



TX Agriculturalist Read William and LaRicher's story about their family owned business, Nanny Goat Salsa



Young Farmer Grant Aaron Reeves, head farmer at Reeves Family Farm, had a vision for his community.



TDA Updates
Daikon Radish,
Food & Nutrition,
marketing assistance
grant, Shop GO
TEXAN and more!



Your monthly connection to the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Volume 2 Issue 2 February 2021



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



Texas agriculture is known for a lot of things. Cattle, cotton, corn being a few. But agriculture production in Texas also includes often overlooked products like leafy greens, specifically spinach.

The Ritchie Family roots run deep in the soil of Wintergarden, Texas where the "mild climate combined with good quality artesian well water, fertile land and ample labor supply made for successful production of spinach." Ed Ritchie, owner of Tiro Tres Farms, is a third-generation spinach and leafy green farmer, who has dedicated his life to creating a functional program that promotes sustainability in the industry.

As spinach producers continue to dwindle, Ed hopes to see what is left continue to prosper. "I've come to enjoy the challenges growing spinach brings and the relationships and friendships I've built from being a part of the spinach industry are priceless."



In the 1900s, Ed Ritchie's ancestors farmed Eagle Pass on the banks of the Rio Grande. They grew hay for the mules and horses used by coal miners and active forts up and down the river. Edward Ritchie (Ed's grandfather) and his brother partnered and grew various vegetables for the commissary and for traffic on the international bridge.





They were successful in producing carrots, onions and melons but it wasn't until ice became available that the pair would venture into spinach farming. Over the years, their spinach production expanded and with the construction of the railroad and electric powered ice plants in 1924, a spinach family empire was born.

With this new mode of transportation and ability to keep produce chilled, farmers were able to send spinach bushel baskets out of state and into Canada. This was an incredible feat, considering most of the spinach produced in Wintergarden at the time was for local consumption. The spinach industry boomed in Texas shortly after, lasting about a decade between 1936 and 1946, in which Texas became the largest shipping point in the U.S. Crystal City, Texas



was named the "Spinach Capital of the World" and Governor James V. Allred proclaimed March 16 - 21 as spinach week in Texas. In March 1937, the importance of Crystal City to the spinach industry was memorialized when a statue of famous spinacheater Popeye the Sailorman was erected with the blessing of his creator and fellow Texan, E.C. Segar. The Spinach Days festival was held annually until the start of World War II and then resumed in 1987. The original Popeye statue remains at the front of City Hall, while a newer statue placed downtown was donated by Del Monte before their closure.

In September 1979, Ed and his father, Edward W Ritchie, Jr., formed a partnership and chose the name Tiro Tres Farms to break away



from the Ritchie family name. In asking about the name "Tiro Tres", Ed says "...it meant a third shot or chance, so in my case being a third-generation farmer I would be the third opportunity to keep the family business going forward." Ed continues growing spinach with his family and experienced their peak in the 2019-20 season with a total of 310,880 shipped containers. With the growing popularity of living a healthy lifestyle, Ed suspects his spinach sales to steadily increase over the years.

Today, about 220,000 pounds of spinach leaves the farm per week. That includes baby leaf, teen leaf and full size curly (savoy) leaf. Last season, Tiro Tres Farms harvested 5.3 million pounds of baby, teen and curly spinach. Their spinach is sent mainly to the East Coast and Canada where it gets further processed, washed and bagged.



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 18 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.





In addition to spinach, Tiro Tres Farms occasionally grows arugula, and are in their fifth growing season of organic products. Those organic products include spinach, arugula, mizuna, chard, green oak lettuce, and green and red leaf lettuce. Last season they shipped about 800,000 pounds of organic products – about half of which was organic spinach. To ensure they produce the best spinach crops possible, the Tiro Tres Farms team conducts their own research and partners with seed breeders and companies, universities and agriculture extensions on various projects. They conduct variety trails, disease research and fungicide efficacy studies. Spinach and leafy greens are also heavily regulated under food safety compliances which Tiro Tres Farms properly implements and records in their program. "The food safety compliance work actually takes up more time than the farming and field work nowadays... If we get a pathogen hit on a field prior to harvest the entire field must be destroyed. So, it can be a very risky crop to grow, yet it is rewarding," says Paige, Ed Ritchie's daughter.

Like many farmers and other struggling businesses right now, the Ritchie Family and Tiro Tres Farms are fighting to survive and successfully overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. While a long-term goal is to process and sell their spinach locally, Ed says their objective remains the same as it always has been – "to push internal growth, becoming more efficient, sustainable, food safe, and to care for the land to ensure it's better than when we started."



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 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 <u>website</u> for updated information or view our <u>COVID-19</u>
<u>Resource Guide</u> for additional resources and information.

February 2021 TEXAS AGRICULTURE Matters! 3

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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:

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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 AGRICULTURALIST

William and La Richer Parks, owners

NANNY GOAT SALSA

Elgin, Texas



alsa is a staple in every Texan's pantry and can be paired with complex dishes or a simple bowl of fresh tortilla chips. Chips and salsa were designated the state snack of in 2003, and rightfully so. Salsa is known for its versatility and variety

in flavors, textures and ingredients that are as unique as Texas itself. The typical ingredients found in salsa – peppers, onions and tomatoes – nourished the

Native Americans and pioneers of Texas, were used in early Texas folk medicine and play a notable economic role in the Texas economy today. Small, family-owned salsa businesses continue to thrive in Texas, like Nanny Goat Salsa, and are often inspired by a cherished family recipe and encouraged by Texans' insatiable demand for this savory concoction.

What started off as a hobby for LaRicher almost 10 years ago has grown into a full fledged family owned and operated salsa business. She tried her hand at baking breads, cakes and maybe one too many pies. LaRicher wanted to create something she knew her family and friends would enjoy. She began crafting a spectacular blend of peppers, aromatic onions, herbs and tomatoes. After a few batches she whipped something up she thought was fantastic. William brought a jar of salsa to a work pot-luck, and returned



home with praise and the first of many orders of salsa. LaRicher's salsa soon took off in the community and made an appearance at a ribbon cutting. Today, Nanny Goat Salsa prides itself on locally sourced ingredients, commitment to community and vision to be the staple salsa in homes across the country.



WHERE DOES THE NAME "NANNY GOAT SALSA" **COME FROM?**



"We polled a few names with our family. [When] LaRicher's sister, Stephanay, unexpectedly passed away, we decided to honor her memory by naming our salsa after her childhood nickname "Nanny Goat." It's a fun, catchy name that pairs up well with our delicious almost famous salsa."



BRIEFLY EXPLAIN YOUR PRODUCTION PROCESS-IS EVERYTHING MADE AND PACKAGED IN **HOUSE?**



"Yes, everything is made and packed in-house per the Texas Cottage Food Law. There's a lot of prep work involved just to get ready to make to the salsa- from sanitizing the workspace and jars, setting up tables, canners and chopping produce, etc.

We do an inventory of supplies and determine how many of each flavor and heat we need to make, and we purchase ingredients accordingly, transform the kitchen into our little workshop, crank up the music and start making some magic aka salsa."



WHEN ARE YOUR **BUSY SEASONS AND** WHAT ARE THE MOST **POPULAR FLAVORS** OF SALSA?



"Football season, Thanksgiving and Christmas are our busiest seasons. Our Cilantro Lime is the most popular flavor. Folks love its whether it's medium, Hot or our XXHot. We can't make enough."



HOW DOES YOUR BUSINESS **CONTRIBUTE TO** AGRICULTURE?



"Our salsa business contributes to and supports agriculture every time we purchase our ingredients, as everything in our salsa is grown locally."



WHERE CAN PEOPLE **FIND NANNY GOAT** SALSA?



"Elgin Farmers Market every Thursday 4-7pm at Veterans' Memorial Park, Taylor Farmers' Market every Saturday 10am-2pm at Heritage Square and if you can't make it to one of the weekly farmers' market give us a shout on our social media pages (@NannyGoatSalsa on Facebook and Instagram) and we will make arrangements to get the salsa to you."



WHY DOES TEXAS AGRICULTURE MATTER TO YOU?



"Texas agriculture matters to us because without it where would we be? What would we do for food? Agriculture is the foundation of our being." 👆

Click the arrows to view images of Nanny Goat Salsa.

HOW TO FIND US

For more info about Nanny Goat Salsa and to order visit their Facebook & Instagram @NannyGoatSalsa

February 2021 TEXAS AGRICULTURE Matters! 5







The purpose of this program is to provide financial assistance in the form of dollar-for-dollar matching grant funds to young agricultural producers that are engaged or will be engaged in creating or expanding an agricultural business in Texas.

The Young Farmer Grant Program aims to:

- ★ Grow and support lexast agriculture
- Help meet a financial need that is otherwise not met
- Help grow an operation that also impacts the community





Farmer Aaron, daughter and neices, who all work on the farm.

Aaron Reeves Reeves Family Farm

Reeves Family Farm was founded in 2006 in Princeton, Texas. They currently cultivate about 50 acres of vegetables year-round and use sustainable, organic practices on the farm. They also grow melons and produce pasture-raised chicken eggs. Their main goal was to build a kitchen

on the farm. This would help produce a wide spectrum of "value-added" products from what they grow and source - an extension of their farm operation. The Young Farmer Grant helped Aaron Reeves do just that. With the funds received from the grant Aaron and Reeves Family Farm canned and sold about 1,500 quarts of veggies, 300 pints of jams and hired a chef for the farm kitchen to create grab-n-go meals from their own produce. In addition, they hosted two successful farm-to-table dinners, and produce cut fruit and veggies which helps with utilizing imperfect foods.

Ultimately, Reeves Family Farm provided their local community with a more profound connection to their farm through food. The kitchen elevated their strength in the community and produced income for their farm.

We asked Aaron if he had advice for other young farmers. Here's what he said: "Be humble and ask for help. People and organizations are willing! Utilize grants and volunteers. Get your community involved. The demand for local food is on the rise, so grow or produce food and then sell it!"

For more information about Reeves Family Farm, visit www.ReevesFamilyFarm.com



A farm-to-table hosted dinner at Reeves Family Farm.



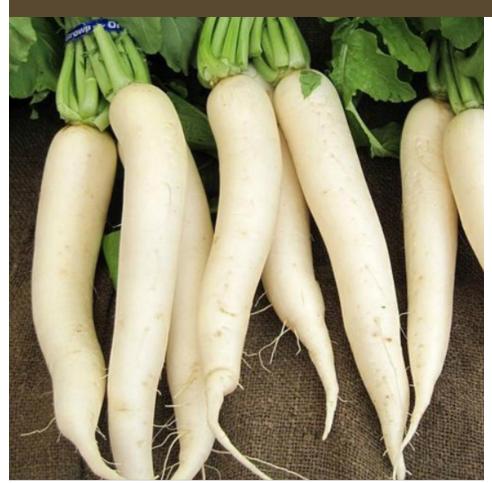
Reeves Family Farm.

For more information on the grant and how to apply please visit our website, www.texasagriculture.gov

February 2021 TEXAS AGRICULTURE Matters! 7



DAINON RADISH BY ANOTHER NAME



Daikon has gained popularity among Texas producers. It is most often found grown in the Houston area and the valley but will do well throughout the state. It can be grown in both Fall and Spring as long as there is plenty of loose soil and full sun. There have even been reports of producers using daikon as cover crops, allowing cattle to graze on the greens as the root material helps to loosen their soil and add organic matter back to the ground for future crops.

Whether you are a seasoned producer, an aspiring home gardener looking for something new, or home consumer, give this spicy radish a try. This versatile produce may become one of your new pantry staples.

Radishes are a popular choice among many home gardeners. They are easy to grow, usually have a decent yield for the amount of effort required and are tasty additions to salads or appetizer plates. Even those who are not home gardeners are used to the familiar red and white bulbs and know that they can often add a spicy bite to an ordinary plate of greens. But, have you ever heard of a Daikon?

Daikon is a type of radish that is most common in Asian cuisine. Instead of the typical smaller, rounded bulb, it is found to have more visual similarities to a carrot. It is usually white in color, although some varieties of daikon will differ, but is almost always seen as a long, tubular shape that are usually about 12 to 18 inches in length. The Japanese translation of the name Daikon actually means "large root." Daikon has grown in popularity in what is considered to be "Chef Cuisine" and is in high demand from many of up-scale Texas restaurants. It has a different flavor profile that is spicier at its root end and milder as you approach the greens at the top. Whether it is sliced, diced, julienned or grated, it can be enjoyed as a spicy addition in dishes or served pickled, stewed, stir-fried, or even raw.

FAST FACTS:

- Origin: Southeast or East Asia.
- -Translation: "big root" in Japanese.
- Also known as white radish, Japanese radish or Chinese radish.
- Edible root and leaves.



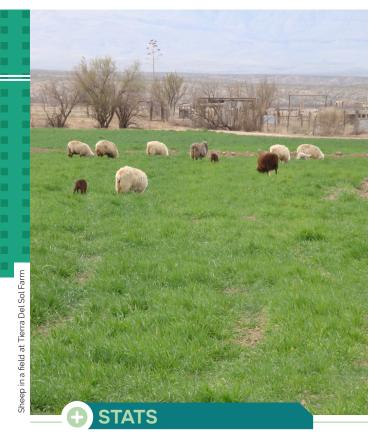
TIERRA DEL SOL FARMS

FARM PROFILE

This month's featured farm is Tierra del Sol Farms, located in a small valley next to the Rio Grande River in far West Texas.

A family-owned farm, Tierra del Sol opened for business in 1985 after the family bought 60 acres of land. From the start, the family used old-fashioned farming techniques to grow food for the farm animals, and all garden weeds were removed by hand. Tierra del Sol filled old ditches, fixed fences and started plowing land that had been left alone for years. They always did it with a strong focus on sustainability.

Today, Tierra del Sol farms with the same focus on sustainability, but on a bigger farm scale. They are raising lambs, goats, chickens and rabbits, and growing vegetables in the greenhouse. The proprietors at Tierra del Sol take pride in their commitment to hiring people from the nearby community and selling most of their products directly to farmers markets and restaurants in the El Paso area.



Owner:

Founded: 1985

Location: Fort Hancock, Texas

Specialty: Organic meat products











10 TEXAS AGRICULTURE Matters! February 2021

Ambassadors Champion School Nutrition and Provide Student Perspective for TDA Partners

School nutrition teams are working hard to serve healthy school meals while overcoming challenges brought on by the pandemic. At several Texas high schools, they receive support from students in Commissioner Miller's Health Ambassadors for a Ready Texas (HART). As campus leaders, HART students collaborate with the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and school staff to champion school meals, Texas agriculture and healthy lifestyles.

Kylie Mask, a HART representative at Lytle Independent School District (ISD), used her creativity to engage students in National School Lunch Week. She initiated the production and recording of five professional-looking videos using TDA-produced artwork for a background. In the videos she appears as a newscaster reporting on healthy school meals such as chicken parmesan. Also, Kylie provided voice recordings the district's campuses could use for announcements during the week.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT SQUAREMEALS.ORG/HART





In a similar effort at United ISD in Laredo, HART's Larisa Rangel, Diana Ballardo and Mia Brizuela worked with their child nutrition department to make a video promoting National School Lunch Week. Larisa also organized a drive-by parade for the hardworking cafeteria staff distributing grab-and-go meals at her school. Larisa and her classmates decorated their parents' vehicles with thank you posters and balloons and thanked the workers for their hard work and dedication.

Itzel Rojo and Jeffrey Garcia from Laredo ISD worked together to create a newsletter to inform students about school meals. The newsletter included meal-service times and an interview with a member of their nutrition team. Travis Sims at Elysian Fields ISD worked with his HART Advisor to survey students and get feedback on menu items like

bone-in wings. The results were shared with the food service director to assist in meal planning. These examples show how HART students are building healthier campus environments using creativity, collaboration and hard work.

This year's HART class has 122 participating students, the largest cohort for the program which is now in its second year. Students are in grades 9-12 and participate in statewide conference calls that include TDA, HART students, HART advisors and nutrition teams. The students are required to pursue nutrition-

related promotional efforts, teach classmates about healthy foods, and reach established goals. Commissioner Miller recognizes all participants with letters, certificates and more.

Commissioner Miller and TDA know that students have a powerful voice for engaging their peers in learning about healthy lifestyles and promoting school nutrition. This year's HART participants have already shown that they can overcome the obstacles presented by COVID-19 and safely pursue activities that promote healthy lifestyles and the good nutrition in a school meal. TDA thanks all the HART students, their advisors and the nutrition teams working with them for their efforts. For more information, please visit SquareMeals.org/ HART. 👆







FARMERS MARKET MARKETING ASSISTANCE GRANT



To promote Texas Specialty Crops sold at Farmers Markets and encourage participation in the Certified Farmers Market program, the Commissioner Sid Miller and the Texas Department of Agriculture invites Farmers Markets to apply for funding to increase their market reach among consumers.

The Farmers Market Marketing Assistance Grant is an opportunity for Certified Farmers Markets across the state to promote Texas Specialty Crops including produce, tree nuts, honey, olive oil, and nursery plants/flowers.

The award will be up to \$2,000 in reimbursement funds for approved promotion related expenses to market Texas Specialty Crops that can be found at their market. Awards will be given on a first-come, first-served

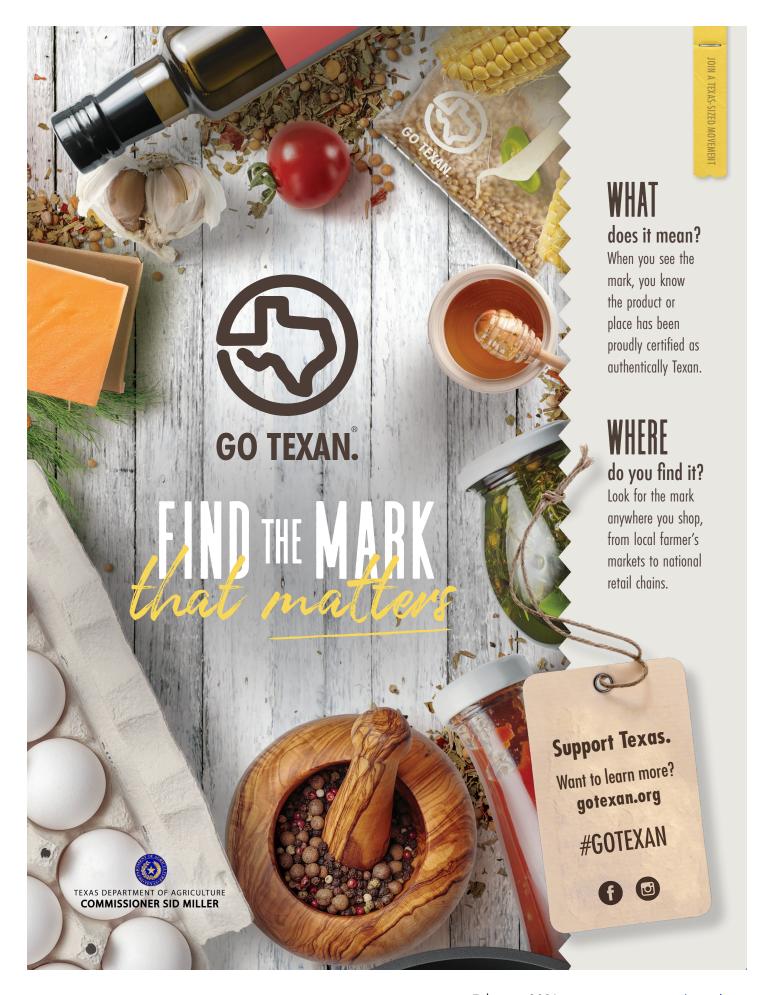
basis to applications that meet the minimum qualifications and scoring criteria pending funding allocations. Applicants must be a current Certified Farmers Market and a current GO TEXAN partner.

To apply for either or both programs, visit www.gotexan.org. No application will be accepted after July 15, 2021. Applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. Award funding is limited, so don't delay!



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO APPLY FOR THE FARMERS MARKET MARKETING ASSISSTANCE GRANT, VISIT WWW.GOVEXAN.ORG









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GO TEXAN. **NEW PARTNERS!**

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- ★ Corazon Natural Beef
- ★ Luada Beadworks
- ★ Lucid Concepts LLC
- ★ Cuatro Cinco Enterprises
- ★ Redden Farms LLC
- ★ Sugar Foods Corporation
- ★ Blazinbonez LLC
- ★ Texas Grounds Coffee Company
- ★ Pretty Farmer LLC
- ★ You Dont Know Jak BBQ LLC
- ★ Cook Ranch Beef Store
- ★ Swagyubox LLC
- ★ Blue Sky Soaps
- ★ Dishaka Gourmet Imports LLC
- ★ Frosted Paws Bakery LLC
- ★ Westfold Farm
- ★ Stockdale Chamber of Commerce
- * Hungry Chicken Farms
- ★ Liberty Mask LLC
- * Royal Roost Farm
- ★ The Essence Co LLC

TO VIEW PICTURES OF THE ONLINE MARKET, CLICK THE LEFT AND RIGHT ARROWS

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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 ensures compliance with Chapter 41 of the Agriculture Code.

TDA Metrology Lab

maintains Texas' primary standards that are traceable to national and international standards, as well as provides certification of weights and measures equipment used by TDA inspectors and service companies.

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





Texas Ag Stats:

- ★ 13,850,000,000 pounds of dairy milk was produced in Texas in 2019.
- ★ Texas cotton farmers produced about 578 pounds per acre of cottton in 2019.
- ★ In the 2019 growing season, the Texas peanut industry was valued at almost \$144,832,000.
- ★ As of January 1, 2020, Texas is home to about 4,570,000 beef cattle.
- ★ There were 247,000 farming operations in Texas in 2019.

Recipe of the Month

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE CORNBREAD

Ginger Clardy | Bandera

Ingredients:

Butter, for the pan

1 cup cornmeal

3/4 cup flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 eggs

1 cup whole kernel corn

1 cup buttermilk

1 cup grated cheddar cheese

1/4 cup seeded, chopped jalapeño

pepper

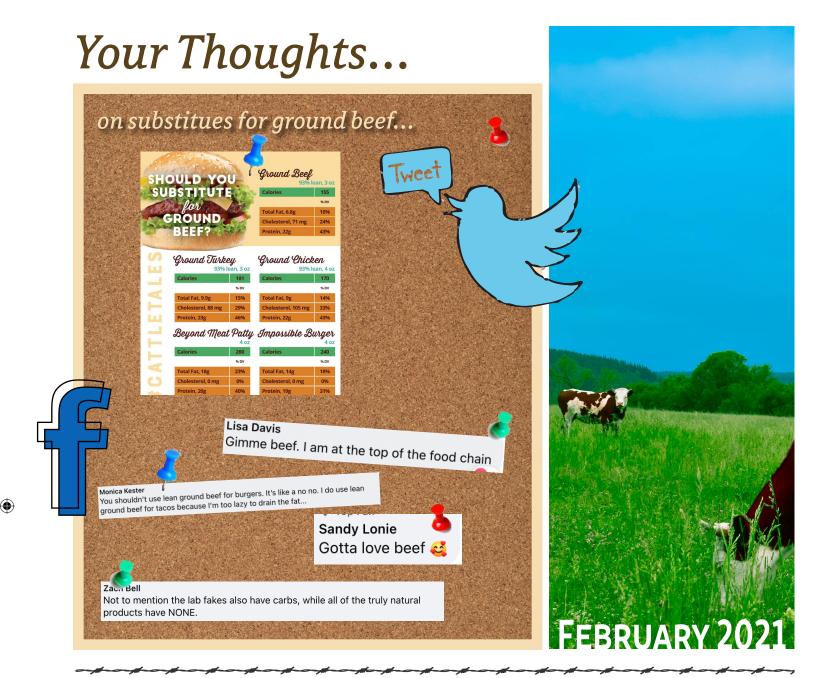
3 tablespoons olive oil

Directions:

- **1.** Butter an 8- or 10-inch cast-iron skillet and place it in the oven as it preheats to 400 degrees.
- 2. In a large bowl, stir together the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In another bowl, lightly beat eggs, then stir in corn, buttermilk, cheese, jalapeño and oil. Add to dry mixture and stir until just barely combined.
- **3.** Remove hot skillet from oven, pour in batter, then bake cornbread 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.







Tell Us... what are your agricultural goals in 2021?



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