



TX Agriculturalist
Todd Gregory and Scott Billings have an interesting twist on distilling.



Harvest of the Month
It's Ruby Red Grapefruit season here in the Lone Star State.



TDA Updates
Food & Nutrition, New GO TEXAN Partners, Shop GO TEXAN and more!



TEXAS AGRICULTURE Matters!

Your monthly connection to the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Volume 2
Issue 1
January 2021



Howdy Neighbors!

Welcome to the Texas Agriculture Matters newsletter, your monthly connection to the Texas Department of Agriculture.

We are closely watching the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff members at TDA have transitioned to working remotely for the time being. Rest assured we are hard at work everyday to support farmers, ranchers and Texans with their agriculture endeavors.

Our operations will continue to serve you and we have plenty of opportunities available. Whether you're a young farmer, want to learn how to get a hemp license or need to read something that brings you joy, this newsletter will serve you well.

Remember friends, Texas Agriculture Matters!

Sid Miller

Texas Agriculture Commissioner

The Texas Ruby Red Grapefruit

If there's anything a Texan loves it's a juicy Red Ruby Grapefruit. These iconic fruits adorn the branches of citrus orchards in the Lower Rio Grande Valley November through March. Ruby Red Grapefruits are unique because of the bright red fleshed varieties which arose in Texas by mutation from existing grapefruit in the early 1900s.

Grapefruit originated as a natural mutation of the pummelo and orange somewhere in the West Indies. It was first described in 1750 in Barbados and the term grapefruit appeared on record in 1814 in Jamaica. It's believed that a Jamaican farmer named the fruit grapefruit because it grows on trees in clusters like grapes. Grapefruit seeds soon made their way to America by French or Spanish settlers. The earliest record of grapefruit shipments from Texas was 120 tons during the 1919-20 season and peak production reached 960,000 tons during the 1945-46 season. Around 1929, a mutation on a



Image courtesy of Living Sparkle Blog.



TEXAS AGRICULTURE *Matters!*



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

*Produced by the Office of Communications
Editor, Katlyn Gast*

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(800) TELL-TDA



ABOUT COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Sid Miller is an eighth generation farmer and rancher and the 12th Commissioner of Agriculture for the great State of Texas. Commissioner Miller has devoted his life to the agriculture industry, and supporting Texas producers and the communities they call home. He is a businessman, rancher, community leader, former ag teacher and former school board member. Commissioner Miller is a rodeo cowboy and holds 12 world championship titles. He is an honors graduate of Tarleton State University in Stephenville, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Vocational Agriculture Education.

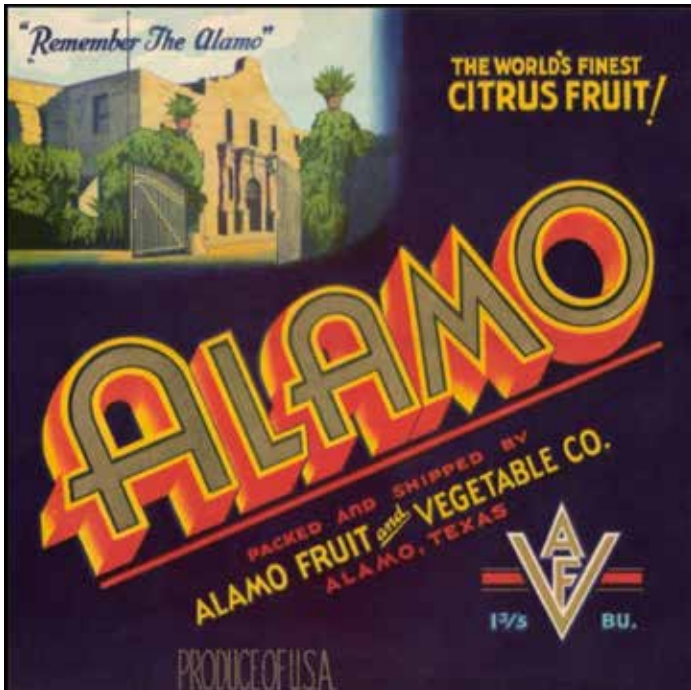
single tree became the famed Texas Ruby Red, which received the first-ever patent awarded to a grapefruit.

The Texas Red Grapefruit was designated the official state fruit of Texas in 1993 by the 73rd legislature. Due to its renowned sweetness and rich, red interior, nutritional content, and contributing outstanding revenue to the Texas economy, the designation was an easy one. “As distinctive as the proud state from which it originates, the Texas Red Grapefruit will serve as a fitting

emblem for the bounties of nature with which our state is blessed (statesymbolsusa.org)”.

Today, the Texas citrus industry is comprised of almost 27,000 acres across a three-county area. Citrus growers produce more than 9 million cartons of fresh grapefruit and oranges each year and another 5 million cartons of juice fruit valued at over \$100 million dollars.

You can [buy Texas grown citrus](#) from GO TEXAN partners to ensure you're only getting the *best* grapefruits around! 🇹🇽



The Alamo Fruit and Vegetable Co. citrus crate image of the famed landmark to market the fruit shipped from the Rio Grande Valley town of the same name. Image: Courtesy of Carol Pease. Article: "When Crates Become Canvasses" by Eileen Mattei.

COVID-19

The Texas Department of Agriculture is committed to providing the same high level of service to our customers during the COVID-19 emergency as they've come to expect. Whether we're helping Texas farmers and ranchers continue to provide a safe and dependable food supply, ensuring Texas school children continue to have access to regular, healthy meals or supporting our vital rural hospitals and clinics, the Texas Department of Agriculture is here for Texans.

Due to the Coronavirus emergency, the Texas Department of Agriculture is now working remotely and will continue to do so until directed to return to state offices by agency leadership. As a result, we are asking all constituents, customers, licensees and others to contact TDA by email, as there will be limited staff in the office answering the phones. Additionally, TDA is not accepting external visitors in the office during this time. If you need to make a payment, you may do so online or via USPS.

Please visit our [website](#) for updated information or view our [COVID-19 Resource Guide](#) for additional resources and information.

ABOUT TDA

The Texas Legislature established the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) in 1907. The agency's key objectives are to promote production agriculture, consumer protection, economic development and healthy living. The agriculture commissioner oversees the agency and is elected every four years. The current commissioner, Sid Miller, was elected in 2014. TDA is a diversified state agency that provides value-added services through our regulatory and marketing and initiatives. TDA is headquartered in Austin and has five regional service offices, two sub-offices, three laboratories and five livestock export facilities.

Mission:

TDA's mission is to partner with all Texans to make Texas the nation's leader in agriculture, fortify our economy, empower rural communities, promote healthy lifestyles, and cultivate winning strategies for rural, suburban and urban Texas through exceptional service and the common threads of agriculture in our daily lives.

Texas Agriculture Profile



BlackEyed Distilling Co. Fort Worth, Texas

GO TEXAN Partner, BlackEyed Distilling Co., uses black-eyed peas and corn 100% sourced from Texas in their vodka. They take great pride in keeping their story an honest-to-goodness Texan tale from start to ultra-premium finish. Quality ingredients make all the difference. That's why they carefully inspect every batch of non-GMO black-eyed peas and corn used. By keeping a hand in

every step of our process, they're delivering a true farm-to-bottle experience.

Sure, a lot goes into being a true Texas original. At the root of it all is their surprising signature ingredient — the black-eyed pea. So, what's the story behind the black-eyed peas? Well, it all comes down to controlling your own fate. That's exactly what one down-on-his-luck black-eyed pea farmer decided to do.

Hey, sometimes it takes a bad drought to grow a bold idea. And one night in the fields of Muleshoe, Texas, that bold idea was born — take a failing crop and turn it into the world's first vodka distilled from black-eyed peas. Some people thought they'd gone a little crazy, but they knew they had something special from the very first sip. 🇺🇸

Scott Billings, Owner & Distiller



Scott Billings didn't grow up on a farm, but we don't hold that against him. This Beaumont native is still a true Texas original. Scott spent more than 25 years gaining experience in the financial industry before helping launch BLK EYE Vodka. That's right, he'd rather be distilling beans than counting them. And who can blame him?

Under his watch as distiller, BLK EYE Vodka has medaled at multiple competitions, earning Double-Gold and Best Traditional Vodka medals at the Global Spirit Awards in Las Vegas. BLK EYE also medaled at the prestigious New York World Wine & Spirits Competition — part of the Triple Crown of wine and spirits competitions.

It's pretty clear that Scott brings plenty to the table, thanks to his Texas grit and distilling expertise gained training in Louisville, Kentucky. It's about doing whatever it takes to bring out the best in our black-eyed peas.

"I think we both get a sense of pride from what this product is. And it's us. We can say proudly, 'We made this.'"





Todd Gregory,
Owner

Todd Gregory saw great potential in a one-of-a-kind vodka made in Texas from true Texas ingredients. Call it bold vision backed by another key ingredient — a little local knowledge. Our farming roots run deep at BlackEyed Distilling Co.

Todd was born and raised on a farm in Petersburg, where his family grew black-eyed peas in a Texas-sized, quarter-mile-long garden. He graduated from Texas Tech University with a degree in Agricultural Economics. Let's just say he learned what it takes to grow something special. He never thought he'd own a distillery, but he fell in love with the originality and surprising smoothness of a vodka made from those little peas he used to shell as a kid. Todd still loves watching people try BLK EYE Vodka for the first time. "It stops them in their tracks," he says. Just the way the original idea stopped Todd in his tracks.

"I can remember the first time tasting it. It was just this nirvana moment. It was original. It hadn't been done before."

Learn more about Black Eyed Distilling by visiting their website, blackeyed.vodka and find them on social media.



Black Eyed Distilling pairs with true Texas artists [Nancy Lamb](#) and [Pat Gabriel](#) to design labels for their vodka bottles.

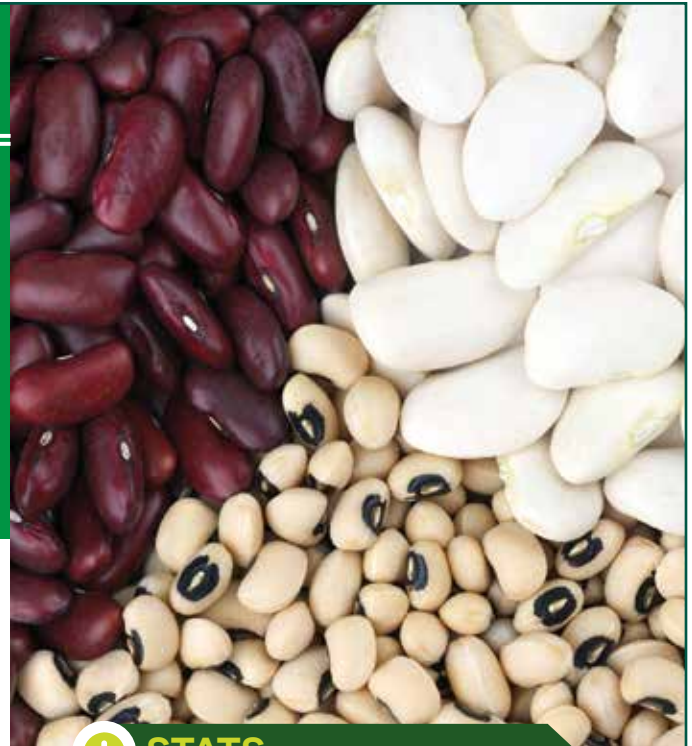
SUPERIOR BEAN & SEED

FARM PROFILE

This month's featured farm is from Sudan, a small town in the High Plains region of Texas. Superior Bean & Seed has been a family owned and operated farm for the last 60 years. They grow and process fresh beans and seeds including the black-eyed pea.

Black-eyed peas are a popular summer crop in the High Plains because they mature quickly. Many people eat black-eyed peas on New Year's for good luck, but they can and should be eaten all year round for their high protein and fiber content.

© Graham / Adobe Stock



+ STATS

Owner: Jason Trotter

Founded: 1950s

Location: Sudan, Texas

Specialty: Black-eyed peas and pinto beans



SUDAN,
TEXAS


© yogesh_more / iStock



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This product was funded by USDA. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.





TDA COLLABORATES WITH U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TO GIVE STUDENTS A TASTE OF TEXAS FRUITS

In January, Texas citrus is in season and that includes the official state fruit — Texas red grapefruit. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) connects many schools with seasonal Texas fruits like oranges and grapefruits through a partnership between TDA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). The program is called DoD Farm to School and it helps Texas schools procure six different fruits grown by farmers in the Lone Star State.

“What I like most about using DoD Farm to School is knowing we are helping Texas growers,” said Lillian Barnett, the child nutrition director at Florence Independent School District (ISD). “It is also fun to show kids the difference between Texas varieties versus fruit coming from California or Florida. Texas citrus cannot be beat. The Top of Texas apples are delicious. Earlier in the year, the peaches were a hit and watermelon is the all-time favorite.”

Florence ISD is one of 220 Texas school districts or charter organizations that have ordered more than 4 million pounds of apples, watermelon, oranges, grapefruit, peaches and pears this school year. Schools receive the foods when


they are in season and use them for educational taste testing, add them to meals or provide other nutritional experiences for students. The fruit also provides a promotional tool for increasing participation in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

“The ability to know where a product is coming from makes it easy to advertise our local offerings,” Barnett said. “Some of our most liked social media comes from bragging about local.” Citrus thrives in the Rio Grande Valley and that meets the parameters of locally grown for schools in Texas.

DoD Farm to School is part of a larger TDA and USDA collaboration that taps into DoD’s distribution network for delivering high-quality produce to military installations. DoD Fresh is the larger program and it offers fruits and vegetables grown anywhere in the United States. Schools can elect to participate in DoD Fresh and/or DoD Farm to School by allocating a portion of the USDA entitlement amount they use to acquire other domestic agricultural commodities, such as meats, grains and canned or frozen vegetables through USDA’s Food Distribution Program for Child Nutrition.

“The advantage of DoD fruits for Paris ISD is that they utilize our USDA funds which helps stretch our budget,” said Lori McEntyre, student nutrition director at Paris ISD.

DoD programs complement other TDA efforts to introduce children to Texas foods including the Farm Fresh Initiative. Commissioner Miller introduced the Farm Fresh Initiative to support schools as they work to include Texas foods in their menus. The initiative includes the Farm Fresh Challenge that encourages schools to include Texas foods in October menu planning. The initiative’s Farm Fresh Network helps connect schools to local farmers, ranchers and distributors who source local foods. These efforts are supported by a variety of TDA-developed educational resources.

“The goal is to not only provide locally sourced and healthy meals for school lunches but to pass those healthy lifestyle changes along to students for each meal they choose” Commissioner Miller said. “I want all Texans to make health-conscious decisions that will sustain local economies and build a healthier future for the great state of Texas.” 



RED GRAPEFRUIT

HARVEST OF THE MONTH
JANUARY



Red grapefruit is the state fruit of Texas. It was discovered growing on a pink grapefruit tree in Texas' Rio Grande Valley. It has a tangy, sweet taste and can be juiced, sliced in half or divided into several sections. Texas citrus fruits grow in places with lots of sunshine and soft ground. Varieties like Rio Star, Flame and Ruby Sweet can be found in supermarkets from October through May.

DID YOU KNOW?

A grapefruit has lots of vitamins A and C, so eating a ruby Texas red grapefruit or drinking its juice helps keep your skin and your eyes healthy, and helps protect your body from getting a cold or the flu.

FUN FACT

Grapefruit got its name from growing in bunches just like grapes.



RUBY RED
GRAPEFRUIT
GROWING REGIONS

Rio Grande Valley



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

This product was funded by USDA. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.





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When you shop GO TEXAN, you are supporting small businesses and

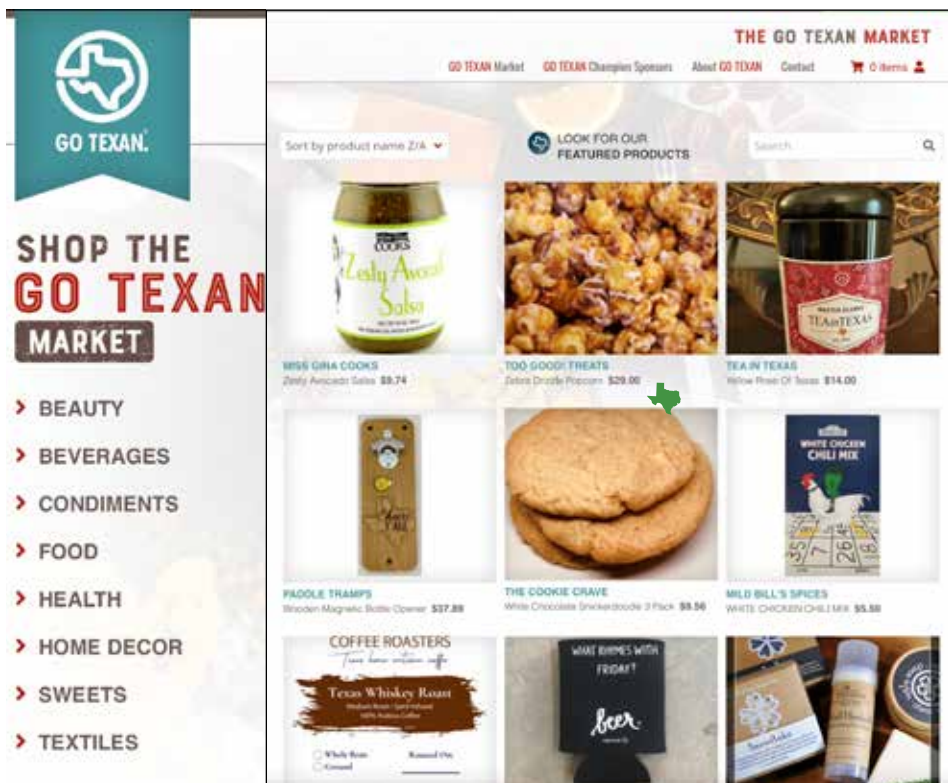


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- ★ [Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce](#)
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Did You Know?

TDA Commodity Boards

recognize the importance of each Texas commodity and serves commodity boards by facilitating meetings and ensuring compliance with Chapter 41 of the Agricultural Code.

TDA Daily Market News

provides daily updates of agricultural commodity prices in Texas and across the nation via email and on TDA's website, TexasAgriculture.gov

TDA implements and inspects price scanners for accuracy.

TDA operates livestock export pens. The agency has no official role in animal health, as that's the responsibility of the Texas Animal Health Commission.



Texas Ag Stats:

- ★ The Texas citrus industry, oranges specifically, brought in \$35,538,000 to the Texas economy.
- ★ Of 480,506 producers in Texas, 37% are women.
- ★ Texas leads the nation in number of farms and ranches, with 248,416 farms and ranches covering 127 million acres.
- ★ There are more horses in Texas than any other state (330,671) and produced \$122,969,000 in sales in 2017.

Recipe of the Month

Brown Sugar Spiced Grapefruit

Food Network

Next time you go to your local grocery store make sure you ask for Tropic Moon Texas Rio Star Grapefruit so you can try out this recipe!

Ingredients:

1/4 cup lightly packed light brown muscovado sugar
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
2 large red grapefruits, halved and segmented

Directions:

1. Mix together the sugar, cinnamon and ginger in a small bowl. Position an oven rack so that it sits 4 inches below the broiler.
2. Preheat the oven to broil. Put the grapefruit cut-side up on a baking sheet.
3. Divide the sugar mixture over the top of each and place under the broiler. Broil until lightly golden brown, about 3 minutes. Enjoy!



Your Thoughts...

on snow covered hay bales...

I found them.
The Frosted Mega Wheats.



Tweet



Top Fan

Dave Newell

The yellow ones are not lemon!

Charlotte Diane Wilson
That is beautiful !

Christopher Sandoval
Alicia Bernhardt free range wheaties

Donald Walsh
Just add milk.



JANUARY 2021

Tell Us... *do you have any New Year's resolutions?*



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