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FOR JULY 4

Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

JULY 2025

Run of the Mill

A focus on ancient grains
makes James Brown
no ordinary miller

**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 16



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July 2025



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By Claire Stevens
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James Brown, owner of Barton Springs Mill in Dripping Springs.
Photo by Wyatt McSpadden

ABOVE
The Simon Theatre in downtown Brenham.
Natalie Lacy Lange | Courtesy the Barnhill Center at Historic Simon Theatre



Anchored in History

THE OLDEST AMERICAN port west of New Orleans celebrates its bicentennial this year.

The Congress of Mexico established the Port of Galveston on October 17, 1825.

It was home to the Texas Navy during the Republic of Texas' war for independence. Before Ellis Island in New York opened in 1892, it was one of the main gateways into the country for immigrants. At the end of the 19th century, it was the world's foremost cotton port.

But after the hurricane of 1900 destroyed Galveston, Houston emerged as the safer long-term shipping option on the Gulf. Today, Galveston is the fourth-busiest cruise port in the U.S.

Two events in Galveston will celebrate the port's 200th anniversary: a party on the pier October 17 and bicentennial gala October 18.

Special Delivery

For most of America's history, that meant a delivery via the post office using a process that originated 250 years ago this month.

The postal system was established July 26, 1775. Benjamin Franklin was the first postmaster general.

Did you know? The first U.S. stamps, featuring images of Franklin and George Washington, were issued July 1, 1847.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

My favorite Fourth of July was ...

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

Here are some of the responses to our May prompt: **I blush whenever ...**

I think of some of the things I did in school!

STEVE BAILEY
PENTEX ENERGY
GAINESVILLE

My wife catches me staring at how beautiful she still is after more than 40 years of marriage.

ROGER ELSEY
PEDERNALES EC
WIMBERLEY

My phone goes off in a public place.

COLLEEN PROVASEK
SAM HOUSTON EC
LIVINGSTON

I tell the story about accidentally walking into the men's restroom at a restaurant in Houston.

CAROL HILTON
BANDERA EC
PIPE CREEK

Visit our website to see more responses.

TCP Contests and More

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FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS
Abstract

RECOMMENDED READING

In December 2016 we told of Galveston's history as the "Ellis Island of Texas." Read the story at TexasCoopPower.com.

MAY 2025 Bavaria, By Way of Texas

"I met Ronny Tippelt in 1984. In '85 and '86 he played my backyard. He was and still is the best yodeler in Texas."

DENNIS PEAK
PEDERNALES EC
LAMPASAS



ERICH SCHLEGEL

Destination: Walburg

We often visit Walburg for German food, drinks and, of course, the oompah music [*Bavaria, By Way of Texas*; May 2025]. From now on I imagine our trips must include reservations made well in advance as many of our fellow Texans will be venturing there to enjoy a bit of Germany come to Texas.

Martha Everman Jones
Victoria EC
Victoria

Hail Chaser

My father, Bob Rinker, was a hail chaser for the Colorado State University meteorology department in "hail alley" in the early 1960s [*Twisted Approach*, May 2025]. Hail alley starts at the eastern front of the Rockies in Colorado and Wyoming and covers all territory east to the Great Lakes.

One time he chased a hailstorm from the Colorado-Nebraska border



JENNY BROWN

all the way to Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Susan Frensley
Wise EC
Richardson

Beeline for Sea Center

I recently retired and didn't even know that Sea Center Texas existed, so my wife and I made a beeline for Lake Jackson [*Fish School*, April 2025]. What a great visit that was at the hatchery with the guide who had done it for many, many years.

Chris Gloger
Pedernales EC
Canyon Lake

Pilot Connection

In 1980 I worked in Yugoslavia for six weeks with Dennis Dalrymple, the son of Millie Dalrymple [*The WASPs Who Flew Out of Sweetwater*, April 2025]. We traveled to the mountain town of Danilovgrad, where America-friendly locals had sheltered his father after bailing out of his damaged bomber.

A couple of great pilot stories in that family.

Russell Honerkamp
Bluebonnet EC
Brenham

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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Living the GOOD LOAF

BY CLAIRE STEVENS • PHOTOS BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

The Renaissance man who pulled strings and gave new life to old grains

James Brown has a fascination with history. For 23 years, the Texas native played the viola da gamba, a bowed instrument that resembles a cello but fell out of favor nearly 300 years ago.

“The whole thing was to put the listener in a time and a place,” Brown says. “When you’re hearing this music, if you closed your eyes, it’d be the same as being in Germany in 1735 hearing Bach conducting the chapel choir and orchestra on the same instruments.”

Brown specialized in music of that era, performed and conducted around the country, and was director of worship and arts for a church. But in 2016, he was looking into a second career.

Brown had been baking bread and pizza as a hobby (though he does have a culinary degree picked up among various music degrees). In pursuit of a better loaf, he happened upon a blogger in New Mexico who was touting the wonders of baking with locally grown grains from a co-op in Albuquerque.

To his surprise, he couldn’t find a similar operation in Texas.

So Brown, who was living in Austin at the time, looked into establishing a small-scale mill that could process grains from local farmers. And, just as in his music career, he turned to the wisdom of the past, bringing those around him on a journey through time—this time by way of wheat.

Armed with historical documents detailing the grain varieties grown in Texas in the early 20th century and some hazy information about mills powered by Austin’s Barton Springs in the 19th century, Brown set out “to take people to a time and place” that no longer exists.

“What was growing in Texas? What were people eating? What was being milled in your hometown?” he wondered.

Brown got to work in 2017, and eight years in, Barton Springs Mill in Dripping Springs, about 20 miles west of Austin, provides freshly milled grains to a growing audience of restaurants, distilleries, bakeries and home bakers. It’s showing folks why they should care whether their flour is local and organic or an ancient, heritage or landrace variety.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Wheat sheaves from
several heirloom varieties.
James Brown in front of
one of his three mills,
each fitted with a pair of
2,500-pound stones.
Freshly milled grains are
available for purchase
on-site and online.





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The grains are selected with a focus on ancient varieties—those largely unchanged over time and still closely resembling how they looked and tasted before human intervention—and landrace and heritage grains—those developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, before more intensive hybridizing. Landrace grains are specifically adapted over time to the local climate where they are developed.

In addition to churning out flour, BSM offers tours of its 17,000-square-foot facility, which houses all the equipment to store, clean, mill and ship grains.

In a classroom opposite the mills, staff and guest instructors teach visitors to make breads, pastas and other baked goods. Through large windows in the classroom, visitors can watch the three stone mills.

The 7-foot-tall pine structures are fitted with a pair of 2,500-pound, flat composite stones. A pattern etched into the stones crushes the grain. The miller can control the result by adjusting the stones' closeness, the speed at which grain is added and the speed at which the upper stone rotates. Power would have been provided by the water of a nearby creek a century ago, but today the mills get their energy from Pedernales Electric Cooperative.

The rumbling stone mills look like relics of the past. In some ways, they are. These days, most commercial milling is done with roller mills, which can produce flour much quicker.

Brown's goal is to show that flour can have its own incredible flavor and aroma. He wants the loaves of bread to transport them back in time, much like his music. Stone-milling preserves the germ and the bran, flavorful parts of the wheat kernel that are typically removed when milling white flour (though included in whole wheat).

"You pick up the aroma and the flavor and the characters of these wheats, and they become an equal player in anything that you make," he says. "It becomes an ingredient that contributes those things, rather than just being neutral."

TAM 105, a variety of hard, red wheat developed by Texas A&M University in 1976 and one of the mill's more modern grains, smells to Brown like a wet dog while it's being milled. Fortunately, that doesn't translate when the finished flour is used for baking, and Brown recommends it for breads, pastas and pizza dough.

On the other hand, rouge de Bordeaux, a 19th-century wheat, naturally smells and tastes of cinnamon, baking spices and molasses. "People will swear that's in the bread," Brown says. "No, that's just the wheat—wheat, yeast, water and salt."

Brown has gone to great lengths to track down seeds for wheat varieties he desires. He found farmers still growing marquis, which was popular in the U.S. in the beginning of the 20th century, in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. Other seeds he could get only from the Department of Agriculture's National Plant Germplasm System, a bank of plant material that conserves plant genetics.

When BSM was just an idea, Brown convinced 10 organic farmers across the state to meet with him. Over coffee or a meal, he presented his pitch: He'd provide the seeds and buy the wheat they produced. To his surprise, all 10 were



RIGHT Brown shows unmilled Sonora soft white wheat kernels.

OPPOSITE Barton Springs Mill's warehouse. To keep the grain fresh in the Texas heat, oxygen is removed from each bag of wheat. Last year, the mill processed 650 tons of grain.



interested, which meant he had to turn some down due to a lack of capacity.

Henry Martens has been growing wheat for Brown, in rotation with peanuts and cotton, at his farm in Tokio, about 40 miles southwest of Lubbock, since 2017.

A fifth-generation farmer, Martens always knew he wanted to farm. In 2015, when a piece of land became available that hadn't yet been treated with chemicals, he couldn't pass it up. He began organic peanut farming, which he rotated with cotton.

Today, Martens farms roughly 2,000 acres but likens his experience farming organic to tending a garden. The work is especially labor intensive—keeping up with weeds and caring for crops without the use of chemicals—but he says organic farming is worth it for him.

"It takes dedication and love," he says.

When he met Brown, Martens had been looking to add another crop to his rotation. Crop rotation is particularly important for organic farmers, who rely on it to manage pests and diseases and keep soil healthy. Peanuts reintroduce nitrogen, a key nutrient, into the soil. Plant only cotton too many years in a row, and pests become a problem.

Starring Rolls

A Michelin star is considered by many to be the highest award a restaurant can receive. The Michelin Guide has been bestowing stars since 1926, but it took until 2024 for the guide's secret reviewers to finally make it to Texas.

In November, 15 Texas restaurants were awarded Michelin stars, including awards for barbecue, sushi, and Mexican and Southern fares. Among the stars, five of the awarded restaurants use grain from Barton Springs Mill.

Wheat is a good rotation crop for Martens because it can be planted in winter, when weeds are less of a concern, and the tall grass provides cover to the ground, protecting it from high winds. As another plus, Brown pays his farmers significantly more for their crops than the market rate.

An additional benefit for Martens is getting to try the flour from his wheat.

"When you see it, it's not what you're used to seeing—the flour, where it's so fine and perfect and white," Martens says. "But I guess that's never mattered to me and my wife. We care about it being organic and it being directly from the farm that we know, and it tastes amazing."

The best way to test a grain's flavor, Brown says, is to make a pancake with it. They're simple, quick and allow the flavor of the grain to come through.


And since "nobody wants to eat a spoonful of flour," Brown sends visitors next door to Abby Jane Bakeshop, which sells a variety of baked goods that use only BSM grains.

Brown is proud to help farmers, supporting what he calls the local grain economy. He works with four to five farmers each year (groups rotate in and out with their crops). Most are in Texas, but he has also worked with farmers in Oklahoma, Colorado and Arizona.

Brown says he gets a call from a farmer wanting to grow for him about once a week, but he's at capacity. Last year, the mill processed 650 tons of grain. This year, it may take in a record 800 tons.

"I got into all this because I wanted a better loaf of bread," Brown says. "That's really the long and short of it."

"But along the way, I became more intimately acquainted with what's going on with American farms and with American farmers and became quite passionate about how we treat farmers, regard farmers and our farmland." ■

 Watch the video on our website to tour Barton Springs Mill.



A Century of the Simon

When the railroad ended in Brenham, it brought
the world to its stage—which endures today





NATALIE LACY LANGE | COURTESY THE BARNHILL CENTER AT HISTORIC SIMON THEATRE

BY ADDIE BROYLES



The man whose name is on Brenham’s famed Simon Theatre never saw it completed, but the renovated theater still reflects his vision a century later.

The historic venue on Main Street in Brenham, midway between Austin and Houston, turns 100 this year. It’s thriving today because of a multimillion-dollar restoration that saved it from the brink of crumbling, and its story tells the story of Brenham, a town that has found a way to mine its past to preserve its future.



In the 1920s, the theater, originally with more than 700 seats and a balcony and separate entry for Black theatergoers, emerged from the imagination of James H. Simon, son of a Polish immigrant, who grew up in Brenham in the entertainment industry and died three months before the first performers took the stage.

Simon was a boy when his family moved to Brenham, arriving with some of the first Jewish settlers in the region and staying because that’s where the railroad ended, according to Sharon Brass, a local researcher who created the *A Century of Simon* exhibit, on display at the historic theater earlier this year.

The Simon family arrived in the mid-1860s, and James’ father, Alex Simon, opened a mercantile store. He eventually bought the Grand Opera House in town and turned it into a family-friendly venue for musical performances, receptions, recitals, political meetings and vaudeville, which was quickly becoming the most popular form of entertainment at the time.

The Simon Theatre stands as an anchor in downtown Brenham, though in the late 20th century, it came close to being demolished to make way for a parking lot.



As the terminus of the Washington County Rail Road, constructed in 1860, the county seat's population doubled every decade until 1900—and with it grew Brenham's reputation as an entertainment hub, along with the opera house.

When Alex Simon died in 1906, his sons took over. They opened the stage for an even wider variety of local performers, including Black singers from the nearby Brenham Normal and Industrial College, a postsecondary school for African Americans, according to Tina Henderson, who grew up in Brenham. She's president of the Texas Ten Historical Explorers, a research organization focused on the freedmen's communities around Washington County.

James H. Simon sold the opera house in 1918 and started making plans to build his own theater. He teamed up with Houston architect Alfred C. Finn to make plans for a majestic performance space with an upstairs section for Black theatergoers so they could watch the shows too.

"They built the theater with [integration] in mind," Henderson says. Although Simon didn't live to see the completion of his theater, he was ahead of his time in terms of wanting to make art available to more people, Henderson says.

"Segregation was very harsh, but there were some people

who understood it was unkind," she says. "They had to abide by the laws, but I think they were trying to accommodate and do what they could" to make the performances accessible to all.

Variety acts had been around for a long time, but it wasn't until the late 1800s that "vaudeville," a word borrowed from French, became a household term to describe a kind of show performed by artists, comedians, magicians—anyone who had something amazing, interesting or entertaining to show off.

At the height of vaudeville, as many as 50,000 performers traveled in troupes to perform in thousands of American cities, including Brenham. This lasted from the end of the Civil War into the 1930s, when in-person variety shows gave way to those broadcast on radios and, later, television.

The earliest vaudeville shows took place in saloons and beer halls, but their popularity soared, thanks in part to the growing popularity of circuses during this time. Venues like the Grand Opera House in Brenham opened in places served by the railroad to make it easy for the performers to get there and for visitors to come to the shows, according to Brass.

Many of the vaudeville performers who came through



COURTESY THE BARNHILL CENTER AT HISTORIC SIMON THEATRE



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE The 1954 Western film *Arrow in the Dust* drew a crowd to the Simon. The theater's stage and auditorium during its extensive reconstruction. The Malpass Brothers brought their traditional country and bluegrass music to the Simon in September 2024.

Brenham would have been well-known to people who lived there, thanks to telegraphs and the newspapers that came in on the railroads daily from the East Coast.

Vaudeville shows were on the decline in the 1920s due to the rising popularity of silent films, but they were a crucial part of the early days of the Simon Theatre because the shows brought in big names, like Adelaide Prince, who was born in London but grew up near Brenham.

After Simon's death in 1925, the theater was sold to the Stuckert family, who ran it for almost 50 years before selling it. The venue continued to host movies and events into the 1980s, when competition from drive-in theaters, shopping malls and home video ultimately caused the theater to shutter. After a showing of *Night of the Living Dead* on October 31, 1985, the theater went dark.

Jennifer H. Eckermann, former tourism and marketing director for the city, is a Brenham native who remembers when all those historic buildings were an afterthought.

"The Simon wasn't in great shape," she recalls. "There was a lot of talk about it being demolished to build a parking lot. For so many downtowns, that was the answer."

In 1999, after a career at Blue Bell Creameries, Eckermann started working with the nonprofit Main Street Brenham.

From Downtown to Camptown

The Texas Ten Historical Explorers tells the stories of the freedmen's communities that formed after the Civil War, when as much as half of Washington County was Black. Many of those families lived in freedmen's communities spread throughout the region, and one of the oldest, called Camptown, has a seven-part immersive audio tour, available online. It starts at Brenham's Jerry Wilson Park and explores the story of a consequential fire in 1866 and the evolution of the neighborhood as a center for Black life.

By that time, the Simon Theatre had become a Chinese restaurant and then sat vacant, waiting for demolition or the kind of restoration that takes a miracle to pull off.

She joined a handful of people who had a vision for what the brick building could be. Thanks to that community spirit that led James H. Simon to build the theater so many years ago, local boosters raised more than \$1 million for the restoration project. The Simon Theatre reopened in 2004 with 321 seats.

The group eventually raised another \$1 million to renovate the ballroom and retail space that was part of the original design. The facility now operates as the Barnhill Center at Historic Simon Theatre, with shows throughout the year from performers such as Grammy Award-winners Ricky Skaggs and Marty Stuart to tribute bands celebrating the Carpenters, the Eagles and the Andrews Sisters.

Eckermann says the project sparked a downtown revival that continues to this day and that the success story of the renovation reflects changing attitudes toward preservation.

"People are always coming and going," she says. "You might own this building now, but one day, you won't." The current keepers of the keys—and the stories—are trying to tell new stories while also keeping the old ones alive.

The Simon Theatre could last another century, but Eckermann says that depends on always finding new ways to bring in people. They've had success in recent years with themed movie nights and school performances.

"You have to be thinking about the next generation and what would be appealing about this theater to them," she says. "What can it continue to offer to the community?"

For its 100th year, the Simon Theatre team kicked off the celebration with performances that included juggling, dancing and comedy. "It was fun to have something for everybody," Eckermann says. "It's still vaudeville." ■



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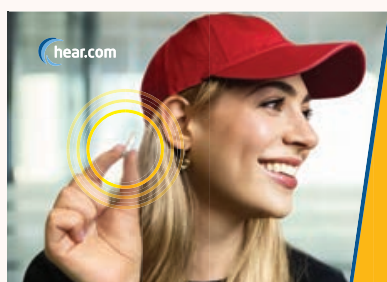
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SOUTHSIDE MARKET & BARBEQUE: With five Central Texas locations, including the original built in Elgin in 1886, Southside offers beans, macaroni and cheese, potato salad, side salad, baked potatoes and coleslaw. Also on the menu: peach and blackberry cobblers, made fresh daily.



KREUZ MARKET: In Lockhart, the top-selling side is gooey macaroni and cheese. Other favorites include creamed corn and pinto beans loaded with jalapenos, seasoning and brisket.

LJ's BBQ (inset, right): Among the offerings at this family-owned Brenham restaurant: coleslaw, macaroni and cheese and street corn salad.

The SID STOR

It's time for Bluebonnet-area barbecue to share the spotlight with its supporting cast, from potato salad to poblano spaghetti.

Story by Eric Webb ● Photos by Sarah Beal

Picture a plate of barbecue. Maybe you see brisket with peppery bark guarding a glistening streak of fat. Perhaps there's a shiny link of sausage, the casing ready to snap and reveal the juiciness inside.

Don't forget the beef rib as big as you think your appetite is.

When you're talking Texas barbecue, meat always gets top billing.

But where would Batman be without Robin, or Brooks without Dunn? Solid co-stars are essential to Texas barbecue, and no trip to the pit would be complete without the supporting cast of side dishes.

Most barbecue joints in the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative region rely on the classics — potato salad, pinto beans and coleslaw. A few restaurants are shaking things up with a fresh take on side dishes.



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Barbecue pros know that the side of the plate is valuable real estate, where nostalgia and creativity can be equally delicious. We toured the Bluebonnet service area and stopped at more than a dozen spots to sample side dishes and learn their backstories.

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS MEAT

The Bluebonnet region is home to Texas' oldest barbecue restaurants, and the oldest of all is **Southside Market & Barbeque** in Elgin. The business opened its first store in 1886 on Central Avenue.

Hands-on, meat-only dining was the tradition there for decades, even after Southside was purchased in 1968 by the grandparents of current owner and CEO Bryan Bracewell.

Another of Texas' oldest barbecue businesses, at 208 S. Commerce St. in downtown Lockhart, started serving smoked meats in the late 1800s. In 1900, Charles Kreuz Sr. bought that business and sold to-go barbecue. By the 1920s, **Kreuz Market** added tables for diners.

At the oldest barbecue spots, meats had only simple accompaniments — onions, pickles, whole jalapenos, slices of cheddar cheese, and crackers or white bread. This tradition lasted for decades. There were no forks at Kreuz Market, and butcher knives were chained to the tables.

In Elgin, Southside Market's roots as a meat market with a small grocery section set the stage for those early garnishes. Customers would pick items from the dry goods section, then walk down the hall to the barbecue area for their meat. Eventually, the garnishes were moved to where the meat was served.

Another longtime spot, **The Original Black's Barbecue** in Lockhart, today at 215 N. Main St., has been owned by the Black family for more than nine decades. Edgar Black Sr. founded it in 1932 as Northside Grocery & Market, and the

Continued on Page 18



TRUTH BBQ: At this Brenham restaurant, standout sides include tater tot casserole, left, and corn pudding. Other offerings include citrus and kale salad, Brussels sprouts and sweet potato soufflé.



OUTLAWS BBQ: Its signature Outlaw corn is made with Velveeta, cream cheese, cream of mushroom soup and slices of jalapeno. The restaurant also serves green beans, coleslaw and baked potato-style tater salad.

Continued from Page 17

restaurant first began smoking meat to avoid wasting unsold cuts. Like other early barbecue joints in the region, Black's served meat on pink butcher paper with the traditional bare-bones garnishes.

PASS THE BEANS AND POTATO SALAD

In 1992, Southside Market & Barbeque moved to its current location at 1212 U.S. 290 in Elgin. The restaurant was a spry 110 years old before the first side dishes were added to its menu.

Barbecue businesses are often passed down through generations, with side-dish recipes plucked off the family tree. Adrene Bracewell, owner Bryan Bracewell's grandmother, started using recipes passed down from her German-Texan family to make batches of pinto beans and mayonnaise-based potato salad — simple, budget-friendly options for families.

Coleslaw was added to Southside's menu around 2000, and it was another decade or so before macaroni and cheese, garden salads and baked potatoes were added to the menu.

It also took decades before side dishes made their way to the Kreuz Market menu in Lockhart. The restaurant at the old Commerce Street location changed hands in 1948 when the Kreuz family sold it to longtime employee and butcher Edgar "Smitty" Schmidt.

Fifty-one years later, in 1999, the restaurant was renamed **Smitty's Market** by Schmidt's daughter, Nina Sells.

The first side dishes made it to Smitty's menu in 2001: potato salad and pinto beans, according to owner Sells. The beans, made from a Schmidt family recipe, take four hours to cook.

Schmidt's grandson, John Fullilove, brought a simple approach to the beans — only chili pods, bacon and salt are added for flavor.

Today, Smitty's also offers coleslaw, green beans, creamed corn and macaroni and cheese, their most popular side dish.

Another Schmidt sibling, Edgar Schmidt's son, Rick, retained the Kreuz Market name for his barbecue restaurant that opened in 1999 at 619 N. Colorado St. in Lockhart. Sides were introduced there in 2001.

"We started with beans and German potato salad, and it has evolved from there," said Rick Schmidt's son, Keith Schmidt, the current Kreuz Market owner. Today, those two sides and coleslaw are staples. The pinto beans are anything but a tray filler, thanks to big chunks of jalapeno, a spice blend and a not-so-secret ingredient from the pit: well-cooked chopped brisket.

Macaroni and cheese is the most popular side at Kreuz's. Another side, sauerkraut, harks back to Kreuz's German roots, with caraway seeds adding a traditional flavor to the fermented cabbage. Homemade banana pudding is a closing complement to the smoky, salty meats.

At Black's, the first side dish was introduced in 1937 — pinto beans crafted by second generation co-owner Norma Black. The beans served there today still follow her recipe. Other sides followed in the 1970s, all made from family recipes. "It was a practical decision. My mother was a great cook. More and more people were eating out, and they wanted sides," said Kent Black, third-generation pitmaster at the restaurant.

In Brenham, **Nathan's BBQ** has been located at 1307 Prairie Lea St. for almost 15 years. Manager Cyndi Murski said their sides are prepared from recipes that originated with founder Nathan Winkelmann's grandmother. The recipes evolved over time. Traditional potato salad joins coleslaw and baked beans on the menu, and Nathan's creamy macaroni and cheese is its most popular side.

About 13 miles east of Nathan's is **Chappell Hill Sausage Company**, 4255 Sausage Lane. Frank and Clara Cone bought the business in 1968 and for decades produced sausage in bulk for regional stores. In the 1990s, the Cones and their children added a retail store, and in the early 2000s, they opened a restaurant on



SMITTY'S MARKET: The cooks still make beans using Edgar 'Smitty' Schmidt's original recipe for beans, which takes four hours to prepare. Other sides include bread, crackers, avocados, cheese, pickles, onions, chips and Blue Bell ice cream.



KREUZ MARKET: Banana pudding, right, is made from a Schmidt family recipe. Pie and ice cream are also available.



NATHAN'S BBQ: Known for its coleslaw, this Brenham restaurant offers traditional sides like potato salad, green and pinto beans, macaroni and cheese and twice-baked potatoes. Additional options include broccoli salad and black-eyed peas. Fresh chips are made daily and a vegetable of the day is available Monday through Friday.

What's your sides story?

Barbecue in Texas is a must-have, but the plate isn't complete without the side dishes. We want to hear your sides stories! Do you have a favorite barbecue joint side dish or a fond memory associated with one?

Leave a comment in the barbecue story post on Bluebonnet's Facebook or Instagram for a chance to win a \$50 gift card to your favorite Bluebonnet-area barbecue spot! The deadline is July 20, 2025. The winner will be contacted the following day.

site. The business still sells sausage in bulk.

Tricia Cone said Chappell Hill Sausage Company's vinegar-based coleslaw and mayonnaise-based potato salad are made using family recipes her parents made at home. She and her siblings make the same dishes in their own homes today.

If you grew up in Texas, both taste like good memories.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE PIT

Some barbecue spots across the region stick with only the classic sides while others, like **Outlaws BBQ** at 1380 N. Main St. in Giddings, offer both traditional and unique side dishes.

Outlaws is a popular spot for locals and travelers. They sell coleslaw, potato salad, macaroni and cheese, green beans and pinto beans along with fan-favorite "Outlaw corn" on Fridays and Saturdays only.

Co-owner Shane Hoffman is primarily the pitmaster. Jason Heuerman is "the side guy" who adds Velveeta, cream of mushroom soup, cream cheese and jalapenos to the corn for a unique twist, Hoffman said.

Luling's **City Market** offers its own take on the traditional side duo of beans and potato salad. Its beans are made fresh daily with bacon and salt, and pair well with potato salad and smoked meats, said Joe Capello, City Market's pitmaster and manager.

Another Luling barbecue joint, **Luling Bar-B-Q** at 709 E. Davis St., was founded in 1986. Co-owner Ken Blevins strives for crowd-pleasing tastes for the restaurant's typical mix of lunching locals and urbanites driving in for a day. The pinto beans are seasoned with cumin for a Southwestern twist. The potato salad packs a lot of flavor and texture into one bite. Two of the restaurant's most popular sides are broccoli salad and au gratin potatoes.

In Bureson County, **Matus Bar-B-Q** keeps things simple but soulful. This family-run spot at 304 W. Buck St. in Caldwell has been a local favorite since 1995. Robin Matus and her daughter Renee Matus co-own the business and open the doors on Saturday and Sunday only from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Regulars know to get there ahead of the crowd because the restaurant often sells out of barbecue by 10 a.m. "We call it barbecue for breakfast," Renee said.

The sides are a modest but meaningful trio: pinto beans, green beans and potato salad. Both beans are made fresh in-house each day and cooked with bacon, because "bacon just makes everything better," Renee said. What they lack in frills, they make up for in heart — and food that keeps customers coming back.

Renee's daughters Ember, 11, and Kennedy, 10, also work each weekend. Ember sells homemade bread that's become a staple of the Matus experience. Renee's son, Marshall, 16, cuts wood for the barbecue pit and takes care of the landscaping.

Continued on Page 20



CHAPPELL HILL SAUSAGE COMPANY: Laura Aguilera prepares a vinegar-based coleslaw from a family recipe for the on-site restaurant.



OUTLAWS BBQ: Banana and Oreo puddings are the perfect treat for finishing off a meal at this Giddings barbecue spot.



LULING BAR-B-Q: Broccoli salad and potato salad are among the top sides at this restaurant. The broccoli salad includes tomatoes and purple onions in a tangy dressing. The potato salad features boiled potatoes, sweet pickle relish, mayonnaise, mustard, red onions, red peppers and green olives with pimentos.



MATUS BAR-B-Q: Robin Matus, left, and granddaughter Ember, 11, work at the family-run barbecue spot in Caldwell, founded in 1995. Ember helps bake about a dozen loaves of white bread from scratch every Friday to serve on weekends. Robin's daughter, Renee, now runs the business, with help from Ember and her sister, Kennedy, 10, who also assist in the kitchen before sunrise. Food is made fresh daily, and unsold items are donated to their church and a local shelter.



BARBS B Q: Open Saturdays and Sundays in Lockhart from 11 a.m. until sold out. The stew — a mix of corn, squash and pork over white rice — may seem like an outlier but is surprisingly delicate, with a hint of heat in the gravy.

Continued from Page 19

New generations bring new flavors to tradition. **Barbs B Q**, a women-owned barbecue restaurant founded by Alexis Tovías Morales, Haley Conlin and Chuck Charnichart, is one of the newest names on the Central Texas barbecue scene and it is a bona fide phenomenon. The barbecue joint at 102 E. Market St. in Lockhart has made several best-of lists since opening in 2023. In November, the restaurant earned a prestigious Bib Gourmand from the inaugural Michelin Guide Texas, an award given to exceptional restaurants that offer good value.

The sides at Barbs B Q are part of the reason for the acclaim. The restaurant serves boats full of black beans instead of pinto, and each bite is a flavor bomb. Sometimes you get a smoky slice of sausage, a salty crumble of queso fresco or a fresh note of cilantro.

Stew might seem like an unlikely addition to the regional sides lineup, but Barbs B Q ladles a golden mixture of corn, squash and pork over a bed of white rice.

The “green spaghetti” is another side that has become a trademark: Creamy poblano sauce clings to slurpable noodles, with a flavor as vibrant as the color and a bit of spice in each bite.

Merritt Meat Company in Fayette County also has adventurous tastes. Just steps away from Royers Pie Haven and nestled among vintage boutiques at 197 Henkel Circle in Round Top, Merritt makes yet another case for Bluebonnet-area barbecue.

Merritt Meat Company was originally the Round Top Smokehouse and was renamed in honor of the late Lee Ellis, the former owner whose middle name was Merritt. The new owners, Abbie Byrom-Botello and Leonard Botello IV — who also own Truth BBQ locations in Houston and Brenham — wanted to build on Ellis’ legacy, including his menu, which featured some Asian-inspired dishes.

Vegetables get their share of the sides spotlight at Merritt. Oaxacan-style Brussels sprouts are crisp on the outside and tender on the inside, drizzled in tangy, spicy sauce and tossed with a few kicky peppers. The traditional, crisp Texas-style coleslaw is light, with mustard seed-dotted strands of cabbage cutting the heaviness of the rest of the tray — we’re looking at you, pulled pork.

Slow down in Washington County, or you might miss the



corrugated metal structure that houses **Truth BBQ** at 2990 U.S. 290 in Brenham. It's worth a U-turn for adventurous eaters. Truth's corn pudding blends fresh, slightly decadent flavors for a comfort food that is soft and gooey, with a few caramelized pieces of gold studded throughout. It's like eating kernels fresh off the cob and a homey Thanksgiving stuffing at the same time.

Truth BBQ's cooks know their way around cheese. The curly noodles of the restaurant's hearty macaroni and cheese have a pleasantly chewy bite and cling to a zingy sauce. Breadcrumbs and cheese on top add texture and a layer of toasty flavor. Then there's the tater tot casserole, tasting like a salty bag of potato chips smothered in a blend of cheese and cream.

Top it all off with Truth's seasonal cake flavors, available now through the fall: triple chocolate, strawberry, coconut, banana and caramel.

Just down the road in Brenham, Matt Cummins, one of the lead cooks at **LJ's BBQ** at 1407 W. Main St., has been handling the sides for a couple of years. There's a practical purpose to traditional sides, he said. Simplicity in cooking means you pay attention to every single thing.

Take, for example, the macaroni and cheese, LJ's most popular side. Developed by pitmaster Corey Cook, it takes four to five hours to cook, Cummins said. They start the macaroni at 5:30 a.m., a low-and-slow process requiring constant stirring.

Street corn salad, a more recent addition to LJ's menu, is one of Cummins' favorites. Smoky corn, charred poblano peppers, mayonnaise, sour cream, cotija cheese, Tajin seasoning and cilantro go into this side.

All these creative twists on traditional sides at barbecue spots across the Bluebonnet region beckon old-timers and newcomers alike. Still some folks prefer to stick with tastes that have withstood the test of time.

Adrene Bracewell is 94 now, so she doesn't come into Southside in Elgin much. The family brings the restaurant's food to her.

"She never tells me the recipes aren't right, but I know I need to check on things if she asks me, 'So who made the potato salad today?' or 'Who made the beans today?'" Bracewell said. "She's too nice to just say it's not right."

He pays attention to her gentle hints. Who wouldn't want to keep their grandmother happy? ■

— Sara Abrego and Kirsten Tyler
contributed to this story

MERRITT MEAT COMPANY: Sides include Oaxacan-style Brussels sprouts, Texas-style coleslaw and loaded baked potato salad with thick bacon and tender potatoes in a rich, umami dressing. Other house-made options: tater tot casserole with bacon and cheese, citrusy kale salad, pesto bow-tie pasta with sun-dried tomatoes, Texas-style baked beans and creamy corn casserole.



LJ's BBQ: Matt Cummins, pictured, with a day's batch of the most popular side, macaroni and cheese. The dish takes four to five to hours to prepare and requires constant stirring. Each ingredient — from starchy pasta water to white American cheese — is added at just the right moment.

2025 ANNUAL MEETING

Low rates, record growth take center stage at gathering

By Connie Juarez

MORE THAN 600 Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative members and guests gathered May 13 for the co-op's Annual Meeting in Giddings. The meeting, at The Silos on 77 event center, gave attendees a chance to hear updates from cooperative leaders, visit informational booths and talk with fellow members.

Longtime members Sandra and Ralph Becker, along with friend Grace Kankel — all from Washington County — have been Bluebonnet members for a combined 140 years. They've been attending the Annual Meeting for about 10 years. When asked why she comes each year, Sandra said, "All the fun things! Hearing the band play, the gifts, and the kolaches are the best in the world."

During the Annual Meeting, three incumbent Directors were re-elected to Bluebonnet's Board of Directors. They are Milton Shaw, District 1, Caldwell, Hays, Guadalupe and Gonzales counties; Debbi Goertz, District 3, Bastrop County; and Ben Flencher, District 5, Burleson County.

Bluebonnet's nine Board members are elected by the membership and each serves a staggered three-year term.

More than 6,300 members participated in this year's Annual Meeting, either by submitting a proxy form or registering at the meeting.

Board Chairman Ben Flencher opened the business session by thanking Bluebonnet's members and guests for their continued trust and support. He emphasized that the cooperative's strength is rooted in the ties it shares with the communities it serves, where directors live and work alongside the members they represent.

"Speaking for our entire Board, it is a true pleasure for us to represent you at Bluebonnet," Flencher said. "We are in a tremendous growth area, and the fact that we've had the opportunities to grow is going to help each and every one of our members."

General Manager Matt Bentke shared a report highlighting the cooperative's service to members, historic growth, and investment in its communities and electric grid.

"We're incredibly proud of the fact that we haven't had a distribution rate increase since 2017, and we don't have any in the



1) Board Chairman Ben Flencher gives his opening remarks to the audience at the Annual Meeting.

2) Bluebonnet member Katherine Penney, center, of Bastrop poses for a photo with crew supervisors Logan Lancaster, left, and Jeffrey Bolding.

3) Romeo Nunez of Ledbetter places his chips from Buc-ees into his 'kid bag' along with coloring books and other goodies.

4) Dyanna Machinsky, a member service supervisor, helps Ethel Jones of Cedar Creek register for the meeting.

5) Juanita Greene of Giddings jumps up as her winning ticket number is called for a door prize — a Craftsman pressure washer.

6) Diane Leutz of Lexington and Lalove Robinson of Lincoln dance while the band plays.

7) General Manager Matt Bentke shares his state-of-the-cooperative report highlighting service to members, growth and investment in communities.

8) Rita Salyer of Elgin gets ready to take home the grand prize, a truck recently retired from Bluebonnet's fleet.

Sarah Beal photos

plan right now," Bentke said. He noted that Bluebonnet keeps pace with the area's growth in a thoughtful, strategic way by making wise investments and maintaining the lowest possible rate.

In addition to benefiting from one of the lowest electric rates in Texas, Bluebonnet's members will receive more than \$11 million in capital credits in 2025, an increase of \$747,000 from the previous year.

Members and guests also enjoyed live music by the Nathan Colt Young band, along with a selection of refreshments, including kolaches from Weikel's Bakery, Blue Bell ice cream and Buc-ee's potato chips. Attendees were also eligible to win door prizes donated by Bluebonnet's vendors. The prizes ranged from small appliances and power tools to outdoor grills and two zero-turn lawn mowers.

A BIG Thank You!

FROM BLUEBONNET

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SEnergy

Techline Inc.

Tempset Controls Inc.

Texas Electric Cooperatives

The Arbor Experts LLC

The Nitsche Group



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Randy West of Rosanky, a Bluebonnet member since 2015, attended the Annual Meeting for the fifth time with his father, Ernie West. When asked what he enjoys most about being part of a cooperative, Randy said, "I like the people. They have been the easiest folks to deal with during my construction projects."

In addition to the connections he's made, Randy West has also taken home a door prize. "I won fishing equipment last year, which I loved because I'm a fisherman," he said.

Katherine Penney of Bastrop, a member since 2024, has attended Bluebonnet's Annual Meeting for the last two years. "As soon as the



8

notice arrives in the mail, we mark the date on our calendar," she said.

Penney enjoys the prize drawings and always looks forward to the gift bags. The kolaches are a personal favorite. "We're Czech, so kolaches are a tradition in my family," she said.

After the Annual Meeting, Rita Salyer of Elgin was announced as the winner of the 2013 Ford F-150 extended cab four-wheel-drive truck that was retired from the Bluebonnet fleet. Members had a chance to win the truck by either submitting a proxy form or registering at the meeting.

A video recap of the meeting is available on the cooperative's website at bluebonnet.coop/annualmeeting. Next year's Annual Meeting is set for Tuesday, May 12, 2026. ■

OFFICE CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Friday, July 4, for Independence Day. If your power goes out, report it by texting OUT to 44141, using bluebonnet.coop or the MyBluebonnet mobile app, or by calling 800-949-4414. You can pay your bills anytime online, on the mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708 (select Option 2 when prompted).

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What makes them iconic? The Morgan Silver Dollar is the legendary coin that built the Wild West. It exemplifies the American spirit like few other coins, and was created using silver mined from the famous Comstock Lode in Nevada. In fact, when travelers approached the mountains around the boomtown of Virginia City, Nevada in the 1850s, they were startled to see the hills shining in the sunlight like a mirror. A mirage

caused by weary eyes? No, rather the effect came from tiny flecks of silver glinting in the sun.

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The Fast Track

The Father of Country Music yodeled his way into hearts, proclaiming a special love for Texas

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

IT'S HARD FOR people today to understand just how popular singer and songwriter Jimmie Rodgers was during the 1920s and '30s. Think Elvis in the '50s, the Beatles in the '60s or Taylor Swift today. Southerners joked that the typical Depression-era shopping list was a pound of butter, slab of bacon, sack of flour and the new Rodgers record.

Rodgers was born in Mississippi in 1897, but he declared in song that Texas was "a state I dearly love." He proved it by moving here in 1929.

He grew up the son of a railroad gang foreman but showed a fondness and knack for show business from an early age. Convinced he was well on his way to fame and fortune after winning a talent

contest when he was 14, he ran away from home with a traveling medicine show before his father put him to work on the railroad.

In 1924, when he was 27 years old, doctors diagnosed Rodgers with tuberculosis. Sensing that his time was short, he quit the railroad and devoted himself to playing music. Over the years, he had compiled a repertoire that included traditional folk songs, jazz, blues, vaudeville tunes and yodels—the sounds of America.

Rodgers played on street corners and at tent shows—anywhere he could. He performed at an Asheville, North Carolina, radio station in 1927 with the Tenneva Ramblers. And when the band

learned that the Victor Talking Machine Co. (later RCA Records) was holding recording sessions in Bristol, Tennessee, they decided to go. Until the Bristol sessions, radio stations didn't play country records because they had precious few to play.

The two songs Rodgers recorded in Bristol didn't do much, but a second session, in Camden, New Jersey, included *Blue Yodel No. 1*, which sold a half-million copies and is better known as *T for Texas*.

Rodgers recorded more than 100 songs over the next few years, including classics like *In the Jailhouse Now*, *Frankie and Johnny*, and *Waiting for a Train*. He reportedly sold more than 10 million records in his lifetime—more than any other RCA Victor artist pre-Elvis.

As his health worsened, Rodgers limited his touring to the Southwest. Nearly every Texas town, regardless of size, has a Rodgers sighting in its history. Once, after a performance in Temple in 1929, he returned to his motel and started singing from the window of his room, drawing such a crowd that cops had to be called to break up the ensuing traffic jam.

Rodgers moved to Kerrville in 1929 in hopes that the Hill Country air might give him some relief from the tuberculosis that was slowly killing him. He built a house at the intersection of West Main Street and Jackson Road and called it Blue Yodeler's Paradise.

In 1933, a gaunt and ailing Rodgers traveled to New York to make 12 new records. He recorded his last song May 24 and died two days later. He was 35.

Though his time was brief, his legacy looms large. Country performers including Merle Haggard, Ernest Tubb and Johnny Cash cited Rodgers as a major influence, but so did blues singers Mance Lipscomb, Howlin' Wolf and Mississippi John Hurt and rockers like Lynyrd Skynyrd.

Rodgers is the only artist to be inducted into the country music, rock 'n' roll and blues halls of fame, and that says it all. ■

Make It Spicy

Peppers put on quite a show as the lead act

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

I am a salsa girl—hit me with all the spicy goodness! But why are tomatoes always the star? Frankly, I'm a little tired of it. It's high time we gave fruit the kick it deserves. Bring on the pineapple and mango, and say hello to this exciting salsa!

Pineapple Salsa

4 cups diced pineapple (about 1 medium pineapple)
2 cups diced mango (about 2 large mangoes)
½ cup minced red onion
1 small jalapeño pepper, finely diced
½ cup diced red bell pepper
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
Juice of 1 large lime
1 teaspoon salt
Tortilla chips, for serving

COOK'S TIP To serve your salsa in the pineapple, slice the pineapple in half lengthwise. Cut around the edges of the pineapple, being careful not to pierce through the rind, to remove the inside of the fruit before dicing. After Step 1 below, spoon salsa into pineapple shell, place on serving platter and continue to Step 2.

1. In a large bowl, combine pineapple, mango, onion, jalapeño, bell pepper, cilantro, lime juice and salt. Gently stir together to incorporate.
2. Refrigerate at least 30 minutes.
3. Serve chilled with tortilla chips.

SERVES 8

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Watermelon Salsa.





Sautéed Spicy Corn

RICK GUTIERREZ
GVEC

If you love the flavor of grilled corn but not eating it off the cob, sautéed spicy corn is the summer side for you. Sautéing fresh corn kernels with a bit of butter and jalapeños enhances the corn flavor while producing tender kernels with a bite.

- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter**
- 6 ears corn, kernels removed from cob, or 3 cans golden sweet whole kernel corn (15 ounces each), drained**
- 1 fresh jalapeño pepper, minced**
- ½ cup chicken broth**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**

- 1.** In a large skillet over medium heat, melt butter.
- 2.** Add corn, jalapeño, chicken broth, salt and pepper.
- 3.** Cook, stirring frequently, until corn is tender, about 12–15 minutes.

SERVES 6

\$500 WINNER

Zesty Spaghetti Salad

NANCY HORTON
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC



Get ready to sharpen those dicing skills because this salad is a total game changer! We're talking about a colorful medley of diced veggies that comes together in the most delightful way and makes every moment spent chopping absolutely worth it. This zesty salad dazzled my taste buds.



- 16 ounces uncooked spaghetti, broken in half**
- 2½ cups halved grape tomatoes**
- 2 small zucchinis, diced**
- 1 English cucumber, diced**
- 1 yellow bell pepper, seeds removed, diced**
- 1 red bell pepper, seeds removed, diced**
- ½ cup sliced banana peppers, drained**
- 1 cup thinly sliced hard salami**
- ½ cup diced pepperoni**
- 1½ cups zesty Italian dressing**
- 2½ tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese**
- 2 tablespoons black sesame seeds**
- 1 teaspoon poppy seeds (optional)**
- ½ teaspoon paprika**
- ½ teaspoon celery seed**
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder**
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper**
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- Dried chives or fresh garlic chives, for garnish**

- 1.** Cook spaghetti according to package directions, rinse with cold water, drain and place in a large bowl.
- 2.** Add tomatoes, zucchini, cucumber, yellow and red bell peppers, banana peppers, salami, and pepperoni to spaghetti and gently mix to combine.
- 3.** In another bowl, whisk together Italian dressing, Parmesan, sesame seeds, poppy seeds (if using), paprika, celery seed, garlic powder, black pepper, red pepper flakes and salt. Pour over pasta salad and mix until well coated.
- 4.** Refrigerate at least 2 hours to blend flavors. Garnish with chives and serve chilled.

SERVES 8

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

HOLIDAY BREAKFAST DUE JULY 10

Christmas dinner gets all the attention, but what about that morning? Share your best holiday breakfast recipe that can feed a crowd, and you could win \$500. Enter by July 10.

UPCOMING: OODLES OF NOODLES DUE AUGUST 10



CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >

Pecan-Stuffed Jalapeños

GARY CRANE
VICTORIA EC

Holy jalapeños, these are good. I'm not lying—I devoured four during recipe testing. (That's right, four.) No need to worry about too much spice when baking these up. The seeds are removed, and the peppers are stuffed with a cheesy pecan mixture that softens the heat.

10 large jalapeño peppers

1 package cream cheese (8 ounces), softened

½ cup chopped pecans

2 green onions, minced

¼ cup medium-heat red salsa

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon garlic powder

or 2 cloves garlic, diced

¼ teaspoon orange or lemon zest

½ cup shredded cheddar cheese



1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or foil.
2. Slice the top off each jalapeño and slice in half lengthwise. Remove seeds and place jalapeños on prepared baking sheet.
3. Bake jalapeños 30 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool 10 minutes.
4. In a bowl, stir together cream cheese, pecans, green onions, salsa, salt, cumin, garlic and zest until combined.
5. Fill each jalapeño half with cream cheese filling and return to baking sheet.

Beat the Heat

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

Wear kitchen gloves when handling chiles to protect skin from capsaicin, the element that makes chiles hot. In a pinch, use sandwich bags.

Protect skin if not wearing gloves by running a knife under the ribs of seeds to remove.

Avoid touching eyes and face when working with chiles—wash hands with dish soap first.

To minimize burning on skin, apply a little oil—olive, canola or vegetable—as capsaicin dissolves in oil.

6. Sprinkle jalapeños with cheddar, return to oven and bake 10 minutes. Serve warm.

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- J.P. Morgan*



COURTESY CHET GARNER

Lodged in Time

Visit 1840s Castroville at the Landmark Inn State Historic Site

BY CHET GARNER

I WAS LYING in bed but felt like I was in a creepy movie. I imagined all the travelers who had slept in my room since the 1800s and wondered if any of them had met a sudden and unexpected ending. I eventually fell asleep and when I woke up (alive), I found myself in one of the most peaceful and historic places in Texas.

Castroville, 25 miles west of San Antonio, was settled in the 1840s by immigrants from the Alsace region of France. The inn, which emerged from a house built in 1849, is among a cluster of buildings that today is part of the Landmark Inn State Historic Site. The inn originally served as a hub for this immigrant community.

But this site is more than the stark-white, two-story building where I stayed overnight. It's an entire block of buildings that tell the story of grit and industry in the Hill Country.

Over the years, the property passed from one owner to another. While some of the buildings have fallen into disrepair, many are still standing.

There's a wash house, where bygone travelers could take a much-needed bath, and the home of Rowena Vance, a schoolteacher from Vermont and one of the original matriarchs of the property. There's a gristmill, where two giant stones worked 12 hours a day providing grains to the townsfolk and which decades later was converted to a hydroelectric power plant to electrify Castroville. The property was gifted to the state in 1974 and transferred to the Texas Historical Commission in 2008.

Every story I heard added a ripple to the complex tale of life in Texas over the past 175 years. I counted myself fortunate to have stayed in one of the eight historic rooms the inn offers modern guests. ■

ABOVE Chet spent the night in one of the eight historic rooms in the Landmark Inn.

TCP Watch the video on our website and see all Chet's Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

JULY

10

Claude [10–12] Caprock Roundup, (806) 310-9044, claudetexas.com

Mason [10–12] Mason County Roundup Weekend, (325) 347-5758, masontx.org

11

Corsicana Food Truck Friday, (903) 654-4850, visitcorsicana.com

McDade [11–12] Watermelon Festival, (512) 980-4456, mcdadetexas.com

Laredo [11–13] International Sister Cities Festival, (956) 795-2200, visitalaredo.com

Hico [11–12, 15–19] Old Settler's Reunion, (254) 434-1249, hicoTXchamber.org

12

Corsicana Mimosas at the Market, (903) 654-4850, visitcorsicana.com

Galveston Old Smokey Throwdown, (409) 765-5778, albatrossgalveston.net

Grapevine Ice Cream Social, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

Weatherford Parker County Peach Festival, (817) 596-3801, peachfestivaltx.com

Winnsboro Adam and Chris Carroll, (903) 342-0686, winnsborocenterforthearts.com

Lewisville [12–Aug. 9] All Natural, visualartleague.org

15

Fort Worth [15–20] The Wiz, (817) 212-4280, basshall.com



Pick of the Month

Fuzzy Peach Festival

Fairfield, July 18-19

(903) 389-5792

fairfieldtexaschamber.com

Cool off during this two-day festival east of Waco. Enjoy music, vendors, cornhole, food and lots of water activities.



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18

Brenham The Great DuBois:

Masters of Variety,

(979) 337-7240,

thebarnhillcenter.com

Huntsville [18-19] Texas

Thimble Trail, (936) 329-1376,

texashtimbletrail.com

Fredericksburg [18-20]

Trade Days, (210) 846-4094,

fbgtradedays.com

Palestine [18-20, 25-27]

Alice in Wonderland,

(903) 394-2173,

thetexas theater.com



19

Friona Cheeseburger

Festival & Cook-Off,

(806) 250-3491,

friona-chamber.com

Lewisville [19-Aug. 16]

Nouveau West,

visualartleague.org

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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



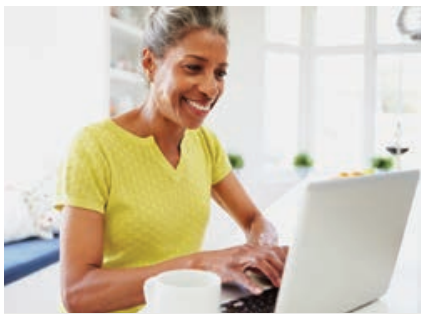
Hit the Road

Event Calendar

With hundreds of events across Texas listed every month, TexasCoopPower.com has something for you.

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JULY EVENTS CONTINUED

23

Winnsboro [23–Sept. 20]
Women in the Arts,
 (903) 342-0686, winnsboro
centerforthearts.com

26

Buffalo Gap Tour De Gap,
 (325) 829-0617,
tourdegap.com

24

Clute [24–26] Great Texas Mosquito Festival,
 (979) 265-8392,
mosquitofestival.com

Sargent [24–26] Hooked on Sargent Fishing Rodeo,
 (985) 258-8233,
hookedonsargent.org

25

Fredericksburg [25–27] Hill Country Swap Meet,
 (254) 751-7958,
earhartproductions.com

Grapevine Disco Wine Train, (817) 410-3185,
grapevinetexasusa.com

AUGUST

1

Anna Kenny Chesney Covered by Barefoot Nation, (972) 560-4101,
barnhillvineyards.com

El Campo [1–3] Lagoon Fest, (979) 275-1600,
eclostlagoon.com

2

Granbury Blazin' Saddle 75,
blazinsaddle75.com

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Catch of the Day

This nautical haul leaves us reeling with excitement! Fishing out the best ones was easy as shooting fish in a barrel. There may be bigger fish to fry, but these folks seem pretty pleased with what's on the line.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



1 JENNIFER MATULA
VICTORIA EC

"Her first big redfish that she brought in on her own."

2 RAYMOND TESTA
FARMERS EC

"I caught the moment that a bass struck at this lure in Royse City."

3 TOM HERRIN
PEDERNALES EC

"A mature bald eagle catches lunch in the Mississippi River during the dead of winter."

4 RAY BEDNAR
BLUEBONNET EC

"A kingfisher about to have a large lunch."



Upcoming Contests

DUE JUL 10 Abstract

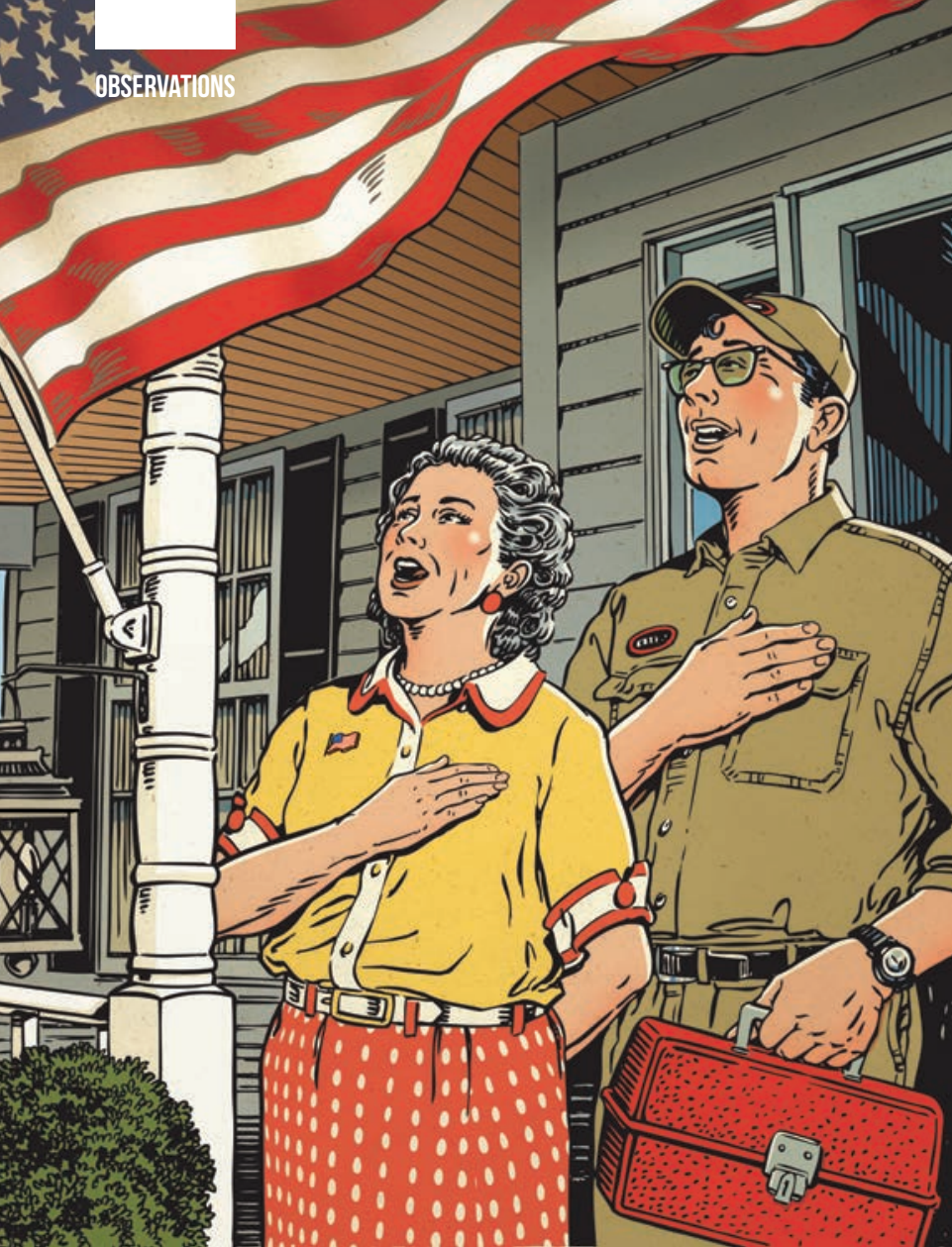
DUE AUG 10 Country Life

DUE SEP 10 Snakes Alive!



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Catch of the Day photos from readers.



Liberty Belle

One grandmother's unmatched poetic love for the red, white and blue

BY CAROL GENE GRAVES
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KACHIK

MY GRANDMOTHER LOVED America and felt every citizen should share her patriotism. She instilled her fervent patriotism in me—and everyone around her.

Her love of country was not reserved just for holidays like the Fourth of July but was a belief she carried out daily.

When I visited her in the summer, we would put out the American flag on her front porch on Main Street in the small Central Texas town of Gatesville. When the flag was in place, she would stand erect and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

If any unsuspecting soul was walking down the street, Grandmother would throw out a strong invitation to join us: "Come on up and say the pledge with us!" I don't think anyone dared to turn down Mrs. McCoy's strong invitation.

In Grandmother's bedroom was a

patriotic shrine: a framed copy of the preamble to the Constitution draped with a small American flag. Stuck to the side of the frame was a picture postcard my family had sent her from Philadelphia when we vacationed there. She was so thrilled that I had personally seen the Liberty Bell.

The bell had great significance for Grandmother because her favorite poem was *Independence Bell*. It's a dramatic poem, possibly written by American author Charles Brockden Brown, that recounts the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Would the 56 delegates to the second Continental Congress declare the colonies free in July 1776?

The poem's setting is a hot, jittery Philadelphia as citizens stand before the Pennsylvania State House waiting for news. I can still see Grandmother the last time she recited this poem by memory for our family.

"Will they do it?" "Dare they do it?"

"Who is speaking?" "What's the news?"

"What of Adams?" "What of Sherman?"

"Oh, God grant they won't refuse!"

We could only be expectant as Grandmother described the old bellman, who was waiting "with one hand ready on the clapper of the bell." Then the old man's grandson brings him the news. He shouts, "Ring, Grandpapa, ring!"

Grandmother swelled with pride as she proclaimed this and concluded the poem:

*We will ne'er forget the bellman
Who, betwixt the earth and sky,
Rung out loudly, "Independence";
Which, please God, shall never die!*

Grandmother died January 19, 1981, and the next day was one of high national drama. Not only did we say goodbye to her, but we also watched Ronald Reagan be sworn in as America's 40th president and were thrilled at the return of 52 American hostages from captivity in Iran.

We flew Grandmother's flag that day to celebrate the hostages' return, but it was more our family's way of remembering Grandmother and how much she loved America. ■

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At the age of 56, a back operation left me dependent on a cane, significantly impacting my daily life. Simple tasks like going to the store or meeting friends became challenging, and I even had to cancel a long-awaited anniversary trip to Italy.

My husband purchased a scooter for me, but it was cumbersome and uncomfortable for everyday use, leaving me feeling more constrained than liberated. However, everything changed when I came across the ATTO SPORT. This remarkable scooter proved to be a game changer. Not only is it robust and reliable, but it also conveniently splits into two pieces, allowing me to effortlessly lift it into my car trunk on my own. I was even able to stow it in the overhead compartment on the plane, enabling us to finally take that trip to Italy! I am now independent once more, able to go wherever I please and do so with a striking sense of style. In fact, I now find that my husband struggles to keep up with me!



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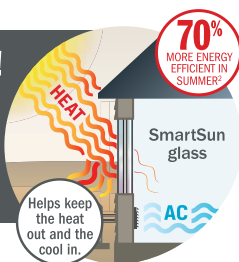
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