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*Texas Hill Country*



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Peter Brown

June 6-8, 2019



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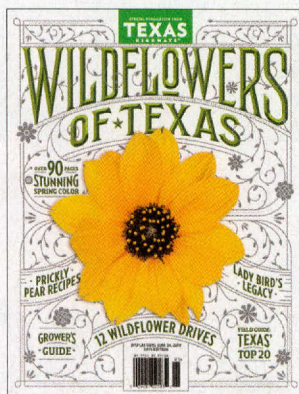
## NOTE

## An Oasis Renewed

**S**ometimes the best summer moments are unplanned—a spontaneous road trip, a lazy day at the lake, or an impromptu backyard barbecue. But some of our state's most memorable summer diversions require advance planning. Balmorhea State Park's star attraction, the pool, reopened March 1 after being closed nearly 10 months for repairs, and visitors are already returning in droves to cool off in the aquamarine water of the world's largest spring-fed swimming pool.

With day-use passes now capped at 900 to protect the natural environment of the West Texas oasis, summer travelers should plan to reserve their spots ahead of time using the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's new online booking system at [texasstateparks.reserveamerica.com](http://texasstateparks.reserveamerica.com).

While repairs to the park's Civilian Conservation Corps-built motel, campground, historic pergola, and septic system are ongoing, the 1.3-acre pool will be open daily from 8 a.m. to



### WILDFLOWERS OF TEXAS

Don't miss our special issue featuring more than 90 pages of spring color, wildflower drives, a grower's guide, and more. Find it only on newsstands through June 24.



Balmorhea State Park reopened its 1.3-acre swimming pool March 1 after 10 months of repairs to the rock-walled oasis, which was built around San Solomon Springs in 1933.

7:30 p.m. all summer long. "It's really the only place in the desert where you have a place to swim as well as snorkel and dive," park superintendent Carolyn Rose says.

Along with strongly recommending travelers secure their passes ahead of time, she asks guests to be mindful of its natural inhabitants. Long before the CCC built the park in the 1930s, the springs were home to five endangered aquatic animals that now swim alongside the more than 150,000 people who visit Balmorhea annually. "So many people love this park," Rose says, "and they can help us protect it if they come with a stewardship mindset."

To stay up to date on the latest news on Texas destinations, including noteworthy openings, new attractions, and curated travel guides, visit [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com). While you're there, check out our definitive Summer Bucket List with more than 100 ideas to fill the season with unforgettable moments—like a bracing splash into Balmorhea's famous swimming hole.

*Emily R. Stone*

**EMILY ROBERTS STONE**  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



SUNSHINE + SILOS ARE  
JUST A DAYTRIP AWAY

MAGNOLIA







# THERE'S SO MUCH TO DO AND SEE HERE IN WACO —

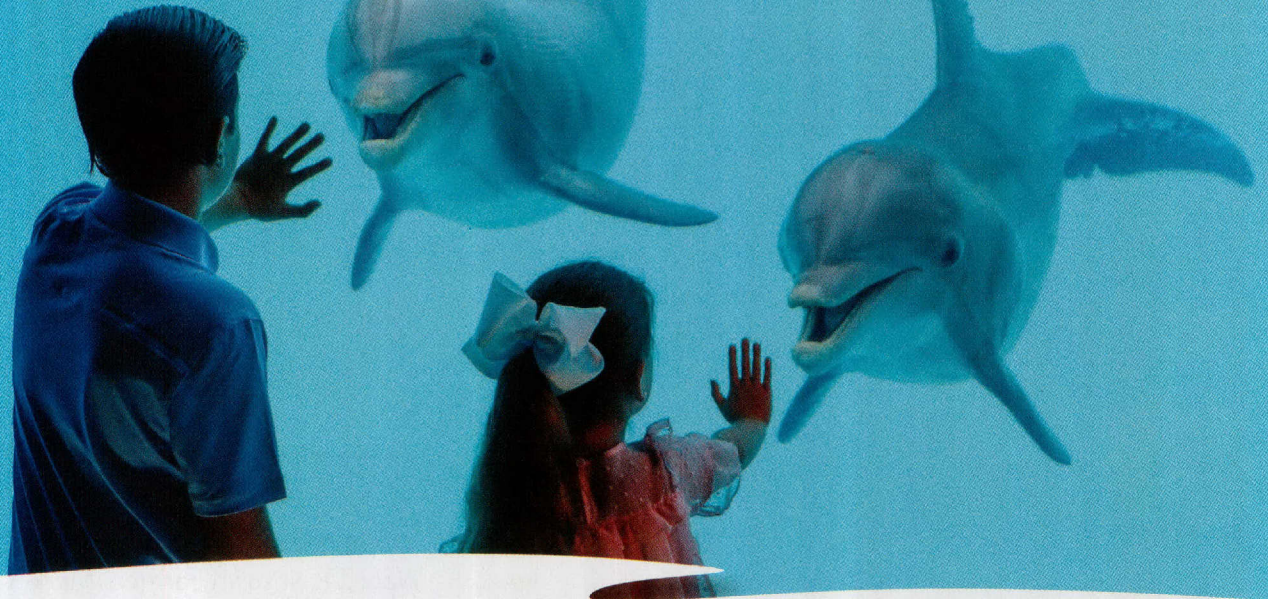
*It's time to plan a day trip!  
Here's a list of our favorites for you  
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2. Spend Saturday morning at the Waco Downtown Farmers Market
3. Go antiquing around town
4. Stop by the Little Shop on Bosque to snag some discounted finds & see where Magnolia got its start
5. Have a picnic lunch at Cameron Park
6. Play a round of cornhole on the lawn at the Silos and take a look around the Market
7. Grab a cupcake (or six) at Silos Baking Co.
8. Cheer on the Bears at a Baylor University athletic event
9. Take an evening stroll on the Waco Suspension Bridge
10. Catch a movie or concert at the Waco Hippodrome Theatre

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# MAY

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## Just Peachy!

Hit the road and visit three counties to find the juiciest, ripest peaches for cooking, canning, or eating fresh from the tree.

*By John Lumpkin*

*Photographs by Tiffany Hofeldt*

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## The Beginner's Guide to Camping

An outdoor novice offers a practical manual on the age-old hobby, from Texas-made gear to fire-starting 101.

*By Kimya Kavehkar*

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## The Spirit of Selah

Fried chicken mogul J. David Bamberger has dedicated more than half his life to restoring a Hill Country ranch and teaches others how to do the same.

*By Andrew Sansom*

*Photographs by Rusty Yates and David K. Langford*

**A RAINBOW**  
arches over  
Bamberger Ranch  
in Johnson City.



THE BEST DAYS ARE

# Festival Days

A refreshing way to beat the heat

Your exclusive GO TEXAN guide to the freshest produce festivals across Texas this summer.

MAY

- A Pasadena Strawberry Festival  
May 17-19, 2019  
Pasadena Fairgrounds
- B Alamo Watermelon Festival  
May 11, 2019  
Alamo Texas Central Park

JUNE

- C Texas Blueberry Festival  
June 8, 2019  
Downtown Nacogdoches
- D Jacksonville Tomato Fest  
June 8, 2019  
Downtown Jacksonville
- E Stonewall Peach JAMBoree  
June 21-22, 2019  
Stonewall Chamber Grounds
- F Luling Watermelon Thump  
June 27-30, 2019  
Watermelon Thump Pavillion, Luling
- G Stockdale Watermelon Jubilee  
June 15-16, 2019  
Stockdale City Park

JULY

- H Parker County Peach Festival  
July 13, 2019  
Downtown Weatherford
- I Center What-A-Melon Festival  
July 13, 2019  
Downtown Center Square
- J McDade Watermelon Festival  
July 12-13, 2019  
McDade
- K Hempstead Watermelon Fest  
July 19-20, 2019  
Hempstead
- L Naples Watermelon Festival  
July 25-28, 2019  
Naples

AUGUST

- M De Leon Peach & Melon Festival  
August 5, 2019  
De Leon



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Texas Department of Agriculture  
Commissioner Sid Miller

Here's to a great summer!

Hot summer days & fresh new experiences.



# MAY

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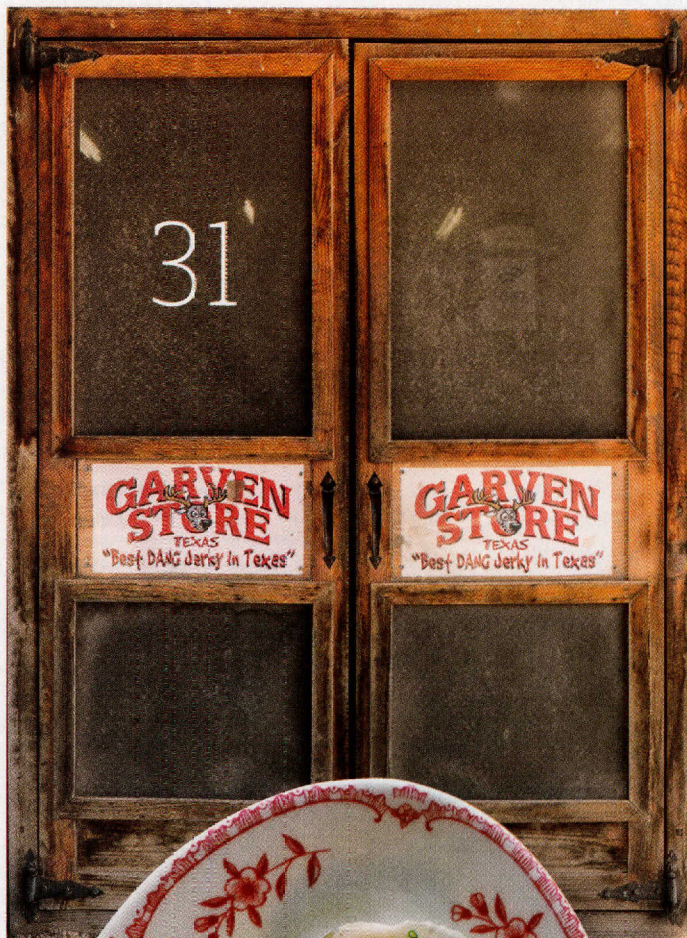
Drive/Souvenir

Three old-timey country stores double as community centers



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Photo by Tom McCarthy Jr.



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Spinach farms in Crystal City

Visit [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com) for more content and events.



## Behind the Story



Whenever *Texas Highways* publishes a story about naturally growing flora, we always include a caveat: Due to Texas' unpredictable weather, results may vary. This also applies to our feature "Just Peachy!"

(Page 38) about the top peach-producing counties, which writer John Lumpkin originally reported during the 2018 peach season. In early March 2019, a deep freeze blanketed much of the state, leading Lumpkin to follow-up with the growers he interviewed. For the sweet freestone varieties that draw Texans to roadside stands, the trees had not blossomed and, in fact, may have been helped by the frigid dips. "We prayed that God would blanket our farm and protect the tender buds and delay blooms for the ones that had not popped," said Elizabeth Johnson, co-manager of Cooper Farms in Fairfield. She added that such a cold snap "is nature's way of thinning the trees naturally." Gary Hutton of Hutton Fruit Farms near Weatherford reported, "I'm going to have a crop." The Hill Country also breathed a sigh of relief. "It appears we fared amazingly well through the recent cold," said Jamey Vogel of Vogel Orchard in Stonewall. Vogel also shared what his father always remarked about springtime crop projections: "I'll let you know in August."

## Featured Contributors



### Andrew Sansom

Sansom wrote about a conservation ranch in Johnson City (Page 58) and its passionate steward, J. David Bamberger. "It isn't often that you have a chance to write about one of your personal heroes and, for me, it has

been a privilege to be inspired [by him] over the last 40 or so years," Sansom says. He has served as executive director of The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, and the Texas Nature Conservancy. He is also the author of eight books.



### Jason Stanford

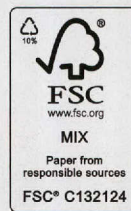
The Austin-based writer penned a heartfelt essay about taking his son, Henry, to visit Texas A&M University (Page 16). "One thing I've learned about fatherhood is that you'll

get sick of all the short drives to soccer practice, but never forget the long trips that take hours," he says. Stanford has had bylines in *Texas Monthly*, *The Texas Tribune*, *The Texas Observer*, and other publications. Previously, he worked as communications director for Austin Mayor Steve Adler.

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# MERGE

I served a total of 22 years in the U.S. Army and took photos all over the world. But this one of my wife, Elsa, taken on US 66 in 1958 remains a favorite. We are now celebrating 62 years of blissful marriage.

- **Manuel Quezada, El Paso**



## ENCHANTED ROCK

### FAIRY SHRIMP

When the puddles dried up one year, I sat down in the crater to look at the moss. The park volunteer gave me a huge talking to about the shrimp. I had no idea! Oops!  
**Sarah Shaheen, Fort Worth**

Enchanted Rock was my first geology field trip in college... yep, there's a nice view from the top.

**Bob Gibson, Argyle**

It's quite amazing how water can be so plentiful on top of this monolith.

**Jeff Henry, Bend, Oregon**

## Greetings from Switzerland

For about 25 years, we have been reading your magazine. In 1969, I was on a 15-week Greyhound bus tour through the USA, and in Yellowstone Park, I talked to a man named Floyd Merritt from El Paso. He was a teacher like me; we exchanged addresses. We wrote letters to each other, and one day about 30 years ago, he sent a gift subscription of *Texas Highways*. This lasted for about 20 years, until his death. After this, I paid for the subscription myself. The magazine offers wonderful pictures and articles—and it helps me to keep in touch with the English language. Since 1969 I have traveled to and through the USA several times. Now I can say not without pride that I have been to all 50 of the United States! Whenever I manage to travel to Texas again, my first destination will be Marfa because of the marvelous movie *Giant*. Best wishes and *herzliche Gruesse*.

**Jakob Dietiker,  
Hirschthal, Switzerland**

## Big Bend Traveler

I am one of those Texans who has visited the park on 15-plus occasions. I have backpacked the Chisos Mountains and desert backcountry, stayed in all of the campgrounds, hiked the trails, four-wheeled the backcountry roads, canoed the Rio Grande, and still haven't been everywhere and done all the things that can be done in the park. I have introduced my son, grandchildren, and soon my great-grandchildren (they are almost old enough) to the vast beauty that is Big Bend National Park. At 73, I hope I have many more years left to continue my love of Big Bend.

**Lonnie Hazlewood, West Lake Hills**

## Palo Duro Lore

My father always liked to tell a story about a rancher who ran a herd of Texas Longhorns on a ranch that bordered Palo Duro Canyon. According to Dad, a ranch hand was riding down the side of the canyon and came across a ring of con-

quistador swords stuck into the ground up to their hilts. He tried to pull the swords out, but they were sealed in by the hard-baked ground. So he filled his hat with water from a small stream and poured water around one of the swords. After a half day of going back and forth with water, the fellow finally got the ground loosened enough to pull one of the Spanish swords out. He recruited several of his fellow ranch hands to go back and recover the other sabers; however, he was never able to locate the place again. Supposedly a true story.

**Mike Caddell, South Padre Island**

## We want to hear from you!

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## Floating the Frio

With hotter temperatures coming, the aptly named Frio River attracts tubers, including these local students toting inner tubes at Garner State Park near Concan. The popular park, which reaches capacity daily between Memorial Day and Labor Day, is one of several put-in sites along the clear, spring-fed waterway. Andy's on River Road, Josh's Frio River Outfitters, Happy Hollow Store, and other outfitters rent tubes and offer shuttles to and from additional access points. Or stay on the water at Neal's Lodges, Frio Country Resort, or Seven Bluff Cabins. No matter where you decide to drop in, the Frio promises ice-cold waters and a fun way to laze away the summer.











# Decatur

News and notes from a North Texas ranching town

By John Lumpkin







## TOWN TRIVIA



POPULATION:

6,721



NUMBER OF STOPLIGHTS:

9



YEAR FOUNDED:

1856



NEAREST CITY:

Fort Worth,  
40 miles southeast



MARQUEE EVENTS:

Eighter From Decatur Food Truck Challenge, May 4; J.W. Hart PBR Challenge bull-riding, June 1; Wise County Old Settlers Reunion, July 22-27.



MAP IT:

Decatur Visitors Center in the 1939 Post Office building, 106 S. Trinity St.

**R**oy Eaton's earliest memory of the *Wise County Messenger* was his parents eagerly awaiting its Thursday delivery during World War II for news about local servicemen. "Many were our friends and neighbors," recalls Roy, who would leave the family ranch near Decatur for college, become a TV news anchor in Fort Worth, marry his high school sweetheart, Jeannine Eaton, and return with her in 1973 to buy the weekly newspaper his parents read.

Decatur was born in 1856 when the Texas Legislature created Wise County and directed the establishment of a county seat. The town benefited from three transportation eras—cattle drives on the nearby Chisholm Trail in the 1860s, the arrival of the Fort Worth and Denver Railway in 1882, and the route of the Meridian Highway from Mexico to Canada in the 1920s.

The Eatons made the *Messenger*, founded in 1880, an award winner, as their civic contributions doubled down on their hometown allegiance. Jeannine, in her roles as a director of the Decatur Main Street Committee and Wise Regional Health System, helped spearhead a downtown revitalization and the development of a medical center. Roy headed the chamber of commerce and volunteer fire department. "It's important for the newspaper to be a leader in the community," Roy says as the couple leads a tour of their favorite hometown stops. "But you must walk a fine line between being a cheerleader and writing hard-hitting news coverage."

### The Courthouse

Jeannine: "Our beautiful pink Texas granite centerpiece was designed by J. Riely Gordon and built in 1896 for \$110,000. The county commissioners were voted out because citizens considered it an extravagance. Now, it anchors a vibrant business district. We have merchants like Biggar Hat Store, where you see hat-making firsthand."

### Wise County Messenger

Roy: "It is a dream of journalists to own their own newspaper or broadcast station, and we got that when we bought the *Messenger*. The switch from TV anchorman to publisher of a small weekly newspaper was interesting. First, you meet the people you write about on the steps of the post office or in church on Sunday. So, accuracy is more important than ever. Hard-hitting reporting occasionally upsets civic boosters and elected officials who want the public to think 'everything is great.' But integrity of news coverage must be the hallmark of a good community newspaper."

### Decatur History

Roy: "The Wise County Heritage Museum, located in what was Decatur Baptist College, was the state's first junior college. It was a major blow when the college packed up and moved to Dallas in 1965 to become what is now Dallas Baptist University. But our historical commission

acquired the main building. One room is dedicated to the Lost Battalion from World War II, partly made up of area soldiers. Also on the grounds is the Woody Cabin, circa 1854, said to be the first such dwelling built in the county."

### Eighter from Decatur

Jeannine: "To the chagrin of church leaders, Decatur had a huge highway billboard featuring a pair of dice with the words 'Eighter from Decatur, County Seat of Wise.' The billboard is long gone, but the legend lives on. One story is the Waggoner Ranch headquarters, once in Decatur, employed a cook named Ada, and the cowboys considered her a good luck charm. In Texan speech, sometimes 'er' is added. So, when they rolled the dice looking for a pair of fours, they would yell 'Ad-er from Decatur.' Today, that refrain is on a downtown mural and a sculpture of two dice, each showing a four."

### Hometown Eats

Jeannine: "There are four restaurants on the courthouse square, including well-known Sweetie Pie's Ribeyes. Next to a 1930s tourist court on the old Fort Worth highway, the Whistle Stop Cafe has pie to die for—call ahead or they may be sold out. West of downtown, the line of pickup trucks in the parking lot tells you how much we appreciate Jesus and Maria Torres' cooking at Casa Torres." 🍴







# TO HOOK 'EM, OR TO GIG 'EM?

A son schools his father on a college tour

By Jason Stanford

**T**

The night before I take my oldest son to visit Texas A&M, my wife comes home to find me watching *The Blind Side*. It's the scene where the Olers are dropping off their son Michael at Ole Miss. Sandra Bullock is all business to cover her emotions. She's not crying, but I am. "What are you?" asks my wife, who's worried I'm intentionally inflicting misery on myself. "An emotional cutter?"

She knows how much I've been looking forward to, and dreading, college visits with my oldest son, Henry. He's 18 now and ready to go to college. I'm not ready to let him go, but I want to do this for him, to be the parent who

helps him explore his options. I've been waiting for my turn to do this for years, and it's time. When I tell my wife the next morning that I'm having difficulty picking out what to wear so I don't embarrass him, she gently reminds me that it's possible that taking my son (and her stepson) to visit a college is not about me. She doesn't get it. This trip is a milestone. I've done it. I've raised a child whom colleges are competing for. My reward for his imminent departure is a walking tour of College Station.

Admittedly, it feels a little strange to be driving there at all. Henry grew up in a home where "The Eyes of Texas"—the University of Texas at Austin's school song—was his first lullaby and we could see the UT Tower from our front yard. As a toddler, he once leapt out of his stroller to run toward Bevo—the school's 1,500-some-odd-pound long-horned mascot. Thankfully, Bevo's handlers noticed before Bevo did. Henry hates it when I tell this story, but you don't easily forget the time the world's most famous steer saw your son as a threat. It all turned out well. Bevo did not stomp my son to death, and a cheerleader let him "pet" the hulking mascot with a long scratching stick.

**WHEN I MOVED TO AUSTIN IN THE '90S, UT TRADITIONALLY** played Texas A&M University during Thanksgiving weekend. Every other year, the sight of A&M's Corps of Cadets in Austin felt like an invasion from a bygone era, when animal husbandry was a common course of study. When Henry came along, followed two years later by his brother, Hatcher, I raised them the best I knew how. They still think the real words of "The Eyes of Texas" include an insult to the University of Oklahoma and that the words to A&M's fight song are "I want my mommy."

Once, we visited the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library, and the surrounding town made so little impression that later we wondered if perhaps it had been hiding out of view behind a large building. Not every college town can be Austin, of course, but this wasn't a town. This was College Station. The name is so literal as to give rise to both mockery and pity, at least to many Austinites, yet at the same time it accurately connotes the general ambiance of a midsize city supported by a minimum-security prison. Add to that the fake paramilitary cadets marching to and fro in their brown shirts, and you have the whole panorama of my



prejudice against the place.

Although I didn't attend UT, I was not an independent arbiter of colleges. I took my sons to UT basketball and baseball games and dragged them through the latest exhibits at the campus' Harry Ransom Center so often they now hate the sight of the Gutenberg Bible. They've seen Andy Warhol's "Farrah Fawcett" at the Blanton Museum of Art and listened politely to my stammered explanation about her importance to American men alive in the '70s.

When I offered to do Henry's laundry for four more years if he stayed in Austin to go to college, I thought I had closed the deal, but in the absence of the annual football game, it turns out his generation isn't hanging onto childish rivalries. Also, it doesn't hurt these days that Aggies are graduating with math and science degrees required for tech jobs in the big cities, including Austin. It's been more than a decade since I've heard an Aggie joke,

something I didn't realize until Henry told me A&M was on his shortlist.

So we're visiting A&M. I always knew this boy was going to college. I just never expected him to be interested in going to *this* college. And though I think he appreciates my offer to do his laundry, Texas A&M has a world-class zoology program, and Henry dreams of working on wild-life preserves in Africa. This is not new for him. Way back in middle school we looked up the top zoology schools in the country. I should have known then. Plus, his best friend is set on going to A&M. This entire town-versus-country, UT-versus-A&M thing was in my head, not his. It turns out I did a horrible job of warping my son's mind, leaving him open to possibilities and opportunities.

**WE TOOK A SELFIE BEFORE WE SET** off for College Station. He gave me a happy face, not the closed-mouth variety

he usually placates me with. On the way out of town, we passed the comic book store where I got him the graphic novel his grandfather wrote, the sushi place he goes to with his mom, and the high school where he came into his own as a funny, tall, gorgeous kid. These are the bread crumbs of his childhood that I hope he'll happily follow home, and often, but right now we're tracing this line in the opposite direction, away from home and Austin. We take a right before we get to his favorite Whataburger, and before you know it we're heading east toward the sun on US 290.

After almost an hour, we turn off 290 and, just past Sherwood Forest Faire, head northeast on State Highway 21. It feels like an abrupt change not just in direction but in worlds. The first gas station we see is called the Whoop Stop. Trees crowd the two-lane highway. The hills roll. I have to slow down. It's quieter. We make forced

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conversation in the car before giving way to podcasts. He's in that phase where I have to wait for him to emerge from his shell. He'll go to a movie or watch football with me, but he's closed off for the most part. He has a private life of his own now. There's so much I haven't shown him, too much left to do.

In one of the sparsely populated areas of Lee County, the land flattens into fields. We're listening quietly to a Marc Maron interview while I run through a list of things I've never taught him. I taught him about a savings account, but did I ever tell him about taxes? For some reason I keep meaning to teach him how to tie the knots I learned in Boy Scouts—something he had no interest in. He's read *Beowulf*, but does he know what bleach is for? "Do you even know how to do laundry?" I ask, abruptly turning the monologue in my head into a conversation with him.

"No," he says, unfazed. "But I can always

**Every wall is covered with homemade Aggie decorations. Every customer is wearing some type of A&M gear ... a charming contrast to how corporate the ubiquity of burnt orange can feel in Austin.**

look up a tutorial on YouTube."

I am instantly relieved, both of stress and of duty. I'm not sure what I'm still doing here for him. It's been years since he needed my help doing homework. Maybe we can talk on the ride back.

My aunts and uncles used to tell me how much the thought of my younger cousins leaving for college pained them. "Empty Nest Syndrome," they called it. This made

no sense to me. At the time, my life was an endless list of obligations and unmet emotional needs. My oldest was in diapers then, and I suppose he felt pretty much the same way—except he needed his diaper changed. The idea of my children going to college seemed like a blue sky opening up in my windshield. "You can do whatever you want!" I'd say, wondering why they sounded resigned about the plans they'd made to finally go to Europe or take an African dance class at the community college. They'd look at me with an expression I now understand as sparing.

To be fair, these are hard emotions to put into words. You only get your heart broken a few times in your life. Love affairs end on their own, marriages conclude when death does us part or the judge says so. We're not told that our children will break our hearts. Maybe we are and don't hear it. I remember my mom

I continued on Page 102

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August 17: Sunray Funday

September 28: Museum Day

September 28: Texas Tumbleweed 100 Bike Ride

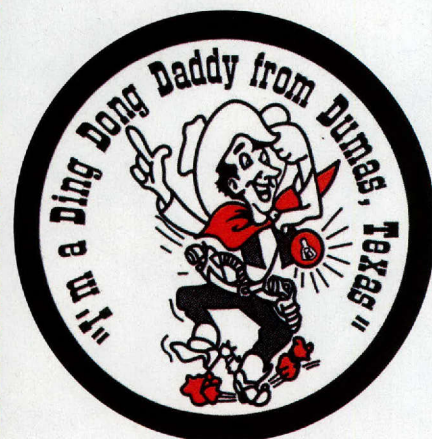
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# DRIVE

## A SIGN ON TEXAS

Basket Company's factory building in Jacksonville reflects the company's wooden-veneer baskets.





**STACKS OF STAPLED** staves will be shaped into baskets used for everything from crabs and cucumbers to arts- and-crafts stores.

# A Century of Baskets

The Texas Basket Company survives as a living link to Jacksonville's tomato capital heritage

By Matt Joyce

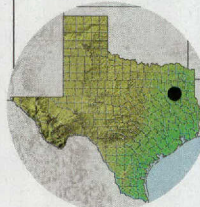
**O**n any given day, the Texas Basket Company thrums with the rhythm of workers and steel machinery turning logs into wooden baskets. The product could be hard-bottomed baskets destined for Chesapeake Bay crabbers, bushels bound for New Jersey cucumber farms, or display baskets that will one day show off merchandise at Williams Sonoma.

The Jacksonville manufacturer, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, has churned out millions of veneer baskets since it opened in 1919, surviving amid changing times from its home along the railroad that first brought this East Texas town to life.

In many ways, the daily challenges of running a century-old basket factory are similar to those of any small business hustling to survive.

"There's always something to do and obstacles to overcome," says Martin Swanson, company president. But for Texas Basket, challenges such as finding logs and maintaining sales long ago faded into routine, a backdrop for

**TEXAS BASKET COMPANY FACTORY STORE,** 100 Myrtle Drive, Jacksonville, opens Mon-Fri 9 a.m. -5 p.m. and Sat 10 a.m.-4 p.m. You can order baskets online at [texasbasket.com](http://texasbasket.com); 800-657-2200



generations of resilience and change.

"We've had a little bit of everything to make things interesting," says Swanson, who bought the factory with his father in 1976. "We had a big fire here about the same month we were trying to buy the place. There have been three fires here through those years, actually, and we had a tornado and a train derailment."

There have been triumphs as well, including the launch of a factory retail store in the 1980s—a bustling shop that sells baskets and a variety of gift items—and a diversification of basket products that has helped Texas Basket survive as the only remaining factory of its kind in Texas, and one of just a handful in the United States.

The Texas Basket Company's origins are linked to Jacksonville's history as a



## The East Texas manufacturer has churned out millions of wooden baskets since it opened in 1919.

center for peaches and tomatoes, which took root as commercial crops in the 1890s. According to a local history book published for the city's centennial in 1972, Cherokee County's peach industry hit its peak in 1912 with the shipment of more than 1,000 rail cars of fruit. By the 1920s and '30s, farmers in the county planted 15,000 acres in tomatoes, and Cherokee County was exporting 3,000 cars of tomatoes every summer.

The industry employed thousands of people, from the farms to packing sheds and factories making boxes and baskets.

Over time, Jacksonville became known as "The Tomato Capital of the World," and in 1934, the town held its inaugural Tomato Festival. Jacksonville High School's football team still plays in the Tomato Bowl, a stadium that opened in 1940 and is currently under renovation.

"There's something about the soil here," says Shelley Cleaver, a member of the Cherokee County Historical Commission. "Farmers were raising cotton, and they realized they could make more money off an acre of tomatoes than an acre of cotton. What they would do is pick them green and put them in these railroad cars where they had blocks of ice on each end, and then send them up north. By the time they'd get there, they'd be getting ripe."

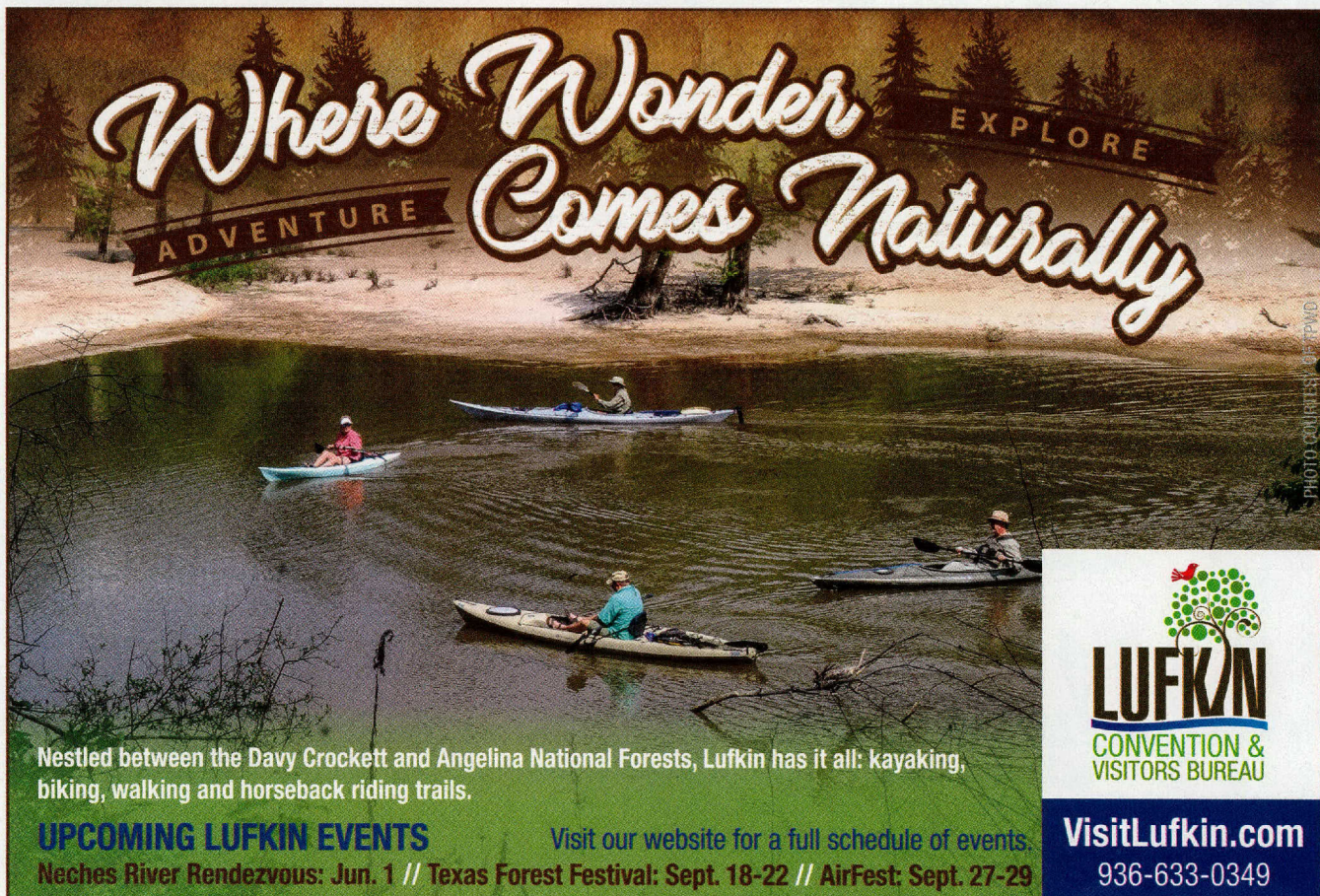
When it opened in 1919, the Texas Basket Company (then called Slover Box Co.) was one of six such factories in Cherokee County. Farmers used baskets to take their crops to town, where they lined up

their tomato-laden Model T farm trucks along Commerce Street—nicknamed Catfish Row. Packing sheds would buy the tomatoes, then load up train cars for shipment around the country.

Cleaver's aunt and uncle worked for Texas Basket Company's predecessor "for a lifetime," he says. "This would have been in the 1930s and '40s, and when I was a boy I used to go with him and fire up the boiler on Sunday nights. I thought that was the biggest place in the world."

While electricity now powers the factory, Texas Basket still feeds its wood scraps into the fire box of that same hulking, 85-horsepower boiler to produce steam for its logs. The company works with soft hardwood trees such as sweetgum, cottonwood, birch, and elm, all logged within a 300-mile radius, Swanson says.

After trucks deliver the trees, a debarking machine strips the bark. The



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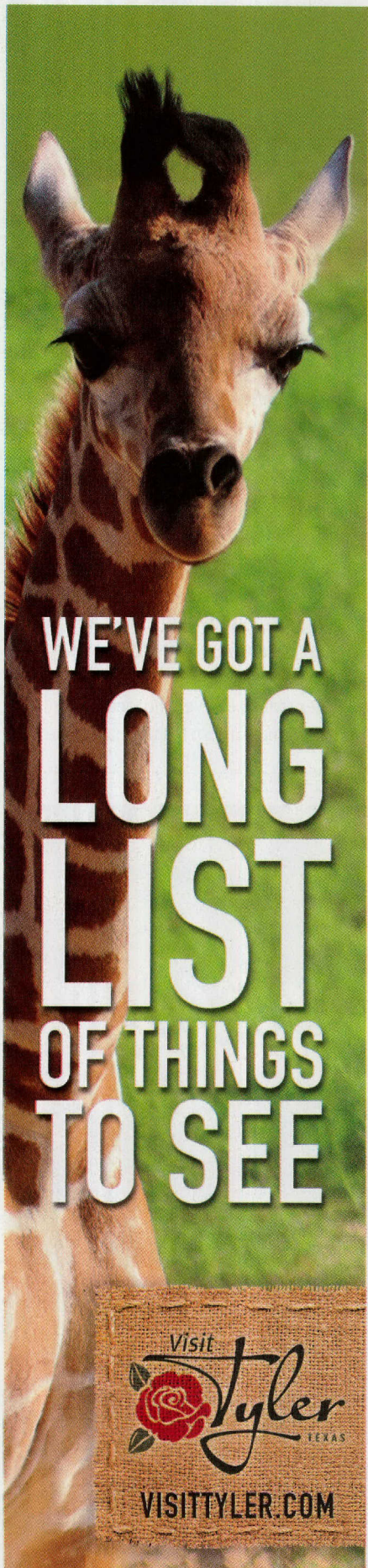
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 OF THINGS  
 TO SEE



**A WORKER APPLIES**  
 a wooden band around  
 a basket to strengthen  
 it. Visitors can watch the  
 factory floor from an  
 observation room.

logs are cut, doused in water, and then draped in a tarp to be steamed overnight to make the wood pliable. The next day, workers feed the steamed logs into a lathe, which peels them into sheets of wood called veneer. A clipper then chops the veneer into long rectangular strips known as staves. Workers place the staves onto trays to create woven web patterns akin to sunrays or asterisks. Next, a stapler joins the nexus, and then a basket machine shapes the flat webs into baskets. Staplers secure bands around the diameter to add strength.

Many of the machines are antiques dating to the 1930s, and David Haberle knows them like the back of his hand.

"He's got baskets in his blood," Swanson says of Haberle, the company's executive vice president. Haberle's grandfather, Fred Haberle, brought the first basket machine to Jacksonville in 1896, from Michigan—it's now displayed on the factory grounds. David worked for his family's basket plant until it closed in the 1970s, and he joined

Texas Basket in the '80s. "I just love it," Haberle says. "I'll come over on Saturday afternoon or Sunday just to walk through and pet it and say thank you."

The factory employs about 90 people and makes 5,000 to 10,000 baskets a day. Agricultural customers make up about 30 percent of the company's customer base, down from 100 percent when Swanson took over in mid-'70s. Much of that business was lost to cardboard and plastic containers. Swanson set out to diversify, expanding into arts-and-crafts shops, candy shops, grocers, home goods stores, and elsewhere. The factory's "handmade department" makes baskets in countless shapes ranging from state outlines to armadillos and hearts. "Nobody wants the Colorado basket because it's square," Swanson says.

Business is holding steady, Swanson says, though the headwinds never subside—the internet, and particularly Amazon's squelching of small arts-and-crafts retailers; competition with grass and reed





## Tomato Season

It doesn't take visitors long to get the hint that Jacksonville is proud of its tomato heritage—maybe it's the painted concrete tomato sculptures adorning nearly 200 local business fronts. On the second Saturday of June, the community's fondness for the tangy fruit is on full display during the **Jacksonville Tomato Fest** (June 8, 2019), an annual celebration of the tomato harvest. Along with events like a 5K run and a car show, Tomato Fest honors its namesake by judging homegrown tomatoes and holding contests for tomato eating, tomato peeling, tomato packing, and salsa. Local farmers are also on hand selling produce. If you can't make it for Tomato Fest, two produce sheds draw tomato junkies from far and wide throughout the growing season (roughly May to November):

**The Tomato Shed**, 461 Alabama Ave., and **Guinn's Produce**, 1603 S. Jackson St. Both carry a variety of produce.

baskets from eastern Asia; and ballooning expenses. Nevertheless, a 100th birthday is a milestone worth celebrating and a worthy excuse to take a deep breath.

"I definitely wanted to make it to a hundred years," Swanson says. "Frankly, I don't know what else I would do. And there are a lot of people that depend on this place for their living, and we feel some loyalty to them. We'll just try to keep it going as long as we can." 🐾

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On May 2, Jacksonville will fête the Texas Basket Company's 100th birthday with a city proclamation, marker dedication, and public tours of the factory.

---

“

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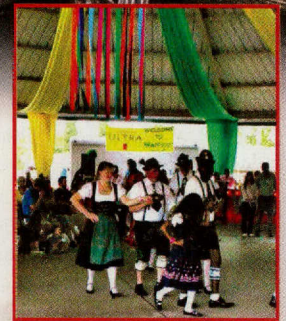
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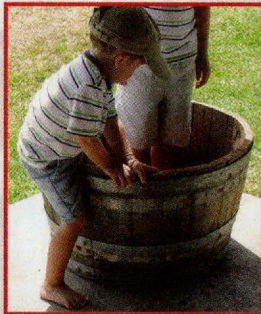
**Burton Cotton Gin Festival**  
April 27, 2019  
[CottonGinMuseum.org](http://CottonGinMuseum.org)



**Downtown Summer Sip**  
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# Riverside Rodeo

Crider's in Hunt offers down-home entertainment all summer long

By Heather Brand



**CRIDER'S RODEO AND**  
Dancehall opens every  
Saturday from Memorial  
Day through Labor Day  
next to the Guadalupe  
River in Hunt.

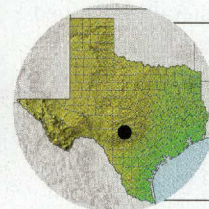
**O**n summer weekends, Crider's Rodeo and Dancehall springs to life on the banks of the south fork of the Guadalupe River, where locals and vacationers return time and again to watch cowboy competitions and boot-scoot to live music under a canopy of stars.

The down-home, open-air entertainment venue on the outskirts of Hunt got its start in 1925 when Walter and Audrey Crider hosted a rodeo, dance, and barbecue fundraiser to support the local school. The event proved so popular it was reprised the following year, then on a weekly basis throughout the summer by the late 1940s. Over the subsequent decades, the small-town attraction has grown and gained a statewide following.

"Everyone needs a place to come home to," says Tracy Moore, who runs Crider's café and dancehall in Hunt, a town that has been one of the most popular vacation and summer camp spots in the Hill Country since the 1920s.

At dusk on Saturdays from Memorial Day through Labor Day, visitors stream into the bleachers of Crider's brightly lit arena. On the sidelines, rodeo competitors saddle their mounts, and lowing live-stock huddle in steel pens. As the sun dips over the horizon, the crowd stands for the national anthem, and the competitions begin. Cowboys test their endurance on bucking bulls. Teams of ropers race to capture runaway calves. Cowgirls on horseback tear around barrels at break-neck speed. And young cowpokes compete to ride bucking ponies, or, in the case of the "Junior Bull Riding" event, miniature zebu cattle.

The youngest aspirants can attempt "mutton bustin'"—holding on tight on the woolly back of a sheep while it streaks across the arena. And any child age 12

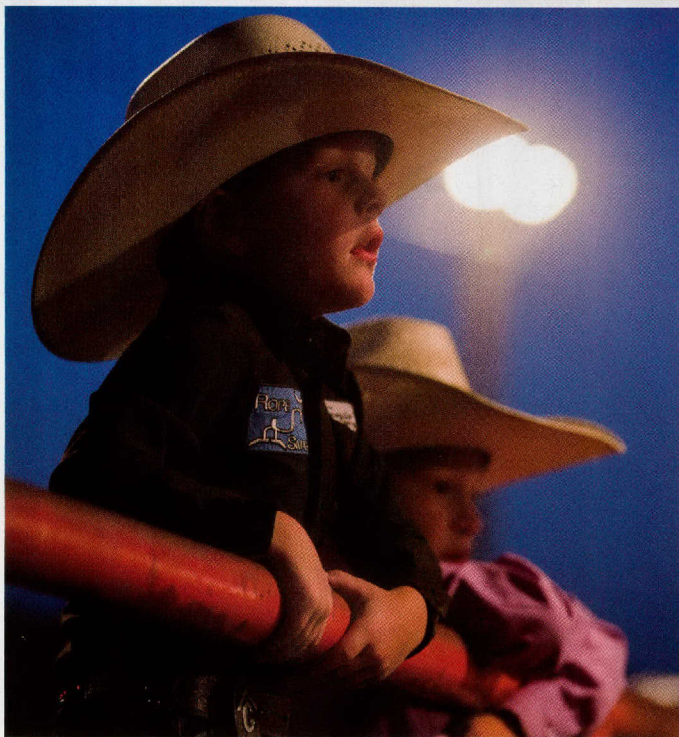


**CRIDER'S RODEO AND DANCEHALL**  
2310 State Highway 39,  
Hunt, 830-238-4441;  
cridersrandd.com





**BULLS HAVE BUCKED**  
at Crider's since 1925. After the rodeo, folks can attend a dance where legends like Bob Wills and Willie Nelson have played.



and younger can try to win a modest cash prize in the calf scramble, a riotous melee of kids and calves running wildly in all directions.

Dakota Moore, the 25-year-old great-grandson of Walter and Audrey Crider, started helping out at the rodeo when he was only 6. He almost literally got roped into the job. "When I was old enough to move gates and cut cows, I was out there," he confirms.

In 2017, Dakota took over management of the rodeo from his father, Bill Moore. He's just the latest in a long line

of Crider family descendants to keep the business going.

Dakota's mother, Tracy Moore, runs the adjacent café, which serves up cheeseburgers, barbecue sandwiches, tacos, corn dogs, and Frito pie along with beer and other beverages to wash it all down. On Fridays in the summer, the café also hosts a catfish dinner with all the fixings: okra gumbo, coleslaw, beans, and hush-puppies. The only break in Crider's long history came when the café caught fire in 1993, shutting down operations for a couple of months. Its new metal building

offers indoor seating (plus pool tables, air hockey, and a jukebox) for those who have had enough of the great outdoors.

The décor is decidedly Western: tack, tools, and taxidermy cover the walls. But the more popular option is to grab a seat outside at one of the wooden picnic tables that surround the dance floor. Here, you can dig into a pile of fried pickles and sip on a longneck while enjoying the sprawling live oaks illuminated by strings of lights, the murmur of the river passing close by, and fireflies pulsing in the night.

After the rodeo, people flood over from



**“It doesn’t change. ... As we grow up, get married, and have kids of our own, we can come back and it’s still the same. Whatever else is going on in the world, there’s always Crider’s.”**

the arena to attend the dance. A raised bandstand opposite the café hosts live musical acts—some up and coming, others well known. Even legends like Bob Wills and Willie Nelson have graced the stage. A couple of decades ago, Tracy took over booking the talent from her husband’s family, including his grandmother,

who in the 1960s had relegated Nelson to playing only on weekday nights. “She didn’t think he was that good,” she chuckles. In recent years, Tracy has sought out emerging musicians as well as big draws like Gary P. Nunn, who will play June 15.

The dance floor, designated by a red circle painted on the cement patio, is usually packed with two-stepping couples. “We have an age range from 6 months to 90 years old,” Tracy says. “We have families who have been coming for three generations. This is a friendly, welcoming place. People from all over the world come here, and they’re just like part of the family.” On the crowded floor, you can find retirees gliding around in a practiced groove; mothers teaching sons to lead; fathers dipping daughters; and teenage girls dancing with each other.

Elizabeth McClung was once one of those teenagers. Now in her early 30s, she

has been coming to Crider’s since she was about 5. “I’ve only missed a few years in between,” she grins.

McClung lives in the Houston area but continues to make an annual trek to Hunt. “My extended family has been going to Crider’s every summer for as long as I can remember,” McClung says. “The appeal is that it doesn’t change... It is wholesome fun for the whole family. As we grow up, get married, and have kids of our own, we can come back and it’s still the same. Whatever else is going on in the world, there’s always Crider’s.”

Rodeos start at 8 p.m. Saturday nights Memorial Day-Labor Day; rodeo \$7, dance \$10, combo ticket \$15 (discounts for children and seniors; prices may differ for special events).

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# Country Convenience

Old-time stores are stocked with rural nostalgia



## GARVEN'S STORE

co-owner Vincent Dowdy is a friend of felines, as well as the colorful peacocks that strut around the dirt parking lot.

Small country stores once dotted the state's landscape. Today, many have either disappeared or else sit abandoned at lonely road crossings, but some mom-and-pop shops have found ways to thrive while carrying on rural commerce. Here are three such markets where travelers can drop in for a snack, some conversation, and a taste of old-time Texas.

### The "Best Dang Jerky in Texas"

Like a place out of time, Garven's Store has stood since at least 1932 at a remote highway junction in the northeastern corner of Real County.

Handwritten signs warn those born after 1990 to "be mindful," "pay close attention," and "think very hard" when using the old analog gas pumps. The attendants are perhaps the store's most unusual feature: Peacocks patrol the grounds, greeting customers with their colorful plumes. In the dirt parking lot, a wooden directional signpost announces the distances to other destinations—the closest being Leakey, 27 miles south.

"This is the only restroom stop for about 30 miles, so you

don't want to miss it," jokes Vincent Dowdy, who oversees operations.

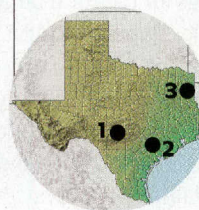
Dowdy comes from a long line of shopkeepers: His maternal great-grandfather built Garven's Store, and his paternal ancestors were also store proprietors in the nearby community of Ingram in the late 1800s. In 1998, when Dowdy was 22, he helped his father, Billy, take over the shop from his grandparents. On his way back home to Austin, Dowdy hit a 400-pound hog with his Geo Metro. The hog walked away, but the car was totaled, so he stuck around.

Before long, Dowdy found himself carrying on the traditions established by his grandfather in the 1950s. One of those traditions was to stock Garven's with a wheel of Wisconsin cheddar that customers can slice to their liking. Another was to continue providing

#### 1. GARVEN'S STORE Mountain Home

#### 2. JANAOK'S COUNTRY MARKET Hallettsville

#### 3. FUGLER'S GROCERY AND MARKET Marshall







the store's claim to fame: jerky. Dowdy devised his own secret curing recipe and filled the shelves with a variety of flavors, including mild, hot, cracked pepper, honey, and teriyaki. "I try to get people addicted," he confesses.



While keeping Garven's Store traditions alive, the Dowdy family has expanded both its premises and inventory to cater to Hill Country travelers. Signs beckon visitors toward biker gear, barbecue, beer, and the "Best Dang Jerky in Texas."

The store also carries local products like Uvalde Honey and Sister Creek Vineyards wines, as well as its own brand of canned goods, including cherry preserves, peach cobbler, pumpkin butter, pickled quail eggs, jalapeño-stuffed olives, candied green tomatoes, and mango lime salsa, to name a few. Those looking for immediate gratification can order up a hot brisket sandwich or sausage wrap and eat at the picnic tables in the enclosed patio. Inevitably, one of the peacocks will take an interest in your food.

Dowdy says the peacocks arrived on the premises soon after he did. A neighbor had purchased a flock, but the birds flew the coop when they discovered the ready source of grub at Garven's. Every day the birds indulge in a smorgasbord of bugs, picked off the grills of customers' parked cars.

"It's a free service," Dowdy chuckles. "No charge." —Heather Brand

22 miles west of Mountain Home at 27304 N. US 83. 830-640-3235. garvenstore.com



**CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:** A smorgasbord of goods at Janak's Country Market; Janak's décor; a motto for Fugler's most committed customers.

### Czech Family Recipes

It's easy to cruise right past Janak's Country Market on the scenic route between Houston and San Antonio. Drivers who are in the know don't make that mistake. In fact, they tend to show up around lunchtime.

Situated on US 90 Alternate two miles west of Hallettsville, the old-fashioned market and gift shop celebrates the traditions and culture of rural Texas. Setting the tone is the rustic cedar interior hand-cut by owner Leroy Janak, along with shelves lined with delicate, hand-sewn quilts in a kaleidoscope of colors.

Janak's came from humble beginnings. Texans were still digging out of the Great Depression when Paul and Mary Janak opened their business, Janak's Packing Inc., in 1938 to slaughter and process hogs for the rural families of Hallettsville, Shiner, Moravia, Breslau, Komen-sky, and other nearby communities. Money was tight, so Janak's sometimes kept a part of the pork as payment. Paul used the pork to make sausage from an old family recipe.

With the spread of supermarkets after

World War II, some meat markets in Texas' Czech belt morphed into barbecue joints, but Janak's diversified. Paul and Mary sold groceries, cattle feed, and hay in addition to sausage, bacon, ham, and pork chops. In 2000, the Janak family diversified again, adding a gift shop, expanded inventory, and a name change to Janak's Country Market.

Now owned by Paul and Mary's son Leroy; his wife, Alice; grandson Mark; and Mark's wife, Karen, the store sells country accent pieces, seasonings, and organic soaps and lotions. Just about every fruit in the orchard and vegetable in the garden gets canned, jammed, jellied, preserved, or pickled in house. Old favorites also receive the Janak's treatment, from the jalapeño mustard and fresh salsa to big jars of Janak's Country Made Cane Syrup.

The meat market is a candy store for carnivores, featuring thick slabs of bacon, country ham, pork loin, steaks, quail legs, and whole quail stuffed with rice, shrimp, and crawfish, ready to cook. Link sausage comes in mild, medium and hot varieties and is lightly seasoned



with salt, pepper, and garlic then slow-smoked over hickory, the same process Leroy's dad followed 80 years ago.

Janak's also ships goods and gift boxes that can be ordered online. The store's customers seem to be a combination of locals who've been coming here since the days of rotary telephones and urbanites who opt for the more scenic and less hectic alternate to Interstate 10 when making the 200-mile hop between San Antonio and Houston.

The lunch menu includes plate lunches and sandwiches made with Janak's own smoked meats and condiments for take-out; or to be devoured right there with sauerkraut, potato salad, and iced tea. Cranking out sausage from an old family recipe for the past 80 years, Janak's gives the term "daily grind" a whole nother meaning. —Michael Barr

4 miles west of Hallettsville at 3116 US 90A W.  
361-798-2985; janakscountrymarket.com

### The Home of the Bubba Burger

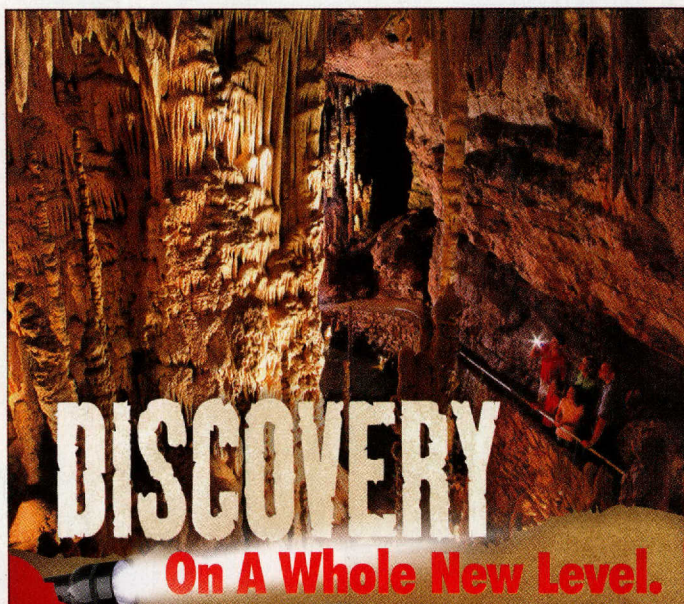
Fugler's Grocery and Market has a little bit of everything—and a whole lot of Bubba burgers. You can grab a bag of dog food and other country essentials, get a deer processed, or wash a load of clothes at this out-of-the-way store about halfway between Marshall and Harleton.

Come lunchtime, East Texas regulars flock to Fugler's for the massive cheeseburgers named for John "Bubba" Fugler Jr.

Bubba's grandfather opened the grocery and market in 1940. By the mid-1980s, people were coming in and saying, "I want Bubba to fix my burger." The Bubba burger was born.

Six days a week, Bubba and his son Trey grind the meat, form the patties into three-quarter-pound mounds, and work the grill. They've developed quite the fan base. Marshall native George Foreman once told Jay Leno on *The Tonight Show* the Bubba burger was the best he'd ever had. —Wes Ferguson

8 miles northwest of Marshall at 10079  
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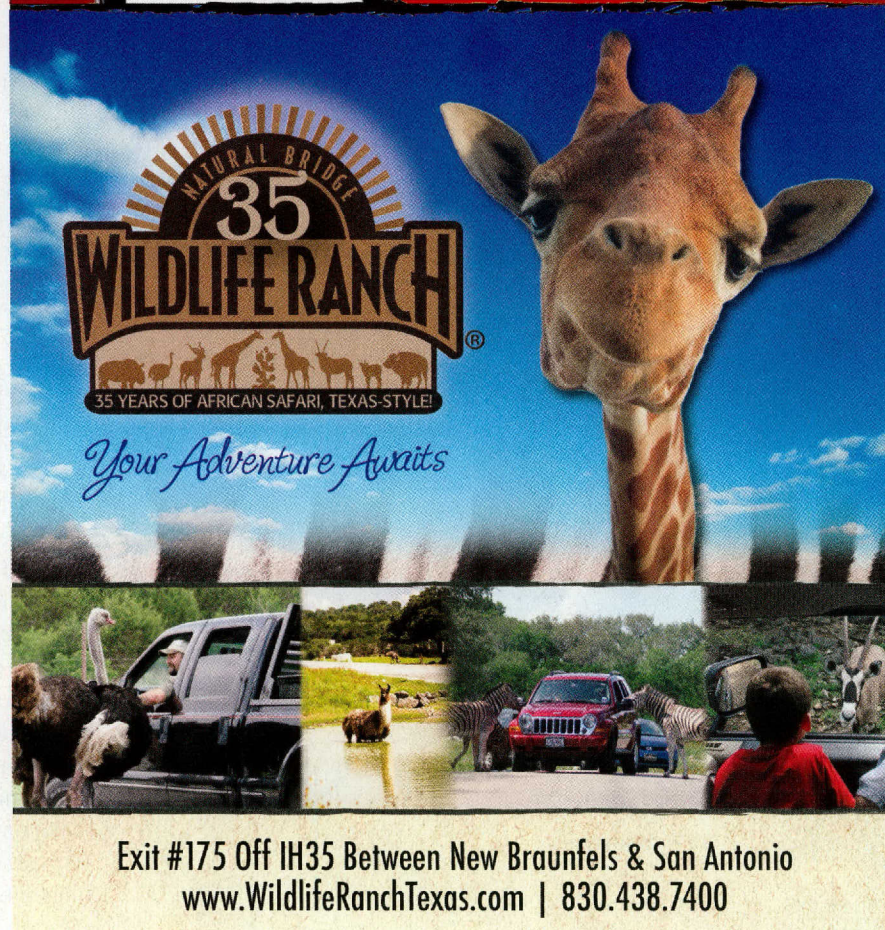


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# Book It to the Big Country

Settle in for storytime at the Children's Art & Literacy Festival in Abilene

By Matt Joyce

**Dallas**  
2.75 hours

**Austin**  
3.5 hours

**San Antonio**  
4 hours

**Houston**  
6 hours



**M**y children stepped foot in Abilene for the first time in their short lives last June for a quick three-night visit. Now, even though it's been a year, mention Abilene to them and you'll get a happy earful of stories.

This fond association traces directly to the Children's Art & Literacy Festival, an annual celebration of all things picture books. Most people know Abilene as the capital of the Big Country, a dusty railroad outpost thick with steakhouses and Churches of Christ. But for three days every June, the festival (known as CALF) cloaks downtown Abilene in an imaginative world of colorful characters and fanciful tales—and ice cream vendors aplenty.

Put on by the Abilene Cultural Affairs Council, the festival stems from the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, a local museum that exhibits the work of picture-book illustrators. Each summer,



75 YEARS OF ADVENTURES AND COUNTING

— in —

# BIG BEND

the NCCIL (everybody calls it “the nickel”) features a high-profile children’s book illustrator. The Cultural Affairs Council then builds the festival around that author’s books with dramatic readings, theatrical productions, movies, musical acts, arts and crafts, and carnival activities. Last year, about 5,000 people attended.

“We’re trying to bring these books to life in people’s imaginations,” says Lynn Barnett, executive director of the Cultural Affairs Council. “Our whole goal is to get these kids reading because if they’re not pretty good readers by third grade, the odds of them being successful in high school are slim.”

This summer’s featured illustrator/author will be Philadelphia-based Peter Brown, whose bestselling titles include *The Wild Robot*, *My Teacher is a Monster!*, and *Children Make Terrible Pets*.

## Thursday



5:30 P.M.

### Picture Book Parade

You can be fairly sure wild robots and monster teachers will be part of the Storybook Parade, which kicks off the festival as families fill downtown to watch characters stroll along Cypress Street. It’s a squealing-with-delight affair as kids recognize heroes like the Lorax, Stuart Little, and Cinderella. Afterward, the 1930 Paramount Theatre—restored in striking Spanish-Moorish detail—will host Brown for an artist talk and book signing.



STAY



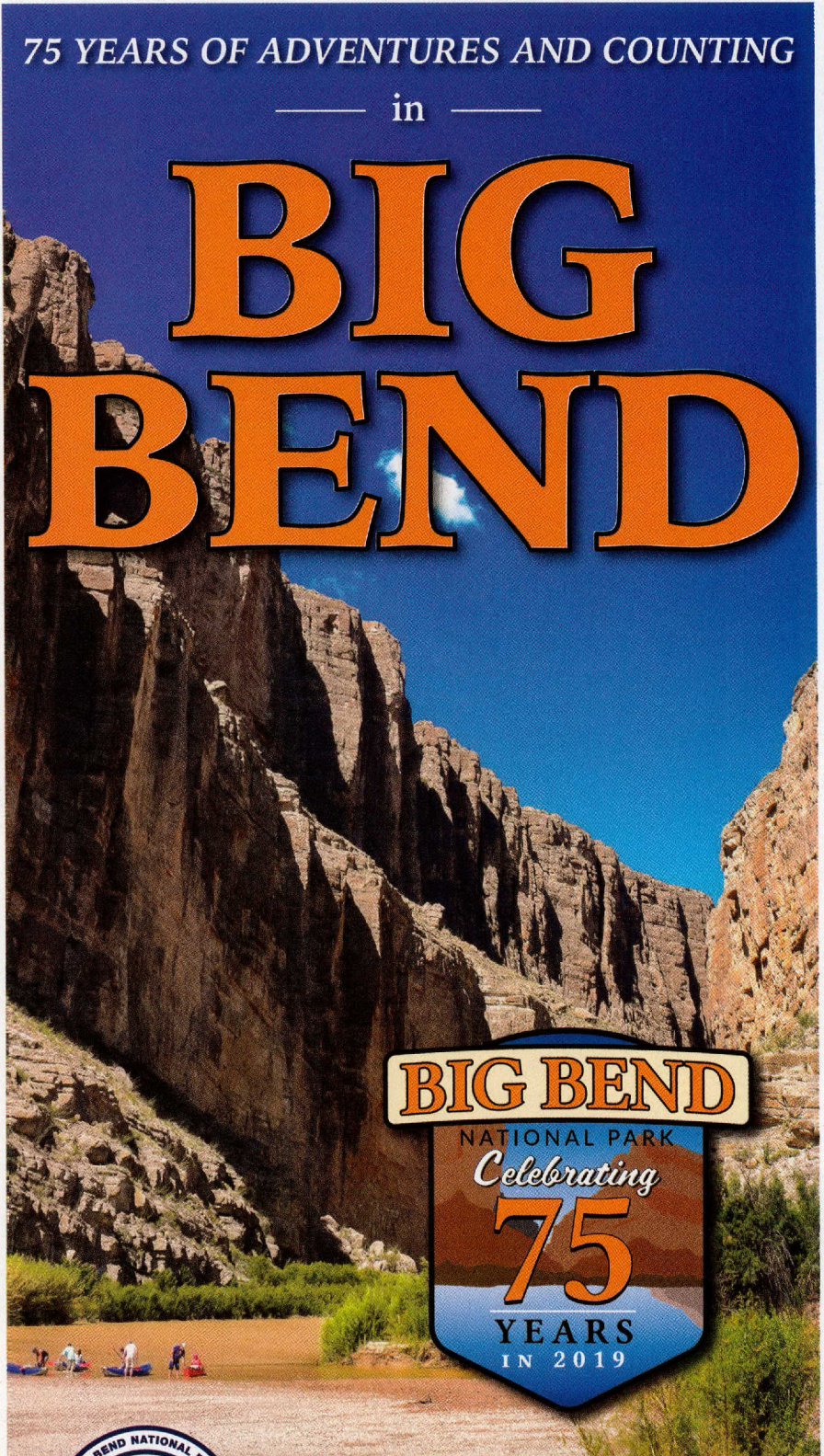
EAT & DRINK



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# Friday

**9 A.M.**  
**The Most Valuable Nickel**  
 Founded in 1997, The National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature opened its current location in 2000 to showcase the work of storybook artists in a fine-art setting. During CALF, the NCCIL's bright and airy gallery will feature Brown's artwork, along with a book signing, dramatic readings, and fine art activities for children.

"Our mission is to instill the love of art in children as young as we possibly can because if you think about it, the first art they see is in the books they're reading," Director Trish Christoferson-Dressen says. "If we can instill that in them young, then we can preserve the love of art for the ages."

**1 P.M.**  
**Storybook Sculptures**  
 Perched atop a downtown building, a brontosaurus in a baseball cap smiles over an orange Volkswagen Beetle. Nearby, a bronze Santa Claus keeps benevolent watch over a street corner, and a duck rides a bike near the railroad tracks.

The 25 storybook sculptures gracing downtown Abilene make a playful backdrop for CALF. The Abilene Cultural Affairs Council launched the project in 1996, and a new sculpture is unveiled each year during the festival—Brown's Mr. Tiger is the 2019 addition.

## THE FINE PRINT

The Children's Art & Literacy Festival is June 6-8 with most events taking place 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Thursday events are free. Tickets are \$13; \$8 for children 3 to 12. After May 15, tickets cost \$16 for adults and \$11 for children. [abilenecalf.com](http://abilenecalf.com)

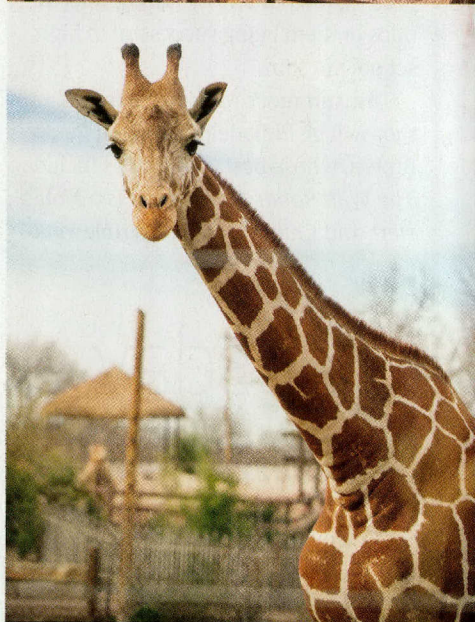
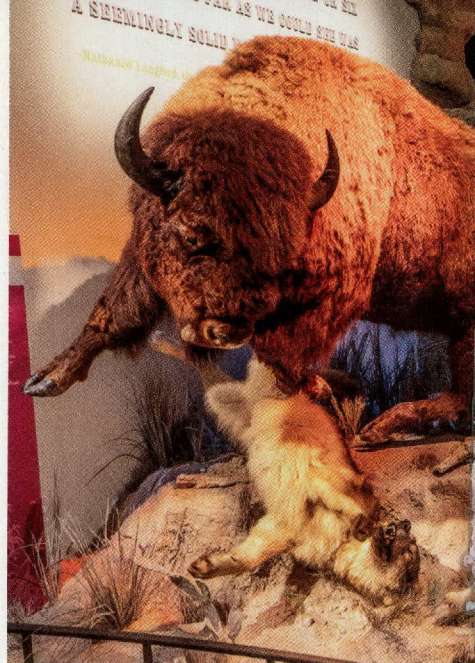
The sculptures are one of the primary reasons the Texas Legislature designated Abilene the "Storybook Capital of Texas" in 2015. In typical Lone Star fashion, the city expands that acclaim as the self-titled "Storybook Capital of America."

**7 P.M.**  
**Make a Beeline for The Beehive**  
 Also downtown, the local favorite Beehive Restaurant and Saloon delivers classic Texas food in a laid-back setting, with vintage photographs of Abilene on the walls. The Beehive is a steakhouse, but on a hot day, plenty of customers are in shorts. The steaks arrive crisp and seasoned on the outside and juicy on the inside. The same could be said for the tasty and kid-approved chicken tenders.

# Saturday

**9 A.M.**  
**The Frontier Spirit**  
 Built in the style of a 19th-century fort, Frontier Texas traces frontier history from ice age natives to the arrival of the railroads in the late 1800s. Along the way, exhibits cover the Comanche empire, buffalo hide trade, stagecoach trails, the U.S. Army, cattle ranching and trails, and life in frontier towns. Video holograms of famous historical figures like Kiowa leader Santanta and buffalo hunter Pat Garrett—most famous for killing Billy the Kid—breathe life into the historical account. During CALF, Frontier Texas also hosts a petting zoo and dramatic readings.

**3 P.M.**  
**Amazing Grace**  
 A break from crowds of children and the June heat awaits in the galleries of The Grace Museum, which feature rotating exhibits that range



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Frontier Texas breathes life into 19th-century history; the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature; across from the NCCIL, *Dino Bob*—one of Abilene's 25 storybook sculptures; a ranching exhibit at Frontier Texas; the 32-acre Abilene Zoo houses more than 1,000 animals. **OPENING SPREAD:** The NCCIL.







widely from contemporary sculpture to photos and paintings. All share a direct connection to Texas.

The museum inhabits the bones of the Hotel Grace, built in 1909 to serve railroad passengers. On the third floor, displays and recreated living quarters tell the story of the building's restoration and life in old Abilene.

Children are welcome, too: The Grace also houses the Kidsville children's section and hosts dramatic readings and art activities during CALF.



### 7 P.M. **Whichever Way You Slice It**

Even picky children like pizza, and Vagabond Pizza doesn't disappoint, assuming you can convince the young'uns that calabrese salami is essentially pepperoni.

A historic and rustic downtown spot with high ceilings, Vagabond bakes its pizzas in a wood-fired oven, producing crusts that are crispy yet chewy—perfect for dipping in the homemade jalapeño jelly. The salads are fresh, and a menu of wine and craft beer facilitates patience after a long day.



### 1 P.M. **Happily Ever After**



A swing back into downtown to cap the weekend with baked goodies and stout java at Monks Coffee Shop serves as a fitting launchpad for the drive home. (Alas, Candies by Vletas, the venerable 107-year-old sweetshop is closed on Sundays. Sorry, kids.) Both Monks and Vletas make their homes within Abilene's downtown, an area that buzzes with energy during CALF.

Over the past few decades, various early 20th-century brick buildings have been brought back to life, reflecting a community investment of countless hours and dollars. CALF capitalizes on this by bringing families into restored buildings such as the Texas & Pacific Railroad Depot, the Paramount Theatre, and the Grace Museum, to name a few. What better way to ensure such revitalization efforts endure than by endearing these places to the next generation?

"If it's good for children, it's good for Abilene," Barnett asserts.

Judging by the impact on my kids, the Children's Art & Literacy Festival is good for both. As 2018's featured artist Oliver Jeffers put it, "Abilene seems to be not only the Storybook Capital of Texas, not only of America, but probably the whole world." 🐼

## Sunday



### 9 A.M. **Where the Wild Things Are**

Free to enter on Sunday with your festival pass, the Abilene Zoo houses more than 1,000 animals across 32 acres. The exhibits span the globe, from the creepy crawly critters of our own backyards to beasts of fur and feather from faraway continents.

A few highlights: an alligator snapping turtle with a head the size of a volleyball and a shell like a wheelbarrow; African giraffes, including one that's 18 feet tall; African kori bustard birds, which look like dog-size roadrunners; and the

### NIGHT NIGHT

Abilene lodging options include chain hotels, a handful of RV parks, the stylish Sayles Ranch Guesthouses (a one-bedroom option starts at \$195/night; two-bedroom options start at \$295), and campsites and yurts at Abilene State Park (about 40 minutes from downtown).





# Just Peachy!

◆◆◆  
Eat your way  
through the Texas  
Peach Triangle

◆  
By John Lumpkin









**A**s summer begins, so will annual pilgrimages to roadside stands and farmers markets where popular varieties of Texas' succulent freestone peaches arrive in successive waves through Labor Day. Those peaches set a national standard for sweetness, and—here's the really good news—they are mostly reserved for Texans.

The Texas census first mentioned peaches as a commercial crop in 1890, and by 1910, the state's peach production peaked with 10 million trees. Today's current tree count is a tenth of that—largely due to inconsistent weather cycles—meaning there's not a steady enough supply for commercial export outside the state.

"It's darn hard work," says Jim Kamas, a Texas A&M associate professor who co-authored a primer on growing Texas peaches. "It can't be mechanized because it is a perishable commodity." As a result, the fruit tends to go from tree to retail in 24 hours—the roadside stand model.

Thanks to irrigation and modern horticulture, peaches can be grown from the Rio Grande Valley to El Paso and even in the Panhandle, but the most popular samples are found in North, East, and Central Texas, which benefit from more reliable climates and soils ideal for growing. In early June, the first of the freestones—the Harvester—appears, finishing by early September with Parade, Fairtime, and the plump Flameprince, a relative newcomer to the Texas peach pantheon.

Last summer, I set out in my Jeep Cherokee to navigate what I call the "Texas Peach Triangle" to find the best of the best. The journey starts with Stonewall and Fredericksburg along US 290, where growers' outlets are interspersed with Hill Country vineyards. Up north, Weatherford, which the State Legislature designated as the Peach Capital of Texas in 1991, hosts up to 55,000 peach fans at the annual Parker County Peach Festival in July. Between Dallas and Houston sits the third wedge of my triangle, the vast operations of Cooper Farms in Fairfield, which opens pop-up stalls in other Central Texas communities in good years.

Using these coordinates, road trippers will meet families spanning three generations who tend historic orchards near their stores. Sample their peach preserves, peach butter, peach salsa, peach cider, and even peach wine. Graze on peach turnovers, peach cobbler, peach fried pies, and peach ice cream. And, yes, buy a peck or two for your neighbors and your freezer.

"There is little comparison between fresh peaches and the metro grocery store peaches," says Kay Andrews of Austin, an annual visitor to the Burg's Corner stand near Stonewall. "I made a cobbler with good fresh peaches, and it is simply the best dessert you can imagine. Add a little Blue Bell Homemade Vanilla and—wow. No words."

## Gillespie County

**I**t's late June, and Stonewall's annual Peach JAMboree has already kicked off what will be an abundant local crop. Trays of Harvester peaches line tabletops at Vogel Orchard and Burg's Corner. Soon, larger Majestics, Red Globes, Dixilands, and venerable Lorings will follow, each variety with its own disciples.

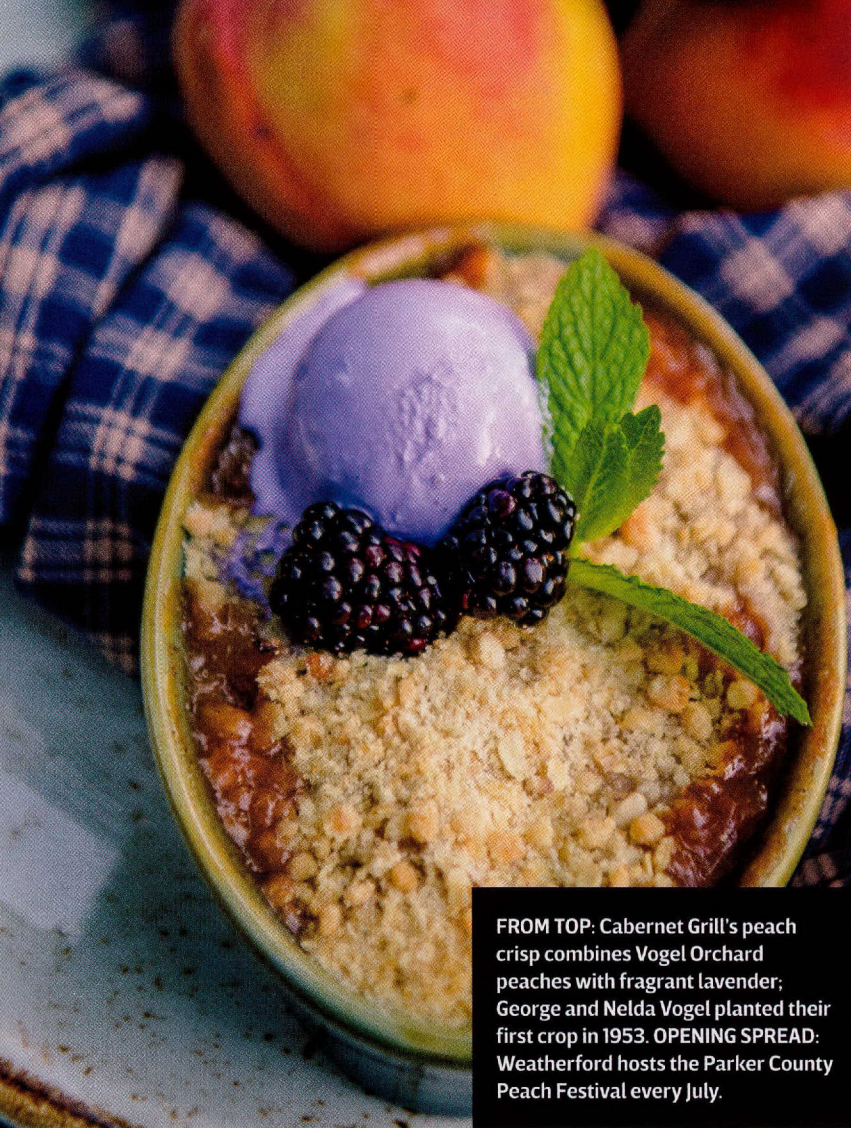
A handwritten sign next to the peaches at Burg's Corner admonishes: "Please don't pinch us. It hurts our peelings." The solution: Buy a basket of the tawny beauties and consume one, skin and all. Just ask for a napkin.

Jimmy Duecker, the patriarch of Burg's Corner, left college in 1969 to work the family orchards when his father died unexpectedly. "I had no reservations what I had to do," he recalls. (He returned to complete his bachelor's degree in 1972). Now, daughters Kristen Restani and Katelyn Duecker manage the US 290 stand. "Families—so far, that's the savior of the peach business," says Jimmy, whose wife, Emily Duecker, also stays involved.

Growing up near the Dueckers, Jamey Vogel remembers he "couldn't wait to get away from this, but in the back of my mind, maybe I could get back if I was away for a while." Now, he and his wife, Terri Vogel, look to their children as the eventual caretakers of Vogel Orchard's 7,000 trees; his parents, George and Nelda, planted the first ones in 1953. George worked the farm until he died this March—he sorted 2018's bountiful peach harvest from his wheelchair.

Hye Market, a nearby historic destination for diners and imbibers, uses Vogel peaches in chef Matt Church's fermented peach salsa, which he spreads on ciabatta for his pork belly sandwiches. In Fredericksburg, the Cabernet Grill lists Vogel by name for its peach crisp. When the year's crop is good, peach ice cream at Clear River Ice Cream and Bakery comes from Burg's Corner, which offers the treat at its stand as well.





**FROM TOP:** Cabernet Grill's peach crisp combines Vogel Orchard peaches with fragrant lavender; George and Nelda Vogel planted their first crop in 1953. **OPENING SPREAD:** Weatherford hosts the Parker County Peach Festival every July.



## Cabernet Grill's Vogel Orchard Peach Crisp

- 6 cups peaches, peeled and sliced
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ¼ cup local honey
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup rolled oats
- ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoon lavender sugar
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ cup soft butter
- 6 scoops lavender ice cream

1. Place peaches in a 9-inch square pan.
  2. Sprinkle with lemon juice and drizzle honey.
  3. In medium bowl, mix together ingredients using a pastry blender or fork.
  4. Sprinkle mixture evenly over peaches.
  5. Bake in preheated 350-degree oven for 35-40 minutes or until top is golden brown.
  6. Serve warm topped with ice cream.
- Makes 6 servings.

Lavender sugar can be found in certain gourmet shops, online sources, or can be made by combining ½ cup granulated sugar with 2 teaspoons dried culinary lavender flowers in a spice grinder. Lavender ice cream can be found in specialty ice cream shops and grocers, or can be made by substituting lavender sugar in your favorite standard ice cream recipe.

Recipe courtesy Chef Ross Burtwell's cookbook, *Texas Hill Country Cuisine: Flavors of the Cabernet Grill Texas Wine Country Restaurant*.

### Web Extra:

For more Texas peach recipes, growing advice, and an update on this year's harvest, visit [texashighways.com](http://texashighways.com)





## Sweet Celebrations

### STONEWALL PEACH JAMBOREE

This weekend celebration is in its 58th year and includes a parade, crowning of the Peach Queen, rodeo, concerts, dances, a “washer-pitchin’” tournament, peach-eating and pit-spitting contests, and a peach grower competition—as well as baking, salsa, and preserve cookoffs. *June 21–22.* 830-644-2725; [stonewalltexas.com/peach-jamboree](http://stonewalltexas.com/peach-jamboree)

### PARKER COUNTY PEACH FESTIVAL

Downtown Weatherford kicks up its heels in honor of the region’s peach farming history for the 35th year. Embark on the Peach Pedal bike ride, take home a title at the food competition (categories include ice cream, preserves, cakes, and appetizers), listen to live music, or browse more than 200 arts and craft vendors and activity booths in between sampling all manner of peachy treats. *July 13.* 817-596-3801; [parkercountypeachfestival.org](http://parkercountypeachfestival.org)

### DE LEON PEACH AND MELON FESTIVAL

Peach dessert and fruit competitions, 4-H bake-offs, and even a melon and cake auction are the sweet attractions at this annual late-summer event, now in its 105th year. There’s also a classic car show, a parade (above), tractor pulls, and live music. *Aug. 6–11.* 254-893-6600; [peachandmelonfestival.net](http://peachandmelonfestival.net)

—Laurel Miller





## Parker County



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Weatherford's open-air farmers market features bounty from Hutton Fruit Farms; Gary Hutton (right) of Hutton Farms; Greg Johnson of B&G's Garden; Parker County peaches.

At least three venues feature the bounty of Hutton Fruit Farms' 4,500 trees—its stand west of Weatherford, downtown Weatherford's open-air farmers market operated by the Hutton family, and the Malt Shop, a 1950s-era drive-in on the old highway to Fort Worth. Gary Hutton, orchard co-owner with brother Jimmy, favors the Malt Shop's peach milkshake.

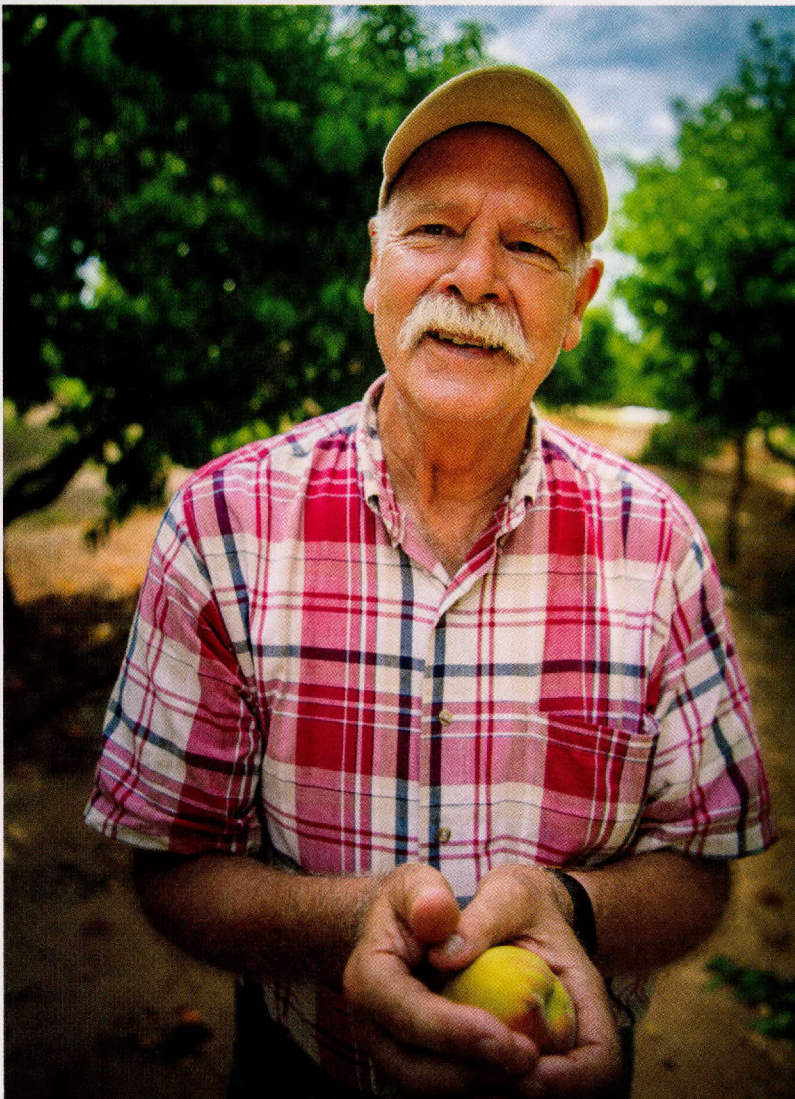
The Hutton stand is down a shady country road off US 180, footsteps away from the orchards. By early July, word has spread about the season's success, with cars, SUVs, and pickups navigating the stand's one-lane driveway. Inside, ripened peaches share shelves with fresh vegetables, canned peach products, and jars of honey.

Hutton escorts a visitor in a golf cart by trees loaded with freestones. "I'm going to add another 15 acres," he says. "I've got to keep my son and nephew busy."

B & G's Garden near the tiny community of Poolville functions on a much smaller scale—200 trees of Harvester, Ranger, Bounty, Loring, and Red Globe among its 10-acre cornucopia of fruits and vegetables. Though there is no stand, visitors are welcome to come out to the farm. "We sell right out of the cooler," master gardener Ben Walker says.

Walker, a former truck driver, and partner Greg Johnson also supply their peaches to Fort Worth outlets like the Cowtown Farmers Market and restaurants like Ellerbe Fine Foods. No zigzagging through rural Parker County is required.

What's Ben's favorite peach? "When I get asked that question, I say 'do you have children? Which one do you love the most?'"







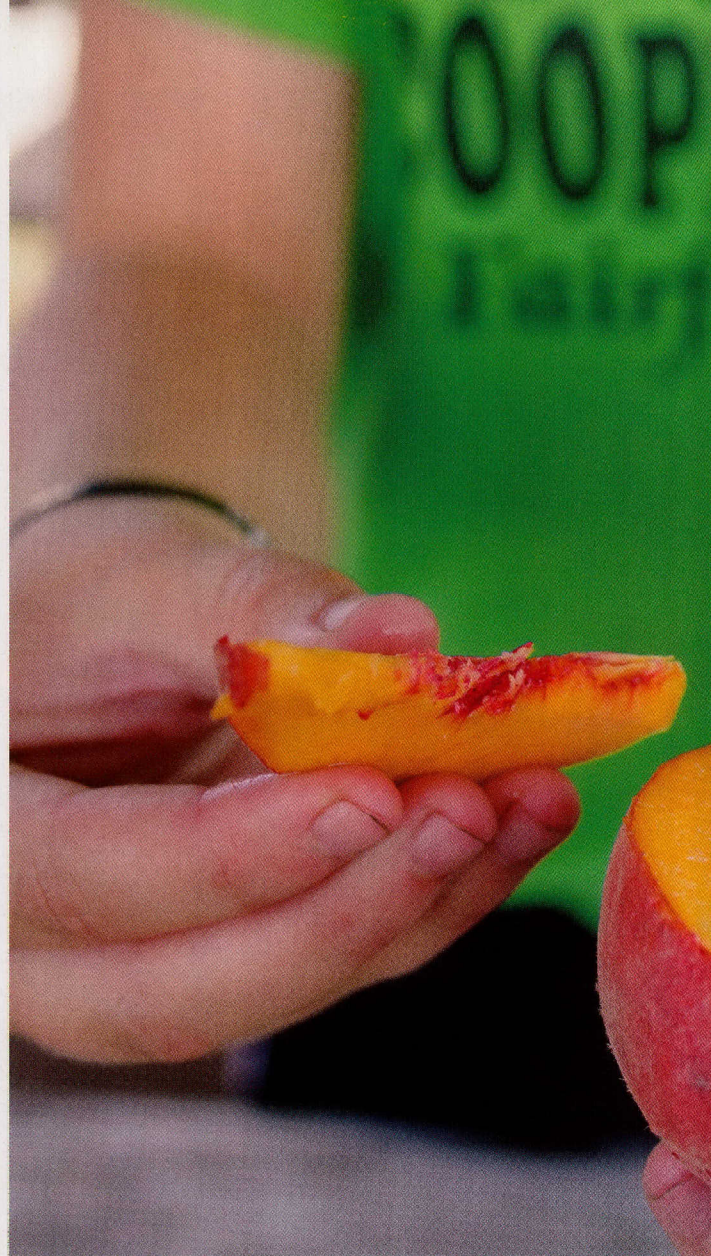
## Picking the Perfect Peach

**Look at the color.** The skin color variations depend upon the variety, but for peaches with partially yellow exteriors, the best indication of ripeness is a deep-gold hue on the “shoulders” of the fruit, at the stem end. For varieties with solid red skin, look for a darker hue at the shoulders; white-fleshed peaches will have deep-pink coloration.

A ripe peach **should have a bit of give when touched** (careful; you don’t want to bruise it), but you don’t want it to be soft unless you’re planning to make jam. Peaches don’t technically ripen after harvest; that is, they won’t continue to develop sugar content. They’ll soften up if placed in a paper bag or bowl, but the sweetness depends upon the variety, how long they’re left on the tree, weather conditions during the ripening process, and terroir (the environment in which they’re grown). **Taste is always the best indicator**, so ask if you can have a sample if there aren’t any readily available.

If you’re picking the fruit yourself, they **should give fairly easily on the branch**; if you have to tug, they’re not ready. Use a basket or box for harvest, to avoid bruising or crushing.

—L.M.







**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:**  
A juicy freestone at Cooper Farms; Cooper's Peach Blossom Honey; find Carl Govan's fresh-baked loaves of peach bread at Cooper Farms Country Store.

## Freestone County

Freestone County is home to Cooper Farms, one of Texas' most reliable suppliers of elegant freestone peaches—the names of the peach variety and the county being a quirky coincidence. Carved out of Limestone County in 1850, Freestone County was named because of the quality of its soils. Mass-scale peach production would come more than a century later, with such soils being critical to peach production.

Cooper Farms Country Store on Interstate 45 sells specialties like cook Carl Govan's Peach Bread and, with a bumper crop, thousands of bushels of tree-ripened peaches from its 300-acre orchards elsewhere in Freestone County. Though Cooper Farms delivers peaches to grocers if there is a surplus, co-owner Elizabeth Johnson says "50 percent of our traffic is roadside," a throwback to her parents' first marketing efforts.

Her parents—Tim and Kathy Cooper, now retired—built the peach-centric empire near Fairfield over the past quarter-century. Elizabeth and her high school sweetheart, Brady Johnson, attended Texas A&M to hone their agriculture and business skills, and now A&M uses Cooper's operations for research into potential new peach varieties.

"We have lots of generational customers," Elizabeth says. "When you were younger, your parents would stop by the side of the road and buy peaches. Then you would make a pie with grandma. People would call every year. Now their kids are calling."

Watching out-of-towners milling around the Country Store, she says, "I would drive an hour for a really good steak, so I guess they would drive an hour for good peaches." 🍑







## Warm and Fuzzies

Freestone peaches—varieties where the flesh doesn't "cling" to the pit—are for the most part, all-purpose. White peaches are less common and more delicate than yellow varieties; they're best eaten fresh or used for desserts (think tarts or ice cream) the day of purchase.

Look for these Texas-grown beauties (regional availability varies) at your local farmers market, farm stand, or store:

**BOUNTY:** Sizeable and firm with good texture; use for grilling, poaching, or for applications that require slices.

**FLAMEPRINCE:** Late ripening, extending the Texas freestone season well into August. Sweet and tart medium to large fruit.

**DIXILAND:** This sweet, juicy variety is one of Texas' most beloved. Fresh or preserves.

**LORING:** Tied with Dixiland for the region's favorite, with firm, "melting" flesh. Fresh or with ice cream, please.

**HARVESTER:** Grown throughout Texas; semi-freestone with medium texture and excellent flavor and balance. Fresh, preserves, with ice cream, or for baking and cooking.

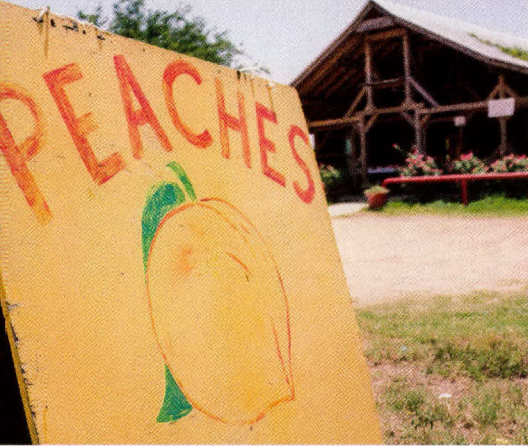
**RED GLOBE:** Holds up well for baking and canning.

—L.M.



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Half of Cooper Farms' peach crop is sold roadside; shop for peaches in Studebaker Farms' timber-framed barn; peaches are ripe for the picking at Vogel Orchard; soon, four generations of the Hutton family may work to preserve Parker County peaches; peach trees at B&G's Garden, about 40 miles northwest of Fort Worth.





# Pit Masters

**When is peach season this year?** It's always a bit fuzzy, so visit farm websites for opening dates and daily harvest updates before you hit the road. Generally, peaches are available May–September, with traditional freestone varieties appearing late June and early July, but offerings are subject to change.

## **B & G'S GARDEN**

Find this Poolville farm's peaches and other produce at Fort Worth's Cowtown Farmers Market. *Cowtown Farmers Market, 3821 Southwest Blvd., Fort Worth. cowtownmarket.com; bandggarden.com*

## **BURG'S CORNER**

Buyers flock to this Gillespie County farm stand for the Duecker family's peach harvest, which also sells preserves, baked goods, and peach ice cream. *15194 US 290, Stonewall. 830-644-2604; burgscorner.com*

## **COOPER FARMS**

This country store sells fresh fruit, preserves, honey, and baked goods using peaches grown on its 300-acre orchards. *301 W. Interstate 45, Fairfield. 903-389-5500; cooperpeaches.com*

## **ENGEL FARMS**

This stand is a favorite stop for peach ice cream as well as fresh organic fruit. Local trivia: Third-generation farmer John Engel's grandparents were the original owners of the land that's now home to Luckenbach. *9885 US 290 E., Fredericksburg. 830-889-3714; engelfarmstx.com*

## **HAM ORCHARDS**

Dale Ham farms 45 varieties of peaches including clings and white peaches. The farm store offers all manner of farmstead products, including preserves, pies, and cobbles. *11939 County Road 309, Terrell. 972-524-2028; hamorchard.com*

## **HUTTON FRUIT FARMS**

Located on the farm, this no-frills store has famed Parker County peaches and other produce, plus peach syrup and honey; their fruit can be found at the Weatherford Farmers Market downtown. *210 Greenwood Cut Off Road, Weatherford. 817-594-1273*

## **JENSCHKE ORCHARDS**

Pick your own peaches at this third-generation orchard and stand, with 26 varieties (including local fave Southern Pearl, a white peach) and more than 5,000 trees. *8381 US 290 E., Fredericksburg. 830-997-8422; bestfredericksburgpeaches.com*

## **STUDEBAKER FARMS**

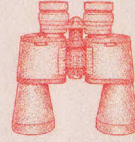
Some of Texas' best-tasting peaches can be found at this timber-framed barn just east of Fredericksburg. Farmer Russell Studebaker and his family have been growing peaches for 20 decades, including local favorites like Dixiland, Ouachita Gold, and Sweet Loriann, a proprietary white variety. *9405 US 290 E., Fredericksburg. 830-990-1109; studebakerfarms.com*

## **VOGEL ORCHARD**

The Vogel family has had peach orchards just west of Stonewall since 1953 (founder George's father used to sell eggs and backyard fruit from the same location). The spacious store sells 24 varieties of peaches as well as farmstead preserves and other crops. *12862 US 290 E., Fredericksburg. 830-644-2404; vogelorchard.com*

—L.M.

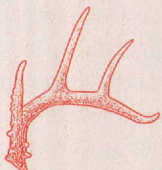




# THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO CAMPING

*HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND  
EMBRACE THE OUTDOORS*

*By Kimya Kavehkar*







Give camping a try at the Lower Colorado River Authority's Muleshoe Bend Recreation Area in Spicewood.



# “If

we leave now, we can be home by 11,” my boyfriend, Alex, told me as we were sitting in his Honda Accord, damp from the sudden onslaught of rain and out of breath from hurriedly putting our valuables in the car.

I'd never loved him more than in that moment. He'd given me permission to quit my first camping trip. After a sleepless night, a canceled stargazing party, chilly and wet weather, and lackluster campfires, we were officially throwing in the towel. We'd lasted just 36 hours in the great outdoors. Giddy from the rush of freedom and abandonment of pride, we pulled out of Inks Lake State Park and headed home to Austin.

I'd never understood the allure of camping. Perhaps it's because my family was never very interested in spending time in the wilderness. We traveled quite a bit, but our destinations were always big cities with the inescapable smell of car exhaust and neon signs lighting up the night sky. In the outdoors, there were bugs, critters, and uncontrollable temperatures—and why would we voluntarily sleep on the ground when my parents worked very hard to put a roof over our heads? Whether due to nature or nurture, I knocked at the door of my 30s with no basic outdoor survival skills or knowledge.

But I was intrigued. Why do people like camping so much? What essential experience am I missing out on? Would giving up the comforts of daily life thrust me into a more primitive, intuitive part of myself I'd yet to encounter?

I wanted to find out—at least give it a fair shot. Maybe, just maybe, I could be a person who, when a friend invites her on a camping trip, picks the best firewood and assists in putting up the tent, instead of making up a lame excuse to skip out.

Having no previous camping experience



▼  
Texas Parks & Wildlife ranger Immanuel Salas assists Texas Outdoor Family campers in building a fire.

or passed-down knowledge from my elders, I opted for some training. Luckily, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department has a program, Texas Outdoor Family, for curious yet cautious newbies like me. Taking place most weekends in spring and fall at parks around the state, TPWD provides equipment and ranger-led workshops on the basics. I attended the session at Garner State Park, west of San Antonio, in September, before my three-day, two-night trip to Inks Lake in January. (See sidebar, right.)

My original plan was to camp solo—to see if I could fend for myself. But everyone I talked to, from park rangers to camping-enthusiast friends, agreed that it's always more fun with other people around.

I recruited Alex to come along with me. After nearly four years of trying to convince me that camping can actually be enjoyable, he was more than willing to shepherd me through this experience. He had fond memories of camping and fishing with his dad in his home state of California as a kid and loves building and cooking with fire as an adult. He was full of nostalgia and know-how—two things I lacked. Plus, he already had all the gear.

We arrived at Inks Lake State Park in Burnet on a mild, sunny Friday in January. Because it was the off-season, the park was mostly filled with Airstreams, RVs, and pop-up campers—people who spend a lot of time on the road. After selecting a



# GROUND WORK

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE'S TEXAS OUTDOOR  
FAMILY PROGRAM CATERS TO ROOKIE CAMPERS



Camping can be intimidating when starting from zero. Just the amount of equipment necessary is bound to make a novice's head spin. Luckily, individuals and families can take advantage of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's Texas Outdoor Family program. This guided camping experience led by a TPWD ranger takes place at parks around the state in the spring and fall. Equipment like tents, cots, sleeping pads, propane stoves, and some cookware are provided, so participants can test out the experience before investing in often-expensive gear.

Needing some initial guidance before I tried camping on my own, I attended a TOF weekend at Garner State Park in Concan in late September. My fellow campers were families from Seguin ISD. Elizabeth Moore, an elementary school physical education teacher who's been working for the school district for 23 years, facilitated the event for her students. "Being outdoors and enjoying nature is one major benefit of the program," Moore says. "I also see it as a wonderful opportunity to spend time as a family."

Interspersed with workshops—how to set up and take down a tent, for example—and activities like geo-caching 101 is free time for participants to enjoy the park, from cooking and reading to hiking and swimming. Moore lent me one of the bikes they'd brought along, and I cruised around the asphalt paths and worn trails through fields, feeling as free as a 10-year-old—although considerably less nimble.

"Are there bears in the park?" and "How do we get started?" are two of the most frequently asked questions, according to ranger Immanuel Salas, who's

been working for TOF for a year and a half. "Many new campers are intimidated by going camping, and this often leads them to not participate or to do so with trepidation," he says.

Aside from the major how-tos, like setting up a tent and building a fire, rangers clue attendees in on tips first-timers may not have considered—not gathering firewood from the park grounds or identifying different animal sounds.

At one point, Salas gathered everyone around to show how to start a fire with a flint-and-steel starter. The kids, thrilled with actually being encouraged to play with fire, jostled for extra turns, and the adults engaged in their own competition to see who could start a fire the fastest.

"Seeing families bond and make sincere connections through camping is inspiring and invigorating for us," Salas says. "When our guests have aha moments, ask which state park they should visit next, or excitedly tell us about their favorite part of their camping weekend, we can see the impact that engagement with nature has made."

My own aha moment came when I biked down to a section of the Frio River that runs through the park. I cheered on kayakers as they attempted to navigate around a large boulder and observed families splashing in the shallows. The lovely scenery and feel of rushing water against my legs brought about a sense of peace. It's easy to see how TOF converts beginners into enthusiasts.

"Many families attend every time we offer the program," Moore says. "They enjoy it so much they go buy camping equipment, and it becomes a tradition to go camping as a family on their own."

*Texas Outdoor Family costs \$95 per family (up to six people) for a two-night program and \$75 for a one-night program. Upcoming events will be held at the following state parks: Lake Corpus Christi (May 3), Inks Lake (May 10), Ray Roberts Lake (May 17), San Angelo (May 18), Garner (June 7), and Eisenhower (June 8). Find out more at [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov).*



# CAMPFIRE COOKING



**A** steady diet of hot dogs and s'mores is a perfectly fine (short term) camping meal plan. But if you want to step up your live fire game, author and *Texas Highways* contributor Paula Disbrowe's cookbook *Any Night Grilling* provides inspired recipe ideas. The simple yet decadent **Broccoli Spears with Crispy Cheese Crust** makes an ideal side dish for a hearty cut of meat. "This recipe is great for camping because of its short ingredient list, and it's easy enough for novice grillers to prepare," Disbrowe says. "The final shower of grated Parmesan creates a crispy cheese crust that will have everyone reaching for seconds."

## INGREDIENTS

2 heads broccoli

Olive oil, for drizzling

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

½ teaspoon red pepper flakes or chopped dried arbol chiles (stemmed and seeded), plus more as desired for heat

1 ½ cups coarsely grated Parmesan, Asiago, aged cheddar, or Gouda

Lemon wedges

## DIRECTIONS

**1. Prepare a charcoal grill** for two-zone cooking and build a medium-high fire, or heat a gas grill to high. Carefully wipe the preheated grates with a lightly oiled paper towel. Using a grill brush, scrape the grill grates clean, then carefully wipe with a lightly oiled towel again. Preheat a cast-iron skillet for 10 minutes before cooking.

**2. While the grill heats**, use a paring knife to trim the bottom inch or two of the heads of broccoli and peel the stems. Slice the broccoli heads into long spears (the florets should be attached to a long portion of stem). Place any florets that break loose in a mixing bowl. Drizzle the spears with olive oil and season with salt, black pepper, and chile.

**3. Grill the broccoli** over direct heat until evenly charred, 4 to 6 minutes per side, moving to indirect heat as needed to prevent the stalks from burning. Grill any small broccoli florets that break loose in the preheated cast-iron skillet, tossing often, until browned and crispy, 3 to 4 minutes.

**4. Add the spears** to the cast-iron skillet and place on the grill grate over direct heat. Sprinkle with cheese, close the grill, and cook until the cheese is melted and the broccoli is crisp-tender, 4 to 5 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature with lemon wedges. Serves 2-4.





BUTTER PAT

RL



lakeside spot with water and electricity (at least we could have *some* of the conveniences of home), we grabbed the events schedule and drove up to our campsite. Mallards and Canada geese swam peacefully on the placid water. We found an even-enough spot on the ground to set up our two-person tent. One thing I learned from ranger Immanuel Salas during the Texas Outdoor Family program is that whatever number of people a tent says it can fit, divide it in half, and that's the actual number of people it can fit. For two people, it would be prudent to have a four-person tent. We only had enough space to fit very snugly side-by-side on top of our blow-up sleeping pads. Sure, it wasn't the Four Seasons, but that's what this was supposed to be about, right?

After setting up our tent and fold-out camp chairs and exploring a bit of the park on foot, we decided to join in the nighttime hike. Camp host volunteer Vicki Iski led us through the short and sweet Devil's Waterhole Nature Trail. Without the aid of flashlights, we became one with the animals I was already wary of encountering: raccoons, coyotes, feral hogs. Vicki's passion for the subject and fun exercises made me relax. She handed out Wint O Green Life Savers and asked us to bite down on them while keeping our mouths open so our partners could see the sparks emanating in the pitch blackness. "Cool," Alex and I agreed. After the hike, I was feeling a little more confident. Maybe camping was fun! And educational! And made us reconsider the wonder of the world just outside the confines of city life!

Back at our campsite, it was finally time to build a fire and enjoy the hot dogs and s'mores we'd packed for dinner. Alex crouched at the edge of the fire pit burning pieces of newspaper and spraying them with an accelerant to get the kindling to catch fire. As the minutes turned into an hour with not so much as a twig sparking, Alex grew frustrated. The firewood we'd brought turned out to be damp. Shivering as the temperatures dropped, we settled for peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches. We scarfed them down and retreated to the relative warmth of the tent under the blankets.

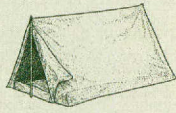
Sleeping—or the attempt of it—provided its own set of disappointments. Without a decent air mattress or cot, there's no way to ignore the fact that you're sleeping on the cold, hard ground. Despite blowing up our sleeping mats and cushioning them with extra sleeping bags and blankets, we were in pain the next morning. My hips ached from sinking through the padding. Alex's back was stiff from contorting his body in a confined space. Too chicken to leave the tent in the middle of the night to use the bathroom, a 3-minute walk away, I barely got a wink of sleep. We vowed to stay up as late as we could the next night to avoid another pitiful night of tossing and turning. We could sleep when the weekend was over.



▼  
Muleshoe Bend  
Recreation Area in  
Spicewood

1. **Twisted Sassafras walking cane** [brazos-walking-sticks.com](http://brazos-walking-sticks.com); \$78
2. **Solo Stove Campfire Kit** [solostove.com](http://solostove.com); \$183
3. **Bison 25-Quart Cooler** [bisoncoolers.com](http://bisoncoolers.com); \$229
4. **Texas Trapper pocket knife** [mooremaker.com](http://mooremaker.com); \$89.95
5. **Kammok Bobcat trail quilt** [kammok.com](http://kammok.com); \$199
6. **Brown & Blue Aromatic Smoking Fuel** [fourstjames.com](http://fourstjames.com); \$12
7. **Somerset Lavender Farms mosquito spray** [somesetlavender.com](http://somesetlavender.com); \$12
8. **Jarvis Boards wood paddle-board** [jarvisboards.com](http://jarvisboards.com); \$1,725





# GETTING INTO HIGH GEAR

START YOUR CAMPING EXPERIENCE OFF RIGHT WITH TEXAS-MADE PRODUCTS AND EQUIPMENT, FROM A STURDY COOLER TO A LIGHTWEIGHT BLANKET



fig. 5

fig. 8

JARVIS BOARDS  
CRAFTED IN TEXAS



fig. 4



fig. 6



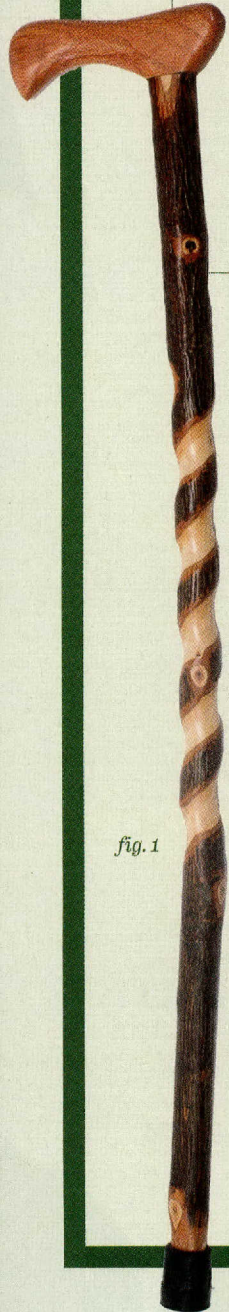
fig. 2

fig. 3

fig. 7



fig. 1





# FIELD GUIDE TO CAMPING DANGERS

One of the things that keeps potential campers in the great indoors is all the unknowns...out there. From unforgiving weather to creepy-crawlies to vines with a vengeance, danger can seem to lurk around every tree trunk in Texas. And while nature is naturally unavoidable, being armed with knowledge—and a first-aid kit—will alleviate some fears. Kimberly Sorensen, a Houston-based outdoor education specialist with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, shares her knowledge of some common dangers in state parks.



## **Severe Weather**

**What to Know:** Unless it's an extreme weather event like a flash flood, campers are responsible for their own safety. In the event of extreme weather, rangers will alert campers when possible.

**What to Do:** Use the WeatherBug app to track lightning distance. When lightning is within 10 miles, seek shelter in an enclosed area. Wind above 25 mph can damage tents—bring extra supports for the tent or plan to sleep in your car. Sorensen also notes that you're safer staying in a park than driving on the roads during severe weather.



## **Poison Ivy and Poison Oak**

**What to Know:** The classic way to distinguish poisonous plants that may cause itching or an allergic reaction is to avoid "leaves of three" and to be wary of fuzzy vines around trees, especially if you're camping with kids who love to climb.

**What to Do:** Over-the-counter medications like Zanafel can help with irritation, and it's always a good idea to wash affected skin as quickly as you can. It also helps to wear long sleeves and pants when out and about.



## **Black Widow and Brown Recluse Spiders**

**What to Know:** Black widows and brown recluses both have poisonous venom. Brown recluses in particular are known for hanging out in damp, dark areas.

**What to Do:** If you get bitten, it's important to seek medical attention as soon as possible. If you get bitten by any type of spider, clean the bite with water and soap. If it feels like it's getting hot or infected, seek medical help.



## **Venomous Snakes**

**What to Know:** If you come across a snake, leave it alone and move slowly. Snakes will eventually move along and go about their business. When you scare them, it activates their defense mechanisms.

**What to Do:** Follow Sorensen's "rule of thumb" when encountering all wildlife: if you hold your thumb out at arm's length and your thumb visually covers that wildlife, you're at a respectful distance.



## **Ants**

**What to Know:** Watch out for mounds where you step and carefully inspect your campsite before setting up your tent, especially in the dark. Ask your park ranger if there are invasive ant species in the park so you can avoid spreading them further.

**What to Do:** If you get bitten, use an antihistamine like Benadryl to help with the itching, or bring an EpiPen if you know you're allergic.



## **Mosquitoes and Ticks**

**What to Know:** Ticks and mosquitoes can be found all over the state and are known to spread disease. Ticks tend to stay in more heavily wooded areas.

**What to Do:** To guard from bites, wear long sleeves and pants made with thicker material and apply bug spray on your clothes, especially around the bottom of your pants. Ask a local ranger if ticks are prevalent in the area, keep out of tall grass, and stay on trails.





▼  
Texas Outdoor  
Family participants  
at Inks Lake  
State Park

The following morning, we drove into town to buy dry firewood, charcoal, and lighter fluid. Wanting something warm and comforting to eat, we stopped at Mama's Home Cooking for breakfast, coffee, and a slice of buttermilk pie. The sugar and the caffeine perked us up enough to venture to Longhorn Cavern State Park, just 6 miles up the road from Inks Lake. Alex and I are not mountain bikers, kayakers, canoers, fishers, nor long-distance hikers, so we wondered what we would actually *do* while camping. We leaned heavily on the park's events and other guided tours to keep us entertained. The hour-and-a-half-long tour through the cave, which had been used as a dancehall and concert venue in the 1920s, was fascinating. From the beautiful crystal formations to the minuscule hibernating bats, the place was rife with delights. We walked through the 1.1-mile passageway in awe at what nature built and what humans dedicated themselves to preserving. It lifted our spirits. We decided to give building a fire another try with our new supplies.

Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other plans. The stargazing party we'd been excited to attend, hosted by the Austin Astrological Society, was canceled because of the

cloudy skies and impending rain. While the sky looked ominous, the showers seemed to be holding off. The humidity didn't help with our campfire, but the lighter fluid did. After about 30 minutes of stoking the flames, we finally had success. The fire was big enough to give us warmth, heat a cast-iron skillet over the grill grates, and melt a jet-puffed marshmallow. Music was playing softly from the Bluetooth speaker we'd brought, and we swigged clandestine wine from enamel cups. We were sore, sleepy, and smelly (for some reason we decided that going 48 hours without showering was a perfectly fine idea), but we were finally capital-C Camping.

Then the rain came. We tried to brave it as best we could—the fire was finally roaring. We were getting soaked. And escaping to the tent, with barely enough room to sit up in, wasn't much more comfortable. We retreated to the car to wait it out. It didn't seem like the rain would be stopping anytime soon. Our resolve depleted, we hastily broke down our site, extinguished the fire, threw everything into the trunk, and sped off toward our queen mattress, hot shower, and cuddly cat.

Strangely, in the car on the way home, Alex and I were already discussing our

next potential camping trip. We were down, but not completely out. Would we splurge for a bigger tent, or stay in cabins and screened-in shelters? We would definitely spring for a propane stove, if only for emergencies. We'd heard Lost Maples State Natural Area is beautiful in the fall—how early would we need to make reservations?

I'd genuinely enjoyed the programs, tours, and hikes. Camping is a great—and mostly inexpensive—way to see the true natural diversity and beauty of Texas up close. I just know now that a good night's sleep is something I don't want to sacrifice. I'm willing to venture outside of my comfort zone in other avenues: I can try kayaking down rapids, showering in a public space, and not having a lick of cell phone reception for days. I'm ready! I'm willing! Just please don't make me sleep on the ground.

I believe you can be an "indoor person" and sincerely enjoy a long weekend outside. I believe you can find tremendous peace staring into a vista with nothing but the sound of birds trilling and still miss Netflix. I believe there's a happy medium between pushing ourselves to embrace the wild unknown and being miserably covered in mosquito bites.

I plan to find it on my next camping trip. 🐾





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**THE  
SPIRIT  
OF  
SELAH**

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**J. DAVID BAMBERGER  
SPENT HALF A CENTURY  
REVIVING A HILL COUNTRY  
LANDSCAPE. THE LEGACY  
HE BUILT REACHES FAR  
BEYOND HIS FENCE LINE.**



**I**n 1969, a San Antonio fried-chicken tycoon was struck by a life-changing idea: He would find, buy, and heal “the sorriest piece of land in the Hill Country.”

Now celebrating its 50th anniversary, the Bamberger Ranch Preserve sprawls across 5,500 acres of grassy hills and wildflower meadows in Blanco County. When visitors arrive May 5 for the annual family day and picnic, they will repeatedly drive across a perennial stream that cascades through a series of waterfalls and deep pools. Fields of Indian blankets practically glow at sundown this time of year, and the leaves of the bigtooth maples burst into brilliant hues of red and gold each fall. The ranch, which also goes by the informal name Selah, is widely celebrated as one of the largest and most influential efforts to restore a classic Texas landscape. When J. David Bamberger launched his project half a century ago, however, Selah was a worn-out wasteland. Many thought he was a crackpot—not that Bamberger minded.

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**BY ANDREW  
SANSOM**

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**PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
RUSTY YATES AND  
DAVID K. LANGFORD,**  
*courtesy Texas A&M University Press*

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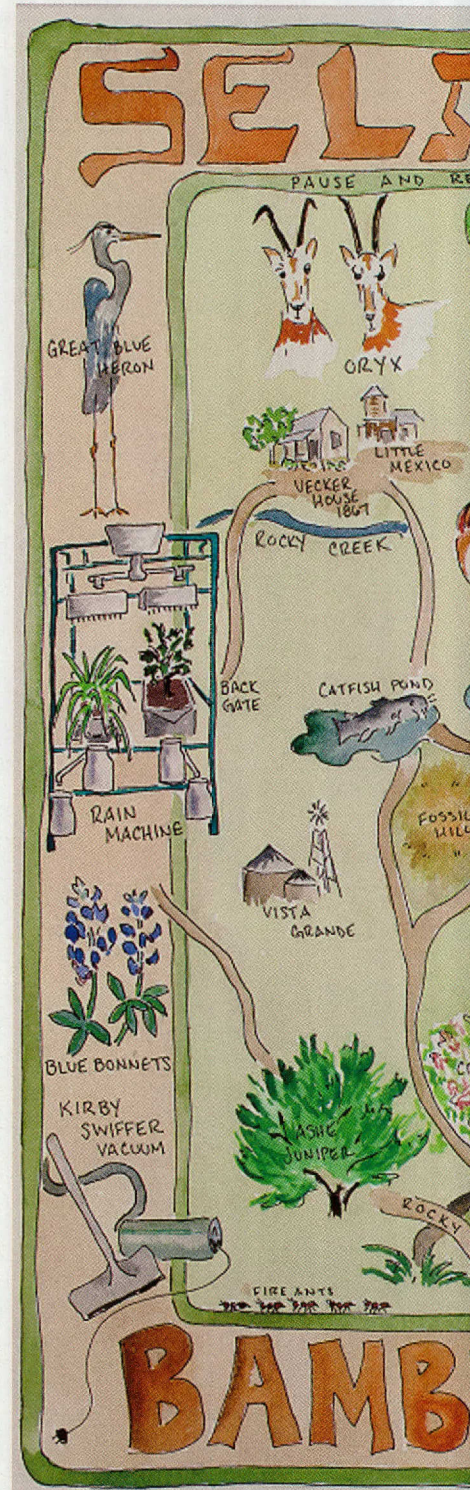


"I've lived my life being different," says Bamberger, who began his career as a door-to-door vacuum salesman and went on to co-found Church's Fried Chicken, the first Texas-based fast food chain to expand nationwide. When the company went public, Bamberger became a wealthy man. At 40 years old, he was living in San Antonio and ready for a new purpose.

"Money no longer meant anything to me," Bamberger, now 90, recalls, "and I knew that the opportunity to change the direction of my life had been presented to me."

The chicken mogul thought back to his childhood in the Amish country of Ohio. He'd grown up dirt poor during the Great Depression, with no running water or electricity. "Everything we ate growing up came either from what we could grow in our garden or gather in the woods," he says, noting that his mother Hester—Hes for short—was an early environmentalist. When Bamberger was a teenager, his mom gave him a copy of *Pleasant Valley*, a popular nonfiction book that chronicled author Louis Bromfield's pioneering efforts to cultivate and restore farmland that had been overworked for generations in rural Ohio.

The Texas Hill Country had also been severely neglected. When the first big wave of settlers arrived in the 1840s, they encountered a sea of grass as far as they could see. Ashe juniper, commonly called cedar,







**CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT:** J. David Bamberger cleared cedar and sowed native grass seeds to begin the restoration of his once-barren ranch, Selah; ranch map. **OPENING SPREAD:** Grassy fields and brushy mesas epitomize Hill Country beauty.

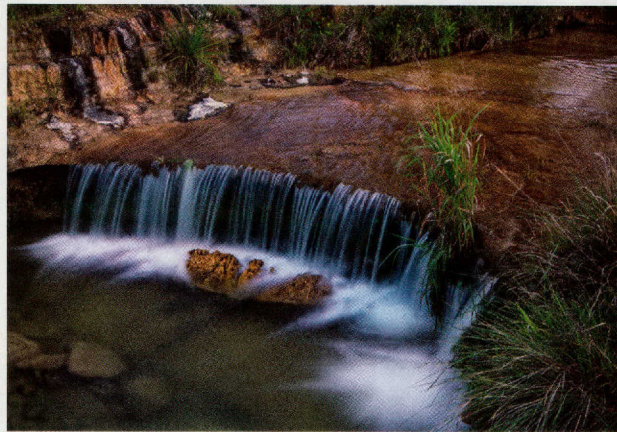
was largely confined to the steep slopes of canyons, and springs flowed freely. In less than three decades after the settlers' arrival, however, the grass was gone—overgrazed by cattle, sheep, and goats. Much of the thin soil washed away. Cedar, which needs minimal topsoil to take root, spread out of the canyons and choked the hillsides. The brushy tree, a notorious consumer of

rainwater, sucked up so much moisture the Hill Country was left dry and barren. When President Lyndon B. Johnson was born on Aug. 27, 1908, less than 10 miles from what would become the Bamberger Ranch, the Hill Country was one of the poorest economic regions in the United States.





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** By managing brush, the Bamberger Ranch nurtures extensive fields of upland grasses; scimitar-horned oryx bed down in the Little Mexico Pasture; Bamberger and his pal Corye; a cascade along the Jane Goodall Trail.



## FAST FORWARD TO 1969,

and Bamberger knew he couldn't fix the entire Hill Country. But he wanted to use his chicken riches to revive his own piece of it, building on the early example set by his mom and by Bromfield, whose Ohio farm has been turned into a state park that educates others about land stewardship.

"I contacted several ranch brokers who tried to sell me spreads with huge houses, airstrips, and other fancy infrastructure," Bamberger recalls. "I couldn't get them to understand that was not what I was looking for." So he reached out to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He told a soil conservation agent he was looking for the most played-out ranch in the region.

"Well, this is Texas, and there is plenty of that," the agent told him. "I just hope you're not planning on raising any cattle."

He was, in fact. Bamberger purchased 3,000 acres near Johnson City, north of San Antonio and southwest of Austin, which he later expanded by 2,500 acres. The ranch was mostly bare ground or infested with cedar. There was no grass and absolutely no live creeks, springs, or ponds. When Bamberger drilled a series of water wells, not one of them produced a drop.

Undeterred, Bamberger assembled a group of Texas A&M-educated professionals—he called them his Cow Aggie, his Tree Aggie, his Deer Aggie, and his Dam Aggie—and went to work. With a used bulldozer, they attacked the cedar, learning as they went to avoid the steeper slopes, taking care not to exacerbate erosion. Then they planted native grasses to hold the topsoil in place. Bamberger, his sons, and his team bought so much native seed from local suppliers they were accused of cornering the market, a feat he jokingly admits he





## A Legacy of Friendship

Two of the state's most respected conservationists met in the early 1980s when Andrew Sansom, then running the Texas office of The Nature Conservancy, invited J. David Bamberger to watch the evening emergence of bats from Bracken Cave, north of San Antonio. "I'll bring the chicken," replied Bamberger, then the CEO of Church's Fried Chicken.

There began a relationship spanning more than three decades, Sansom recounts in his new book, *Seasons at Selah: The Legacy of the Bamberger Ranch Preserve*. In the early years, as the two men walked beside Selah's clear streams or swam in its largest lake, Sansom writes, "I began to realize that my new friend ... was in the process of creating something extraordinary on his ranch, an inspired effort that would transcend our lives."







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## Visit the Bamberger Ranch Preserve

**Public and private tours:** Visitors can take a firsthand look at the results of a half-century of habitat restoration. They might also see dinosaur tracks, fossil beds, a herd of scimitar-horned oryx (a graceful African antelope that is extinct in the wild), examples of every tree native to the Hill Country, and plenty of bats on summer evenings.

**Go deeper:** The ranch offers a number of workshops on land stewardship, such as cedar management, water development, growing native grasses and trees, and managing for wildlife.

**Family Day and Picnic:** The ranch's biggest public event each year offers tours and nature walks, ziplines and fishing lessons for children, fossil digs, wildlife presentations, arts and crafts, and a native plant sale. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. May 5. \$45 adults, \$15 children, \$135 families. Proceeds benefit children's educational programs at the preserve. 2341 Blue Ridge Drive, Johnson City. 830-868-2630; [bambergeranch.org](http://bambergeranch.org)





**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Madrone Lake, the centerpiece of Bamberger Ranch; queen butterflies feed on the nectar of Gregg's mistflower; morning fog settles on the Sahara Pasture; the evening emergence from the Chiroptorium, an artificial cave built to house Mexican free-tailed bats.

never achieved with fried chicken.

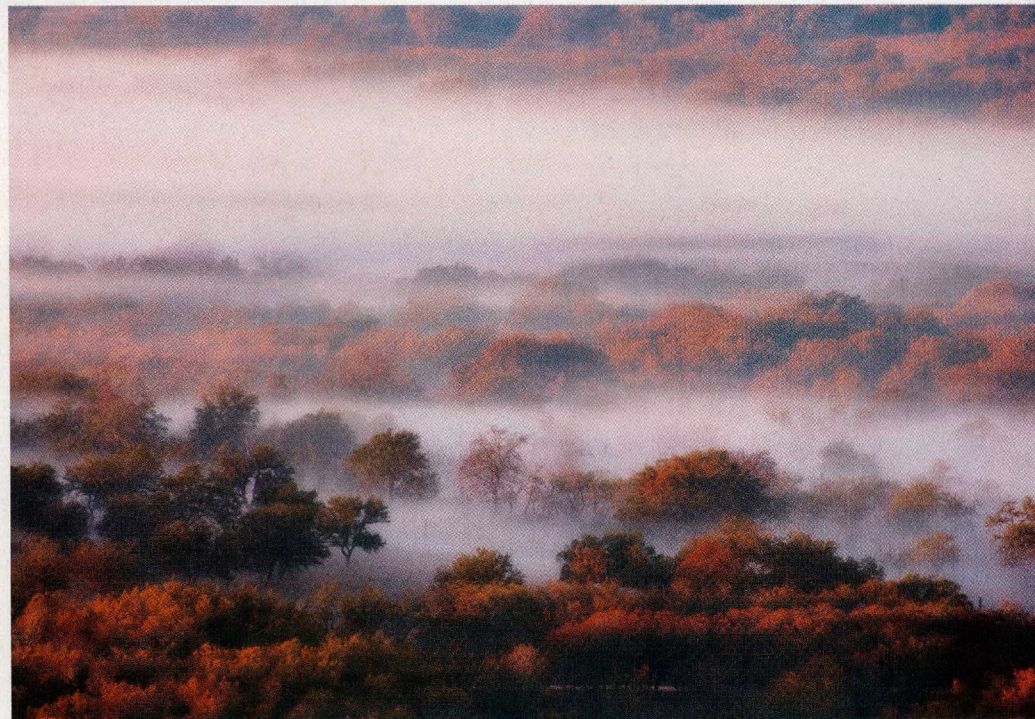
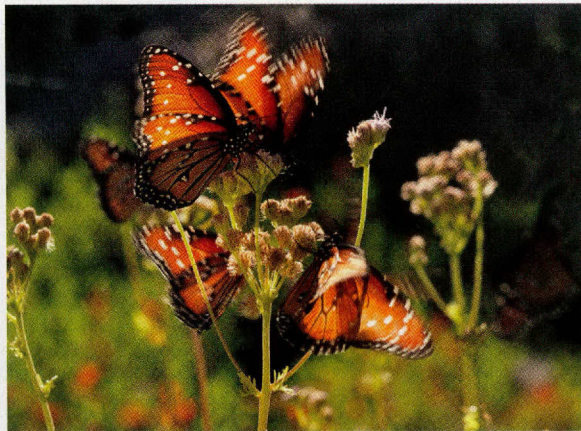
Slowly, the landscape at Selah began to change. As the cedar was removed and grasses took root, the hills took on a vibrant green hue. Instead of running off, the raindrops increasingly were absorbed into the soil, recharging a shallow aquifer just below the surface and, little by little, resurrecting the springs.

Today, there is water literally everywhere on the ranch, from the headwaters of Miller Creek, a tributary of the Pedernales River, to more than two dozen ponds and lakes fed by natural springs

throughout Selah. Five families can live at the ranch on water supplied not from wells but from springs that didn't even exist prior to Bamberger's arrival.

To be sure, land stewardship is more complicated than clearing brush and planting native grass. In some areas, the groundwater is simply too deep to ever emerge as springs. And old-growth cedar has its place in the Hill Country, both to stabilize steep banks and hillsides and to provide important habitat for endangered birds such as the black-capped vireo. The evidence at Bamberger Ranch speaks for itself, however, and Bamberger's efforts have helped lead to the widespread acceptance that rampant cedar growth does in fact deteriorate groundwater, the source of the Hill Country's once-prominent springs.

The healing of Selah, named for an ancient Hebrew word thought to mean "pause and reflect," is "a story of stewardship and a renaissance of restoration," says Carter Smith, executive director of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. The ranch has received some of the nation's highest awards for land stewardship, and Bamberger, always the brilliant salesman,





has attracted dedicated helpers from all walks of life to share in his toil in service to the earth.

"It doesn't take a lot of cash to be a good land steward," Bamberger is fond of saying, "but it does take hard work and dedication."

Today his example has never been more important. Texas is losing rural and agricultural land faster than any other state. One of the biggest environmental problems the state faces is the continued fragmentation of family lands. In this context, the Bamberger Ranch is a beacon of hope.



## BY THE EARLY 1990S,

the Selah restoration project was showing results. Bamberger had retired once and for all as chairman of Church's Fried Chicken, and he was weighing whether to

accept an invitation to serve on the board of Bat Conservation International, which had moved its headquarters from Milwaukee to Austin due to the sensational number of bats in Central Texas.

"Bat people are goofy," Bamberger said at the time, but he soon became one of the nation's most dedicated champions of these then-largely misunderstood creatures.

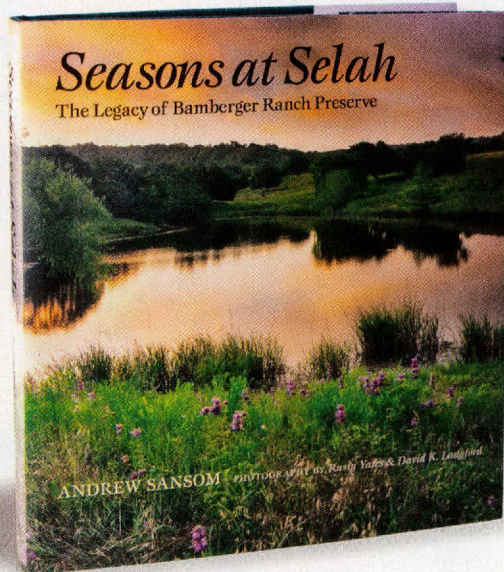
In 1992, the organization had acquired Bracken Cave in Comal County, which is thought to be the summer home of the largest concentration of mammals on the planet. With the help of his "Dam Aggie," ranch engineer Leroy Petri, Bamberger installed a system of trails and other infrastructure at the cave to enable visitors to view the 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats that emerge to feed every summer evening.

"I was hooked," says Bamberger—so hooked, in fact, that he came up with the idea to build his own cave to attract bats to Selah. "At that point," he says, "people

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:**  
**Fireflies on the Aldo Leopold Trail; Seasons at Selah: The Legacy of Bamberger Ranch Preserve, a book of photographs and essays on the restoration of the ranch; the Big Valley Pasture.**







thought I was goofy.”

Today, hundreds of thousands of bats spend their summer in the ranch's artificial cave, which boasts two names: One is “Bamberger’s Folly.” The other is the “Chiroptorium,” a term his wife, Margaret, coined with his son David by pairing *chiroptera*, the scientific name for bats, with the word auditorium. On certain evenings in late summer, the public is invited to watch the bats emerge, perhaps the ranch's most captivating seasonal spectacle.

Not long before the bats arrived at the

Chiroptorium, Bamberger was serving on Gov. Ann Richards’ Task Force on Nature Tourism when he coined another phrase: “people ranching.” It was meant to describe Selah’s growing effort to introduce city dwellers to the outdoors and to educate them in the importance of land and water conservation.

In Texas, where 95 percent of the landscape is owned by private residents, “people ranching,” or agritourism, can be an important source of income to farmers and ranchers across the state. Each year, hundreds of thousands of visitors come to Texas to hunt, fish, or birdwatch, and many of the best opportunities are on privately owned farm and ranchlands.

At places like Selah, such activities are more than a supplemental source of income. The ranch regularly welcomes the public for nature tours and bat viewings. Visitors can also attend landowner seminars, and children come for hands-on classes and summer camps in one of the most beautiful settings in the heart of the Hill Country.

It is increasingly children who are the ranch’s most important guests—a legacy of Margaret Bamberger, an artist and educator who married Bamberger in the 1990s. Margaret created the ranch’s educational programs and gave the ranch its credibility as an educational institution. Each year more than 3,000 kids from low-income schools and many more are brought to the ranch for outdoor fun and learning, and to experience what Bamberger calls “Selah Moments”—the opportunity for the next generation to pause and reflect while surrounded by the outdoors.

“There’s something special about teaching nature,” Bamberger says. “You can feel it in yourself. It’s called passion, and when you are talking, those who are listening will feel it too.”

Seventeen years ago, Bamberger established the Bamberger Ranch Preserve to protect Selah long after his death, and he retired last July as chairman of the preserve’s board of directors. Once derided as a crackpot, he is now hailed as a visionary. “Given the chance, nature can heal itself,” Bamberger says. “Nature can heal us.”

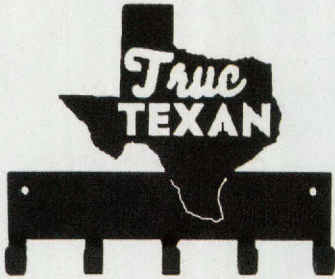




MEET OUR MAKERS

# Kaktos Rose

**“BOHO AND A DASH OF SASS”**—that’s how sisters Ashley (pictured) and Katie Futris describe their metal art designs. Inspired by their mother’s initiative to start her own business making displays for marathon medals, the sisters launched Kaktos Rose in 2016. Based in Waco, they fabricate wall hangings and garden stakes with thoughtful or clever sayings. “I guess you could say we get our entrepreneur spirit from our mama,” Ashley says. Ever since their mother, Marcey Futris, paved the way for her daughters’ business, they’ve been hard at work to make each piece. “There is something for every individual, and if there isn’t a product yet for you, we will create your original design,” Ashley says. “Our custom signs have to be our favorite. People have really awesome stories behind their designs, and we are so happy to make them come to life.”



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# PIATES



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# Garden Variety

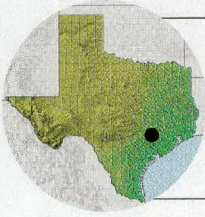
A dance pavilion turned healthy buffet-style restaurant in Shiner honors its past

By Michael Corcoran



A SELECTION OF HEALTHY options makes Sunken Gardens' buffet stand out.





**SUNKEN GARDENS**  
305 E. Fifth St., Shiner.  
361-594-3603  
Open Mon-Fri.  
10:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

**W**hen Kay Villalpando was a child in the 1950s, her parents sold dance tickets at Sunken Garden, an open-air pavilion where seemingly half of Lavaca County came out every weekend to polka, waltz, and two-step on 4,000 square feet of glazed concrete. “It was quite an experience for a little girl,” Villalpando says. Gesturing to an elevated structure with an ornate rock backdrop, she notes, “This was the bandstand.”

From its opening in 1936 until the late '50s, when the advent of air-conditioning moved the party to indoor venues, Sunken Garden made Shiner the swayingest small town in Texas. All the big Texas swing and polka bands, including Houston's Blue Ridge Playboys, played here to capacity crowds of 500, according to the Lavaca County Historical Commission. But these days, dining, not dancing is the draw.

The old dance floor is now the parking lot for Sunken Gardens, Villalpando's healthy homestyle buffet restaurant that suggests a merger between Whole Foods Market and Golden Corral. The walls are covered with framed, enlarged photos of dances from Sunken Garden's heyday. “We added an ‘s’ to ‘Garden’ to make it our own,” Villalpando says of the slight name change, “while also acknowledging some great memories that were made here.”

Originally named because it's naturally carved out of a small hill near Boggy Creek, Sunken Garden began as a downhome entertainment complex with cabins, roller skating, a Mexican restaurant, and a beer garden, in addition to dancing. “New Pleasure Resort Opens in Shiner,” was the headline of an April 1936 article in the *Shiner Gazette*.

# FIELD GUIDE *to* BASTROP COUNTY

ISSUE  
No 04



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# GOING UP.



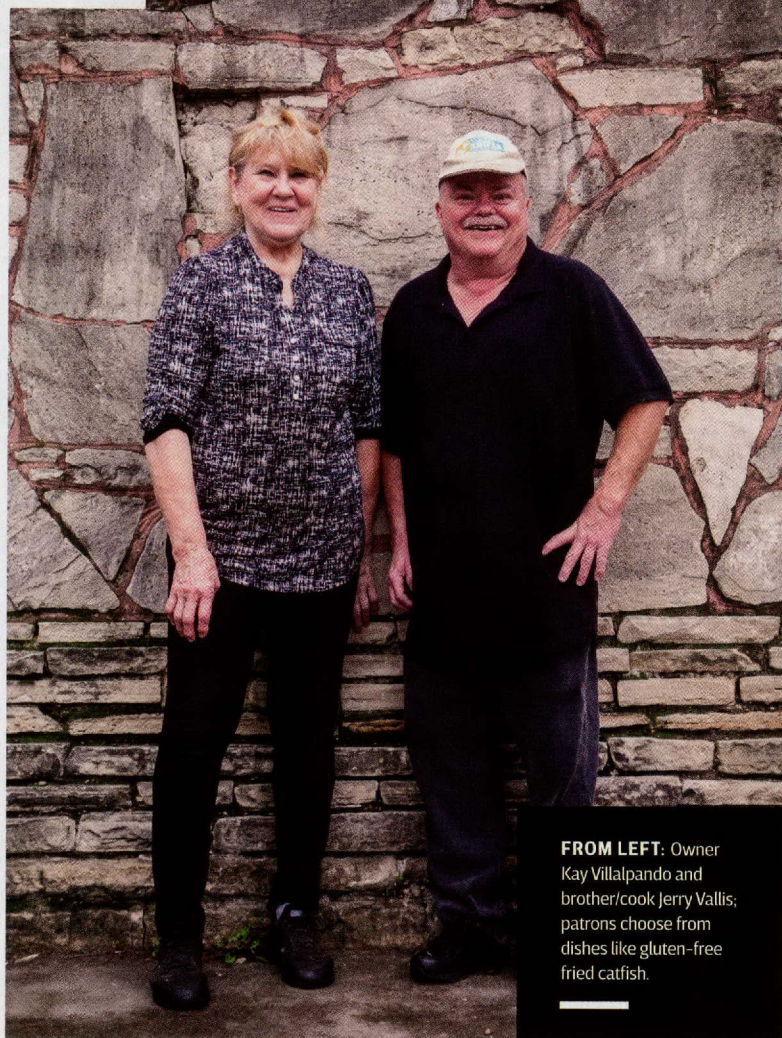
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## PLATES



**FROM LEFT:** Owner Kay Villalpando and brother/cook Jerry Vallis; patrons choose from dishes like gluten-free fried catfish.

After the dance pavilion closed in the late '50s, the main building hosted a succession of restaurants, including Gussie's Place, Swanks, Shimek's BBQ, The Hot Roll, and Pizza Barn. Villalpando and her then-husband, Dominic Villalpando, took over the space in 1999 as the new location of their Country Corner Cafe, a restaurant they'd opened in 1993, whose original building in Shiner was damaged in a fire.

Business was good, but six years ago the divorced mother of four decided to make a change in the menu for her kids, who all worked and ate at Country Corner, and for her community, which didn't have healthy restaurant options. "We didn't know what to expect from our old regulars," she says of the change, "but everyone seems very appreciative." The new name would not only be nostalgic, but an apt description of the fresh menu. Out went anything that had been artificially preserved or genetically modified,

and in came the highest-quality natural ingredients. The running of the restaurant is a family affair with Villalpando's children responsible for design, ownership, and ambiance, and other family members helping out in the kitchen.

"Some folks were begging me to put enchiladas (a best-seller at Country Corner Cafe) back on the menu, but they're just not healthy," Villalpando says. The only recipe that carried over from the previous incarnation is the white, creamy salad dressing made with Shiner Light Blonde beer. The 110-year-old Spoetzl Brewery, Shiner's top tourist attraction, is only two blocks away. "We catered a dinner there about 10 years ago, and the rule was that every dish had to include Shiner beer," Villalpando says with a laugh. The dressing was a hit.

Shiner resident Jeff Pesek calls Sunken Gardens "a blessing for a town our size. It's tasty and healthy, when you're





usually either one or the other." The catfish, for instance, is coated with a gluten-free corn flour and fried in peanut oil, which is low in cholesterol and saturated fats. And kale is plentiful at the salad bar.

Rather than the "all you can eat" format which encourages gluttony as an instrument of value, Sunken Gardens charges \$6.99 a pound. After the restaurant closes at 3 p.m., the leftovers are frozen and eventually taken to Bluebonnet Youth Ranch in Yoakum, a nonprofit that provides housing for abused and neglected children.

The workday starts for Villalpando at 5:30 a.m. The oldest of 10 children, she became the family cook in her pre-teens after her mother died, and she's been working in kitchens ever since. Every Monday through Friday, she parks her car where people once glided gracefully across the dance floor and heads up the stone steps for another day of serving the community. They do things in the kitchen a little differently than in the old days, but the connection to the past is strong. **L**



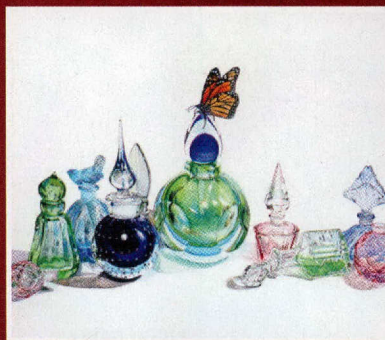
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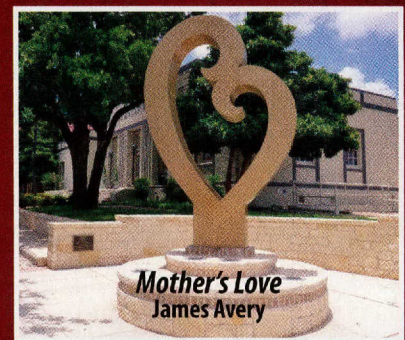
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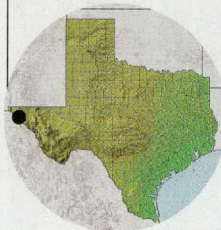


# Cheese, Please

Licon Dairy near El Paso produces crave-worthy asadero

By Matt Joyce

**LICON DAIRY**  
11951 Glorieta Road, San Elizario. Open weekdays 6 a.m.–5 p.m. and weekends 6 a.m.–6 p.m. The petting zoo opens daily 7:30 a.m.–5 p.m. 915-851-2705; licondairy.com



The El Paso Mission Trail is most famous for its age-old adobe Catholic churches, rich in border history and Southwestern culture. But as locals will attest, it would be a mistake to journey to this corner of Texas without a stop at Licon Dairy for asadero cheese.

On the outskirts of the Spanish presidio town of San Elizario, Licon Dairy has been perfecting its signature cheese since the 1950s. That’s when Soltero and Isabela Martinez moved to the El Paso area from California, acquired a couple of dairy cows, and started selling asadero made from a family recipe, says Gene Licon, the third generation of his family to run the dairy.

Asado is Spanish for roasted. “It’s a Mexican cheese, similar to mozzarella,” Licon explains. “It gets the name asadero because once you pull the curds from the whey, the curds go back to the melting process; you recook it.”

The dairy, which includes a food store, sells most of its asadero as 1-ounce flat slices, perfect for rolling right out of the package or folding in a tortilla. The delicate, mild rounds are nicknamed *tortillas de leche*, or “tortillas of milk.”

“I’m 57, and I’ve been eating these for at least 55 years of my life,” says Juan Canales, who visits Licon’s shop several times a week. “My kids love them for quesadillas and on sandwiches. Plus, I live across the street, so...”

At 4 o’clock every morning, Licon’s cheesemakers start cooking whole milk and then mix in cultures and rennet to separate the curds and whey (*suero*, in Spanish). The curds are melted to make into cheese: mostly the flat asadero rounds—about 500 packages per day. But the dairy also makes and sells asadero blocks, some accented with jalapeño and habanero peppers.

The whey byproduct is so abundant it’s pumped into a 3,000-gallon tank to be used for hog feed. And that’s after enough has been set aside to make *requeson* (ricotta), *chile con queso*, and *chile con suero* (whey with chile—see sidebar). Customers also buy plain whey to use as



a salty and creamy broth for dishes like squash soup.

Licon Dairy sells all of these products in its store, which also carries such staples as local honey, pecans, dried chiles, watermelons, snack chips, soft drinks, candies, salsa, ice cream bars, and frozen lamb meat. The shop carries La Princesa tortillas, made by a company that rents the old cheesemaking building onsite.

The \$1 bags of animal feed are for visitors to Licon's petting zoo, a menagerie of native and exotic animals kept in pens and pastures. Arizona ash and ponderosa pine line the walking trails, which are adorned with animal sculptures and religious iconography.

Licon says the petting zoo began about 20 years ago when his mother, Maria, bought two ostriches (Margarita and Tequila). The skittish, long-legged birds survive to this day, counting among their neighbors guinea hens, macaws, various pigeon breeds, goats, Longhorn cattle, and a camel named Roger. A fishing pond opens occasionally for special events.

In January, Licon Dairy made the local news when two dogs found a way through the petting zoo fence and killed 14 animals, including deer, sheep, goats, and a swan that was at least 25 years old. After the trauma of the attack—Licon recounts being awoken by the sound of llama screams at 3 a.m.—the family was heartened by an outpouring of support.



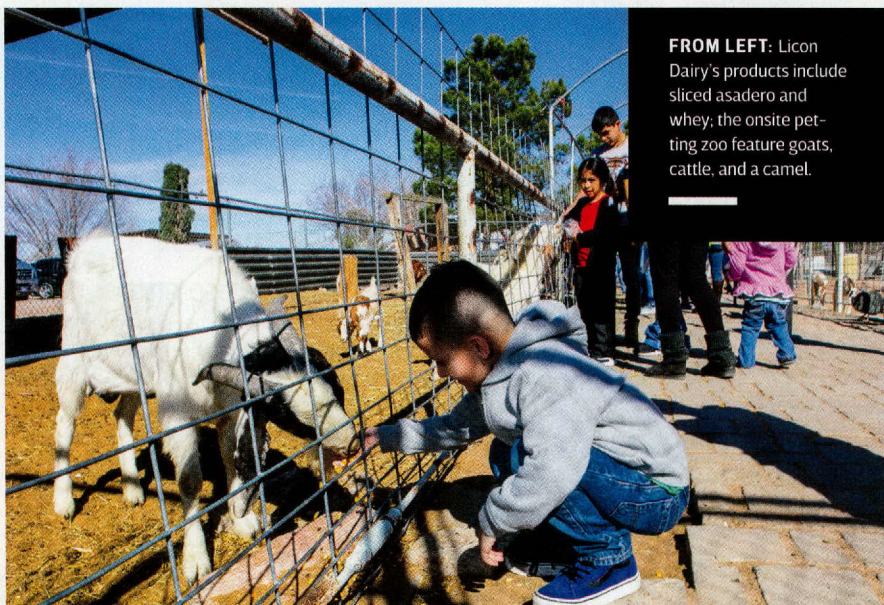
## Chile con Suero

This sauce, made with whey from the asadero-making process, goes well with eggs and refried beans, and even makes a tasty dip for chips.

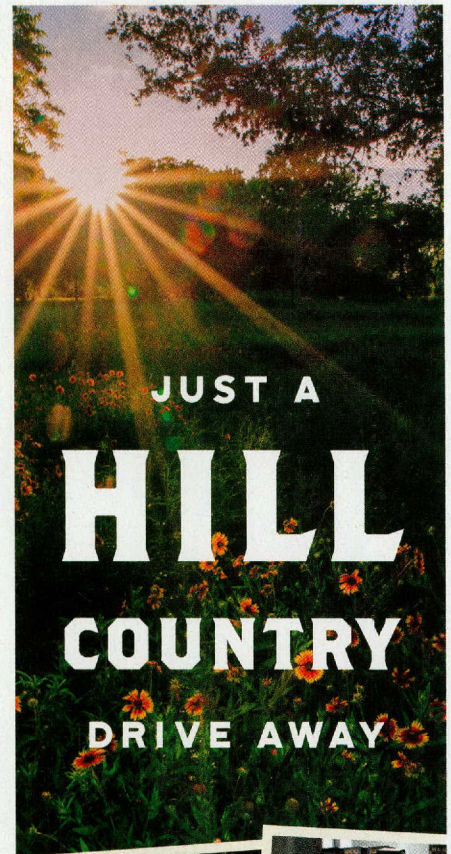
To make chile con queso, add 1-2 pounds of Velveeta cheese once the whey begins to simmer.

- 3 garlic cloves, diced
- 1½ onions, chopped
- 15 long green chiles, roasted, peeled, and chopped
- 3 quarts Licon Dairy whey

In a sauce pan, sauté the onions and garlic until the onion is tender. Add the chopped green chiles and pour in the whey. Simmer for 15 minutes.



**FROM LEFT:** Licon Dairy's products include sliced asadero and whey; the onsite petting zoo feature goats, cattle, and a camel.



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An online fundraising effort amassed \$10,000, and animal-lovers offered replacement pets from as far away as California. With the money, Licon rebuilt the zoo's fence with panels of galvanized steel, reinforced by piping and concrete.

"We had so many people donating time and money," Licon says. "It was overwhelming, unbelievable."

What you won't find on Licon Dairy's 50-acre property is a herd of dairy cows. For decades, the Licons produced their own Holstein milk, but in 2000, the U.S. Department of Agriculture shut down the El Paso County dairy industry to eradicate a persistent bovine tuberculosis problem. After that, Licon ran a dairy in Hudspeth County until the regular 100-mile roundtrips became too burdensome. A few years back, the dairy sold its cows and started buying milk from a dairy in Deming, New Mexico.

Such adaptations come with the territory for a family business that's now entering its fourth generation. Back in the 1960s, Licon's late father, Eugenio Licon, sold asadero door to door before opening his home-based shop. In the early 2000s, Licon expanded the business with the construction of its current metal-sided building. And this spring, Angel Licon, Gene's 29-year-old son, opened the Outlaw Grill, attached to the dairy, serving cheeseburgers and quesadillas made with Licon cheese, and a steak bathed in chile con queso.

So the next time you find yourself on the outskirts of El Paso, tracing the route of Spanish explorer Juan de Oñate's trailblazing expedition of 1598, keep an eye out for Roger the camel, and be sure to pull into Licon Dairy for a snack. Just be aware that the asaderos often sell out by early afternoon. 🐫

### WHERE TO FIND

Licon Dairy's asadero cheese and whey are distributed to grocery stores around El Paso and West Texas. Licon ships frozen asaderos through its online store, with customers as far as Hawaii, Maine, and Alaska.





**LUCIA'S OWNERS**

Jennifer and David Ugyur (who's also the chef and a five-time James Beard Award nominee) in their Bishop Arts District osteria.

At Lucia, one of the most coveted dinner reservations in Dallas, Jennifer and David Ugyur conjure the spirit of their journeys through Italy. If you look closely, you'll notice David's international driving permit from one of their trips framed on the wall. Beyond inspiring the décor, a laid-back, European sidewalk café vibe permeates the Bishop Arts District space.

"We love places in Italy that offer delicious food and good wine but don't feel fancy," says Jennifer, who oversees front-of-house operations while David mans the kitchen. "We wanted that at Lucia."

Perhaps that's why, even after more than eight years in business, Lucia books its 14 tables at least a month in advance.

Inside the shotgun space warmed with cozy banquettes strewn with colorful pillows, patrons sit amiably cheek-to-jowl at closely placed tables. Upon settling in, guests enjoy little plates of warmed olives while perusing a wine list heavily populated by Italian choices, as well as a selection of Austrian, French, and Spanish varietals and a few Oregon pinot noirs. Sometimes, Jennifer appears at the table to see whether wine recommendations are required. Though the knowledgeable server ably answers food and drink questions, Jennifer supplies her own notes on David's specialties.

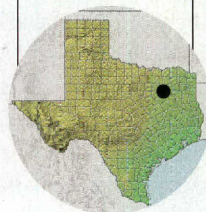
The couple has been playing off each other's strengths since they began dating as East Texas high schoolers (she's from Marshall; he hails from Longview). They found the joy of cooking together early on, entertaining friends with dinner parties. Work took them to Portland, Oregon, where David worked as a chef, and Jennifer fell in love with pinot noirs. Meanwhile, a passion for great food found them touring Italy to explore the country's cuisine. Landing in Dallas in 2001, they began planning to open their own place. Until they saved enough money, David built a solid reputation as executive chef at the esteemed Lola, a tasting-menu bistro in Uptown, and Jennifer honed her oenophile expertise working in Central Market's wine department.

# Bet on the Boot

A reservation at this Italian restaurant in Dallas is a tough get—even if you're a celebrity

By June Naylor

**LUCIA**  
408 W Eighth  
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## PLATES



**HANDMADE PASTAS,**  
like ricotta ravioli and  
*strascinati*, are staples on  
Lucia's menu.

Since Lucia opened, David's *salumi misti* board has been a signature, with changing meat choices—from *coppa* and *pâté* to *sobrasada* and *basturma*—each of which he's cured by hand. Foie gras-stuffed prunes, tender with a balance of sweet and earthy flavors, never leave the menu. Handmade pastas, which change frequently, are another staple. Some are familiar, like ricotta ravioli, but some are rarer finds stateside. One of the most popular dishes is the *cacio e pepe*, a traditional Roman pasta made with Pecorino cheese and cracked black pepper. In summertime, he leans toward southern Italian specialties with tomatoes and olive oil.

"We always have a cut pasta, a stuffed pasta, gnocchi, and some kind of risotto," David says, admitting he cannot count how many pasta varieties he's served in eight-plus years. Among lesser knowns, he names "*strascinati*, shaped like a pea pod, served with fresh peas in springtime, and *grattigiata*, a pasta dough we grated into duck broth with duck confit."

Though the Dallas-Fort Worth area is experiencing a mini-renaissance of intimate and elevated Italian restaurants (see sidebar) no restaurant boasts Lucia's overwhelming popularity or credentials. Dining critics have bestowed on it all the stars they can, and David has been nominated by the James Beard Award committee as a semifinalist for Best Chef Southwest for five years. The Oak Cliff neighborhood's happening Bishop Arts District, with more than 60 bistros, bars, shops, and galleries

housed in renovated 1920s and '30s brick buildings, has proven a perfect home.

Even famous people don't get a break in nabbing a table: When a culinary celebrity called ahead last year to book a 7:30 p.m. reservation, the caller was told that a table wouldn't be ready until 8:30. The guest showed up at 7:30 and was sat at the four-seat bar in front of the kitchen, as are all walk-in guests when the restaurant is full.

"We've had celebrities who have joined us for dinner, and we're so glad to have them—who doesn't get star-struck?" Jennifer muses. "But we're wildly egalitarian. If we have a table available, you're welcome to it."

Their success isn't owed to the power of a star rating or star power, Jennifer says, but to loyal clientele. "From the start, we were delighted and overwhelmed at how many guests wanted to visit us. Some who have been coming twice a month are now very dear friends. That's what helps us create an experience people want to return to again and again." ■

### AND IF YOU CAN'T GET IN ...

To accommodate guests frustrated at the difficulty in getting reservations at Lucia, the Ugyurs recently opened Macellaio just around the corner. Macellaio offers an expanded *salumi* menu, along with grilled snails, Island Creek oysters, lamb casserole, and Wagyu bone-in short ribs. 287 N. Bishop Ave., Dallas. 972-685-9150; [macellaiodallas.com](http://macellaiodallas.com)





## Buon Appetito

Can't get enough Italian fare? Here are other DFW metroplex restaurants that excel in the stylish, authentic cuisine.

**Nonna:** Owner-chef Julian Barsotti produces gems from a wood-fired oven, along with lobster ravioli, in a Highland Park hideaway. 4115 Lomo Alto, Dallas. 214-521-1800; nonnadallas.com

**Sprezza:** The ode to Roman dining showcases pizza, pasta, and inspired salads in Oak Lawn. 4010 Maple Ave., Dallas. 972-807-9388; sprezzadallas.com

**Loveria Caffe:** Owners from Emilia-Romagna bring the best of home in pastas, wine, and décor. 5615 Colleyville Blvd., Suite 410, Colleyville. 817-893-5880; loveriacaffe.com

**Nonna Tata:** Owner-chef Donatella Trotti, a native of a town near Lake Como, shares her grandmother's recipes for bresaola, cappellacci, and torta ciotola. 1400 W. Magnolia Ave., Fort Worth. 817-332-0250; nonnatata.com

**Piattello Italian Kitchen:** Chefs Marcus Paslay and Scott Lewis turn simple into sublime with house ricotta, pappardelle with rabbit, and cannoli with chocolate ganache. 5924 Convair Drive, Suite 412, Fort Worth. 817-349-0484; piattelloitaliankitchen.com

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# TEXANA



**A MOUNTAIN**  
lion rests in the  
shade at Big Bend  
National Park.

## Mountain Specters

On the delicate trail of Texas' elusive mountain lions

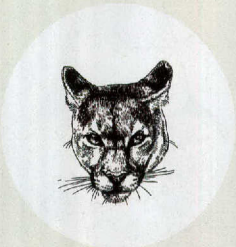
By Asher Elbein

The Trans-Pecos Mountain Lion Project is a long-term study of West Texas mountain lions and their demographics, survival rates, and diets.

**T**he cat has been gone for hours by the time Bert Geary comes upon the footprint. He sees it as our utility-terrain vehicle bounces over a rough ridgeline trail, the wind gusting over golden grass, heavy and cool with incoming August rain. The tracks are perhaps 5 inches across, clear and distinct. "It's too big to be a bobcat," Geary says, swinging out of the vehicle to examine it. "I think that's a mountain lion. Young one, too. Maybe 60 pounds."

We're several miles into the highland forests of alligator juniper and Emory oak that make up the Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountains Preserve. Heavy white clouds pour slowly over the ragged peaks. Geary, a research technician with Sul Ross State University's Borderlands Research Institute, is here to check trail cameras. They're part of the institute's long-term Trans-Pecos Mountain Lion Project, which also





## Learning About Mountain Lions

Exhibits across Texas explore big cats

While your chances of seeing a mountain lion in the wilds of Texas are vanishingly slim, museums around the state display replica or taxidermied animals and explore their lifeways and habitats.

### Big Bend National Park:

The Chisos Basin Visitor Center displays a replica mountain lion along with information about the life of one of the park's most famous lions, a female known as F-07, which lived in the Chisos Mountains for 13 years until she died in 1992. The display includes her skull and monitoring collar, as well as photos. [nps.gov/bibe](http://nps.gov/bibe)

### The Witte Museum, San

**Antonio:** A diorama in the McLean Family Texas Wild Gallery includes a mountain lion feeding on a deer. The exhibit describes the lives of lions among the mountains, rocky overhangs, and animal burrows of West Texas. [witemuseum.org](http://witemuseum.org)

### The Houston Museum of

**Natural Science:** The Farish Hall of Texas Wildlife includes dioramas of mountain lions in both prairie and mountain habitats. The exhibit also covers four other Texas wildcats: bobcats, jaguars, ocelots, and jaguarundi. [hmns.org](http://hmns.org)



### BORDERLANDS

Research Institute researchers sedate, tag, and collar a mountain lion in the Davis Mountains.

includes trap-and-release radio monitoring programs, field studies, and documentation of kill sites—places lions have devoured prey. The project team hopes to discover more about these secretive cats: about their demographics, survival rate in West Texas, and diet.

*Puma concolor* is among the most charismatic of American mammals, and one of the most enigmatic. In centuries past, they ranged across the Americas, gathering a parade of names: cougar, puma, onza, catamount, panther. Farmers pushed them out of the eastern half of the United States, and ranchers pushed them out of the eastern half of Texas. In the early 1900s in West Texas, government-employed hunters and private citizens alike shot them; then, as now, lions had no formal protection under the law. But their ghostly presence still suffuses remote locales throughout West Texas, across ranches and public lands. They live difficult and secretive lives in the mountains and plains of the Chihuahuan Desert. Few are lucky enough to see them. But they're there.

The institute's project has found that while mountain lions venture throughout the desert, they like specific habitat and prey. They spend their days laid up on

high ground in shady patches with good views of the surrounding countryside. Slopes of rough ground, scattered with boulders, steep canyons, and watering holes, are favorite hunting spots: The lion is an ambush predator by preference and hunts mostly at night using stealth and patience to slip close to its prey. It hunts anything from deer and javelina to feral pigs, skunks, and porcupines. Some evidence suggests that both sexes specialize in particular types of prey—the larger males attacking javelinas, the females pursuing deer.

In areas like the Chisos Mountains, says Raymond Skiles, a retired Big Bend National Park biologist, mountain lions don't always have their own way: Black bears sometimes bully them off of kills. The cats of the Davis Mountains don't have that problem, at least not yet. But they're still quite careful and secretive with their meals. Geary says he's followed the GPS signal of collared cats and found large carcasses stored under dry leaves, hidden by the lion for later dining.

The GPS collars are also useful for studying how mountain lions establish home ranges, Geary says. At the age of 18 months, young mountain lions tend to leave their mothers, sometimes travel-



ing hundreds of miles in search of a new home range. "It's a difficult time for them, trying to find their own way, establish their own territories," Skiles says. "Other mountain lions don't want 'em around, and any place where the lion population is stable, there may not be much room in the neighborhood."

The question of how mountain lions disperse is important to figuring out the species' population dynamics in West Texas. In the eastern parts of the state, more mountain lions are occasionally seen as they return to their old habitats. But it's not yet clear whether the overall population in Texas is increasing. Over the course of Geary's several years working on the mountain lion project, only a few cats have left the Davis Mountains, and none have successfully made it out. According to GPS data, on two occasions, cats went north through the passes to Interstate 10, lingered for

a day watching the highway, and then faded back into the mountains. Another female headed south from Alpine, moving across the desert into the Big Bend. About 200 meters from the Persimmon Gap entrance of the national park, she got thirsty, went to a stock tank on a neighboring ranch, and was trapped. Geary says it's possible other cats are successfully dispersing or arriving in the mountains, but there's no clear evidence.

"There's been human pressure out here for a hundred years—sometimes more, sometimes less," Geary says. "But it's always been pretty constant out here. So is this a good healthy place for them, or a borderline place for them?" He ticks through the possibilities as he checks a trail camera alongside a babbling stream. Grainy images of foxes, javelina, and deer flicker past on a field tablet. No cats. He changes the batteries in the camera and hides a scent lure—a synthetic pill that

**"Does it mean that there are cats here that are very successful and able to reproduce, or is there a lot of immigration coming from outside?"**

smells horribly of rancid cheese—beneath a nearby rock. "Does it mean that there are cats here that are very successful and able to reproduce, or is there a lot of immigration coming from outside, either from Mexico or the Guadalupe Mountains? That's a really big question: How important is immigration and emigration for populations here?"

Even for cats that stay in the Davis Mountains, getting by isn't a picnic. The rate of attrition for young lions is about



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50 percent a year. Few mountain lions make it past eight years, falling victim to disease or starvation during droughts. The countryside is changing around them as open spaces have been split into a patchwork of smaller holdings, many of them with absentee owners. Now the cats wander across multiple properties, Geary says, some of them crossing 15 to 20 ranches a year. The cats don't commonly attack cattle, though ranchers are wary nonetheless. "It's kind of neat," he says. "They just live out there and do their own thing, and you might not even know they're there."

Skiles, who worked in Big Bend National Park for more than 30 years, says most mountain lion sightings are a fleeting glimpse in the distance. "And that's something to be proud of and thrilled about, and I think most people are," he notes. On rare occasions, people do have close encounters, and a tiny minority of those are violent. Since the park's founding in 1944, seven attacks have been recorded. Skiles says if you come across a lion that approaches or doesn't immediately flee, the best strategy is to face it down: Shout, wave your arms, and throw stones. While mountain lions are accomplished hunters, he says, they're surprisingly timid. It's not hard to scare them off if you keep your nerve.

As Geary and I return to the ridgeline, following the tracks of the little mountain lion on our way up to the next trail cam, we keep our eyes peeled for that fleeting glimpse. We lose any sign of the trail halfway up the mountain—somewhere along the way, there's a young mountain lion who slipped off the trail. It strikes me that studying mountain lions is a lot like studying ghosts, tracing the movements of something invisible, a force noticed more by its effects on the world than by its specific presence. Tracks, scrapes, day beds and kill sites, gray photos on a trail cam, the very occasional sighting of a tawny blur vanishing into the brush. The volcanic rocks of the Davis Mountains are haunted by cats, a contradictory symbol of both lost wilderness and its persistence against all odds. **L**



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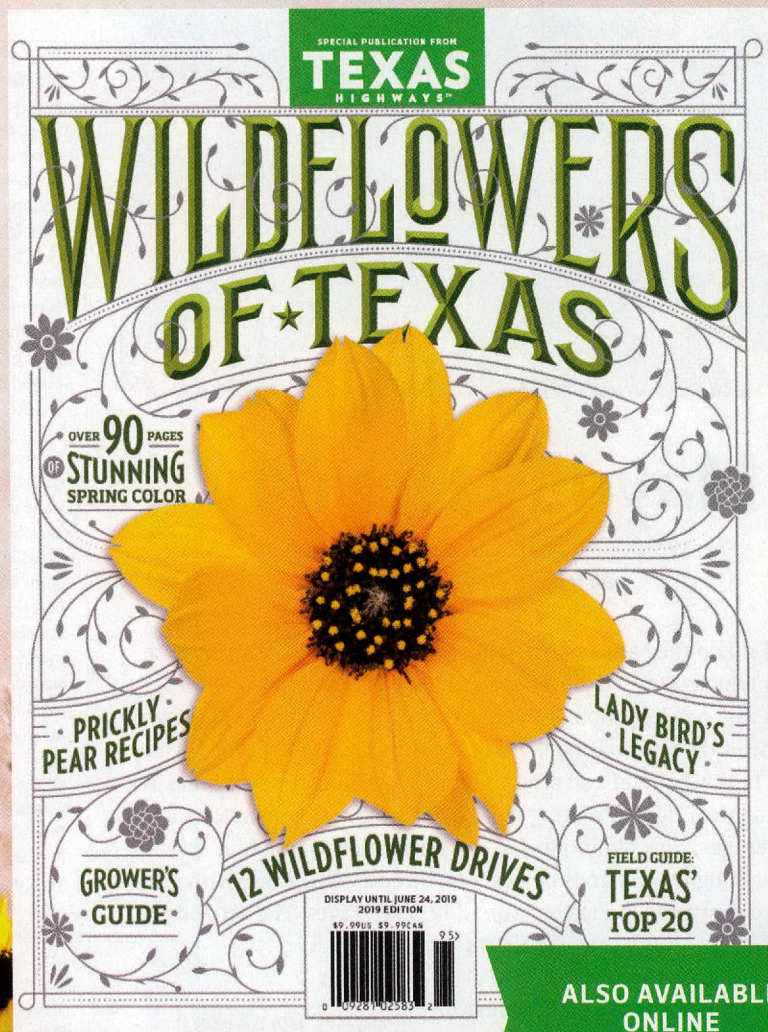
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# EVENTS



## Mayday Heyday

Fort Worth's Mayfest is an annual family favorite

By Mikela Floyd Kinnison

**H**eld on the banks of the Trinity River in Fort Worth's 33-acre Trinity Park, Mayfest began in 1973 as the Trinity River Festival—a celebration of the recreational development of the waterway after the devastating flood of 1949. Today it's Fort Worth's most popular family festival and offers a bit of something for everyone: live music, carnival rides, a petting zoo, performing arts, top-notch food and beverages, rock climbing, and more. Throughout the four-day weekend, roughly 40 bands perform on three stages, along with more than 40 performing groups on four additional stages. The art and gift market features more than 60 artists from across the nation, selling everything from home goods and furniture to handcrafted jewelry and art.

**MAYFEST**  
May 2-5  
Trinity Park, 2401 University Drive,  
Fort Worth.  
817-332-1055; mayfest.org

### Arts & Culture

#### CENTRAL TEXAS

##### Boerne Hauptstrasse Quiltfest

May 4  
Enjoy a spring Saturday in Boerne and experience this colorful event, which offers live music, quilts for sale, special exhibits, presentations, and more. The goal is to cover *Hauptstrasse* (Main Street) and the Main Plaza with quilts. *Hill Country Mile*, 100 N. Main St. 830-249-1635; visitboerne.org

##### Boerne Art Waddle

May 11  
Stroll, ride bikes, and picnic along Cibolo Creek while viewing paintings, illustrations, jewelry, pottery, and sculptures, hosted by neighbors in their yards in The Flats of Boerne. Works by more than 70 artists are for sale, and the event helps support scholarships to Summer Art Camp at the Cibolo Nature Center and Farm. *The Flats of Boerne*, 204 W. San Antonio Ave. 210-325-6390; visitboerne.org

##### Fredericksburg USO-Style Memorial Day Hangar Dance

May 25  
Dress in your best 1940s-inspired outfit and help support the USO in Fort Hood. Swing dance lessons are provided, and music is by the Lone Star Swing Orchestra. *Hangar Hotel Pacific Showroom*, 155 Airport Road. 830-997-9990; hangarhotel.com

##### Georgetown Austin Area Square and Round Dance Association Mid-Tex Festival

May 10-11  
Square dancing is a family-oriented, fun activity for all ages, from early teens to nonagenarians. Guests have the opportunity to meet the officers from the Texas State Federation of Square and Round Dancers, plus many other officers and dancers from all over Texas. There is free admission

for nondancers. Square and round dance lessons are offered throughout the year by local clubs. *Georgetown Community Center*, 445 E. Morrow St. 830-857-6633; squaredancetx.com

##### Hunt Crider's Rodeo and Dancehall Opening Night

May 25  
Boot scoot boogie the night away at this historic venue. The evening includes an 8 p.m. rodeo, 9 p.m. dancing, and live music. Since 1925, Crider's has been a family-oriented entertainment spot along the banks of the Guadalupe River during the summer. *Crider's Rodeo & Dancehall*, 2310 SH 39. 830-238-4441; cridersrandd.com

##### New Braunfels MaiFest Celebrations

May 1-31  
Celebrate spring with German traditions, including special events and entertainment every weekend in May. *Krause's Cafe and Biergarten*, 148 S. Castell Ave. 830-625-2807; krausescafe.com/events

##### Kerrville American Plains Artists Signature Show

May 4-June 29  
See artwork from American Plains artists. *Museum of Western Art*, 1550 Bandera Highway. 830-896-2553; museumofwesternart.com

##### Kerrville "Quilting Is Art" Quilt Show

May 24-26  
Members of the Hill Country Quilt Guild display all forms of quilts. View more than 180 judged quilts and visit more than 50 vendor booths selling wearable and fabric arts, sewing notions, jewelry, crafts, handmade items, and food. *Hill Country Youth Event Center*, 3785 SH 27. 813-908-3305; hillcountryquiltguild.com

##### Kerrville Festival of the Arts

May 25-26  
The sixth annual art festival features a two-day juried fine arts show and sale. *Downtown Kerrville*, Water and Earl Garrett streets. 830-895-7962; kvartfest.com



**Kerrville**  
**Texas Masters of Fine Art and Craft**

May 24-26  
This is the 16th annual exhibition of some of the finest professional artists and craftspeople from all over Texas. Enjoy this summer show in the comfort of air conditioning. *Y.O. Ranch Hotel & Conference Center, 2033 Sidney Baker St. 214-497-7179; texasmasters.com*

**Wimberley**

**Proof**  
Through May 5  
The Wimberley Players present a riveting drama about the fragile nature of genius. *The Wimberley Playhouse, 450 Old Kyle Road. 512-847-0575; wimberleyplayers.org*

**NORTH TEXAS / PANHANDLE**

**Arlington**  
**They're Playing Our Song**  
May 3-26

A funny, romantic show about an established composer and his relationship with an aspiring young female lyricist, not unlike Carole Bayer Sager. Professionally, their relationship works beautifully, but ultimately leads to conflict on the home front. Of course, there's a happy ending. *Theatre Arlington, 305 W. Main St. 817-275-7661; theatrearlington.org*

**Bonham**  
**Red River Art, Wine, and Music Fest**  
May 11

This family-friendly festival offers music, art vendors, wine tasting, a silent auction, kids art projects, and adult art classes. *Creative Arts Center, 200 W. Fifth St. 903-640-2196; creativeartscenterbonham.com*

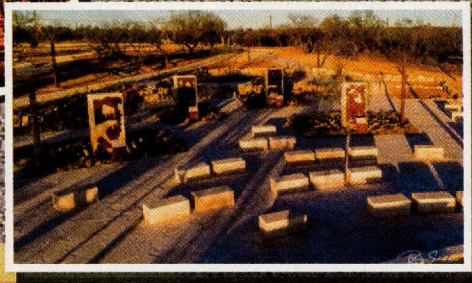
**Ennis**  
**A Little Princess**  
April 26-27, May 3-5, 10-11  
By John Vreeke and Frances Hodgson Burnett, *A Little Princess* is the story of an orphan who endures loss and rejection but becomes an inspiration for girls and boys everywhere. *Theatre Rocks!, 505 NW Main St. 972-878-5126; theatrerocks.com*



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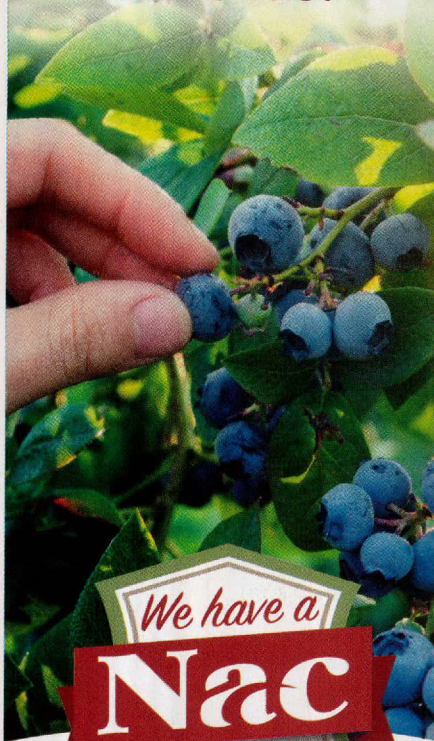


  
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### Ennis

#### **The Premature Corpse**

May 17-June 2

Mike Johnson's masterfully plotted live show has many twists and turns. State's witness Evan Jorris is in a government protection program after testifying against the mob. His wife, Francine, along with her lover, lawyer Larry Craig, contrive to do away with her husband. They are confident Evan's protector, federal agent Bert Marshak, will logically assume the mob did the deed. *Ennis Public Theatre, 113 N. Dallas St. 972-878-7529; ennispublictheatre.com*

### Ennis

#### **National Polka Festival**

May 24-26

Celebrate Czech heritage in a small-town atmosphere. Held annually on Memorial Day Weekend, the festival offers an abundance of activities for the whole family to enjoy, including shopping, dancing, and dining. The City of Ennis, 204 W. Knox St. 972-878-4748; [nationalpolkafestival.com](http://nationalpolkafestival.com)

### Fayetteville

#### **ArtWalk Festival**

May 4-5

This free juried fine arts festival in a friendly small-town setting includes music and food as well as quality art. *Historic Fayetteville Square, 112 N. Washington St. 979-378-2113; artsforruraltexas.org/artwalk*

### Fort Worth

#### **AIA Fort Worth Homes Tour**

May 18-19

Tour this annual showcase of residential architecture designed by local architects. See a variety of home styles, types, and sizes—a mix of projects including new homes, renovations, and additions. *AIA Fort Worth, 5049 Edwards Ranch, Clearfork. 817-334-0155; aiafw.org/homestour*

### Jacksboro

#### **Main Street Classic Car Show and Festival**

May 18

This event features classic cars from all over Texas, kids activities, vendor booths for shopping, and live entertainment. *Historic Downtown, North Main Street. 940-567-2602; jacksborochamber.com*

### Plano

#### **AsiaFest**

May 4

Numerous cultural demonstrations, performances, and vendors showcase the rich cultures of Asia: Japan and Korea in the north; China,

Taiwan, and the Philippines to the east; Vietnam and Malaysia in the south; and Bangladesh, India, and Nepal in the southeast. *Haggard Park, 901 E. 15th St. 972-379-9351; asianamericanheritage.org*

### Stephenville

#### **Moo-La Fest**

May 31-June 1

This hot air balloon festival features dairy activities, tethered and untethered balloon rides, music, a carnival midway, a kids zone, food trucks and vendors, live music, beer and wine pairings with different cheeses, and balloon glows. The event honors the community's rich dairy heritage. *Stephenville City Park, 378 W. Long. 254-552-1222; visitstephenville.com*

### Sweetwater

#### **Applause Series: Musica Latina**

May 4

The Guadalupe Dance Center of San Antonio performs ballet folklorico. *Sweetwater Municipal Auditorium, 400 Locust. 325-235-1418; sweetwatertexas.org*

### Wylie

#### **500 Pedal Car Race**

May 5

Children ages 2-5 race 500 inches down Ballard Avenue in pedal cars provided by local merchants. Kids race in heats of six, and trophies are awarded in two age brackets. Proceeds benefit area Special Olympics. *Historic Downtown, 112 N. Ballard Ave. 972-516-6016; wylietexas.gov*

### EAST TEXAS

#### Mineola

##### **Mainstream Extravaganza**

May 24-26

Enjoy a weekend of square dancing with national callers Tim Tyl and Jerry Junck. *American Legion Hall, 2015 US 80 E. 903-312-3713; mineolarailers.com*

#### Tyler

##### **Groucho: A Life in Revue**

May 10-12, 16-19

Written by Groucho Marx's son, Arthur Marx, and Robert Fisher, this play examines the life and career of the famous entertainer. *Tyler Civic Theatre, 400 Rose Park Drive. 903-592-0561; tylercivictheatre.com*

### SOUTH TEXAS / GULF COAST

#### Galveston

##### **Jack and the Beanstalk**

May 1

This musical adaptation is a rol-

licking retelling of the classic fairy tale. *The Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894; thegrand.com*

### Houston

#### **To Be of Use: The Functional Ceramics of Mike Helke, Ayumi Horie, and East Fork**

Through May 12

As one of the earliest forms of material engineering developed by humankind, ceramics and the production of functional objects has been central to humans' use of clay throughout history. Since the Industrial Revolution, however, the necessity of handmade ceramic ware has diminished, just as the development of plastics has made the many ceramic forms originally used for storage obsolete. This exhibition juxtaposes three very different solutions to the challenge posed by making functional work in clay. *Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 4848 Main St. 713-529-4848; craftthouston.org*

### Houston

#### **Tom Loeser: Please Please Please**

Through May 12

A traveling exhibition of the Wisconsin-based maker and designer's imaginative furniture and works on paper, the playful show encourages viewers to shake up their habits and interact with the environment and one another while considering issues such as body posture and etiquette that are often taken for granted. Loeser's work also raises a clever question: "If the furniture we sit on every day were totally different, would our lives be different, too?" *Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 4848 Main St. 713-529-4848; craftthouston.org*

### Houston

#### **Murder for Two**

Through June 16

Everyone is a suspect in this murder mystery with a twist. One actor plays the investigator, the other plays all 13 suspects, and both play the piano throughout. A zany blend of classic musical comedy and madcap mystery, this whodunit is a highly theatrical duet loaded with laughs. *Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway. 713-527-0123; stagestheatre.com*

### Stafford

#### **The Music Man—Concert Musical**

May 19

In a Fort Bend first, FBSO and FBSO Chorus, in association with Queensbury Theatre, cap



off the season with this Tony Award-winning musical in concert format. Professional Houston and Fort Bend actors sing with full orchestral accompaniment. *Stafford Centre, 10505 Cash Road. 281-276-9642; fbsco.org*

**Houston**

**Vincent van Gogh: His Life in Art**  
Through June 27

This exhibition brings together more than 50 masterworks by one of the most iconic artists in the history of Western art. It follows Van Gogh (1853-90) through four key stages of his career, from early sketches to final paintings. *The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet. 713-639-7300; mfah.org*

**Sugar Land**

**Chicago: High School Edition**  
May 17-19

In roaring '20s Chicago, chorine Roxie Hart murders a faithless lover and convinces her hapless husband, Amos, to take the rap...until he finds out he's been duped and turns on Roxie. Convicted and sent to death row, Roxie and another "Merry Murderess," Velma Kelly, vie for the spotlight and the headlines, ultimately joining forces in search of the American Dream: fame, fortune, and acquittal. *Sugar Land Auditorium, 226 Lakeview Drive. 713-302-5329; inspirationstage.com*

**Sugar Land**

**My Favorite Murder Live**  
May 3

The hit true-crime comedy podcast hosted by Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark goes on tour. Since its inception in early 2016, the show has broken download records and galvanized a devoted "Murderino" fan base. *Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land, 18111 Lexington Blvd. 281-207-6278; smartfinancialcentre.net*

**Sugar Land**

**Disney's Jungle Book Kids: A "Mini-Troupe" Production**  
May 3-5

The jungle is jumpin' with a jazzy beat in this performance. Specially adapted from the classic Disney animated film, it features a host of colorful characters and favorite songs from the movie. *Sugar Land Auditorium, 226 Lakeview Drive. 713-302-5329; inspirationstage.com*

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offers free, narrated demos on the first Saturday of the month. *Three Dimensional Visions—Glass Blowing Houston, 17442 FM 2920. 281-734-0366; threedimensionalvisions.com*

**Victoria**

**Neva Rossi Exhibit**

Through May 12

See the pastel works of Texas artist Neva Rossi. *The Nave Museum, 306 W. Commercial St. 361-575-8228; navemuseum.com*

**Victoria**

**Kathleen Elliott Exhibit**

May 24-July 14

This exhibit features the glass sculpture work of Kathleen Elliott, who uses botanical forms to create surreal representations of nature. *The Nave Museum, 306 W. Commercial St. 361-575-8228; navemuseum.com*

**WEST TEXAS**

**San Angelo**

**Newsies: The Musical**

May 10-12

It's New York City, 1899, and Jack Kelly and his ragtag team of newsboys are making a meager living selling newspapers on the city streets. But when the prices of papes are hiked and the newsies are hung out to dry, there is nothing left to do but "open the gates and seize the day." *Murphey Performance Hall, 72 W. College Ave. 325-655-4136; sanangelopac.org*

**San Angelo**

**Batteries Not Included: The History of Play**

May 17-18

Enjoy an original children's ballet inspired by the evolution of imagination and playtime. *Brooks & Bates Theatre, 82 Gillis St. 325-653-8877; balletsanangelo.org/tickets*



**CENTRAL TEXAS**

**Boerne**

**Fish Fry and Auction**

May 4

Help support the Boerne Volunteer Fire Department at its annual fish fry. There is also live music, a live auction, silent auction, and raffle. Eat your weight in a delicious catfish dinner and then dance the night away. *Boerne Fire Department, 726 N. Main St. 830-249-3644; visitboerne.org*

**Bryan**

**Margarita Mile**

May 18

The inaugural fun run includes margaritas, tacos, and queso along with a run through the beautiful streets of historic downtown Bryan. *Downtown, 110 S. Main St. 979-822-4920; downtownbryan.com/events*

**Cameron**

**Cameron Funfest and Barbecue Shootout**

May 10-11

This year, the event includes the barbecue competition, a Kid Fun Zone, a Beer & Brat Trot 5K, kid fish, arts and crafts, horseshoe and washer tournaments, and free live music during the Party in the Park on Saturday night. *Wilson-Ledbetter Park, 240 FM 1600. 254-697-4979; cameron-tx.com*

**Castell**

**Testicle Festival**

May 18

This festival down on the Llano River is Castell General Store's annual celebration of "calf fries" (also known as Rocky Mountain or prairie oysters), and includes live music and fun for all. *Castell General Store, 19522 RR 152. 325-347-5758 or 325-247-4100; castellgeneralstore.com*

**Fredericksburg**

**Fredericksburg Crawfish Festival**

May 24-26

This three-day festival is dedicated to music, entertainment, food, beverages, and fun inspired by all things Cajun. *Marktplatz, 126 W. Main St. fbjgjaycees.com/crawfish-festival.html*

**Kerrville**

**Wine Down with Yoga**

May 12

Enjoy an afternoon of relaxation with half-hours of yoga paired with tastings of four pose-enhancing wines. *Kerrville Hills Winery, 3600 Fredericksburg Road. 830-895-4233; kerrvillehillswinery.com*

**Madisonville**

**MSCA Barbecue Cookoff**

May 17-18

The annual barbecue cookoff supports the youth of Madison County. *Cattlemen's Pavilion, 800 N. May St. 936-349-0500; sidewalkcattlemens.com/schedule.htm*

**New Braunfels**

**Wein and Saengerfest**

May 4

Proceeds from the event benefit the New Braunfels Parks Foundation and the Downtown

Association. Along with wine and craft beer tastings, this event offers a host of entertainment and activities that include continuous live music, a grape stomp, an artisan market, food seminars, and activities for the kids—culminating with a street dance. *Main Plaza Downtown. 830-221-4057; weinandsaengerfest.com*

**Salado**

**Que on Main Barbecue Cookoff**

May 25

Enjoy Texas-style barbecue on Main Street in Salado at the second annual cookoff. Teams from across Texas compete for prizes. Come sample their brisket, chicken, sausage, and more. *Various locations, Main and Royal streets. 254-394-4100; saladatxrotary.org*

**Santa Anna**

**Funtier Days featuring the World Championship Bison Cookoff**

May 17-18

Held annually the third weekend in May, the bison cookoff happens around the community festival of Funtier Days. Enjoy vendor and food booths, lots of children's activities, rides, and entertainment of all kinds for the whole family. This is also your opportunity to try the world's best barbecued bison. *Santa Anna Civic Center and Gary James Memorial Park, 303 S. Houston St. 432-889-8359; santaannatex.org*

**EAST TEXAS**

**Lufkin**

**Zoo Brew**

May 4

Stout or light? Dark or pale? Take your pick or try them all at the Zoo Brew. For adults in the community, Zoo Brew is a beer-tasting fundraiser for Lufkin's Ellen Trout Zoo. Enjoy a large selection of beers and tasty foods from local restaurants. *Ellen Trout Zoo, 402 Zoo Circle. 936-633-0394; friendsofellentrouzoo.com*

**Lufkin**

**Jam and Toast**

May 18

This play-on-words event features "jam" being the music and the "toast" being champagne and wine. The Brick Street Blues Band performs, and attendees can enjoy dishes served family-style at one long table all the way down First Street. Local chefs cater a brunch that includes fried chicken and waffles, and ticketed guests can enjoy bellinis in the Open Alamo Area next



to The Pines Theater. This event is held in conjunction with Main Street Market Days where vendors line the street selling everything from food to soap to clothes. **Downtown Lufkin**, 113 S. First St. 936-633-0359; [visitlufkin.com](http://visitlufkin.com)

**Palestine**

**Memorial Day Brunch Train**

May 26  
As Americans everywhere take time to remember military members on Memorial Day, Texas State Railroad offers the tradition of a Sunday afternoon barbecue lunch aboard a train. **Texas State Railroad**, 789 Park Road 70. 855-632-7729; [texasstaterailroad.net](http://texasstaterailroad.net)

**Tyler**

**Red Dirt Barbecue and Music Festival**

May 4  
For five years, this music and barbecue festival has proven to be a dynamic, unique food and music experience. **Downtown Tyler**, 100 N. Broadway Ave. 903-581-0606; [reddirtbbqfest.com](http://reddirtbbqfest.com)

**NORTH TEXAS / PANHANDLE**

**Addison**

**Taste Addison**

May 31-June 2  
Known for 180-plus restaurants in less than 4.4 miles, Addison can satisfy any craving. **Taste Addison** is a historical event for the town as well as a backyard party where attendees can kick back and taste local eateries while listening to music. This year's headliners include The All American Rejects, the Josh Abbott Band, the Spin Doctors, and Smash Mouth. **Addison Circle Park**, 4970 Addison Circle Drive. 972-450-2800; [tasteaddisontexas.com](http://tasteaddisontexas.com)

**Decatur**

**Eighter from Decatur Food Truck Challenge**

May 4  
Food trucks compete for various awards, and a kids zone and music keep visitors entertained. **Decatur Chamber**, 308 W. Main St. 940-627-3107; [eighterfoodtruckchallenge.com](http://eighterfoodtruckchallenge.com)

**Frisco**

**StrEATS Gourmet Food Truck and Music Festival**

May 11  
Chow down on some of the best food truck food in North Texas, shop local at unique boutiques, and enjoy music from local bands at the eighth annual event. **The Rail District**. [visitfrisco.com](http://visitfrisco.com)

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**Roanoke**  
**Roanoke Roundup**  
May 4

This event is an all-day steak cookoff where chefs from all over compete for big cash and even bigger bragging rights. This is a family-fun filled day of food, vendors, live music, kid's activities, and a classic car show in the town that declares itself the "Unique Dining Capital of Texas." *Historic Oak Street, 200 Lamar St. 817-491-2411; roanokeroundup.com*

**SOUTH TEXAS/GULF COAST**

**Rockport**  
**Rockport Wine Festival**  
May 25

The Texas Maritime Museum celebrates Memorial Day weekend with this 22nd annual festival. Enjoy a wide variety of wines of the Americas, food demonstrations, and specialty food concessions. Live bands and entertainment make the event lively and fun. *Texas Maritime Museum, 1202 Navigation Circle. 361-729-1271; texasmaritimuseum.org*

**WEST TEXAS**

**Big Spring**  
**West Texas Taco Championship**  
May 3-4

Big Spring's biggest Cinco De Mayo weekend party features live entertainment from The Brittany Oviedo Band, The Tejas Brothers, and country music legend Johnny Rodriguez on May 3; and Eddie Austin, the Loco Motives, and the Los Lonely Boys on May 4. *Big Spring Heart of the City Park, Third Street and Scurry. 432-263-8235; visitbigspring.com*

**History & Heritage**

**CENTRAL TEXAS**

**Blanco**  
**Blanco Classic Car Show**  
May 18

The 31st annual car show features more than 200 classic cars and trucks. Admission is free, and about 2,000 visitors from near and far are expected to come and admire the vehicles. Ample food and soft drinks, restrooms, and a first-aid station are available on-site. *Blanco State Park,*

*101 Park Road 23. 512-632-0648; blancoclassiccarshow.com*

**Columbus**  
**Magnolia Days Festival**  
May 17-18

Step back in time with the Tour of Homes highlighting some of Columbus' most historic homes. Enjoy the Family Fun Zone for all ages, a biergarten and wine garden, the food village, a plethora of vendors and shopping, and live music. *Downtown Columbus, 400 Spring St. 979-732-8385; magnoliadays.org*

**Fairfield**  
**Queen of the Trinity Star Pilgrimage**  
May 5

The 49th annual pilgrimage takes visitors on a stroll back into history with a southern-style "dinner on the grounds" at the historic Moody-Bradley House. Southern hospitality is in full display as hostesses serve guests in stunning antebellum dresses. Enjoy lunch from the Deep South, live entertainment, an auction, children's games, and prizes. Visitors can also enjoy a tour of the Greek Revival home built in 1860 by Col. W. L. Moody for his bride, Pherabe Elizabeth Bradley. *The Moody-Bradley House, 318 Moody St. 903-879-4545*

**Fredericksburg**  
**WWII Pacific Combat Program at the National Museum of the Pacific War**  
May 25-26

History comes to life with equipment and weapons used during WWII and a battle re-enactment set on an island in the Pacific. *Pacific Combat Zone, 508 E. Austin. 830-997-8600; pacificwarmuseum.org*

**Temple**  
**National Train Day**  
May 11

The Railroad and Heritage Museum, CentraMod, and Amtrak host a day of train festivities. Event includes train cars open for exploration, crafts in the depot, railroad information booths and giveaways, Amtrak drawing, toy train fun zone, kids dress up area, handcar rides and motorcar rides. *Temple Railroad & Heritage Museum, 315 W. Ave. B. 254-298-5172; templerrhm.org*

**Weimar**  
**Gedenke**  
May 10-11

This annual local festival stems

from German heritage and includes family fun, music, games, good food, and great bands. *Weimar City Park, Market and Center streets. 979-725-9511; weimartx.org*

**NORTH TEXAS / PANHANDLE**

**Bonham**  
**Heritage Day Festival**  
May 4

Plan to visit the largest annual celebration in one of the oldest towns in Texas. The 13th annual festival is a free family event with re-enactments of the Wild West, a car and truck show, a tractor pull, many vendors, and a lot more local entertainment during the day. *Downtown Bonham, Main Street. 903-583-9830; visitbonham.com*

**Corsicana**  
**AirSho**  
May 11

The "Best Little AirSho in Texas" is celebrating its 21st year with WWII flying warbirds, aerobatic acts, precision flying teams, sky divers, and pyrotechnics. Veterans and military personnel and their families get in free. The celebration is hosted by the Coyote Squadron Unit of the Commemorative Air Force. *Corsicana Municipal Airport, C. David Campbell Field, 9000 Navarro Road. 903-467-7170; coyotesquadron.org*

**Denton**  
**Guided Tour of the North Texas Horse Country**  
May 4

Wind through the beautiful North Texas Horse Country aboard a luxury motorcoach while a fun and knowledgeable guide narrates the facts and back story of the area. The tour includes a chuckwagon lunch and visits to two premier horse ranches for an up close and personal look at the equine industry. *Meet motorcoach in Daybreak parking lot, 401 N. Elm St. 940-382-7895; horsecountrytours.com*

**Nocona**  
**Cruisin' Nocona and Vicari Classic Car Auction**  
May 2-4

Experience three days of fun in the Classic Car Capital of Texas. Cruise through country scenery and enjoy food, music, and vendors. *Downtown Nocona, 300 Clay St. 940-825-3526; nocona.org*



**Waxahachie**  
**Scarborough Renaissance Festival**

Through May 27

Every weekend, this festival set back in the time of King Henry VII offers arts, crafts, vendors, food, jousts, and other entertainment. The Renaissance fair has been held since 1981. 2511 FM 66, Exit 399 A on I-35E. 972-938-3247; [srfestival.com](http://srfestival.com)

**EAST TEXAS**

**Huntsville**  
**General Sam Houston Folk Festival**

May 17-19

Step back in time to the 1800s and enjoy folklife demonstrations, children's activities, cultural displays, arts and crafts, guitar workshops, ethnic foods, living history theatre, dulcimer workshops, citizen soldiers, live acoustic music, tale-spinners, museum tours, performances, and costumed historical characters. *Sam Houston Memorial Museum*, 1402 19th St. 936-294-1832; [samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com](http://samhoustonmemorialmuseum.com)

**Jefferson**  
**Battle for Jefferson Civil War Re-enactment**

May 3-5

The largest Civil War re-enactment in the state of Texas boasts three battles, a downtown street skirmish, a parade, a street dance, ladies' tea, and vintage vendors. *Cypress River Ranch and Downtown Historic District*, 1552 FM 2208. 903-733-1035; [battleforjefferson.com](http://battleforjefferson.com)

**Gladewater**  
**Apron Strings**

May 11

Join the Antique District on Mother's Day weekend as it looks at the history of the apron from necessity to accessory, and honors those who wore them at its 15th annual event. *Antique District, Downtown Shops*. 903-845-5501

**Texarkana**  
**RailFest**

May 11

Celebrate railroads' contributions to the history of Texarkana. Attendees can enjoy train rides, live music, bounce houses, face painting, cornhole games, live entertainment, and craft and food vendors. *Downtown Festival Plaza*. [texarkanacentral.com](http://texarkanacentral.com)



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**SOUTH TEXAS / GULF COAST**

**Tomball**

**Vintage Car Festival**

May 11  
Come enjoy the sixth annual festival for all ages with extraordinary vehicles from the past, live entertainment, food, vendor booths, a silent auction, and kids' activities, including a petting zoo. *First Presbyterian Church Tomball, 30410 SH 249. 979-299-4185; fptomball.org*

**WEST TEXAS**

**San Angelo**

**Armed Forces Day**

May 18  
Salute the nation's armed forces with special displays and living history activities. *Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, 630 South Oakes St. 325-234-0316; fortconcho.com*

**Sheffield**

**Western Frontier Days at Fort Lancaster State Historic Site**

May 17-18  
The story of Fort Lancaster comes alive with soldiers, settlers, wagons, and live animals. Visitors can meet the pioneers and soldiers and hear their stories of life on the Texas frontier. Visitors can also experience daily life through observing cooking demonstrations, soldier duties, livestock, adobe brick making, and the U.S. Army Camel Corps. Open Friday for schools and Saturday for the general public. *Fort Lancaster State Historic Site, 629 Fort Lancaster Road. 432-836-4391; ozona.com/eventscalendar*

**Holidays**

**CENTRAL TEXAS**

**Bandera**

**Memorial Day Weekend Parade**

May 25  
Enjoy the annual Memorial Day weekend parade down Main Street—one of the most colorful parades of the year. *Main Street Bandera, 500 Main St. 830-796-3045; banderacowboycapital.com*

**Fredericksburg**

**Memorial Day Program**

May 27  
This ceremony honors all who lost their lives serving in the United

States Armed Forces. *National Museum of the Pacific War, 830-997-8600; pacificwarmuseum.org*

**Shiner**

**Memorial Day Ceremony**

May 27  
Celebrate Memorial Day with this special ceremony featuring a speaker and wreath presentations by community organizations. A flag posting and flag holding ceremony is done by Boy Scouts Troop No. 231 and recognizes all veterans present. *Veterans War Memorial at Green Dickson Park, 2086 CR 351. 361-594-4180; shinertx.com*

**Taylor**

**Memorial Day Ceremony**

May 27  
This ceremony honors fallen veterans and features retired military members speaking and singing. Light refreshments are available. *Murphy Park, 1600 Veterans Drive. 512-352-3463*

**NORTH TEXAS**

**Cleburne**

**Cinco de Mayo Celebration**

May 4  
Celebrate with vendors, food, mariachi, ballet folklorico, dancing horses, and live entertainment. *Hulen Park, 201 W. Westhill Drive. 817-645-0949; visitcleburne.com*

**Denton**

**Denton's Cinco de Mayo**

May 4  
This Hispanic festival celebrates diversity in the Denton community and kicks off with a parade beginning at 10 a.m. Activities include live entertainment, various food and beverage vendors, arts and crafts, and children's activities. *Quakertown Park, 321 E. McKinney St. 940-594-9146; dentoncinco.org*

**Granbury**

**A Granbury Salute—Memorial Weekend**

May 25-27  
The weekend honors those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, and also kicks off the summer season in Granbury. The patriotic festival features family activities, arts and craft booths, food vendors, patriotic live music, vintage military vehicles, a hot dog eating contest, a pie baking contest, activities for the entire family, and more. *Granbury Square, 201 E. Pearl St. 682-936-4550; granburysquare.com*

**Grand Prairie**

**Cinco de Mayo Celebration**

May 4-5  
Celebrate with live music, great food, and plenty of shopping. *Traders Village, 2602 Mayfield Road. 972-647-2331; tradersvillage.com*

**Sherman**

**Cinco on the Square**

May 4  
Celebrate Cinco de Mayo on the courthouse square with delicious food and live music. *Grayson County Courthouse Square, 100 W. Houston St. 903-892-7230; shermantx.org*

**Waxahachie**

**Cinco De Mayo Festival**

May 3-4  
The event features entertainers, live music, mariachis, folklorico dancers, food vendors, and arts and crafts. *Downtown Waxahachie, 100 W. Main St. 469-309-4040; waxahachiecvb.com*

**EAST TEXAS**

**Huntsville**

**Cinco De Mayo Festival**

May 4  
Celebrate with live performances, food and drink vendors, Latin cuisine, dancing, arts and craft vendors, games, and family fun. *Downtown Huntsville. 936-291-9726; huntsvilletexas.com*

**SOUTH TEXAS / GULF COAST**

**Goliad**

**Cinco de Mayo Celebration**

May 4-5  
Join along and celebrate the victory of Gen. Zaragoza over French forces at the Battle of Puebla in 1862. Visit with living historians and re-enactors dressed and equipped as men under the command of Gen. Zaragoza and those of the French Army, and learn more about the reason behind Cinco de Mayo celebrations. Dress for the weather as this event takes place outdoors. *Presidio La Bahía, 217 Loop 71. 361-645-3752*

**Palacios**

**Memorial Commemoration Barbecue Cookoff-Kickball Tourney**

May 24-25  
The eighth annual event includes an adult co-ed kickball tournament, a cookoff, a washers tournament, a crawfish boil, and a DJ. *Palacios Recreation Center, 2401 Perryman. 361-676-8617*

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**South Padre Island  
Memorial Day Fireworks**

May 26  
Join together at the South Padre Island Entertainment District for Memorial Day Fireworks at 9:15 p.m. *Louie's Backyard*, 2305 Laguna Blvd. 956-761-3000; [sopadre.com](http://sopadre.com)

**Victoria  
Memorial Weekend Bash**

May 25-26  
One of Victoria's biggest celebrations features live Tejano music, a carnival, arts and crafts, and food vendors. *Downtown Victoria*, 101 N. Main St. 361-237-0351

**WEST TEXAS**

**San Angelo  
Memorial Day Exercises**

May 27  
This program honors the military members who made the ultimate sacrifice. *Fort Concho National Historic Landmark*, 630 South Oakes St. 325-234-0316; [fortconcho.com](http://fortconcho.com)

**Van Horn  
Cinco De Mayo**

May 4  
Celebrate the culture and traditions of Old Mexico with food, arts and crafts, mariachi bands, folklorico dancers, and local talent. An outdoor dance concludes the celebration. *Van Horn City Park*, Second and Austin streets. 432-283-2682; [vanhorntexas.org](http://vanhorntexas.org)

**Music**

**CENTRAL TEXAS**

**Austin  
Rancho Alegre Conjunto  
Music Festival**

May 3-5  
This free annual festival is a weekend-long celebration of traditional, accordion-driven conjunto music. Past lineups have featured everything from legendary performers and veteran groups to up-and-coming bands just starting out. Presented by Austin-based nonprofit Rancho Alegre Radio, the festival is held at multiple locations. This year, the first two days are at The Barn on Brodie in South Austin and at the iconic Stubb's Waller Creek Amphitheater in the heart of downtown Austin. Various locations. 512-609-9208; [ranchoalegrradio.org/festival](http://ranchoalegrradio.org/festival)



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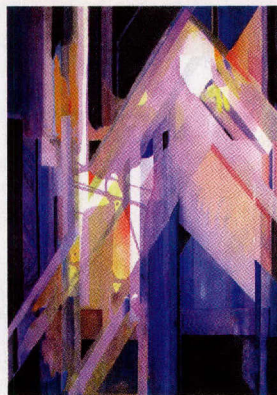
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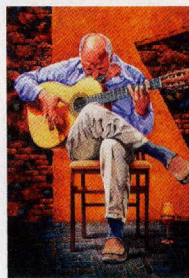
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**Austin**

**Chick Corea and Béla Fleck in Concert**

May 4  
The two master songwriters, musicians, and band leaders meet in a historic duet of piano and banjo. The Grammy Award-winning duet combines Corea and Fleck's most recognizable tunes with music from their Latin Grammy-winning album, *The Enchantment*, and their live set. With a mix of jazz and pop standards crossing myriad genres, like jazz, bluegrass, rock, flamenco, and gospel, this will be a casual, intimate evening with two legends from different musical worlds. *Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress Ave. 512-472-5470; austintheatre.org*

**Austin**

**Paramount Theatre Anniversary Gala with the B-52s**

May 11  
The Paramount Theatre and friends toast the 104th year of the historic theatre with an evening of entertainment and fundraising as this year's 1960s theme brings together riotous music, nonstop dancing, incredible food, and community support. Setting the musical tone is The B-52s, who ignite the party with favorites like "Love Shack" and "Rock Lobster." Guests can enjoy music, an open bar, a seated dinner in an air-conditioned tent on Congress Avenue, dancing in the streets (literally), and the best auction in town. *The Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress Ave. 512-474-1221; austintheatre.org/paramount-gala-2019*

**Bandera**

**Cowboy Capital Opry**

May 7  
Enjoy Grand Ole Opry-style entertainment hosted by Gerry and Harriet Payne. Event includes refreshments and door prizes. *Silver Sage Community Center, 803 Buck Creek. 830-796-4969; banderacowboycapital.com*

**Boerne**

**Boerne Concert Band Memorial Day Performance**

May 26  
This group of volunteer musicians is becoming one of the best performing groups in Central Texas and is proud to present a wide variety of music to entertain audiences of all ages. Concertgoers bring lawn chairs, blankets, and picnics. *Boerne Main Plaza, 100 N. Main. 830-248-1635; visitboerne.org*

**Boerne**

**Concert in the Cave—Axiom String Quartet**

May 26  
A concert in the cave is a musical experience unlike any other in the natural acoustics of the Queen's Throne Room. The program includes music by Schubert and Prokofiev as well as modern composers, and with 1980s ballads by Foreigner and George Michael. *Cave Without A Name, 325 Kreuzberg Road. 830-537-4212; visitboerne.org*

**Cedar Park**

**Jazz and Art on Main**

May 10-11  
This event includes live jazz music; food vendors; arts and craft booths featuring paintings, mixed media, sculptures, woodwork, and glasswork; and handmade items. Listen to live music and shop for unique handmade arts and crafts. *Cedar Park Recreation Center, 1435 Main St. 512-401-5500; cedarparktexas.gov*

**Fredericksburg**

**Maifest German Chorale Concert**

May 5  
Enjoy an evening of German song and Fredericksburg *gemutlichkeit* (hospitality). *St. Joseph's Hall, 212 W. San Antonio. visitfredericksburgtx.com*

**Fredericksburg**

**Waltstock and Barrel Wine and Music Festival**

May 16-18  
Hosted by Austin musician Walt Wilkins, the event features more than 18 bands and musicians, food trucks, Texas wine, and fun vendors. *Texas Wine Country Jellystone Park, 10618 US 290. 830-456-6059; waltstockandbarrel.com*

**Fredericksburg**

**Fredericksburg Music Club—Emile Pandolfi, Concert Pianist**

May 19  
Internationally renowned pop and classical pianist Emile Pandolfi has sold more than 3 million CDs in his career. *Fredericksburg United Methodist Church, 1800 N. Llano. fredericksburgmusicclub.com*

**Fredericksburg**

**The Gatlin Brothers in Concert**

May 10-11  
This Grammy Award-winning trio has dazzled audiences for more than 60 years with a lifetime of noteworthy achievements in their storybook career. *Rockbox Theater, 109 N. Llano. 830-997-7625; rockboxtheater.com*

**Kerrville**

**Memorial Memories**

May 26  
Annual Memorial Day Tribute concert features big band and patriotic music and pays homage to each branch of the military. *Cailloux Theater, 910 Main St. 830-896-9393; caillouxtheater.com*

**Kyle**

**Squeeze Me On the Square: Squeeze-Box Music Fest**

May 11  
This unique event features Tejano, Czech, German, Zydeco, Polka, Conjunto, and Cajun music all prominently featuring an accordion, or squeeze-box. *City Square Park, 101 S. Burseson St. 512-262-3939; cityofkyle.com/recreation*

**New Braunfels**

**The Quebe Sisters in Concert**

May 3  
The Quebe Sisters are an American Western swing group from Texas. The band consists of sisters Grace, Sophia, and Hulda Quebe, who have shared stages with American music legends like Willie Nelson, George Strait, Merle Haggard, Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder, Ray Price, Connie Smith, Marty Stuart, and The Gatlin Brothers. *Brauntex Performing Arts Theatre, 290 W. San Antonio St. 830-627-0808; brauntex.org*

**New Braunfels**

**Jimmy Webb in Concert**

May 10  
Jimmy Webb received his first gold record at age 18 and is the only artist to receive Grammy Awards for music, lyrics, and orchestration. He has written numerous platinum-selling songs, including "Galveston," "The Worst

That Could Happen," "All I Know," and "MacArthur Park." *Brauntex Performing Arts Theatre, 290 W. San Antonio St. 830-627-0808; brauntex.org*

**New Braunfels**

**Alex Meixner in Concert**

May 23-25  
A high-energy polka party featuring classic German tunes and sprinkled with Meixner's one-of-a-kind take on *Billboard* hits. *Krause's Cafe and Biergarten, 148 S. Castell Ave. 830-625-2807; krausescafe.com/events*

**New Braunfels**

**Cody Johnson and Friends in Concert**

May 25  
Johnson's passionate, rowdy concerts have already drawn comparisons to Garth Brooks, and the music from his previous albums—inspired by '90s country foundations, but built for the 21st century—has made him a familiar presence on Texas and Oklahoma red-dirt radio. *Whitewater Amphitheater, 11860 FM 306. 830-964-3800; whitewaterrocks.com*

**San Antonio**

**Camerata San Antonio Concert**

May 12  
Enjoy a chamber music concert inspired by the strength of the human spirit in the face of the depths of human cruelty, featuring violinist Anastasia Parker, violist Emily Freudigman, cellist Ken Freudigman, and pianist Viktor Valkov. *University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway. 210-492-9519; cameratasa.org*

**San Antonio**

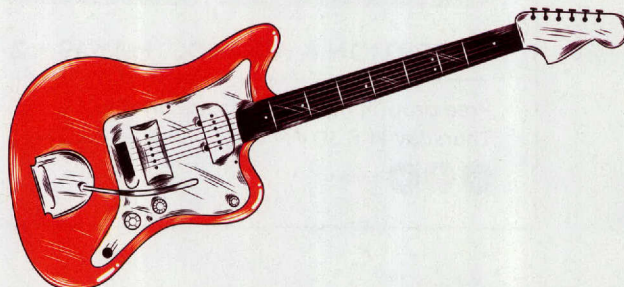
**Tejano Conjunto Festival**

May 15-19  
The 38th annual festival is the first and longest-running conjunto festival in the country. The festival continues the cultural tradition of this uniquely South Texas musical genre by featuring more than 30 of the best, most-popular, and emerging bands from across the state, country, and world. An art contest, call for literature, seniors dance, and a special Hall of Fame inauguration round out the popular festival. *Guadalupe Theater and Rosedale Park, 210-271-3151; guadalupeculturalarts.org/tejano-conjunto-festival*

**San Marcos**

**Feria Del Mariachi**

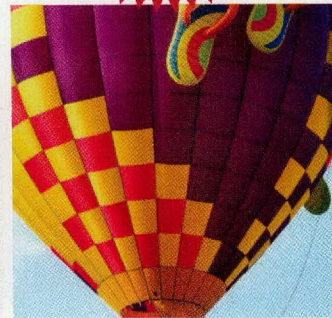
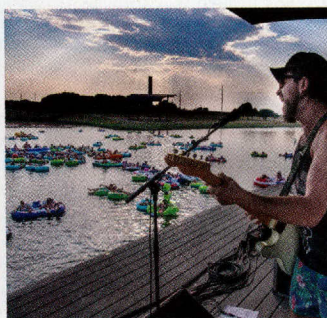
May 4-5  
Latin Music Studies at Texas





# TRAVEL RESOURCE GUIDE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Abilene Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>2 Andrews Chamber of Commerce &amp; CVB</li> <li>3 Bandera County Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>4 Bastrop County Tourism</li> <li>5 Bay Area Houston Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>6 Beaumont Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>7 Blanco Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>8 Boerne Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>9 Brady/McCulloch County Visitors Center</li> <li>10 Brazosport Convention &amp; Visitors Council</li> <li>11 Brenham Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>12 Bullock Texas State History Museum</li> <li>13 Cedar Park Tourism</li> <li>14 City of Angleton</li> <li>15 City of Bryan</li> <li>16 City of Buda Department of Tourism</li> <li>17 City of Grand Prairie</li> <li>18 City of Huntsville Tourism &amp; Cultural Services</li> <li>19 City of Longview - Tourism</li> <li>20 City of Port Isabel</li> <li>21 Clark Gardens Botanical Park</li> <li>22 Cleburne Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>23 Corpus Christi Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>24 Cuero Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture</li> <li>25 Denison Main Street</li> <li>26 Denton Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>27 Downtown Bryan, Texas</li> <li>28 Dripping Springs Visitors Bureau</li> <li>29 Dumas Moore County Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>30 Ennis Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31 Fredericksburg Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>32 Galveston Island Section</li> <li>33 George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum</li> <li>34 Georgetown Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>35 Glen Rose Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>36 Graham Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>37 Grapevine Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>38 Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>39 Greenville Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>40 Irving Arts Center</li> <li>41 Irving Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>42 Kerrville Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>43 Kilgore Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>44 Lufkin Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>45 Magnolia</li> <li>46 Marble Falls-Lake LBJ Chamber of Commerce and Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>47 McKinney Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>48 Messina Hof Winery</li> <li>49 Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>50 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston</li> <li>51 Museum of the American GI</li> <li>52 Nacogdoches Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>53 National Museum of the Pacific War</li> <li>54 Natural Bridge Caverns</li> <li>55 Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch</li> <li>56 Palestine Visitors Center</li> <li>57 Paris CVB/Lamar County Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>58 Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>59 Port Arthur Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60 Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>61 San Angelo Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>62 San Marcos Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>63 Sand 'n Sea Properties</li> <li>64 Seguin Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>65 South Padre Island Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>66 Texas Department of Agriculture - Farmers Markets</li> <li>67 Texas Hill Country Trail Region</li> <li>68 Texas Independence Trail Region</li> <li>69 Texas Parks &amp; Wildlife</li> <li>70 Texas State Aquarium</li> <li>71 Texas State Railroad</li> <li>72 The Colony</li> <li>73 Thin Line Film Festival</li> <li>74 Victoria Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>75 Visit Bastrop</li> <li>76 Visit Big Bend</li> <li>77 Visit Big Spring</li> <li>78 Visit Conroe</li> <li>79 Visit El Paso</li> <li>80 Visit Frisco</li> <li>81 Visit Lubbock</li> <li>82 Visit Plano</li> <li>83 Visit The Woodlands</li> <li>84 Visit Tyler</li> <li>85 Waco Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>86 Waxahachie Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> <li>87 West Texas Co-op</li> <li>88 Wichita Falls Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</li> </ul> |
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State University brings visitors this annual mariachi music festival featuring competitions, workshops, and concert performances. *Patty Stickle Harrison Theatre, 601 University Drive. 512-245-2651*

**Wimberley**  
**Starlight Symphony Orchestra**  
May 5  
Enjoy a pops concert from a professionally conducted, all-volunteer orchestra of talented local musicians. *Wimberley First Baptist Church, 15951 Winters Mill Parkway. 512-902-1361; starlightssymphony.org*

**NORTH TEXAS / PANHANDLE**

**Canadian**  
**Canadian River Music Festival**  
May 11  
Bring a lawn chair to enjoy this annual music festival, which provides great Texas music in a hometown setting. Past performers have included Turnpike Troubadours, Josh Weathers, Grady Spencer, and Mark Chesnutt. Food vendors are available. *Jones Pavilion, 1101 N. Sixth St. 806-323-6234; canadianrivermusicfestival.com*

**Frisco**  
**Off the Rails Country Music Fest**  
May 4-5  
See some of country music's hottest artists on the big stage in Frisco. This year's headliners include Jake Owen, Luke Combs, Sam Hunt, and Luke Bryan. *Toyota Stadium, 9200 World Cup Way. visitfrisco.com*

**Grand Prairie**  
**Bill and Gloria Gaither present Texas Homecoming Spectacular**  
May 3  
This concert features the Gaither Vocal Band and many more favorite classic gospel music homecoming artists. *The Theatre at Grand Prairie, 1001 Performance Place. 972-854-5050; theatregp.com*

**Irving**  
**Daniel Del Pino, Piano Concert**  
May 11  
Join the Las Colinas Symphony Orchestra for a spectacular season finale featuring pianist Daniel Del Pino performing Grieg Piano Concerto in A Minor. The concert is conducted by Maestro Robert Carter Austin. *Irving Arts Center—Carpenter Hall, 3333 N. MacArthur Blvd. 972-252-4800; lascolinassyphony.org*

**SOUTH TEXAS / GULF COAST**

**Galveston**  
**Johnny Mathis in Concert**  
May 4  
Johnny Mathis performs his hits including "Chances Are," "It's Not For Me to Say," "The Twelfth of Never," "Wonderful, wonderful," and "Misty" alongside guest Gary Mule Deer. *The Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. 800-821-1894 or 409-765-1894; thegrand.com*

**Houston**  
**Da Camera Presents: Weinberg and Mendelssohn**  
May 10  
Since Houston Grand Opera's revival of Mieczyslaw Weinberg's opera, "The Passenger," the posthumous reputation of this composer continues to grow. Weinberg's Piano Quintet, symphonic in scale and dramatic scope, is one of the greatest works of this form of the 20th century. The celebrated Daedalus Quartet makes its Da Camera debut with Artistic Director Sarah Rothenberg. The Brentano Quartet joins the Daedalus for Mendelssohn's Octet, bringing the season to a rousing close. *Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas Ave. dacamera.com*

**Houston**  
**Mercury Chamber Orchestra: Beethoven's Fifth**  
May 11  
Mercury presents Beethoven's Fifth Symphony—powerful and explosively dramatic—alongside his spirited "Emperor Concerto"—performed on the instruments of the composer's time. International pianist Alon Goldstein joins Houston's period instrument ensemble. *Wortham Center, 501 Texas Ave. 713-533-0080; mercuryhouston.org/1819-beethovens-fifths*

**Sugar Land**  
**The 1975 in Concert with Special Guests Pale Waves and No Rome**  
May 4  
The 1975 come to Sugar Land as part of their North America tour. *Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land, 18111 Lexington Blvd. 281-207-6278; smartfinancialcentre.net*

**Sugar Land**  
**Ms. Lauryn Hill in Concert**  
May 9  
Hill returns for the 20th anniversary of the *Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*. *Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land, 18111 Lexington Blvd. 281-207-6278; smartfinancialcentre.net*

**Sports & Outdoors**

**CENTRAL TEXAS**

**Bandera**  
**Medina River Cleanup**  
May 4  
The annual river cleanup is conducted as a service to the Bandera community by the Medina River Protection Fund. The charity was established as a perpetual fund to engage residents in all parts of the county in a community-wide effort to preserve and protect the river. *Bandera City Park, 1102 Maple St. 830-796-3045; banderacowboycapital.com*

**Fredericksburg**  
**Hill Country Run Motorcycle Rally**  
May 2-5  
The event features bike rides through the hills, live music, a cowboy breakfast, Brew & 'Que, and more. *Luckenbach Texas. 830-997-8515; hillcountryrun.com*

**Fredericksburg**  
**Texas Flower Country Women's 5K and 10K Run/Walk**  
May 11  
Run or walk through fields of beautiful wildflowers, and enjoy a post-race champagne brunch, free massages, live music, and shopping. *Wildseed Farms, 100 Legacy Drive. runintexas.com/flower*

**Glen Rose**  
**Mother's Day Brunch**  
May 12  
Treat mom to a special Mother's Day with brunch in the glass-walled pavilion at the Foothills Safari Camp, which overlooks a scenic watering hole in our main pasture. She can enjoy a buffet meal and a complimentary glass of bubbles or a mimosa. Each person who makes this event reservation receives one complimentary vehicle pass valid on this day so mom and her guests can enjoy seeing the animals on the Gosdin Scenic Drive. Maximum of 30 people. Call for reservations. *Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, 1789 CR 2009 254-897-2960; fossilrim.org*

**Mason**  
**Eckert James River Bat Cave**  
May 2-5, 9-12, 16-19, 23-26, 30-31  
Watch thousands of bats emerge from their cave. *Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve, James River Road, near SH 290. 210-224-8774 or 325-347-5970; nature.org/texas*



#### Stonewall

##### Lavender Fest

May 4-5

Celebrate everything lavender at this 21st annual event, which also offers vendors, cooking demonstrations, live music, and more.

Becker Vineyards, 464 Becker Farms Road. 830-644-2681; beckervineyards.com

#### Wimberley

##### Wimberley Garden Tour

May 11

The 24th annual Wimberley Garden Club tour, "Nature's Palette," showcases seven unique residential gardens. Local artists from the Wimberley Valley Art League demonstrate their creative processes, plus show and sell their work. Learn how to build a trough garden incorporating Texas native plants. Wimberley Valley Chamber of Commerce, Convention Center, and Visitors Bureau, 14100 RR 12. 512-636-0974; wimberleygardenclub.org

#### NORTH TEXAS / PANHANDLE

#### Clifton

##### Bosque Tour de Norway

##### Bike Rally

May 18

The eighth annual bike rally has four routes of 20, 40, 60, and 80 miles to choose from. Each allows bikers to enjoy the beauty at the top of Texas Hill Country and ride through the historical Norse community. Cyclists ride on a combination of paved state highways and county roads. Since this is the top of the Hill Country, there are rolling hills with a few good leg-burning climbs followed by fast descents. Clifton High School, 1101 N. Avenue Q. 254-675-3720; tourdenorway.com

#### Dallas

##### AT&T Byron Nelson

May 6

One of North Texas' biggest sports attractions, the tournament celebrates its 51st anniversary having raised more than \$155 million since its inception in 1968—making it the most financially successful charity event on the PGA Tour. Trinity Forest Golf Club, 5000 S. Great Trinity Forest Way. 214-943-9700; atbyronnelson.org

#### Fort Worth

##### Charles Schwab Invitational Golf Tournament

May 20-26

The longest-running PGA Tour event still played at its original site has a new title sponsor, one already deeply involved in

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# CATTAILS, CRAWFISH AND CULTURE.

It's time to start planning a great Texas getaway with amazing food, history and nature.



**Memorial Day Weekend Stampede!**  
May 24-26



Cheer on your favorite cowboy at the Bandera ProRodeo's PRCA rodeo at night and enjoy Frontier Days by day. Rodeo action continues every Friday night June thru July. Hang your hat in Bandera for an entire summer of fun.  
**BanderaCowboyCapital.com 830-796-3045**

golf. Colonial Country Club, 3735 Country Club Circle. 817-972-4200; colonialfw.com

## Grand Prairie

### Texas AirHogs Opening Day

May 16

Cheer on the Texas AirHogs as they take on the Winnepeg Goldeyes for the start of baseball season. Texas AirHogs, 1600 Lone Star Parkway. 972-521-6730; airhogsbaseball.com

## SOUTH TEXAS / GULF COAST

### Fulton

#### Babes on the Bay

May 17-18

The largest one-day women angler fishing tournament in the country. Women from all over Texas and across the country come together for a fun-filled weekend with live bands, vendor booths, and educational outreach. Fulton Harbor, 402 Fulton Beach Road. 361-205-0182; babesonthebay.com

### Houston

#### African Violet Society of America Convention and Show

May 26-June 2

A spectacular showcase and judged show of African violets and others in the Gesneriad family of plants. See an exquisite display of hundreds of incredible indoor plants. Winners and awards are displayed. Visit the salesroom and shop for unusual and unique plants not found in most garden centers. Houston Marriott Westchase, 2900 Briarpark Drive. 409-839-4725; avsa.org/conventions-2019

### Port Arthur

#### S.A.L.T Memorial Classic Fishing Tournament

May 25-26

The Saltwater Anglers' League of Texas (S.A.L.T) hosts this fishing tournament full of family fun. Fishing, birding, and disc golf await. Sabine Lake, T.B. Ellison Parkway. 409-626-2501; saltclub.net

### South Padre Island

#### Run the Jailbreak

May 4

The Jailbreak Beach Escape has become a South Padre Island tradition. Each May, thousands of runners conquer the 5K course, covering 20 challenging obstacles, on the sun-drenched beaches before heading to Clayton's Beach Bar for a Texas-size beach party. Clayton's Beach Bar & Grill, 6900 Padre Blvd. 956-761-3000; sopadre.com



## Ranches & Rodeos

### CENTRAL TEXAS

#### Bandera

##### Bandera ProRodeo

May 24–26

PRCA Bandera Pro Rode produced by Rafter G Rodeo Company. Come rodeo with us Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. *Mansfield Park Rodeo Arena*, 2886 SH 16. 830-796-3045; [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com)

#### Uvalde

##### Cactus Jack Pro Bull Riding

May 2–4

This is a professional bull riding event. *Uvalde County Fairplex*, 215 Veterans Lane. 830-591-9040; [cactusjackbullriding.com](http://cactusjackbullriding.com)

## Shopping & Antiquing

### CENTRAL TEXAS

#### Bandera

##### Funtier Days Arts and Crafts Show

May 25–26

Shop more than 75 vendors downtown. *Bandera County Courthouse Lawn*, 500 Main St. 830-796-3045; [banderacowboycapital.com](http://banderacowboycapital.com)

#### Boerne

##### Mostly Native Plant Sale

May 4

The Cibolo Nature Center and Farm hosts its plant sale for the 29th year. Plant sale vendors include nurseries and growers with native and well-adapted plants for this region, nature-inspired art, bird baths and houses, pottery, organic soils, plant food, honey-based products, and businesses such as landscape design and rainwater harvesting systems. *Kendall County Fairgrounds*, 1307 River Road. 830-249-4616; [visitboerne.org](http://visitboerne.org)

#### Comfort

##### Vintage Market Days

May 3–5

Vintage vendors from across the country travel to Comfort for an upscale vintage-inspired indoor/outdoor market featuring original art, antiques, clothing, jewelry, handmade treasures, home decor, outdoor furnishings, yummy treats, and seasonal plantings. There is also live music and food trucks. *Kendall County Youth Ag And*

*Equestrian Center*, 649 FM 289. [visitboerne.org](http://visitboerne.org)

#### Fredericksburg

##### Fredericksburg Trade Days

May 17–19

Shop more than 400 vendors or relax in the biergarten while listening to live music. *Sunday Farms*, 355 Sunday Farms Lane. 210-846-4094; [fbgtradedays.com](http://fbgtradedays.com)

#### Hutto

##### Spring-A-Palooza

May 11

The event features more than 65 art and craft vendors, home and garden demonstrations, live entertainment, a marketplace, a foodie section, and kids activities. *Downtown Hutto*, 100 East St. 512-759-4029; [facebook.com/downtownhutto](http://facebook.com/downtownhutto)

#### Hutto

##### Sunset Block Party Bash

May 24

This free, family-friendly event includes live music, food trucks, kids and family activities, and arts and craft vendors. *Fritz Park*, 306 E. Live Oak St. 512-759-4003; [facebook.com/downtownhutto](http://facebook.com/downtownhutto)

#### Leander

##### Old Town Street Festival

May 18

On the third weekend of May, the streets of Old Town Leander fill with artisans offering handcrafted creations. Texas bands and artists bring the stage to life, and family-friendly activities delight both adults and children. Enjoy food vendors as well as local and regional wineries and distilleries at the wine and beer tent. *Old Town Leander*. 512-259-1907; [oldtownstreetfestival.com](http://oldtownstreetfestival.com)

#### Taylor

##### Blackland Prairie Days

May 4

This event has food, arts and crafts, children's activities, and entertainment. *Downtown*. 512-352-3463; [taylormadetexas.com](http://taylormadetexas.com)

### SOUTH TEXAS / GULF COAST

#### Rockport

##### Nautical Flea Market

May 4–5

This 18th annual event is hosted by the Rockport Yacht Club. Find nautical treasures, including books, nautical art, and fishing-related items. *Rockport Harbor*, 722 Navigation Circle. 361-729-1244; [rockportyachtclub.org](http://rockportyachtclub.org)

## THE DAYTRIPPER'S TOP 5

# Colorado Bend State Park

BY CHET GARNER



Exploring this Hill Country hideout's spectacular trails and waterways

No need to travel “just around the bend” when the bend itself is the main attraction. From the tops of its panoramic vistas to the bottom of its darkened caves, Colorado Bend State Park offers more than 5,000 acres of pure Hill Country heaven to explore. 325-628-3240; [tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/colorado-bend](http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/colorado-bend)

### Gorman Falls

The most common visitor reaction is “I can’t believe we’re in Texas,” and I must admit I felt the same way the first time I stood below this amazing waterfall. The cascading waters look like a postcard from Hawaii, while the lush vegetation feels like a scene from *Jurassic Park*. Fed by natural springs, the falls rush over a 70-foot cliff that spans more than 150 feet across.

### Wild Cave Tours

Some of the best views in the park aren’t on ground level but right below visitors’ feet. Due to the unique composition of the limestone hills, the park is home to dozens of caves. Now, these aren’t like the other “tourist-friendly” caves in Texas with fancy things like pavement and lighting. Join up with Nichols Outdoor Adventures and get ready to scooch, crawl, and scamper through the underbelly of Texas. The rock formations and cave critters are well worth it. [cbcaves.com](http://cbcaves.com)

### Spicewood Springs

What’s better than a Texas swimming hole? Six Texas swimming holes—and that’s exactly what this oasis offers: a collection of spring-fed pools connected by running streams and falls making their way through Spicewood Canyon. Wise travelers will spend a few hours hiking upstream in good water shoes and splashing around in one pool after the next. This place is so magnificent, I’m hesitant to tell others about it, but the secret may already be out.

### Tie Slide Trail

With more than 35 miles of trail to choose from, hikers can have a field day exploring every nook and cranny of this park. My favorite is the Tie Slide Trail, a 2.2-mile jaunt through the oak, pecan, and cacti landscape that epitomizes Colorado Bend. Those that make it to the end will find themselves at the best overlook in the park, 100 feet above the Colorado River with an uninterrupted panorama in every direction—not a powerline or roadway in sight.

### Bend General Store

While this trip may feel miles from civilization, there are some local hangouts for those who know where to look. If you’re looking for a post-hike meal and post-swim beer, this is the spot. The store has existed for more than 100 years and still serves the community as a gathering spot and mercantile. The limited menu includes half-pound burgers, so come hungry. *438 County Road 442, Bend*. 325-628-3523; [bend-general-store.business.site](http://bend-general-store.business.site)

Whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path,  
I hope to see you on the road.

Chet Garner is the host of *The Daytripper® travel show on PBS*. To view the *Colorado Bend State Park* episode visit [thedaytripper.com](http://thedaytripper.com). Follow along on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @chetripper.



# PLAN YOUR SUMMER GALVESTON GETAWAY

Whether you're a history buff, thrill seeker, or beach bum, Galveston Island has something just for you. If walking 32 miles of coast isn't enough, take a stroll through history in what was once known as the Wall Street of the South. From the pyramids of Moody Gardens to the Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier and Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark, there are plenty of adventures to be found for the whole family.

To plan your Galveston getaway, visit [galveston.com](http://galveston.com) and be sure to order your FREE Destination Guide.



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[www.OceanStarOEC.com](http://www.OceanStarOEC.com)  
409.766.7827



## The Galveston Naval Museum

Come aboard the "Avenger of Pearl Harbor", the USS Cavalla (SS-244), known by her crew as the "Lucky Lady". This attack submarine sank the Japanese aircraft carrier that launched the attack against the US Naval Fleet on Dec. 7, 1941. See how sailors lived onboard the "Defender of D-Day", the USS Stewart (DE-238). The Stewart secretly escorted President Roosevelt and his flotilla across the Atlantic Ocean to meet with Mussolini and Churchill for what would come to be known as the Tehran Conference. The museum is located at Seawolf Park and is open 7 days a week.

[www.GalvestonNavalMuseum.com](http://www.GalvestonNavalMuseum.com)  
409.770.3196

The Galveston Island Pass is your key to adventure and savings while exploring the numerous attractions that make Galveston so special. Buy at [www.galvestonislandpass.com](http://www.galvestonislandpass.com).

Attraction may change seasonally.  
For information call 409.765.3580.

**GALVESTON**  
★ ISLAND ★





## Holiday Inn Resort Galveston - On The Beach

Family-fun is in store at the Holiday Inn Resort Galveston – On the Beach! The beachfront resort is the ultimate destination to enjoy the best of Galveston, including summer activities and festivals! Conveniently located along the Seawall, guests are within reach of a variety of restaurants, entertainment and attractions including the Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier. For an evening of fun, head to B. Jigger’s for daily happy hour and nightly live entertainment!

GalvestonHolidayInn.com  
409.740.5300



## Hilton Galveston Island Resort

Soak up the sun at the Hilton Galveston Island Resort. Located along the historic Seawall, the well-appointed resort offers exceptional accommodations and amenities coupled with exciting summer activities for the young and young at heart! Between a dynamic line-up of activities, a vast assortment of dining options and a location steps away from the beach, there is truly something for everyone at the Hilton Galveston Island Resort.

GalvestonHilton.com  
409.744.5000



## Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier

Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier is a Gulf Coast destination featuring family-oriented attractions including 16 rides, midway games, waterfront dining and retail shops. From the extreme steel coaster, the Iron Shark to our 5D Theater Ride, kids of all ages will relish in the excitement.

Be adventurous at [pleasurepier.com](http://pleasurepier.com).  
409.766.4950

# San Luis Resort, Spa & Conference Center

This summer, your paradise awaits you at The San Luis Resort on Galveston Island. The opulent, 16-story hotel offers premier accommodations and amenities, breathtaking Gulf views and unmatched, personalized service. Guests can choose from an array of accommodations including VIP floors, the elite “Club Ten,” enhanced guest rooms and The Villas at The San Luis Resort, five luxurious suites offering the relaxed charm of a secluded hideaway. Take time to relax and rejuvenate with top-shelf pampering at the Spa San Luis. Enjoy a stroll on the beach or soak up the sun poolside with a cocktail at The Cove, the hotel’s enhanced luxury pool and grotto. For added privacy, opt

for a cabana, exclusively available for rental to overnight guests. With so many restaurants on property, The San Luis Resort promises a dining experience for every whim. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast at Blake’s Bistro, indulge in authentic Italian cuisine at Grotto, or escape to the award-winning restaurant, The Steakhouse. In addition to sumptuous amenities, enjoy an endless variety of summer activities, events and entertainment perfect for couples, families and groups! Experience the very best in style, elegance and comfort at The San Luis Resort.

SanLuisResort.com  
800.392.5937







## Holiday Inn Club Vacations Galveston Beach Resort

More than a place to stay. A place to play! Set away from the bustle of downtown, you'll enjoy villa accommodations with fully equipped kitchens, living and dining areas, plus free Wi-Fi internet access. All villas feature private balconies overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. The heated, outdoor infinity-edge pool and large hot tub offer direct, waterfront beach access and a new recreation area. The whole family will enjoy half-court basketball, shuffleboard court, beach volleyball and tetherball. We also offer a 24/7 fitness center to guests 24/7 and picnic areas for outdoor dining.

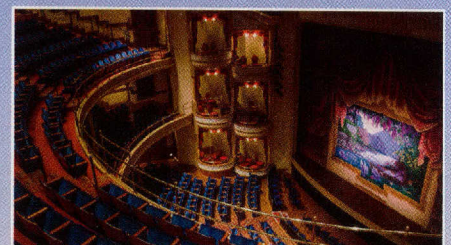
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## Holiday Inn Club Vacations Galveston Seaside Resort

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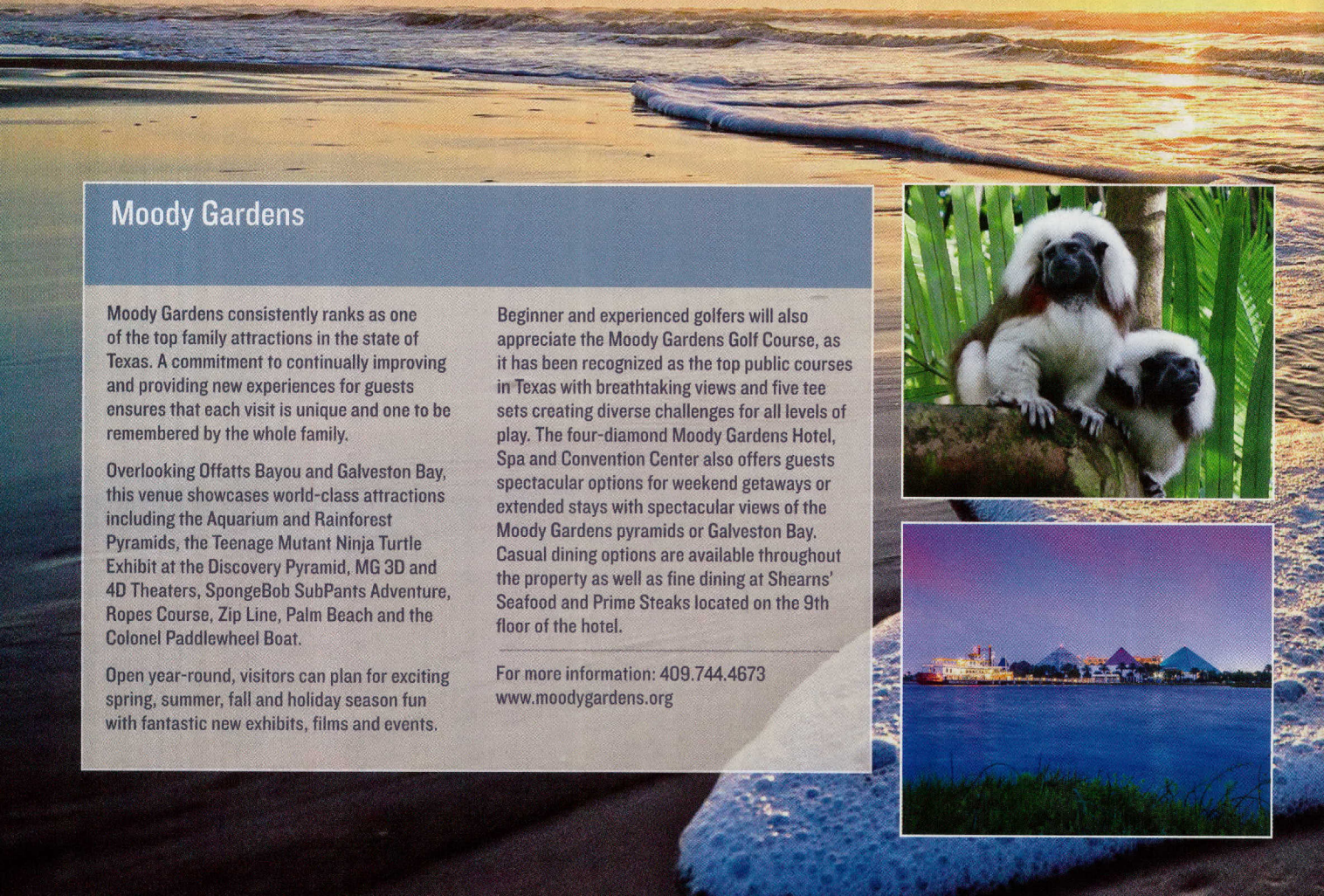
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## The Grand 1894 Opera House

The Grand 1894 Opera House presents a year-round performing arts schedule featuring stars of stage and screen, Broadway hits, music, dance, comedy and more. This historic venue, the official opera house of the State of Texas, offers no seat further than 70 feet from the stage with an intimate view of performances that can't be matched! The Grand is also available for meetings, weddings, and corporate events, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Get your entertainment at [TheGrand.com](http://TheGrand.com)  
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## Moody Gardens

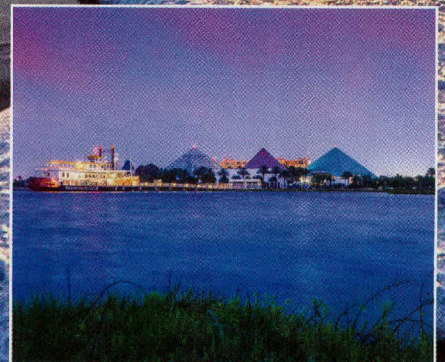
Moody Gardens consistently ranks as one of the top family attractions in the state of Texas. A commitment to continually improving and providing new experiences for guests ensures that each visit is unique and one to be remembered by the whole family.

Overlooking Offatts Bayou and Galveston Bay, this venue showcases world-class attractions including the Aquarium and Rainforest Pyramids, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Exhibit at the Discovery Pyramid, MG 3D and 4D Theaters, SpongeBob SubPants Adventure, Ropes Course, Zip Line, Palm Beach and the Colonel Paddlewheel Boat.

Open year-round, visitors can plan for exciting spring, summer, fall and holiday season fun with fantastic new exhibits, films and events.

Beginner and experienced golfers will also appreciate the Moody Gardens Golf Course, as it has been recognized as the top public courses in Texas with breathtaking views and five tee sets creating diverse challenges for all levels of play. The four-diamond Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa and Convention Center also offers guests spectacular options for weekend getaways or extended stays with spectacular views of the Moody Gardens pyramids or Galveston Bay. Casual dining options are available throughout the property as well as fine dining at Shearns' Seafood and Prime Steaks located on the 9th floor of the hotel.

For more information: 409.744.4673  
[www.moodygardens.org](http://www.moodygardens.org)





# GRAND GETAWAYS LITTLE LUXURIES



## Hotel Galvez & Spa, A Wyndham Grand Hotel

Get some sand between your toes, relax by the pool or schedule an appointment at The Spa – these are just some of our suggestions to make the most of your next Galveston getaway at Hotel Galvez & Spa®, A Wyndham Grand® Hotel.

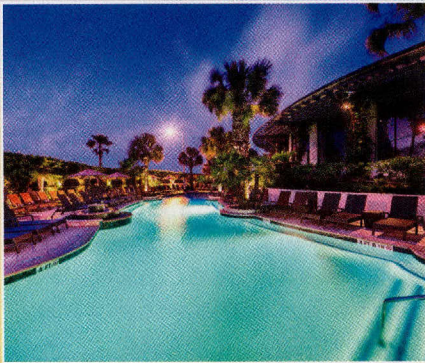
Hotel Galvez & Spa, also known as the Queen of the Gulf, has been a must for travelers for more than 100 years. For decades, visitors have come to Galveston for the healing powers of the Gulf and you should do the same.

After a day at the beach or the pool, enjoy a cocktail at the Galvez Bar & Grill or join us for lunch or dinner. If you're planning a weekend getaway, make reservations for our Sunday Brunch, rated as one of the Top 100 by Open Table for five years running. We also suggest you take

the trolley to Galveston's historic downtown and spend time shopping and dining. Hotel Galvez is an ideal family getaway or romantic escape.

Take advantage of our **Book Ahead and Save 10% Rate + 100 Bonus Points** to save and earn points for your next visit at any Wyndham property.

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## The Tremont House, A Wyndham Grand Hotel

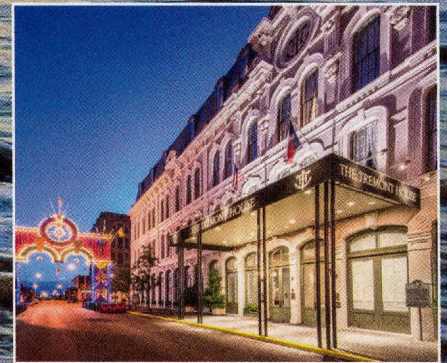
Browse your favorite shops, grab ice cream at La King's, dine in one of the island's most popular restaurants or take in a show at The Grand 1894 Opera House – all this is just steps away from The Tremont House, A Wyndham Grand® Hotel, in Galveston. The Tremont House, a boutique-style hotel located in the heart of The Strand Historic District, offers Galveston's only Rooftop Bar, the popular 1888 Toujouse Bar and casual dining at Tremont Cafe. It's the perfect location for a romantic escape or girls' getaway with plenty to see and do within walking distance.

Remember The Tremont House is in the heart of every downtown festival so check the calendar for upcoming events on the island or monthly happenings, like Movie Nite and Music Nite on The Strand. The hotel is also a popular venue for weddings and meetings. Couples transform the

hotel's ballroom into their own fairytale wedding while planners appreciate the floor to ceiling windows to rejuvenate attendees.

Guests enjoy an exceptional level of service and complimentary Wi-Fi at this top-rated TripAdvisor® hotel. Take advantage of our **Book Ahead and Save 10% Rate + 100 Bonus Points** to save and earn points for your next visit at any Wyndham property. The hotel also offers discounts for AAA and AARP members.

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crying when I left for college and was so excited about my future that I didn't register what was happening to her. My son is tall, handsome, funny, and smart. He's optimistic about the future I'm taking him to explore, and as much as I have dreamed about taking him on a college visit, I have dreaded the day when he would leave my home to actually go there. Now I get it. I can mark a day on the calendar when I'm going to get my heart broken. Empty Nest Syndrome just sounds nicer.

I'm driving him to what feels like the end of the road for me, and I need to pee. By my watch, it will take less than an hour to get from Lee County to College Station, but that doesn't seem possible. We've been on this road for some time, and if there's been a building taller than two stories I missed it. I pull over at the next roadside gas station in Old Dime Box, an unincorporated dot on the map, just to say I've been there. As far as I can tell, this place could be the whole town. That's not to say people don't live full lives out here.

The gas station has a plywood walkway outside and homemade baked goods for sale inside the clear plastic display case behind the register. A state trooper is jawboning the lady at the cash register, and she seems happy for the company. I've lived in Moscow. I've chaperoned Henry's band trip to Carnegie Hall. I've woken up in a high-rise hotel on Waikiki and looked out over the awesome expanse of the Pacific Ocean. I don't know that I've ever felt as far from Austin, or any big-city bubble, as I do walking into that gas station. Maybe that's because I don't have a single skill that could get me a job around here. I can't even work a cash register. I can tie a bowline, but if I'm dependent on tending to the fields of crops out yonder, I'm going hungry. Heck, because of a yoga injury, I couldn't even bend over to pick whatever is growing outside. I may be sophisticated, but I'm useless.

We drive on for a bit, through Caldwell, then more of SH 21, with churches and a pecan farm, before crossing the Brazos River. The green, wet farmland gives way to outcroppings of a bigger city—the airport and massive testing facilities.

The buildings take on an institutional scale, imposing and unified in color and purpose. The signs are expecting you and happy to direct you to the right place. College Station welcomes you with a calm, confident voice. Right this way, it says, you're exactly where you should be.

We kill some time at a McDonald's across the street from campus. Every wall is covered with homemade Aggie decorations. Every customer is wearing some type of A&M gear. It's charming, I confess—a nice contrast to how corporate the ubiquity of burnt orange can feel in Austin.

**THE ADMISSIONS CATTLE CALL IS** less homemade but even more boosterish. I might be the only parent out of a couple hundred attending the admissions presentation not wearing maroon. (I opted for neutral gray.) My son surprises me by asking a question about a gap year. He's excited about everything. Clearly he's not having the culture shock I am.

The weather is muggy during the campus tour, and it rains on and off, but Henry's in a good mood. He pays close attention to the tour guide, and a lot of the coeds are paying close attention to him. I throw a glance his way. Nothing is fazing him. I know he is taller than I am, but when did he grow, you know, up?

When we get to the quad where the Corps dorms are, he falls in love, and not with a student, but with a dog. If he plays in the marching band, he'll have to join the Corps of Cadets and wear a uniform every day. I figured this would be when he'd look at me and say, "We can leave now." But this is when, for the first time, he hears about Reveille—A&M's version of Bevo, though a diminutive collie—and how a sophomore member of the Corps is entrusted with the dog's care.

"Dad," he says, "maybe they'll let me take care of Reveille!"

He's joking a little to let me know that, in the two hours we've been on campus, he's chosen his school. The shtick about the school being one big family sold him. Later he tells me he isn't sure about the school in Philadelphia we had wanted to

visit because it's so far from home. Leaving is on his mind, too. College Station is only a couple of hours away from home, and the drive is pretty if you like looking at farmland. The traffic's not too bad, either, unless you hit Austin during rush hour—something I'm not sure they have in College Station.

I take heart that A&M's close enough for me to drop by sometime to take him and his friends out to dinner yet far enough away that he's going to have to learn how to do his laundry, as well as a million other things, for himself. Also, it's still Texas. You can get Tex-Mex and barbecue in College Station. They take pride in being friendly to strangers. And at the end of the day, educated kids are their cash crop. You could do worse.

We get an excuse note for his high school, buy A&M-branded socks for his younger brother, and hit the road. I'm a little shocked to see how quickly we're out of the campus and into Texas again, how soon the buildings yield to the fields and the big sky, now turning gray again. I know this drive now. It will be the one I take to drop him off for his move-in. It will be the one I take to visit him for parents' weekend and if he ever needs me or just wants to see me. And it will be the one he takes home.

But that's all in the future. For the next two hours, he's mine, and there's so much left to say. I don't know where to start but figure I'll break the ice with some embarrassing story about how I was an idiot in high school. I turn down the music, take a deep breath, look at him, and realize this conversation will have to wait.

He's snoring.

That's OK. As I drive us back to Austin, I realize this is not even close to the last trip for us. I had been building up his leaving for college so much in my head that it had become a breakup, not a transition. We'll text. We'll talk about the classes he's taking, who ends up caring for Reveille, and what his summer jobs are. Everything doesn't need to be said right now. I can teach him about laundry later. The road goes on forever, but the parenting never ends. **L**





# Musica Alegre

The happy music of Tex-Mex conjunto ambassadors Los Texmaniacs

By Joe Nick Patoski

**T**he Tex-Mex sound of Los Texmaniacs is also called *musica alegre*—happy music—for good reason. That bouncy two-step rhythm, powered by a button accordion and a 12-string guitar known as the *bajo sexto*, is made for dancing. Sitting in place or standing still is not an option.

And no one sits or stands still when Los Texmaniacs, the band led by Max Baca, 51, and his nephew Josh Baca, 27, are on stage.

Max started Los Texmaniacs in San Antonio 22 years ago to honor the roots of Tejano conjunto music while incorporating rock 'n' roll, jazz, funk, and other contemporary sounds. He had been playing *bajo sexto* with the supergroup Texas Tornados and decided to launch his own band when the Tornados took an extended break. Los Texmaniacs quickly carved out a place in the Tex-Mex pantheon. When Josh, a budding prodigy on accordion, joined Los Texmaniacs in 2011, the music ascended to a whole other level.

**“When we play outside the United States, we say we’re representing American music ... that we’re from Texas, we’re Mexican Americans, and this is our music.”**

The two New Mexico natives have become leading ambassadors of Texas-Mexican music. They’ve recorded seven albums, including 2009’s Grammy Award-winning *Borders y Bailes*, and taken their traditional sounds around the globe, touring Russia twice for the State Department; the war zones of Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Kosovo for U.S. organizations; and China and Mongolia for the Smithsonian.

They’ve also updated Tex-Mex, most significantly on 2015’s *Americano Groove*, which features cameos from the likes of Joe Ely and David Hidalgo of Los Lobos.

Los Texmaniacs will be playing across Texas this summer, when they’re not venturing beyond state lines to spread their *musica alegre* to the world.



**Q: What's conjunto?**

**Josh:** Whenever we're playing overseas, we explain that where we come from, *conjunto* means an ensemble, a group of four. Audiences everywhere understand that. We explain the music came from Germans and other Europeans settling Texas who brought over accordions and other instruments, and how Mexican Americans, as migrant farmworkers, were listening to that music, and we picked up the accordion and learned to play the polka, the *redova*, *huapango*, *schottische*. We explain how Mexican Americans wanted to create an instrument that took the place of the accompaniment to the accordion, the bass line, and added the *bajo sexto*.

**Q: How did two Albuquerque guys become the standard bearers for Tex-Mex?**

**Max:** I grew up listening to *norteño* music, Tejano, and conjunto—the traditional sounds. My father was a professional accordion player who had a band. He was a big fan of Narciso Martinez [the South Texas accordionist known as *El Huracan del Valle*].

I started on accordion when I was 5 years old. My dad sat me on a chair and taught me "Polka Monterrey" and Glen Miller's "In the Mood." That kind of says it all about Texmaniacs. We do traditional conjunto, and we do rock 'n' roll like John Fogerty and Doug Sahm.

**Josh:** I started out on accordion when I was 5. I watched my grandfather, my father, and my uncle performing. They would practice at my grandma's all the time, and I just loved the music. My dad gave me a one-row accordion. I asked him, "Teach me." He showed me *do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do* in G. "Learn that and master that until you're sick of it, so you never ever want to play that scale again as long as you walk on this earth." I asked, "Why?" He said, "After you do that, you can play any song in the world."

**Q: The accordion maestro Flaco Jimenez made quite an impression on both of you.**

**Max:** We saw Flaco on *Saturday Night*

*Live*. I was 9 when my dad took us to Lubbock, which was the closest Flaco was playing at the time. He would sell out Friday, Saturday, Sunday—a thousand people a night. We got to meet Flaco. When I heard Oscar Tellez playing *bajo sexto* with him, I wanted to be like Oscar. Every time Flaco was in the area, we'd go see him. Flaco got us up on stage. We became such good friends, he'd stay at our house in Albuquerque.

**Q: Flaco has told me Josh is his No. 1 protégé.**

**Josh:** Every single time I see Flaco perform, it's like the first I ever heard the accordion. I don't know what it is. He does all the tuning and repair on my accordion. That's his passion. It's an honor to be able to see that. It's special.

**Q: How did Max get recruited to join the Texas Tornados?**

**Max:** The Tornados were going to play at the New Mexico State Fair. Flaco called me, "Hey man, bring your *bajo* and sit in with us. Oscar isn't in the band anymore. He got left behind in Chicago, he got so wasted." Afterward, he said, "You sounded great. Why don't you come to San Diego? You can do the West Coast tour with us." We played San Diego, then San Juan Capistrano. They had a meeting the next day and called me into their room, and they each came up to me and said, "Hey man, welcome to the Tornados." We played Bill Clinton's inaugural ball, shows with Brooks & Dunn and Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson Farm Aids.

**Q: What are some of your favorite Texas clubs?**

**Max:** It would probably have to be Gruene Hall because of the authenticity of the old wood dance floor and low ceiling, and the vibe from all the legendary musicians that have been on the stage. The sound is just so good in there. Maybe my all-time favorite place was called Ruben's Place in Selma [now closed]. It had the greatest jukebox in the world, nothing but the old conjunto 45s.

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Keep up with **Los Texmaniacs'**  
upcoming shows and performances  
at [lostexmaniacs.com](http://lostexmaniacs.com).

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**Q: What was the most out-there gig you've played?**

**Max:** Liping in Guizhou province in China, for the Smithsonian in July 2014. We had played dates around China and Mongolia, but had three days off before we went back to the states. We flew into Guandong where we performed in a theater, then drove about seven hours south to this village that had been established to be a cultural center.

**Josh:** We did some serious hiking. We went to the very top of this mountain where you could see the whole village and more. This old man was sitting there smoking out of a pipe, looking at me like, "What the heck?" They'd never seen Americans. He asked me about my tattoos. I was feeling so spiritual. I said, "Man, I'm dreaming." The man asked the tour guide what I'd said, and she told him what I said. He looked at me and told her something. He said, "Where you come from is a dream. This is reality."

**Q: When performing, you like to explain where the music comes from, as well.**

**Josh:** The music has a culture. You grew up playing this to your people, and you would make them happy, and there were beautiful sounds coming from working in the cotton fields, the strawberry fields. That's where the music comes from. It has a feel of family, of love.

**Max:** When we play outside the United States, we say we're representing American music. Then we get specific, that we're from Texas, we're Mexican Americans, and this is our music. **L**

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# VINTAGE



## Spinach Salad Days

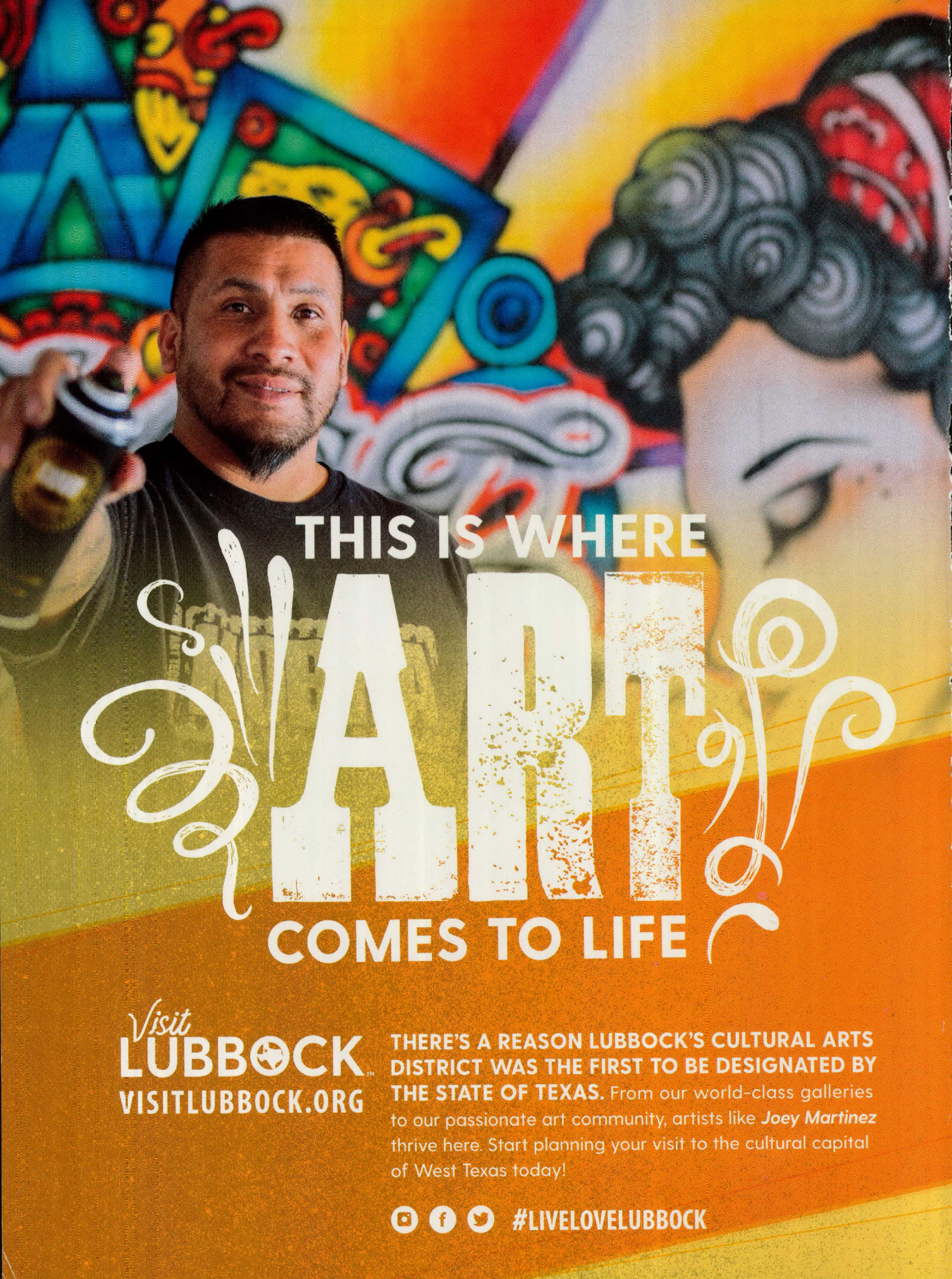
CIRCA 1930

**T**his undated photo of a Crystal City farmer driving a truck packed with spinach baskets hangs on an office wall at the Texas Basket Company in Jacksonville, which celebrates its 100th year of operation in 2019 (see "A Century of Baskets," Page 22). Crystal City, the seat of Zavala County, is a hub of South Texas' Winter Garden Region, where winter conditions are prime for growing spinach, onions, carrots, and broccoli. Before the introduction of plastic bushels, regional spinach farmers were big customers of Jacksonville wooden-basket factories. Zavala County remains Texas' top producer of spinach, and Crystal City celebrates the harvest every November with its Spinach Festival. 🍷

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