meat.

"It's cheating," Perez says. "It's a quick way out. Here we've

always been, 'Don't put nothing on it. Eat it, try it before you start covering it up with sauce.' Simple. With love. Everything else will take care of itself."

This is barbecue I can eat almost every day.

Hipster barbecue fetishists in search of the exotic tend to bypass the bird. Perez says it's because most young folks don't have the time or patience to slow-smoke chicken.

"They don't want to cook something that you have to babysit," he says. "They want to throw on a big brisket, a big clod, big rack of ribs, ring of sausage, pork chops. Then you get a little chicken—'Man, I don't want to sit here all day—it's hot!'"

Only one of Kreuz Market's eight pits accommodates chicken. The other pits, where briskets are cooking at 700 degrees, are too hot. Chicken sales have steadily increased, Perez says, despite a determined lack of emphasis on the product.

"We don't cook much of it," he says. "We're not known for chicken. The old people who have been coming for years don't order chicken. They don't want something new or different. They're set in their ways."

For the rest of us though, there's a whole other reason for making a barbecue pilgrimage to Lockhart: Roy Perez's barbecued chicken. ■

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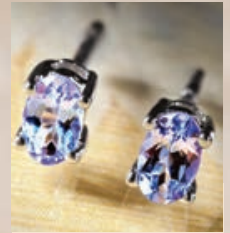


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African Gem Cutter Makes \$2,689,000 Mistake... Will You?

This story breaks my heart every time. Allegedly, just two years after the discovery of tanzanite in 1967, a Maasai tribesman knocked on the door of a gem cutter's office in Nairobi. The Maasai had brought along an enormous chunk of tanzanite and he was looking to sell. His asking price? Fifty dollars. But the gem cutter was suspicious and assumed that a stone so large could only be glass. The cutter told the tribesman, no thanks, and sent him on his way. Huge mistake. It turns out that the gem was genuine and would have easily dwarfed the world's largest cut tanzanite at the time. Based on common pricing, that "chunk" could have been worth close to \$3,000,000! The tanzanite gem cutter missed his chance to hit the jeweler's jackpot ... and make history. Would you have made the same mistake then? Will you make it today?

In the decades since its discovery, tanzanite has become one of the world's most coveted gemstones. Found in only one remote place on Earth (in Tanzania's Merelani Hills, in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro), the precious purple stone is 1,000 times rarer than diamonds. Luxury retailers have been quick to sound the alarm, warning that supplies of tanzanite will not last forever. And in this case, they're right. Once the last purple gem is pulled from the Earth, that's it. No more tanzanite. Most believe that we only have a twenty year supply left, which is why it's so amazing for us to offer this incredible price break. Some retailers along Fifth Avenue are more than happy to charge you outrageous prices for this rarity.

Not Stauer. Staying true to our contrarian nature, we've decided to lower the price of one of the world's rarest and most popular gemstones.

This stunning two-total carat Sunburst Tanzanite Ring features marquise-cut gems set dramatically in gorgeous sterling silver. Each facet sparkles with the distinct violet-blue hue of the precious stones. But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include these tanzanite studs **FREE** with your purchase of the ring — a \$99 value!

Limited Availability. We only have ~~1200~~, 954 left for this ad only. Of course, your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you are not completely aglow with the Sunburst Tanzanite Ring, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price. But, please don't wait, our supply is dropping rapidly.

Jewelry Specifications:

- 2 ctw genuine tanzanite set in .925 sterling silver setting; whole sizes 5–10

Sunburst Tanzanite Ring (2 ctw) ~~\$349~~ \$79* + S&P **Save \$270**
Plus FREE Tanzanite Studs (½ ctw) with your purchase of the Sunburst Tanzanite Ring — **a \$99 value!**

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Once in a lifetime, a product comes along that truly moves people. Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation . . . *The Zinger.*

Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough . . . a personal electric vehicle. It's called the *Zinger*, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

"What my wife especially loves is it gives her back feelings of safety and independence which has given a real boost to her confidence and happiness! Thank You!"

—Kent C., California

The first thing you'll notice about the *Zinger* is its unique look. It doesn't look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum so it weighs only 47.2 lbs. It features one-touch folding and unfolding – when folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the *Zinger* to move



Available in Green, Black and Blue (shown)

forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to



The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your *Zinger* almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.



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ZELUKOSANTRAC | ISTOCK.COM

Ways To Save Energy With Kids

GETTING KIDS INTERESTED in saving energy can seem tough at first, but it doesn't have to be. With warmer months upon us, saving energy will be crucial for keeping electricity bills low. Getting kiddos engaged now will help them form energy-saving habits for the future.

Before parents can teach their children how to save energy, they must first be prepared to answer, "What's in it for me?" As most parents can attest, convincing kids to care about energy efficiency is a hard sell. To counter this indifference, parents can explain why it's important to save energy and how it benefits the child and the world at large, to help kids understand the need to change their habits and motivate them to do so.

In the simplest and most transactional terms, less money spent on an electric bill can mean more money used for fun activities—that's something children can get behind. Less tangible but just as important, using less energy means running your home more efficiently, to help conserve natural resources and benefit the environment.

Once you've got the kids on board that conserving energy is important, here are fun ways to teach kids how to be energy efficient and get them excited about saving energy.

Turn the learning experience into a game. One example is to create an "energy treasure hunt" around the home, where the family searches for devices or appliances that use the most electricity. After finding these items, you can discuss with your kids a few ways for those devices to use less energy.

Another game to play with your kids is I Spy for any energy-saving technologies in stores while out running

errands. Encouraging your kids to find a wide variety of devices around stores can keep them even more engaged. Teach them about the Energy Star logo, which identifies the most energy-efficient devices and appliances.

Create a reward system. One simple method is a star chart. You can use the chart to keep track of stickers and reward your child for every 10 stickers that they earn for doing some activity that saves energy. Stickers could be earned every time your child remembers to turn off the light in a room when they exit, unplugs devices (like phone chargers) that they're not using or showers in less than five minutes. Rewards can be small things that get your child excited, like a piece of candy or a small toy, or getting to pick dinner or dessert.

Discuss lifestyle changes as a family or as an individual, but also make the changes fun. This could be getting the family together to play a board game instead of watching TV. You could also suggest reading a book together instead of using electronic devices. Encourage them to play outdoors with friends instead of playing video games indoors. Incorporating energy-saving practices into everyday life is the best way to ensure the habit has a lasting impact.

Teaching your kids to save energy can be easier when you make it fun. With a little creativity, each of these suggestions can be modified for your family. Each of us, including our kids, can do our part to save energy. ■

Beware of Co-op Equipment

AS YOU SPEND TIME OUTSIDE this summer, your electric cooperative reminds you to use caution near electrical equipment. Often we are surrounded by electric infrastructure without even realizing it, so look up and around to make sure you know the location of poles, power lines, transformers and other co-op property in your surroundings.

Never climb trees near power lines. If you touch a tree that is touching a power line, your body could become the path of electricity from the line to the ground. If you encounter an animal trapped in a tree near power lines or inside a substation, do not attempt to rescue it. Call your co-op for assistance instead.

Don't fly drones near electrical equipment. Remote control toys should never be flown near power lines, substations or other electrical equipment. If contact is accidentally made with a power line or a transformer inside a substation, many members of your community could be left without electricity. To avoid accidents, keep the remote control toy in sight at all times and avoid flying in windy conditions that might make you lose control.

Keep kites away from power lines. Kites can cause power outages if they come into contact with power lines, so it's best to fly them only in wide-open areas. If the wind pushes your kite near a power line, let go of it and don't try to retrieve it without help from your co-op. Never attach anything metal to a kite or fly it when it's wet.

Leave balloons inside and away from power lines. Keep them tethered at all times and attached to weights. Never use metallic ribbon on balloons. Be especially careful with Mylar balloons, whose metallic coatings conduct electricity and can cause short circuits or power surges if they come into contact with power lines. Properly dispose of balloons by puncturing them to release the helium that could cause them to float away.

Here at your co-op, your safety is important to us. Share this message of electrical safety so that you and others can enjoy plenty of summer days filled with fun. ■



Internet-Connected Devices Can Help You Save Energy

INTERNET-CONNECTED DEVICES—often called the Internet of Things—are simply gadgets and appliances outfitted with hardware that allows them to transmit data over the web. That data can be accessed by a user to monitor a device's performance and even control it with a smartphone or computer. Such control allows homeowners to manage appliance use to save energy, identify problems or defer use to off-peak times.

Here are some of the many home items that can be turned into smart devices:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| ▶ Baby monitor | ▶ Washer/dryer |
| ▶ Wi-Fi booster | ▶ Oven/stove |
| ▶ Dog tracker and monitor | ▶ Slow cooker |
| ▶ Bed | ▶ Thermostat |
| ▶ Voice assistant | ▶ Speakers |
| ▶ Lighting | ▶ Remote control |
| ▶ Smoke alarm | ▶ Garage door opener |
| ▶ Sprinklers | ▶ Lock |
| ▶ Air quality monitor | ▶ Car charger |
| ▶ Security monitor | ▶ Doorbell |
| ▶ Coffee maker | ▶ Vent |
| ▶ Refrigerator | ▶ Remote control |
| ▶ Dishwasher | ▶ Exterior lighting |
| ▶ Wi-Fi router | ▶ Electric vehicle |
| ▶ TV | ▶ Yard lighting |
| | ▶ Leak detector |



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Ascending Acclaim

Van Horn has always offered views of the stars; now rockets provide a closer look

BY MELISSA GASKILL • ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID VOGIN

THE WORLD WATCHED in July 2021 as Blue Origin sent four people on a 10-minute ride to the edge of space, 66.5 miles up. The trip launched from a facility about 20 miles outside Van Horn, in far West Texas.

It was the first time many folks had ever heard of the tiny town of about 2,000. And for some Van Horn residents, it was the first time they'd heard of Blue Origin.

The company started construction on the facility, dubbed Launch Site One, in 2006 on former ranch property north of town. It began testing rockets there in 2012. Some Van Horn residents noticed the sound of rockets blasting off, but many could have mistaken it for train cars connecting on the busy track that slices through the town.

Van Horn Mayor Becky Brewster was city administrator when Blue Origin first arrived. "Most people thought, these are big ideas, but it's never going to happen," she says. "There wasn't a lot of public participation in the process. They kept pretty much to themselves, and construction was so far away that it didn't affect our daily lives one way or the other."

That changed in 2021 as test launches became more frequent and once humans started riding the rockets.

"That first launch was unreal," Brewster says. "We were almost overcome. All the hotels were full. News reporters were having to stay in Marfa and El Paso." Space enthusiasts lined the highway to watch the launch.

The flights travel at three times the speed of sound, and occupants float weightlessly for several minutes before their craft descends by giant parachutes for a dusty desert landing nearby.

Some signs of Van Horn's new far-out identity have popped up: a mural of Blue Origin CEO Jeff Bezos on the side of a building, Blue Origin feather logos on others, space-themed T-shirts and mugs on sale at Hotel El Capitan and at Boots and Scoops, a café. El Capitan's Gopher Hole Bar has a large silver feather over the door, a token of appreciation from the company.

The feather also adorns a sign along Texas Highway 54 marking the entrance to the launch site. Thomas Lancaster and Belle Peña of Marfa Cement Works, members of Tri-County Electric Cooperative, produced the artsy display—a 20-foot stainless steel

feather perched alongside a blue concrete planter filled with native plants.

Blue Origin chose this area for Launch Site One because it provided safe, open space to test, transport and fly launch vehicles, a Blue Origin representative said.

The sprawling launch facility includes a vehicle barn, launch pad and training center. About 10 minutes away is Astronaut Village, a collection of Airstream trailers with a restaurant and bar for those preparing to travel to space.

Van Horn's economy has long relied on much older forms of transportation; the railroad and Interstate 10 run through town, making it a hub for day trips to Guadalupe Mountains National Park and the McDonald Observatory. But the town is starting to embrace its new role in the cosmos.

"We started a Facebook page where we share announcements of launches," Brewster says. "And we're working on an app for this five-county region to highlight points of interest for tourists."

Van Horn officials meet regularly with Blue Origin, and Brewster says the town would like to have a viewing area for launches. Blue Origin has helped bring in more than \$1 million for the community through grants that benefit the school district, food bank and infrastructure, according to Morrissey, who said the company is building an apartment complex and a dozen single-family homes in the area. Blue Origin employs 285 people and 50 contractors in West Texas, and some serve on city councils, school boards and in community groups.

Van Horn's longtime residents have had mixed reactions to the whole space thing, Brewster says. "Some people don't even pay that much attention; others see endless possibilities."

Anyone can sign up online to book a seat on future Blue Origin flights. Prices aren't public, but a seat on the first flight went for \$28 million in an auction. Blue Origin donated that money to its Club for the Future, which funds nonprofit organizations working to support the future of life in space.

The rest of us can make the much less expensive trip to Van Horn. And even take home a T-shirt. ■



BLUE ORIGIN

LAUNCH SITE ONE

FIGURE 2

For the Man Who Gives Everything and Expects Nothing



If you're anything like my dad, you give your family everything. Your name, your time, your values — the people in your life know they can depend on you for practically anything. In exchange for imparting all of this energy and experience, you expect nothing in return.

The point? You deserve to treat yourself once in a while. You do so much for the people you care about. Now it's time to focus on you for just a few minutes. That's where the Men's Due Volta Watch comes in. This astonishing innovation provides a digital readout that's powered by a precise quartz engine, combining both analog and digital timekeeping.

Outfitted with a stopwatch, alarm, a.m./p.m. settings, and day, date and month complications, this timepiece stands out from the crowd. With its large face and handsome, masculine design, this watch is perfect for the back nine and the happy hour afterwards. Water-resistant up to 3 ATM, this timepiece won't wimp out if you have a run-in with a water hazard.

Other hybrid watches can sell for thousands of dollars, but because we've built more than 1 million watches, we know how to create real value. That's why we can offer this timepiece for just \$79! If you're not completely satisfied with this watch, return it for a full refund.

Act quickly! This one-of-a-kind watch has been one of our fastest sellers this year. Of our original run of 2,872, we only have 389 left for this ad! In the last couple of years there's been a watch shortage, but Stauer has got you covered. If you're the kind of man who gives everything and expects nothing in return, it's time to treat yourself.

Watch Specifications:

- Complications: stopwatch, alarm, a.m./p.m. settings, and day, date and month
- Precision movement chronograph
- Stainless steel caseback and crown
- Water-resistant to 3 ATM

Men's Due Volta Watch ~~\$399~~ **\$79*** + S&P **Save \$320**

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What Stauer Clients Are Saying About Our Knives



"The feel of this knife is unbelievable... this is an incredibly fine instrument." — H., Arvada, CO



"This knife is beautiful!" — J., La Crescent, MN



It was a perfect late autumn day in the northern Rockies. Not a cloud in the sky, and just enough cool in the air to stir up nostalgic memories of my trip into the backwoods. This year, though, was different. I was going it solo. My two buddies, pleading work responsibilities, backed out at the last minute. So, armed with my trusty knife, I set out for adventure.

Well, what I found was a whole lot of trouble. As in 8 feet and 800-pounds of trouble in the form of a grizzly bear. Seems this grumpy fella was out looking for some adventure too. Mr. Grizzly saw me, stood up to his entire 8 feet of ferocity and let out a roar that made my blood turn to ice and my hair stand up. Unsnapping my leather sheath, I felt for my hefty, trusty knife and felt emboldened. I then showed the massive grizzly over 6 inches of 420 surgical grade stainless steel, raised my hands and yelled, "Whoa bear! Whoa bear!" I must have made my point, as he gave me an almost admiring grunt before turning tail and heading back into the woods.

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I was pretty shaken, but otherwise fine. Once the adrenaline high subsided, I decided I had some work to do back home too. That was more than enough adventure for one day.

Our Grizzly Hunting Knife pays tribute to the call of the wild. Featuring stick-tang construction, you can feel confident in the strength and durability of this knife. And the hand carved, natural bone handle ensures you won't lose your grip even in the most dire of circumstances. I also made certain to give it a great price. After all, you should be able to get your point across without

getting stuck with a high price.

But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99 8x21 power compact binoculars **FREE** when you purchase the Grizzly Hunting Knife.

Make sure to act quickly. The Grizzly Hunting Knife has been such a hit that we're having trouble keeping it in stock. Our first release of more than 1,200 SOLD OUT in TWO DAYS! After months of waiting on our artisans, we've finally gotten some knives back in stock. Only 1,337 are available at this price, and half of them have already sold!

Knife Specifications:

- Stick tang 420 surgical stainless steel blade; 7 1/4" blade; 12" overall
- Hand carved natural brown and yellow bone handle
- Brass hand guard, spacers and end cap
- FREE genuine tooled leather sheath included (a \$49 value!)

The Grizzly Hunting Knife ~~\$249~~ \$79* + S&P
Save \$170

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Colorado's Texas Bridge

The Royal Gorge Bridge, highest in America, was built and owned by Texans

BY W.F. STRONG

BRIDGES ARE MEASURED in three ways: longest, tallest and highest. In Texas, the Fred Hartman Bridge across the Houston Ship Channel boasts the longest span at 1,250 feet and is the tallest at 440 feet. But it's not the highest. That honor goes to the aptly named Pecos High Bridge, where the deck is an astounding 273 feet above the Pecos River—nearly a football field straight up.

The highest bridge in America is the Royal Gorge Bridge—just shy of 1,000 feet high. It's in Colorado. But without Texas, it might not exist at all.

The Royal Gorge Bridge was the dream of Lon P. Piper of San Antonio. They say he stood on the edge of the gorge in 1928

and imagined laying a bridge across it. He had already built a bridge across the Rio Grande into Mexico.

The Royal Gorge would be different though. It would be a bridge to nowhere, one that would exist purely to give tourists heart-stopping views they couldn't get anywhere else in the world.

Within two years it was done—at a cost of \$350,000, or more than \$6.2 million today. When it was finished, Piper owned the highest bridge in the world, and it would remain so for 72 years.

Piper hired bridge engineer George Cole of Houston to design the Royal Gorge Bridge and to serve as the general contractor. With 80 workers, they com-

pleted the project in seven months without a fatality or any serious injuries.

As I learned about the bridge's history, I couldn't help but notice its national character. It was a bridge built by Texans in Colorado spanning the Arkansas River with Oregon timber for the deck. Cole went on to design and build a railroad that would take brave riders to the bottom of the gorge at a 45-degree angle. Now there are gondolas far above the gorge for those who want to go higher still and zip lines for those who can't get enough tachycardia in their lives.

In 1947, Piper sold the bridge to another Texan, Clint Murchison Sr., who bought it sight unseen as an investment and strangely never traveled there to walk across his magnificent possession. Instead, Murchison set up the Royal Gorge Bridge Co. and managed the Colorado property from Dallas. When he died, the bridge was passed on to his sons, Clint Murchison Jr. (you remember him—he founded and owned the Dallas Cowboys for 25 years) and John Murchison. When John died, his wife, Lucille, inherited the bridge, and they say she just loved it, traveling often to see it.

For the past 21 years, Texan Mike Bandera has served as the Royal Gorge Bridge's general manager of operations. But today, the bridge—after nearly 100 years—has Colorado ownership. After Lucille Murchison passed it on to her grandchildren, they sold it a few years ago to nearby Cañon City.

So I'd like to say this to Colorado, about the world-class bridge we envisioned, financed, built and managed for you all those years: You're welcome. ■

TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



Stone Fruits

This season of abundance offers a variety of delectable options

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

When summer hits, I know I'm not the only one looking forward to that first bite of a juicy peach. My family loads up on stone fruits, making sure to have enough to cover our snack cravings and to enjoy in sweet and savory recipes. In this curry, fresh nectarines take the place of the dried fruits more commonly used. You can peel the nectarines if you like; I keep the skins intact to let them bubble away into the sauce.



Chicken Nectarine Curry

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs
2 teaspoons salt, divided use
½ teaspoon pepper, divided use
1 onion, halved and thinly sliced
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
2 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon ground coriander
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
⅛ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
1 cup chicken broth
4 nectarines, pitted and sliced
½ cup chopped fresh parsley, divided use
2 cups cooked couscous
¼ cup roughly chopped pistachios (optional)

1. In a large straight-sided skillet with a lid, add oil and heat over medium-high. Season the chicken on both sides with half of the salt and pepper, then add to the hot skillet. Cook until browned on both sides, about 12 minutes total. Remove from pan and set aside on a plate.

2. Reduce heat to medium and add onion. Sauté until slightly softened, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and ginger and cook another 30 seconds. Stir in remaining salt, pepper and spices, and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.

3. Add a small amount of chicken broth to deglaze the pan, scraping the bottom, then pour in remaining broth. Return chicken to the pan with any accumulated juices. Scatter nectarine slices over the top.

4. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for about 25 minutes. Remove lid and stir occasionally. Once chicken is tender, simmer uncovered for 5 minutes to thicken sauce. Stir in half the parsley and serve over couscous, with remaining parsley and pistachios for garnish.

SERVES 4

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Peach Barbecue Sauce.



Apricot Scones

JANET EAKINS
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

These tender scones, a perfect way to feature dried apricots, are wonderful straight out of the oven but also keep well, so you can enjoy them multiple days in a row.

2½ cups flour
½ cup plus 2 teaspoons sugar, divided use
2 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cold and cut into pieces
1 cup finely chopped dried apricots
1 cup plus 1½ tablespoons heavy cream, divided use, plus more as needed

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. In a large bowl, combine flour, ½ cup sugar, baking powder and salt. Using a pastry blender or two knives, cut butter into flour mixture until crumbly and butter is evenly blended. Add apricots, stirring to mix well. Add 1 cup cream, stirring just until dry ingredients are moistened. If mixture looks too dry, stir in more cream, 1 tablespoon at a time, until dough is equally moistened and coming together.
3. On a lightly floured surface, scoop out dough and knead gently just to bring it together. Pat dough into an 8- to 9-inch circle and cut into 8 equal wedges. Place on baking sheet slightly separated, brush with remaining 1½ tablespoons cream and sprinkle with remaining sugar. Bake 20 minutes or until browned.

SERVES 8

MORE RECIPES >

\$500 WINNER

Peach Cream Cheese Danish

MARY MITCHELL
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC



Easy to make and bursting with peaches, this braided danish makes for an elegant presentation on the brunch or dessert table. Swap in your favorite fresh or canned fruits and serve as is or with ice cream on the side.

SERVES 6



FILLING

6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
¼ cup sugar
1 egg yolk, at room temperature
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon lemon juice
Pinch of salt

PASTRY

Flour, for dusting
1 sheet puff pastry, thawed
1 can (15 ounces) sliced peaches, drained and sliced into bite-size pieces
1 egg
1 tablespoon water
1–2 tablespoons coarse sugar

GLAZE

⅓ cup powdered sugar
1½ teaspoons milk

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. **FILLING** In a bowl, beat together cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add egg yolk, vanilla, lemon juice and salt and beat together until well blended.
3. **PASTRY** Lightly dust a sheet of parchment with flour and roll out puff pastry, flattening creases if needed. Set onto a rimmed baking sheet. Spread cream cheese mixture down the middle of the pastry lengthwise, leaving a 1-inch border at the top and bottom. Spoon diced peaches onto the cream cheese mixture.
4. Use kitchen shears or a paring knife to cut an equal number of 1-inch strips diagonally down both sides of the pastry, leaving ½ inch between the filling and the start of each cut. Braid the pastry strips by folding them into the middle, alternating from side to side.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together egg and water and brush over pastry. Sprinkle with coarse sugar. Bake 25–30 minutes or until pastry is golden brown. Let cool to room temperature.
6. **GLAZE** In a small bowl, whisk together powdered sugar and milk until smooth, then drizzle glaze over the pastry and let set or serve immediately.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

FINGER FOODS DUE JULY 10

Bite-size foods are perfect for holiday gatherings, tailgating or just hanging out. Submit your recipes on our website by July 10 for a chance to win \$500.





Easy Cherry Pie

POLLY BELT
COSERV

Instead of a bottom crust, this pie features a buttery crumble topping that bakes into the filling. Make sure to keep the syrup separate from the pie until ready to serve so the topping stays delightfully crisp.

1 can (14.5 ounces) sour or tart pitted cherries
1 cup plus 1 tablespoon flour, divided

use
1½ cups sugar, divided use
½ cup chopped pecans
1 teaspoon baking powder
¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon salt
1 egg
¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and set a rimmed baking sheet on the lower rack to catch any spilled juices.

2. Drain the juice from the cherries into a small saucepan and reserve. Pour the cherries into the bottom of an ungreased 9-inch pie dish.

3. In a medium bowl, combine 1 cup flour, 1 cup sugar, pecans, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Using a fork, mix in egg until mixture is evenly moist and crumbly. Spread evenly over the cherries. Pour the melted butter over the crumble topping, coating it completely.

4. Bake 40 minutes, until browned. Let pie cool while you make the sauce.

5. To make the sauce, whisk together

remaining flour and sugar. Place reserved saucepan of juice over medium heat, whisking in sugar mixture. Cook until slightly thickened, then remove from heat (sauce will thicken more as it cools).

6. Serve slices of pie with spoonfuls of warm sauce over the top.

SERVES 6-8

TCP You'll find hundreds more recipes featuring these and other stone fruits on our website. Most of them are from the kitchens of *Texas Co-op Power* readers just like you.



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Creeping Along

I was brave enough to visit the eerie Ghost Road. How about you?

BY CHET GARNER

I VIVIDLY REMEMBER the first time I set out to see the Saratoga lights. My mom loaded up the family van with as many people as it could carry so we could experience a bona fide unsolved mystery.

Generations of locals say the lights are a periodic presence of unexplainable orbs and lights dancing up and down an old Big Thicket dirt road under a dark canopy of piney woods. My mom killed the headlights, and we crept along, holding our breath. My only comfort was that I was inside a locked car.

Bragg Road (aka Ghost Road) is a rite of passage in East Texas, between Beaumont and Livingston. It's only about 8 miles long, originally a railroad spur used during the East Texas oil boom. Legend holds this run through swampy land was full of danger, and crews suffered numerous casualties from accidents, malaria and other perils. Some say those killed never left the work site.

The tracks and ties were removed in the 1930s, leaving a very straight road that anyone with a healthy dose of Lone Star courage can drive to see if the ghostly orbs appear. Some say they change colors. Others say they dart back and forth, even coming toward vehicles at light speed.

Naysayers believe they're simply distant headlights, and scientists explain them as swamp gas. But nobody can explain everything that happens out there in the dark.

It took Mom over an hour to drive the entire length of Bragg Road. Every couple minutes she would yell, "Did you see that?" or "Whoa, that was beautiful." As soon as I looked, the light (or whatever it was) would be gone.

By the end, I didn't see a thing. But I did settle the fact that I was brave enough to travel the infamous Ghost Road. ■

ABOVE Chet discovers that what you don't see can be as frightening as what you do see on the Ghost Road.

TCP A dark lane with a chance of ghosts. What could go wrong? See Chet's video on our website to find out. Watch all his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details.

JULY

08

Canton [8-9] Balloon Fest,
balloonfestcanton.com,
(903) 567-1849

**Lewisville [8-10] Texas
Art and Literary Festival**,
texasartandlitfest.com

09

**Galveston Bill Engvall
Farewell Tour**, thegrand.com,
(409) 765-1894

**Grapevine 1920s Ice
Cream Social at Nash
Farm**, 1-800-457-6338,
nashfarm.org

**Lampasas Toughest 10K
in Texas**, runsignup.com,
toughest10klampasas@
gmail.com

La Porte Cycling Saturday,
(281) 479-2431, thc.texas.gov

**Mason Roundup Festival
and Parade**, (325) 347-5758,
masontxcoc.com

**McDade Watermelon
Festival**, (512) 736-4302,
mcdadetexas.com

**Meridian Chisholm Trail
Roundup**, (254) 435-2381,
facebook.com/meridiantx

Palacios Poker in Palacios,
(361) 972-2615,
palacioschamber.com

**Palestine East Texas
Southern Soul Zydeco
and Blues Festival**,
(832) 892-1407, eventbrite.com

**Weatherford Parker
County Peach Festival**,
(817) 596-3801,
parkercountypeachfestival.org

**Kerrville [9-10] Summer
Market**, 1-888-225-3427,
kerrvilletexascvb.com

Palestine [9, 16, 23, 30, Aug. 6] Farm & Flower Market, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

14

San Angelo [14–Sept. 11] Banjara Textiles From a Private Collection, (325) 653-3333, samfa.org

15

Ennis [15–16] Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County Quilt Show, (972) 878-4748, elliscountyquilters.com

Bastrop [15–17] Corvette Invasion, (512) 303-0558, corvetteinvasion.com

Laredo [15–17] International Sister Cities Festival, (956) 795-2200, visitolaredo.com

16

Paris Tour de Paris, (903) 784-2501, tourdeparis.org

Round Rock Colombian Fest ATX, (512) 903-8929, colombianfestatx.com

Fredericksburg [16–17] Night in Old Fredericksburg, (830) 997-2359, gillespiefair.com

Waco [16–17] Duel on the Brazos, (830) 385-3106, sdbaracing.com/schedule

19

Lubbock [19–23, 25–30] **Hamilton**, (806) 792-8339, visitolubbock.org

21

Waco [21–24] Deep in the Heart Film Festival, deepintheheartff.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your October event by August 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.



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Pick of the Month

Salt Lime & a Good Time

Comanche, July 23
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comanchechamber.org

Celebrate National Tequila Day at the courthouse square with the spirited beverage and other treats.

JULY EVENTS CONTINUED

22

Kyle Dive-in Movie: Lilo & Stitch, (512) 262-3939, cityofkyle.com

Lubbock Dwight Yoakam, (806) 792-8339, visitlubbock.org

Waxahachie [22-23] Metroplex Archaeological Society Indian Artifact Show, (469) 309-4040, waxahachie.com

Palestine [22-24, 29-31] The Little Mermaid, (903) 724-4385, visitpalestine.com

Victoria [22-24, 28-31] The Wizard of Oz, (361) 570-8587, theatrevictoria.org

Lockhart [22-24, 29-31, Aug. 5-6] Annie Get Your Gun, (512) 376-5653, mygbt.org

23

Bandera National Day of the American Cowboy, (830) 796-3045, banderacowboycapital.com

San Angelo National Cowboy Day, (325) 657-4444, fortconcho.com

28

Buffalo Gap [23-24] Tour de Gap, (325) 829-0617, tourdegap.com

Gonzales [23-24] Float Fest, floatfest.net

Salado [23, 30, Aug. 6], Salado Legends, (254) 308-2200, tablerock.org

Clute [28-30] Great Texas Mosquito Festival, (979) 265-8392, mosquitofestival.com

29

Fredericksburg [29-31] Hill Country Auto Swap Meet, (254) 751-7958, visitfredericksburgtx.com

Junction [29-31] Sizzler Disc Golf Tournament, (361) 549-5507, junctiontexas.com/disc-golf

San Angelo [29-Aug. 5] Wild West Fest, facebook.com/wildwestfestsanangelo

Stafford [29-31, Aug. 5-7, 12-14] The SpongeBob Musical, (713) 302-5329, inspirationstage.com

30

Bowie July Jam, (940) 872-6246, cityofbowietx.com

Lubbock An Evening With Journey, (806) 742-7362, visitlubbock.org

AUGUST

02

Bandera Cowboy Capital Opry, (830) 796-4969, banderatex.com

06

Camp Wood Nueces Canyon Old Settlers Reunion, (830) 597-6241, nuecescanyonchamber.org

Frankston Neches River Wilderness Race, (903) 245-9490, necheswildernessrace.com

Morning Glory

A new day is dawning in Co-op Country, and members have captured the magnificence, from dewy haze to warm sunshine. So fetch yourself a cup of coffee, and let's greet the sunup.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 DANNY VIVIAN
NUECES EC
"The sun rises over the breakers near Port Aransas."

2 BRIAN FOX
PEDERNALES EC
Sunrise over Caprock Canyons State Park.

3 CASSIE DE LEON
TRI-COUNTY EC
"Breakfast. Need I say more?"

4 MICHAEL HRISCHUK
TRINITY VALLEY EC
"Our backyard on a cool fall morning."



Upcoming Contests

DUE JUL 10 Aerials
DUE AUG 10 Winter Wildlife
DUE SEP 10 Nature's Colors



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more Morning Glory photos from readers.





Can't Top This

Finding more than just a sense of accomplishment on Guadalupe Peak

BY ANDY RHODES
PHOTO BY E. DAN KLEPPER

"HOW FAR AWAY is the peak?"

"Once you get to the really hard part, you're nearly there."

"Wait ... *this* isn't the really hard part?"

I was approaching the summit of Guadalupe Peak—or at least I thought I was—and glad to catch my breath while giving my rubbery legs a break. After encountering the descending hiker, I was momentarily discouraged but not daunted. My three-hour trek in far West Texas had so far been challenging but not overwhelming, and I wanted to carry my momentum all 8,751 feet up to the tallest natural point in the state.

The last eighth of a mile was indeed tricky—a couple sheer rock faces (I didn't look down) and large boulders to ascend—but it never felt dangerous. Finally, I took one giant step and came face to face

with a metal pyramid atop the peak.

But I also encountered something I hadn't expected: Surrounding the sculpture was a spontaneous community. About a dozen of us smiling hikers shared the rewarding accomplishment of having just summited Guadalupe Peak. Cheers of "You did it!" and "Welcome to the top of Texas!" erupted. We beamed with adrenaline and pride, knowing how much planning, commitment, resolve and stamina it took to conquer such a formidable foe.

I was also rewarded by the most spectacular 360-degree views I've ever seen in Texas. It was a perfect fall day—65 and sunny—so visibility was pristine. The sky was pure blue, a cheerful overstretched canvas. I took in multicolored ridges of mountains stretching for miles and miles beyond Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

I had started the day with a hearty breakfast and hit the trail in the cool shade. The first hour was tough, with tight switchbacks and steep ascents. I reminded myself I wasn't in a race and listened to my body's cues; when I felt weary, I'd stop for water or take a few bites of a protein bar. My trusty trekking poles helped me navigate the rocky trail and pivot up tough spots.

The second hour was easier—a large section of trees provided welcome shade, and I noticed more flora, including jade-colored desert scrub and small waxy succulents. The trail was well maintained and easy to navigate, which helped guide me through the final stretch.

By the end, my legs were fatigued, but that seemed a small price. I was excited about completing the quest. When the shiny obelisk entered my view, the smile on my face reflected the joy I felt in joining my new community.

At that moment, it felt like the top of the world. It just so happened that it actually was. ■



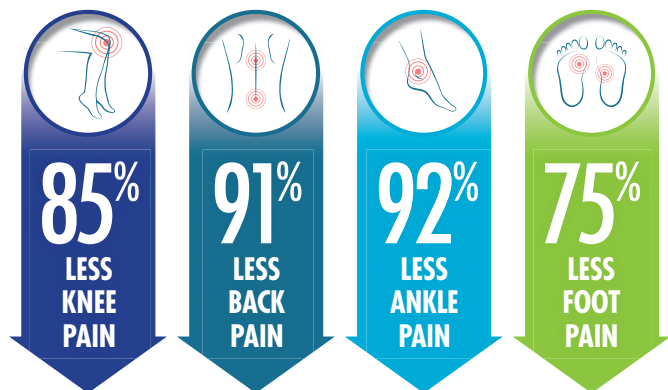
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