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Texas Coop Power

FOR TRINITY VALLEY EC MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2020

Sweet Life

Panaderías serve up
pan dulce and traditions
held dear in Mexican
American culture

TRINITY
VALLEY EC
NEWS

SEE PAGE 18





LET YOUR DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT

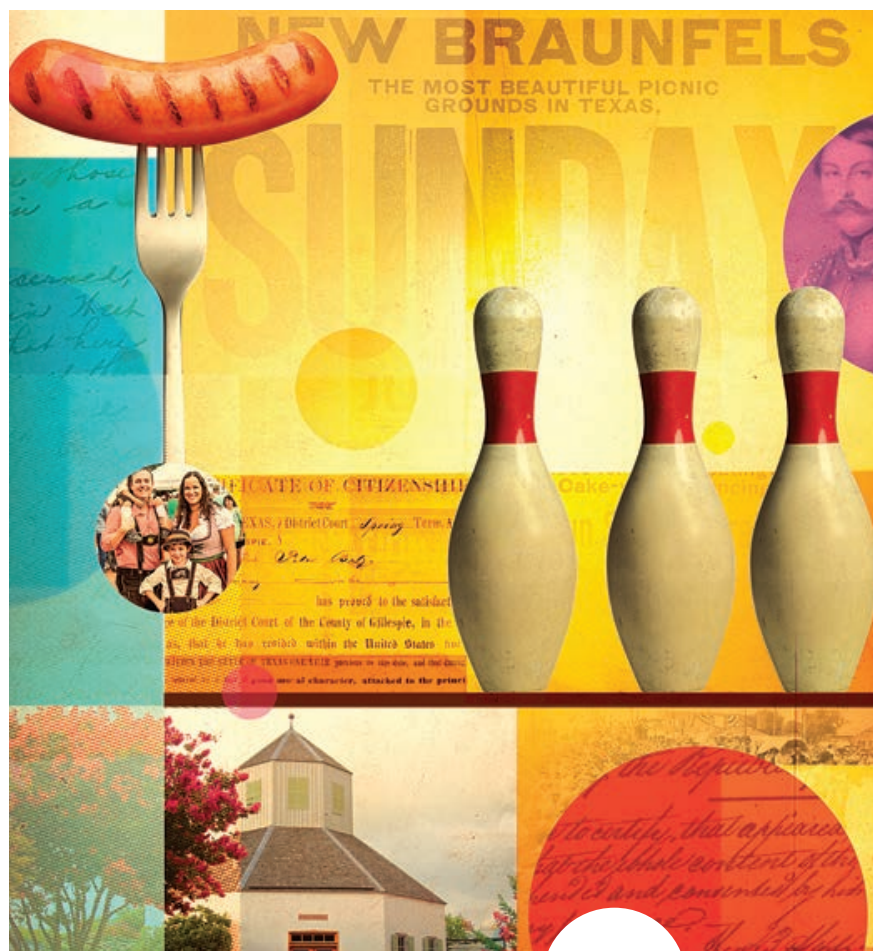
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December 2020



12

08 Sweet Memories

Visits to panaderías for pan dulce create cherished family bonds for Mexican Americans.

By Vianney Rodriguez
Photos by Eric W. Pohl
Illustration by Tim Carroll

Burgs in a New Land

A wave of German immigrants 175 years ago transformed the Texas Hill Country.

By Dan Oko
Illustration by David Vagin

ON THE COVER

Vianney Rodriguez with her favorite pan dulce selections.
Photo by Jason David Page

ABOVE

Traces of German culture in the Hill Country.
Illustration by David Vagin

04

Currents

The latest buzz

06

TCP Talk

Readers respond

18

Co-op News

Information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative

29

Footnotes in Texas History

He Gave Us the Stars
By W.F. Strong

30

TCP Kitchen

The Main Event
By Megan Myers

34

Hit the Road

Ghost Town Hangout
By Chet Garner

37

Focus on Texas

Photo Contest: On Wheels

38

Observations

Hooked on Worms
By Tom Widlowski



“Christmas is doing a little something extra for someone.”

—CHARLES M. SCHULZ

Park Pride

Texas has two of the best state parks in the country. Palo Duro Canyon State Park, in the Panhandle, and Brazos Bend State Park, about 45 miles southwest of downtown Houston, rank second and third according to a national rating by HomeToGo.

Looking Brighter

SURE, NIGHTS ARE GETTING LONGER as the Northern Hemisphere approaches the winter solstice, December 21—but there’s a bright side.

Between Thanksgiving and New Year’s, holiday lighting makes American suburbs up to 50% brighter than usual, even after midnight, *The New York Times* reports. Those strings of lights and blinking reindeer, which use enough electricity to power 800,000 homes for a year, can be observed from space.

Start Counting

You’d need 2,683 LED lights on your roof for them to be seen from space, say researchers at England’s University of Leicester.



PALO DURO CANYON STATE PARK

The vacation rental website ranked parks based on solitude, activities, wildlife and nearby accommodations.

Letchworth State Park in New York took the top spot.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

I WISH
I COULD ...

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 October prompt: **The best Christmas gift I ever got was ...**

A Majorette record player that my dad bought for me three days before he died.

BECKY HOLZHAUS
MEDINA EC
CASTROVILLE

When the neurologist removed a tumor from my son's pituitary gland in his brain and found no cancer.

FRAN BACA
COSERV
CROSS ROADS

My brothers coming home from World War II and the Korean War.

DON MASON
HEART OF TEXAS EC
GATESVILLE

My adopted son, born Dec. 22 and received in our arms Dec. 26.

DEE SUSAN MAGELLA AZEREDO
VIA FACEBOOK

My brother, who was born on Christmas Eve 1957.

W. GRANT BRALY
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC
CUERO

A Texas-shaped waffle maker. I was so happy I cried.

SUSAN PROKOSCH
VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents online.



That Frozen Concoction

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1977, Jimmy Buffett's *Margaritaville* peaked at No. 8 on the music charts. The defining song of his career has a place in the Grammy Hall of Fame for its cultural and historic significance. It tells of the first huge wave of tourists to hit Key West, Florida, decades earlier and the laid-back lifestyle they discovered.

And it was written in Austin. Buffett enjoyed the titular refreshing beverage in 1976 at Lung's Cocina del Sur on Anderson Lane, which inspired him to wax lyrical at a friend's house about "that frozen concoction that helps me hang on."



Did You Know?

Oh, and Buffett turns 74 on Christmas Day. Let's all send him shakers of salt.

TCP Contests and More

ON TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

\$500 RECIPE CONTEST

Potluck Dishes

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

Storms

WEB EXTRA

How UT's McDonald Observatory grants visitors access to the cosmos.



KRISTIN TYLER

Why Horses Wear Shoes

“I was reminded of my great-grandfather Smith. He was the town’s blacksmith and farrier back in Pennsylvania. His forge was fired with Pennsylvania coal.”

FRANK OTT
CONCHO VALLEY EC
EOLA

Co-ops Count

Who knew our electric employees “are so much more than power providers”? How can so few get so much done in all types of weather year after year, often under treacherous conditions [By the Numbers, October 2020]?

Jane Patterson
Bowie-Cass EC
Texarkana



They wear shoes so they don't hurt their feet when kicking their owners [Why Horses Wear Shoes, October 2020].

BOBBY BARRON
VIA FACEBOOK

Encountering SRV

I was a limo driver in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. One of the approximately 100 celebrities I met was Stevie Ray Vaughan [Letters, October 2020]. I picked him and his mother up in Oak Cliff. This was the same month that he died in the helicopter crash.

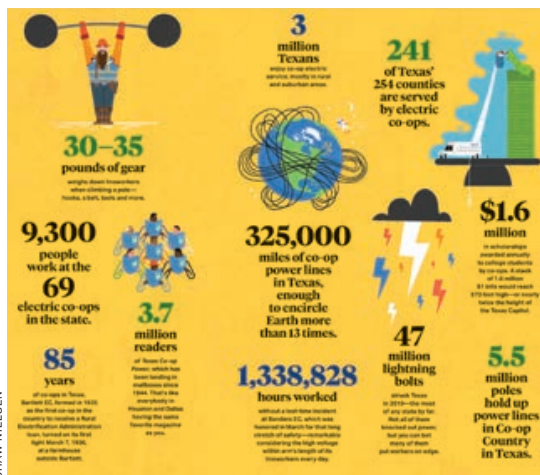
Vance K. Apple
CoServ
Frisco

Bittersweet Keepsake

The best Christmas gift I ever got was a cassette player with a cassette still in it, which my parents had used Christmas Eve while setting out presents [Finish This Sentence, October 2020]. On the cassette they were laughing, joking and talking about us three girls. I never told them about the cassette, nor did I tell my younger sisters. I am the oldest of three girls and was 10 then.

The reason this is so very special is that on March 30, 1975, just three months later, Daddy was murdered, and those were the only words I could hold and continue to have of him. My youngest sister was only 2, and for her these were the only words she would ever hear from her father.

Dedria Tanton
Sam Houston EC
Rye



SHAWN NIELSEN

TCP WRITE TO US

letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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

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

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BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ • PHOTOS BY ERIC W. POHL
ILLUSTRATION BY TIM CARROLL

Visits to panaderías for pan dulce create cherished family bonds in Mexican American culture

Growing up I spent summers with my *abuelitos* in Brownsville, and our Sunday morning visits to the *panadería* are a cherished memory. My sisters and I would quickly put on our shoes, tighten our ponytails and run to Abuelito Angel's car. At the end of the five-minute drive, my grandfather would park and walk us into the bakery. The aroma was intoxicating.

Like most panaderías, this one was self-serve, so my abuelo would grab a pair of tongs and a silver *charola* (tray) before he set us free. My sister would slowly pace the aisle, studying the colorful displays on each shelf. I, on the other hand, knew exactly what I wanted: two cereal-crusted *galletas* with the jelly center. They were my favorite then, and they still are. I would point to the *galletas*, and my abuelito would smile because he knew they were my favorite. To this day visiting a panadería reminds me of my late grandfather.

Visiting a local panadería to buy *pan dulce* is a tradition we deeply love in our Mexican American culture. We enjoy pan dulce throughout the week with our morning *café* or for *merienda* (afternoon snack), and these special pastries are a major part of our holiday celebrations. Because panaderías are part of our daily lives, the folks at our local bakeries are part of our *familia*. We know them all, and when we stop in, we chat about our day, our children and life in general. Because we are a family, the pan dulce tastes that much sweeter.

Every panadería has its regulars who want to keep the tradition of enjoying pan dulce alive for their children and grandchildren. They have their favorite pan dulce selections and arrive early to fill their bags.

Pan dulce translates literally as sweet bread and includes a vast array of pastries that vary dramatically in size, shape, texture and flavor. My experience suggests there are several hundred varieties.

Canda LePage of Brownsville says pan dulce conjures up fond memories about family time and being a carefree kid for her, too. "It's also a very intergenerational thing," she says, describing her grandmother, who was born in Mexico

and does not speak English. “I have very few things in common with her,” LePage says, “but when I bring out the pan dulce and coffee, she’ll start sharing stories of her youth. It’s my favorite time with her.”

Pan dulce was originally heavily influenced by French baking techniques that Mexican bakers began to experiment with after May 1862, when the French were defeated at the Battle of Puebla. Bakers began incorporating indigenous ingredients such as *canela* (cinnamon), fresh-ground corn flour, Mexican vanilla, *piloncillo* (unrefined brown sugar), chocolate, nuts and native fruits. With shapes like *marranitos* (piggies), *bigotes* (mustaches) and *ojo de buey* (ox eyes), each baker gives a nod to his or her culture. These shapes became the beloved names of the pan dulce we love today.

And while that traditional character will always remain, the bakers of today are continuing to put their own mark on pan dulce culture.

Amanda Nolan, owner of Sweet Craft Vegan in Brownsville, scheduled the opening of her new storefront in early 2020. Though she, too, describes childhood visits to the panadería as an awesome experience and a special memory, her mother was very health-conscious, so she decided to learn how to make a healthier version of her favorite pastries. Vegan pan dulce was not readily available in South Texas, so she decided to teach herself.

Baking became an obsession for Nolan. She honed her baking skills at Linda’s Cakes & Desserts, a Brownsville bakery, and pitched owner Andrea Bernes on the idea of selling vegan pan dulce at the shop. The owner gave her the OK. So Nolan began sharing her creations on social media, and soon her vegan *conchas* (seashells) were scooped up by the dozen. Because they do not use any preservatives, her pastries must be sold each day, so calculating exact ingredients is essential to meeting demand.

Just as enjoying pan dulce is multigenerational, baking the special pastries also is often shared among family. I interviewed one Brownsville baker who worked in his family’s panadería for more than 25 years, learning the skill from his father and uncle.

Another Brownsville baker whose entire family works in the panadería tells me that one of his primary goals for this year has been not just to stay in business but to protect his family and employees during the COVID-19 pandemic—and to protect his customers, too. “We want them to bring their grandchildren into the panadería,” he says.

Throughout my travels in South Texas, I have visited many panaderías that have become near and dear to my heart and have helped me keep my abuelito’s memory alive. I encourage everyone to visit a neighborhood panadería and meet the talented bakers carrying on this beloved tradition. Visit, enjoy the aromas and fill up your tray with these irresistible special pastries. I promise you will not be disappointed.

Les mando amor y pan dulce. (I send them love and pan dulce.) ■



Vianney’s Pan Dulce Favorites

Bisquette This savory and sweet treat is more dense than the typical biscuit—often enjoyed with butter or jam.

Churros Dough squeezed into star-shaped sticks and fried; crisp *churros* are rolled in sugar. Some are filled with *dulce de leche* or *cajeta* (caramelized sugar) and are best dipped in steaming mugs of Mexican hot chocolate.

Concha This sweet bread, named for seashells, is a sugar crust pastry that varies in color and flavor at each panadería.

Cortadillo Also known as *pastel de niños*, this popular yellow cake is topped with pink icing and sprinkles, then sliced into triangles.

Cuernito The flaky “little horn” is brushed with egg and dusted with sugar and sometimes filled with chocolate.

Elote Anise- or cinnamon-scented dough filled with orange cinnamon cream, baked, then rolled in sugar while warm from the oven.

Empanada Always quick to sell out, an *empanada* is a crescent-shaped turnover of flaky dough filled with pineapple, pumpkin, *cajeta* or apples.

Mantecado This is the muffin version of a pound cake and most often found in red wrappers.

Maranito A pig-shaped cookie made from a cakelike dough similar to gingerbread



but actually flavored with *piloncillo* (unrefined brown sugar).

Niño Envuelto This “wrapped child” is similar to a jelly roll made from cake topped with a layer of strawberry jelly, rolled and then topped with more jelly and shredded coconut.

Oreja An “ear” made from flaky dough that is brushed with butter and sprinkled with sugar to look like a French *palmier*. Most often enjoyed with afternoon *café*.

Polvorone or Galleta

This firm, crumbly cookie can be found in an assortment of

colors and flavors. Variations include *tricolores* (three colors), *sandía* (watermelon), *grageas* (with sprinkles), *rosas* (pink) and—my favorite—cereal-crusted *galleta* with jelly.



parted 2. The good moral character, attached to the princ



Einwanderungs-Vertrag

to certify, that appeared
to the whole content of the
letter and consented by his
presence. —
in Bremen the 12th of July
1840
Wm. F. Sch. m.
Vice -

BURGS IN

A NEW LAND

175 years ago, a wave of GERMAN IMMIGRANTS transformed the Texas Hill Country

Each fall Wurstfest in New Braunfels and Oktoberfest in Fredericksburg celebrate German culture with festive costumes, blaring polka music, and plenty of sausage and beer. With creative exploring, you can find a quieter, family-oriented expression of German culture that endures in out-of-the-way corners of the Hill Country.

The Blanco Bowling Club, just east of the town's courthouse square, is one of fewer than a dozen nine-pin bowling clubs in the German communities of Comal, Gillespie, Bexar and Guadalupe counties. Nine-pin bowling harks back to the game played by German immigrants in the mid-19th century and bears little resemblance to the 10-pin version played in most bowling alleys.

Nine-pin bowling is just one lasting cultural import that German immigrants brought with them when they settled in Central Texas towns and villages 175 years ago.

"Think of it as a team sport," says Julie West, who has lived in Blanco all her life and bowls at the Blanco Bowling Club with friends and family. Her roots in the community are deep. "My grandma managed the cafe," she says, "and my aunts all worked there." West, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, was a pinsetter at the bowling club when she was a teenager.

The pinsetters are one reason this game is so distinctive. "As a pinsetter you're on your hands and knees, and you have to be athletic," West explains. That athleticism helps each pinsetter replace the pins bowlers knock down. "You have to pay attention," she says, "because the pins are flying around."

Nine-pin team bowling requires each bowler in a team of six to bowl in succession. "Knocking down nine pins means nine points," West says. "And the score is calculated cumulatively, not individually. A 12-ringer is when you leave the center pin."

Nine-pin bowling has remained popular over generations in Central Texas—for more than 150 years—because of the area's deep German roots. West explains that the emphasis

on family and the team makes the game uniquely German and attracts children to the game.

The locals know that youth involvement is essential to keeping cultural traditions alive. That's why New Braunfels traditions, such as the annual Kindermasken parade, a costume ball for children usually held in May, have survived since 1856. New Braunfels and Fredericksburg are this year and next marking 175 years of keeping alive the German culture brought here by immigrants, with various celebrations planned for the coming months.

New Braunfels was founded in 1845 by Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels, who purchased land on the banks of the Comal River to establish a German colony. A year later a group of settlers from New Braunfels headed 60 miles northwest and established Fredericksburg. The earliest Texas settlement formed by Germans was Industry, founded in 1831, and a glance at a Texas atlas shows many other communities that can trace their origins to Germany: Weimar, Boerne, Schulenburg, Luckenbach and Muenster.

Ernie Loeffler was raised in New Braunfels and is now the president of the Fredericksburg Convention & Visitor Bureau. "The original Germans wanted to create a cultural enclave in Texas," says Loeffler. "They wrote many letters home describing it as a land of milk and honey."

Evelyn Weinheimer, an archivist at Fredericksburg's Pioneer Museum, which documents the German roots of Gillespie County, says that as early as 1842, the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, also known as *Adelsverein*, advertised to attract settlers to establish enclaves across the Hill Country and the south-central plains. New Braunfels and Fredericksburg were the first two settlements of the *Adelsverein*.

"Land was the biggest draw," says Weinheimer, whose ancestors arrived in that first wave. "Coming from those little German kingdoms, those settlers surely thought they would find a better way of life to raise their families."

“THE ORIGINAL GERMANS wanted to create a cultural enclave in Texas. They wrote many letters home describing it as a land of milk and honey.”



Those day-to-day concerns about family life determined the enduring aspects of culture. Among the visible reminders of German culture in Fredericksburg are the Sunday houses and their distinctive architecture.

“Coming to church on Sunday wasn’t going to happen in the days of wagons and old dirt roads,” Weinheimer says. Families loaded up the wagon on Saturday morning and made the trip into town, where they would barter at the general store and enjoy a social activity or family gathering on Saturday night. Sunday morning they went to one of the five churches in Fredericksburg.

Weinheimer says the typical weekend house was a one-bedroom frame building with a kitchen and living room and a sleeping loft. One of these “tiny houses,” the Fassel-Roeder House, awaits visitors on the grounds of the Pioneer Museum. William Roeder, a former Gillespie County commissioner, told Weinheimer stories of his family’s trips from the White Oak community, 22 miles west, to stay in the house.

Even though the 20 or so Sunday houses that remain in Fredericksburg are similar, Weinheimer says they do not follow an architectural style but reflect the pragmatism of German farmers and how they organized their lives.

Other enduring German influences, such as education, are more civic-minded. “You had this 3,000-year-old society that came and formed a community on the frontier,” says Judy Young of the New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce. “But they were not your average frontiersmen.” The settlers laid out the New Braunfels street grid their first month on the ground, she says, and the town created a tax in 1847 to fund the community’s first public schools.

The German culture in Texas that’s still thriving today is more clearly expressed in nine-pin bowling than in jubilant beer festivals.

New Braunfels is home to the oldest bakery in Texas, Naegelin’s Bakery, which opened its doors in 1868. The Naegelin family sold the business, but new owners kept the name and the Old World recipes. Manager Frankie Alvarado explains, “It’s these traditions that have allowed us to stay in business this long.” ■

TCP WEB EXTRA

Read about how John O. Meusebach, founder of Fredericksburg, signed what is believed to be the only unbroken peace treaty between Native Americans and U.S. settlers.

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POWER OF OUR PEOPLE | DECEMBER 2019

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MESSAGE
FROM
GENERAL
MANAGER/
CEO

JEFF LANE

Help Save Christmas for Your Neighbors

AMONG THOSE HARDEST hit by the COVID-19 pandemic are small businesses. In rural areas, including those served by Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative, small businesses are often the lifeline of local commerce.

You can do your part this holiday season to help our area small businesses stay open. Here are some ideas to get you going.

Stop ordering everything online. Check Main Street for businesses that sell the same items you typically buy online. Even if they're still not open, some local shops are taking online and phone orders. Buy the bulk of your holiday gifts, decorations and food from local merchants. If you must order online, consider offering a small holiday bonus to delivery drivers.



ANDRESR | ISTOCK.COM

Go to farmers markets. Many stayed open during the pandemic, and now is the time to repay the favor. Some are allowing customers to preorder over the phone or online, which decreases in-person contact. How great would a fresh lamb roast from a local farm taste during your Christmas feast? What could be better than fresh, locally grown vegetables as side dishes and pies baked by someone with a business right down the street from you?

Shop for the holidays and beyond. As long as you're shopping for Christmas, think about birthday and anniversary gifts you'll need over the next year

and buy them now. That way you'll give some local businesses a boost when they need it the most. Plus you'll be prepared when it's time to wrap up those gifts later.

Invest in gift cards. You would spend the money anyway; why not do it in advance if you can afford it now?

Order carryout. Start buying your morning coffee from a local café instead of from a national chain. Find a favorite restaurant with outdoor dining and go there with your family whenever you feel like a socially distanced evening on the town. Pick up carryout from a locally owned diner a little more often than you ordinarily would, if you're able. 60133275001

Write a review. Get on Yelp, Google Reviews

and the websites of your favorite businesses and talk them up when they do a good job. Online reviews go a long way toward attracting more customers. It will take you just a minute to post a rave review that might just save someone who lives in your community from shuttering a neighborhood institution.

Offer generous tips. Show service providers your gratitude by tucking a generous tip into a Christmas card. One alternative to a cash gratuity is to send a gift card for a local business. Or you can drop off a big ham before Christmas or leave a stocking stuffed with gift cards and other goodies on the front porch of someone such as your nail technician, housekeeper or barber, even—and maybe especially—if they no longer work for you.

Remember your employees. Even though you might be working at home instead of in the office, the administrative staff you rely on—and who typically get a big thank-you tip from the staff at the holidays—still work on your behalf. Don't let "out of sight, out of mind" stop you from showing your appreciation for their virtual help.

Remember, we all live here, and we support one another in normal times, during a pandemic and especially through the holidays. ■



CHARLES MANN / ISTOCK.COM

TREWA Supports the Co-op Family

THE TEXAS RURAL Electric Women's Association raised more than \$100,000 this year for co-op causes, despite not being able to hold its annual fundraising events at Texas Electric Cooperatives' annual meeting, which was held virtually this year amid the COVID-19 pandemic. TEC is the state association that represents and supports the more than 70 electric co-ops across Texas.

TREWA's mission is to educate co-op consumer-members and the general public about electric cooperative systems and raise awareness of the issues affecting co-ops and the good that they do. The group presents a unified front for member-owned electric cooperatives as they improve the quality of life in rural Texas.

Fundraising activities at the TEC Annual Meeting traditionally include a membership booth, arts and crafts booth, raffles, and a silent auction. Members of electric cooperative boards and their families and co-op employees support TREWA and its objectives through participation in these fundraising activities. This year, with in-person giving impossible, the group counted on the generosity of the co-op family. They came through, giving \$100,000.

"We put our good faith into the cooperative family to help us raise this money to continue our good work in these trying times," said Karen Culpepper, TREWA board president and a Wise Electric Cooperative employee. "You came through with flying colors. We are extremely grateful for this overwhelming response."

TREWA plans to give the funds to co-op initiatives: \$30,000 for scholarships, \$10,000 to the Government-in-Action Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., and \$85,000 for government relations advocacy efforts. The group awarded 20 scholarships in 2020 to high school students who are members of electric cooperatives in Texas.

Members of electric cooperatives, board members and families of board members are welcome to become members of TREWA. Membership costs just \$10 per year, and applications can be found online at trewa.org. ■

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ABOUT TRINITY VALLEY EC

TVEC operates in Anderson, Dallas, Henderson, Hunt, Kaufman and Van Zandt counties.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Kaufman District Headquarters

1800 E. Highway 243, Kaufman

Athens District Office

909 W. Larkin St., Athens

Cedar Creek District Office

1012 W. Main St., Ste. 102
Gun Barrel City

Wills Point District Office

582 N. Fourth St., Wills Point

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VISIT US ONLINE

tvec.net





TVEC Board of Directors Approves \$4 Million Capital Credits Retirement

Members from 1992 and 2019 will see refunds

AS A NONPROFIT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, any revenue beyond what is used for the co-op's expenses is not profit sent to shareholders. Instead, at the end of each year, that money is allocated to members in proportion to electricity purchased, and serves as members' investment in the co-op's infrastructure. This is the system known as capital credits.

As determined by the board of directors, whenever the co-op's financial situation allows, this money is returned to members.

In their regular October meeting, the TVEC board approved just over \$4 million in capital credits refunds to be disbursed in 2020. This encompasses all remaining capital credits for 1992,

and 21% of capital credits from 2019.

Current members who purchased electricity from TVEC in 1992 or 2019 will see their refunds on bills mailed in December.

Former members will receive checks at the current mailing address we have on file. It is important to inform us of any address changes to make sure these checks arrive in a timely fashion.

This year's capital credits retirement will distribute money to more than 68,000 current and former TVEC members and will bring the total capital credits returned to almost \$52 million.



How much will I receive?

Capital credits are allocated based on the amount of electricity purchased each year. That means that refund amounts vary greatly.

Members who have been with TVEC since 1992 will typically see the largest refunds, since this year's retirement includes 1992 and 2019 capital credits.

When do I get the refund?

Current members will see their refund as a credit on their bill that is mailed to them in December. That means some members will get them in early December, while later billing cycles will arrive in early January.

Former members will receive checks in mid- to late- December

What about pre-pay members?

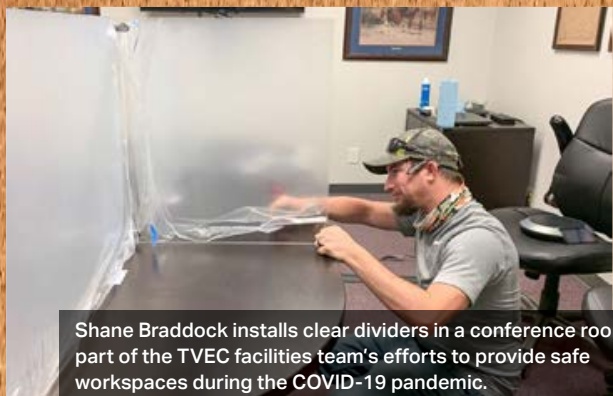
TVEC Pay-as-You-Go members will see their refund as a balance credit at the end of December.

For members utilizing pre-pay debt management, the credit will be applied in the same way as a payment.

TVEC

TRINITY VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

in focus



Shane Braddock installs clear dividers in a conference room, part of the TVEC facilities team's efforts to provide safe workspaces during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Ruth Benson, a TVEC member services representative, assists a member at the Kaufman office drive-thru. While lobbies are temporarily closed, the drive-thru in Kaufman and the night-drop facilities at each TVEC location are available for members.



TVEC Human Resources Generalist Elizabeth Grimes sorts mail at the cooperative's Kaufman office. Employees around the co-op are taking on a variety of tasks apart from their normal routines as COVID-19 precautions continue.

Prepare for Winter Storms

WHEN WINTER TEMPERATURES drop and storms hit, heavy snow and ice can lead to downed power lines and power outages.

- **Stay warm.** Plan to use a safe alternate heating source, such as a wood-burning stove, during a power outage. But exercise caution when using such sources, and never leave the heating source unattended. Remember that fuel- and wood-burning sources of heat should always be properly ventilated.
- **Stay fed.** Keep several days' worth of food that does not need to be cooked. Crackers, cereal, canned goods and bread are good options. Five gallons of water per person should also be available in the event of an extended power outage.
- **Stay indoors.** It is best not to travel during winter storms, but if you must, bring a survival kit along, and do not travel alone. If you encounter downed lines, always assume they are live. Stay as far away from the downed lines as possible. ■



3098826811 | ADORBESTOCK

WIN \$25 JUST FOR READING!

Somewhere, hidden on pages 18-23, is a TVEC account number. Read closely. If the account number is yours, contact the member services department by December 31 to receive a \$25 credit on your electric bill. Don't miss out—you could be a winner!



Decorate for Energy Efficiency This Holiday

THE FESTIVE HOLIDAY MOOD may make you want to decorate to the max with sparkly lights and yard decorations, but remember to consider cost and energy savings. As you put the finishing touches on that giant Nativity scene or Santa's sleigh on your roof, be sure to remember these energy-efficient holiday decorating tips.

Buy LED Lights

Those old incandescent holiday lights you have been putting up forever are inefficient, and despite careful storage, often emerge only halfway lit with many being tossed in landfills. Instead, save money by replacing them with Energy Star-qualified LEDs. In addition to using 70% less energy than traditional bulbs, LEDs are brighter, eco-friendly and safer—as they are much cooler than incandescent lights. Plus you can use up to 24 strings of LEDs connected end-to-end without overloading a wall socket—that potentially means easier setup. And these bulbs last up to 25 times longer when used correctly.

Rebates

You can sometimes find local rebates and coupons on Energy Star-rated decorative light strings at many hardware and department stores. In addition, these lights often have a three-year warranty, come in a variety of colors, and have indoor and outdoor models.

Limit Hourly Usage

Consider setting timers for lights to automatically turn them on at dusk and off in the middle of the night, when fewer people are out to enjoy them. You can save money on your electric bill by keeping light displays on only when you can see them at night. If you are still using traditional incandescent bulbs, this tip is even more important for cutting energy costs.

Reflect Your Creativity

Carefully placed reflective ornaments and tinsel can be just as bright at night, so get creative with your lighting display to multiply your shine. You could even mirror your next-door neighbors' costly display with a string of silver bells on your railing. Not interested in electric lights at all? Ribbons, wreaths, garland and reflective menorahs provide a traditional, electricity-free ambiance. ■

THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION

YOUTH TOUR

JUNE 13-22, 2021



Are you a Texas high school student? Would you like to travel to Washington, D.C., and visit historic landmarks—all without spending a dime of your own money?

Perhaps you'd like to meet elected officials, or maybe you're looking for an inspirational experience in the company of other Texas teens. If that sounds like you, then the Government-in-Action Youth Tour is your tour. Apply now!

For more information, visit
TVEC.NET/YOUTH-TOUR

Start your adventure at
TexasYouthTour.com.

Your Generosity in Action

THE TVEC CHARITABLE FOUNDATION recently awarded five grants totaling \$16,500. Recipients of the grants include:



Alzheimer's Coalition of Henderson County
Athens, \$4,000
Help fund caregiver resources and family support programs.



Keep Athens Beautiful
Athens, \$2,000
Clean-up efforts and a new Adopt-a-Street Program.



Cedar Creek Veterans Foundation
Mabank, \$5,000
Provide support and resources for service men and women.



One Man's Treasure
Clothing that makes a difference

One Man's Treasure
TVEC Service Area
\$3,000
Provide clothing, basic needs and work attire for men transitioning out of incarceration.

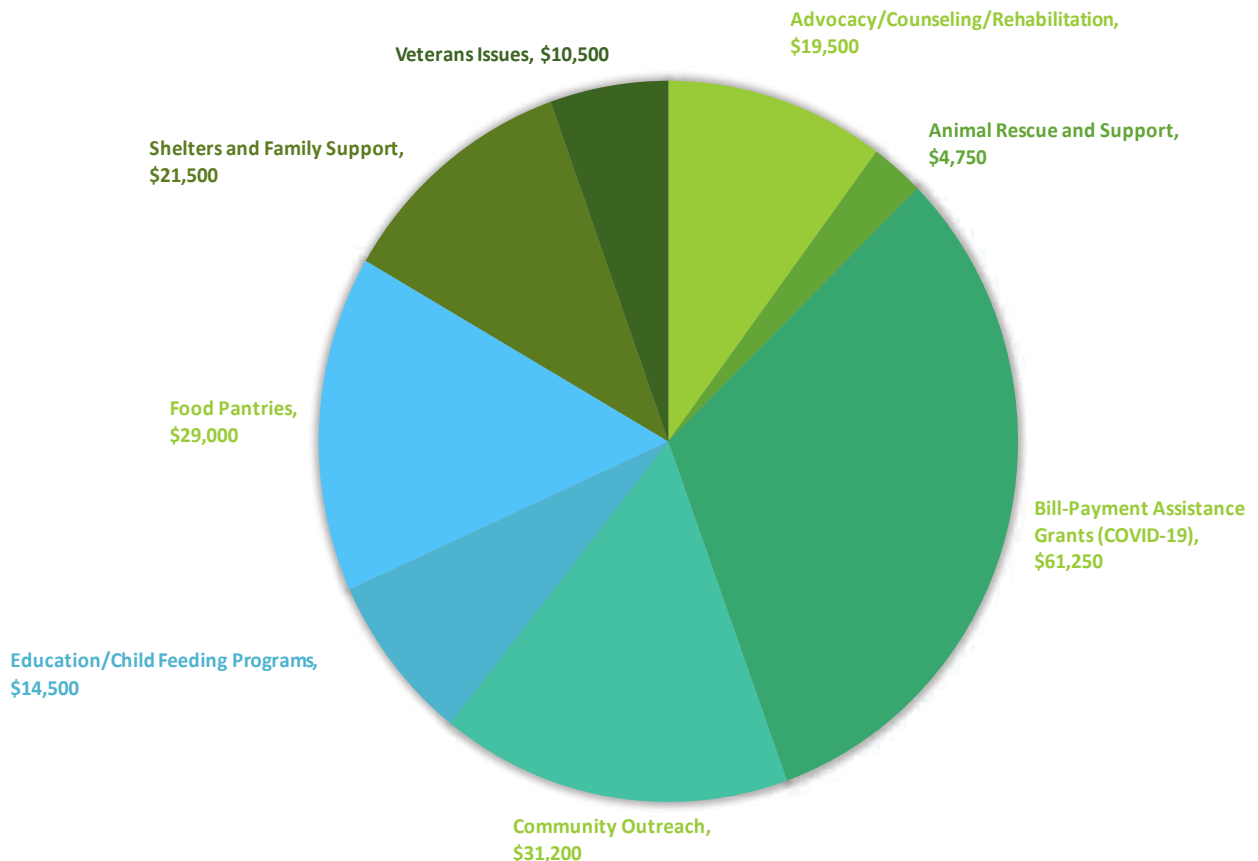


Still Waters
Kaufman, \$2,500
Parenting, pregnancy and young family support and mentoring programs.

COVID-19 - Bill-Payment Assistance
\$20,000

Grants totaling \$20,000 were made to area agencies in support of bill-payment assistance for TVEC Members.

GRANTS AWARDED IN 2020



Shh!

A mysterious musical presence sometimes intrudes upon a Houston library's stillness

BY MARTHA DEERING • ILLUSTRATION BY EVA VÁZQUEZ

LIBRARIES ARE QUIET places, which allows visitors to the Julia Ideson Building of the Houston Public Library to occasionally hear the distant strains of a violin playing a romantic Strauss waltz. The purported violinist, Jacob Frank Cramer, the library's former caretaker, died in the library's basement apartment in 1936.

Little is known about Cramer's early years. Born in Baltimore in 1857 to German immigrants, he moved around the Midwest as a railroad laborer, and the 1911 Houston City Directory lists him as a resident. He found work at Houston's Carnegie Library in 1913, and when the ornate Spanish Renaissance-style Julia Ideson Building—named after the city's first librarian—opened in 1926 as the city's central library, Cramer moved into the basement apartment and dedicated his last 10 years to caring for the building as a security guard, gardener and handyman.

The Ideson was planned as the centerpiece of a five-building civic center, but the other four buildings were put on hold during the Great Depression. The Ideson's exterior features cream-colored brick, arched windows and a red tile roof, and the interior is characterized by intricate woodwork, marble columns and murals. Designed by architect Ralph Adams Cram of Boston, the building underwent an extensive restoration in 2010, when a wing was added to house the Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

Cramer lived quietly with his faithful German shepherd, Petey. The caretaker was remembered by one staff member as "having one of the sweetest smiles I have ever seen." Library employees respectfully called him Mr. Cramer, and he was more than a janitor. Two magnificent bur oak trees flank the main entrance to the Ideson building on McKinney Street; legend suggests that Cramer grew the slightly smaller tree from an acorn when one of the original trees died, nurturing the seedling until it reached the stately proportions of its older sister.

At night, after closing hours, Cramer walked the halls of the three-story building with a violin in hand and Petey at his heels. The third-floor gallery near the balustrade of the library's inner court was his preferred spot to perform. One can imagine the elegant and lilting waltzes of Austrian composer Johann Strauss II echoing off the tile floors and

floating through the empty hallways, the 40 windows of the jewel-box ceiling high above glowing in the moonlight as Cramer played.

Some don't have to imagine it.

Staff members were surprised when they arrived one morning in 1936 to find the building still locked. One intrepid employee discovered the 79-year-old handyman's body in his apartment. There was no sign of Petey, who was never located. Not long after, patrons began to report strange occurrences in the building—the distant sound of violin music (frequently *The Blue Danube*) and the rhythmic tick, tick, tick of a dog's claws on the tile floors.

Douglas Weiskopf, a former senior library services specialist, sensed a presence in the second-floor Texas Room and in the stacks when he worked there 20 years ago. Lights had been known to blink on and off, and the room's ancient elevator sometimes arrived at the floor empty even though operating it required a key. "I still remember the auras, or senses of his presence," Weiskopf says, "and I thought I heard Pete's footsteps a couple of times. I only wish I could have heard him playing his violin, like some have when working late on stormy evenings."

During the decades since Cramer's death, reports of ghostly floating orbs and of books and sheet music scattered on the floor feed the legend that Cramer and Petey still inhabit the library. Cramer is apparently as cultured and friendly in the afterlife as he was when he walked the library's halls as night watchman. Perhaps he loved the beautiful building, now a historical landmark that houses special collections and archives, too much to leave. Or perhaps he simply hasn't had time to finish reading all the books.

Laney Chavez, manager of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, suggests that it is important to consider that Cramer passed away a very long time ago, so the facts of his tale can be hard to confirm.

"I think this only adds to the mystery and intrigue," Chavez says. "It allows us to use our imaginations and to picture for ourselves what might have happened. And who knows, maybe one day you'll have your own experience here with the supernatural." ■



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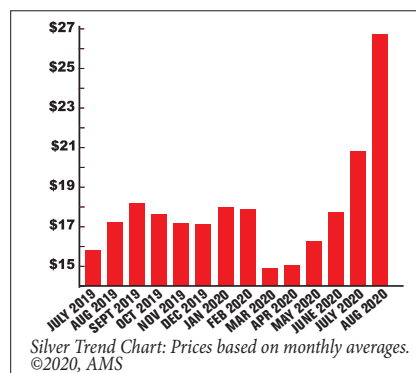


Actual size
is 38.1 mm

Why Are Dealers Hoarding These 100-Year-Old U.S. Silver Dollars?

When it comes to collecting, few coins are as coveted as the first and last of a series. And when big anniversaries for those “firsts” and “lasts” come around, these coins become even more coveted.

Take, for example, the 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars. These 90% pure silver coins were the last of their kind, a special one-year-only resurrection of the classic Wild West Silver Dollar. Three years prior, the Pittman Act authorized the melting of more than 270 million Morgan Silver Dollars so their silver could be sold to our allies in the United Kingdom. Facing our own Silver Dollar shortage, the world’s favorite vintage U.S. Silver Dollar was brought back for one year only while the U.S. Mint worked on its successor, the Peace Silver Dollar.



Dealers Begin Stockpiling Last-Year Morgans

Knowing what we’ve told you about special anniversaries, dealers around the country are preparing for a surge in demand. 2021 will mark the 100th anniversary of the 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar—the last-year-of-issue for the most popular vintage U.S. Silver Dollar ever minted. But slow-moving collectors may be disappointed in what they find when they seek out these coins.

Since the days of the Pittman Act, millions more U.S. Silver Dollars have been melted or worn down in commerce. It’s been estimated that as few as 15% of all the Morgan Dollars ever minted have survived to the present day. That number grows smaller each year, with private hoards now accounting for virtually all the surviving Morgan Silver Dollars. And that was before silver values started to rise...

Interest in Silver Is on the Rise

As you can see from the chart on the left, in 2020, we’ve seen daily silver prices close as low as \$12.01 per ounce and as high as \$28.33 per ounce. That rise in value has led to a sharp increase in buyers’ interest in silver. We’re already seeing a surge of interest from collectors wanting to add vintage Morgan Silver Dollars to their collections. But at what price?

Don’t Wait—Secure Your 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars NOW!

With this special offer, you can secure a last-year 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar ahead of the rush in About Uncirculated (AU) condition for just \$39.95! Mint marks vary.

These vintage U.S. Silver Dollars allow you to hold 100 years of American history in the palm of your hand. But only if you secure yours before our limited supply of 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars lasts in our vault.

Don’t wait—call 1-800-973-9208 and use the offer code below to secure your 100-year-old Morgan Silver Dollars NOW!

Weight:	26.73 grams
Purity:	90% silver
Diameter:	38.1 mm
Condition:	AU
Mint Mark:	varies

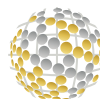
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TCP WEB EXTRA

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story, then watch our video about the McDonald Observatory.



He Gave Us the Stars

An eccentric banker funded the McDonald Observatory against family wishes

BY W.F. STRONG

IN 1926 A BACHELOR banker died in Paris, Texas—a rich bachelor banker, that is. His estate was worth \$1.2 million. Today that would be about \$17.6 million. In his will the banker left 90% of his money to the University of Texas to buy a telescope and build an observatory.

The banker's name was William Johnson McDonald (no connection to the famous hamburger chain).

McDonald's relatives didn't like him leaving all that money for a telescope. They believed that anyone who would do such a thing must not have all the pickets in his fence, so they sued to keep the money in the family.

Fortunately for UT, McDonald had shared his telescope dream with his barber, telling him that astronomy was a young science. He told the barber he hoped that "one day a telescope would be built that would allow astronomers to see the gold-plated streets of heaven."

McDonald was also known to be an amateur scientist. Consequently, a jury had little trouble believing that his bequest was the product of a sane mind. Upon appeal, his relatives received more than they were given originally, but UT still ended up with about \$800,000—\$11.8 million today.

Once the university had the money, it

had to go shopping for a mountain on which to build an observatory. That must have been fun. Mountain shopping has got to be something you get to do only once or twice in a lifetime. Luckily the university's representatives were able to shop in the Davis Mountains, which harbored some of the finest stargazing potential in North America.

After driving several thousand miles around the region, inspecting numerous sites for altitude, dark skies, cloudless nights and poor prospects for rain, they found what they were looking for. It had no official name, but the locals called it Flat Top Mountain. It was part of a ranch perfectly named for West Texas: The U Up and U Down Ranch.

University of Texas President Harry Benedict wrote a letter to Violet Locke McIvor, owner of that mountain. He told her of McDonald's gift and of the university's great need for a mountain to put an observatory on. Benedict informed McIvor that her mountain was ideally suited for such a facility and that "optical tests already made showed that the Davis Mountains region was the best in Texas, perhaps the best in the United States, for astronomical purposes." He asked her if she might consider giving her mountain to science.

McIvor might have surprised Benedict when she agreed. She wrote back almost immediately and gave UT 200 acres, the entire top of the mountain, which was renamed Mount Locke in honor of McIvor's grandfather, G.S. Locke, who founded the ranch. She also gave the university enough land to build a road to the summit. The resulting highway, Spur 78, is still the highest highway in Texas.

Today UT's McDonald Observatory sits majestically atop Mount Locke. It is one of the world's leading centers for astronomical research. As William McDonald predicted, his gift has given us the heavens themselves. ■

The Main Event

Special touches and flavors make for exceptional holiday meals

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Because my family lives so far away, we're not always able to get together at the holidays. Even though we might not be gathering around a table laden with turkey and plenty of potatoes, our smaller family holiday meal is no less festive. One dish I love to make that feels fancy but is mostly hands-off is short ribs. They only need a few minutes of browning time before braising in the oven. We like ours with mashed potatoes, but you can also serve them with cheesy polenta, risotto or even pasta.

Red Wine-Braised Short Ribs

3 pounds short ribs
1½ teaspoons salt
1½ teaspoons pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
1 cup chopped onion
½ cup chopped carrot
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 bottle (750 milliliters) cabernet sauvignon
1 cup beef stock
2 bay leaves
4 3-inch sprigs fresh thyme or
1 teaspoon dried thyme

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Season short ribs with salt and pepper and heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Working in batches, sear short ribs on all sides and remove to a plate.

2. Reduce heat to medium and stir in garlic and onion, scraping the bottom of the pot. Cook 2 minutes, then add carrot and continue to cook 5 minutes, until carrot is softened. Stir in tomato paste until well mixed.

3. Add wine, beef stock, bay leaves and thyme and stir well. Arrange short ribs in the pot, making sure as much of the meat is submerged as possible. Cover, place in the oven and cook 3 hours.

4. Carefully remove short ribs from the pot (if you want to serve with the bone intact), place them on a platter and tent with foil.

5. Strain the liquid in the pot to remove solids and simmer until reduced by half, adding salt or pepper if needed. Serve short ribs over mashed potatoes with sauce spooned on top.

SERVES 4

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Easy Steak Roulade.





Prime Rib Au Jus With Yorkshire Pudding

JACQUELINE BOYD
NUECES EC

A meat thermometer is essential when roasting large cuts like this garlicky prime rib. "My family loves this prime rib for Christmas or New Year's," Boyd says. The accompanying Yorkshire pudding is perfect for soaking up the delicious au jus. If you can't find a bone-in cut, boneless will work just as well.

PRIME RIB

- 5-pound bone-in beef rib roast**
- 5 large cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon pepper**
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme**

YORKSHIRE PUDDING (optional)

- 6 eggs**
- 2 cups milk**
- Pinch salt**
- 2 cups flour**
- ½ cup pan drippings from roast**

AU JUS

- ½ cup white wine**
- 2 cups beef stock**

1. PRIME RIB The night before cooking, unwrap the roast and set it in a casserole dish to dry in a refrigerator. This helps to brown the roast.

2. An hour before cooking, set the roast on a rack, fat side up. In a small bowl, combine garlic, olive oil, salt, pepper and thyme, then apply rub to roast, making sure to cover all sides. Insert meat thermometer and pre-heat oven to 450 degrees.

CONTINUED >

\$500 WINNER

Citrus-Brined Smoked Turkey With Brown Sugar Rub

JILEEN PLATT
BOWIE-CASS EC



Is there anything more Texan than smoking a turkey during the holidays? Platt's recipe features a fruity brine that ensures the bird stays moist and tender during the smoking process. If you don't have a smoker, you can roast the turkey in the oven at 350 degrees for about 3 hours.

SERVES 8



BRINE

- 1 gallon water**
- 1 cup salt**
- 1¾ cups orange juice**
- 1¾ cups cranberry juice**
- ½ cup brown sugar**
- 2 cinnamon sticks**
- 1 lemon, sliced**
- 1 orange, sliced**
- 2 tablespoons dried minced onion**
- 4 bay leaves**
- 1 tablespoon pepper**

TURKEY

- 12- to 13-pound turkey, neck and giblets removed**
- Apple or pecan wood chips, for smoking**

RUB

- ½ cup brown sugar**
- ¼ cup smoked paprika**
- 2 tablespoons onion powder**
- 1 tablespoon pepper**
- 1 tablespoon salt**
- 1 tablespoon chili powder**
- 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper**

1. BRINE AND TURKEY In a pot large enough to fit the turkey, mix together the brine ingredients, stirring well. Place whole turkey into the brine, breast-side down. Cover and refrigerate overnight, 12–18 hours.

2. RUB Mix together all ingredients in a medium-sized bowl. Transfer the rub to an airtight container until ready to cook the turkey.

3. The next morning, set smoker to 250 degrees and soak apple or pecan wood chips.

4. Pour ¼ cup of rub into a small bowl. The rest can be stored in a cool, dry place to be used later. Remove turkey from brine, drain excess liquid from cavity, and set on a shallow pan or cookie sheet. Discard the remaining brine. Massage the rub all over the outside of the turkey.

5. When the smoker temperature has reached 250 degrees, place turkey directly on rack with breast side up. Add wood chips to smoker, replacing again after 1 hour. Let turkey cook until internal temperature reaches 165 degrees, maintaining a smoker temperature of 225–250. A 12-pound turkey will take approximately 6 hours. Remove turkey from smoker and let rest 30 minutes before carving.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

POTLUCK DISHES DUE DEC 10

Share your favorite dish to grace the buffet or pass around at family gatherings. Enter at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests by December 10.



happy holidays

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RECIPES CONTINUED

3. Roast 20 minutes at 450, then lower temperature to 325 and cook until roast is 120 degrees (130 degrees for medium doneness).

4. YORKSHIRE PUDDING Beat the eggs, milk and salt, then stir in the flour until smooth. Cover and place in the refrigerator while the roast cooks.

5. When the roast is done, remove from pan, cover with foil and let rest while you finish the Yorkshire pudding. Measure ½ cup of drippings from the roast and divide among a 12-cup muffin tin. Pour off the rest of the fat, but keep the roasting pan for the au jus.

6. Place the muffin tin in the oven and turn up the heat to 450 degrees. Let the muffin tin preheat for 10 minutes, then remove and quickly fill each cup ¾ full with the refrigerated batter. Bake 20–25 minutes until golden brown and very puffy.

7. AU JUS Place the roasting pan on the stove over medium-high heat. Stir in wine and bring to a simmer while scraping pan to dissolve drippings. Pour in beef stock, return to a simmer and cook 10 minutes. Carve prime rib and serve with au jus and Yorkshire pudding.

SERVES 6



**Grilled Pork Chops With
Chai Spice Apple Compote**

MARIAN EVONIUK
PEDERNALES EC

Pork and apples are a perfect pairing, and the spices in Evoniuk's compote make this a cozy, comforting dish that's ideal in winter, even while we fire up the grill. Any extra compote is delicious served warm with whipped cream.

CHAI SPICE APPLE COMPOTE

1 tablespoon butter
1 shallot, peeled and chopped
½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground allspice
⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
⅛ teaspoon ground cardamom
⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
⅛ teaspoon salt
2 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and coarsely chopped
2 tablespoons light brown sugar
Zest and juice of 1 large lemon

PORK CHOPS

1½ teaspoons salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
¼ teaspoon sugar
¼ teaspoon celery seed
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon dried parsley
3 pounds (about 4) pork center rib chops, bone in, 1¼–1½ inches thick
2 teaspoons garlic powder, divided use

1. COMPOTE Combine butter and shallot in a 10-inch skillet and cook, covered, over medium-low heat until shallot is tender. Add the spices and salt and stir about 30 seconds. Add the apples, brown sugar, lemon zest and juice, and cover, cooking over medium heat until apples are crisp-tender, about 7–10 minutes. Remove skillet from heat, transfer compote to a medium glass serving bowl and set aside.

2. PORK CHOPS Prepare outdoor grill for indirect heat. In a small bowl, mix together the salt, pepper, sugar, celery seed, onion powder and parsley. Place pork chops onto a large platter. Sprinkle each side of the chops with ½ teaspoon of the seasoning and ¼ teaspoon of the garlic powder.

3. Place a 12-by-24-inch sheet of non-stick foil onto the grill grate, nonstick side up. Arrange pork chops on top. Grill pork chops 10 minutes on one side, then flip and grill 10 minutes on the other side. Flip pork chops again, grill 5 minutes, then flip and grill 5 minutes on the other side. Cook pork chops to 160 degrees, continuing to flip every 5 minutes as needed. Remove chops onto a clean platter, tent with foil and let rest 5 minutes. Serve with chai spice apple compote.

SERVES 4



holiday GIFT GUIDE

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Ghost Town Hangout

Terlingua's Starlight Theatre draws a crowd

BY CHET GARNER

I'M SITTING IN the desert at the edge of Texas, enjoying grilled quail amid an assembly that includes artists, dropouts, backpackers and notable ranchers. Over my right shoulder I can see a stuffed goat that once served as the mayor of nearby Lajitas, and in front of me a troubadour sings a lament to the moon. It's Friday night at the Starlight Theatre in the Terlingua ghost town.

This rocky village sits about 10 miles from the Mexico border, but it seems more like another universe, one defined by incongruous elements such as a pirate ship and rough metal folk art. When it was founded more than a century ago, Terlingua was defined by a quicksilver mine, but the village faded after the mine went bust. By the 1960s artists and freethinkers found they could thrive there without society's constraints.

Like many of those gathered here, I'm fresh off the trails of Big Bend National Park. In pursuit of a good meal, I stop at the Starlight for dinner before heading home. The building served as the town's theater into the 1930s but was abandoned. After 30 years its four walls remained, but the roof was gone. The adobe shell became an open-air music venue. With the West Texas stars for a ceiling, the Starlight earned its new name.

After a few more decades, the owner decided to add a roof and create a proper restaurant. Now the Starlight is possibly the best place west of the Pecos for distinctive dining, boasting creative dishes like chicken-fried wild boar, axis burgers and bowls of classic Texas chili.

After dinner I grab a cold beer from the Terlingua Trading Company next door and join the characters on the expansive porch to enjoy the West Texas breeze and listen to yarns that stretch across the Rio Grande. ■

ABOVE Starlight signage on the facade above the front entry.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Chet's video from Terlingua's Starlight Theatre and check out his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

Some events may have been affected by COVID-19. Call or check an event's website for scheduling details.

DECEMBER

04

Granbury [4-13] Away in a Manger Nativity Display, (817) 360-6228, visitgranbury.com/away-in-a-manger-nativity-display

La Grange [4-6, 10-13, 17-23] Trail of Lights at Kreische Brewery and Monument Hill State Historic Site, (979) 968-5658, friendsofkreischebrewery.org/trailoflights

08

Nederland Lighted Christmas Parade, (409) 985-7822, visitportarthurtx.com

11

Clute Christmas in the Park, (979) 265-8392

Fredericksburg [11-12] The Christmas Journey, (830) 997-2069, bethanyfredericksburg.com

Levelland [11-12] South Plains Showdown Jackpot Pig Show, (806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com

Fredericksburg [11-20] Nuncrackers, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

12

Hondo Tour of Vacant Buildings, (830) 426-3037, hondochamber.org/tour-of-vacant-buildings

Jacksonville Cherokee Craft & Trade Fair, (903) 268-1598, jacksonvilletexas.com

Palestine Old Town Vintage Christmas Open House, (903) 221-6233, otvandmore.com

Palestine Wine Swirl, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com

Port Arthur Drive Thru Christmas, (409) 983-8105, visitportarthurtx.com

Reno Christmas in the Park, (903) 785-6581, renotexas.us

Palestine Christmas Carol Sing Along, (903) 723-3014, visitpalestine.com/christmas

Fredericksburg [18-20] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094, fbgradedays.com

Levelland [18-20] Christmas Cash Classic Show Pig Jackpot, (806) 894-4161, malleventcenter.com

Fort McKavett Victorian Christmas Fair, (325) 396-2358, facebook.com/visitfortmckavett



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Pick of the Month

Main Street Christmas

Darrouzett, December 12
(806) 624-2441
facebook.com/dztttx

This town of 300 mostly farmers and ranchers about as close as you can get to the North Pole and still be in Texas promises two blocks packed with a variety of activities. Children can decorate T-shirts and cookies. Adults can enjoy bingo. All can partake in chili and soup and a Christmas dance. A parade of hay-hauler trucks decorated with antlers is followed by a special guest who rides in a firetruck.

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event online for February by December 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

RICK KIEFFER
BLUEBONNET EC

"My friend Bill Stephens showing his skills at Palo Duro Canyon State Park."

PHOEBE LAKE
BLUEBONNET EC

"We moved a 100-year-old farmhouse from Somerville to Brenham. This is half of it on its way."

GARY CARPENTER
FAYETTE EC

"This bus was used by the Texas swing band that represented Lone Star Beer in the 1950s and 1960s."

NANCY BURRER
SAN BERNARD EC

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Upcoming Contests

DUE DEC 10 Storms

DUE JAN 10 Historic Texas

DUE FEB 10 Manmade vs. Nature

Enter online and review submission rules at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



Hooked on Worms

Growing up with an unabated work ethic while stooping low in the rain

BY TOM WIDLOWSKI
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KACHIK

I USED TO have worms.

Even at 13 I knew that wasn't very funny, but it seems to be a crack common to the night crawler business, and I used to be in the night crawler business.

It was 1974 in Joliet, Illinois, and I wanted cash.

We stuck a shingle on the utility pole—shame on us—at the end of our block, where it crossed a busier street. “Worms & Nite-Crawlers, 917.” Our address on Sheila Drive.

It worked. Folks heading out to fish stopped by and rapped on our door to buy their bait. Today it would probably be mistaken for drug deals. Strange cars pulling into the driveway, a dollar handed over in exchange for the goods.

It's not a job for the squeamish. First you must collect the worms. That means

going someplace with lots of grass—a park or a schoolyard. The worms come out of the ground after a good rain, especially at night.

My dad, God bless him, and I and sometimes my younger brother and sister would traipse through the grass in the dark, bent at the waist with a flashlight and old milk jug in one hand. We'd pluck the worms off the ground and drop them into our gallons, which had been cut open at the top to create a larger opening.

We'd be out there for an hour, maybe more—how does a kid measure time hunched over in the total darkness, sometimes in the rain? When we thought we had enough, either worms or of the experience, we'd head home.

There, we dumped them onto newspapers on our basement floor—a writhing mound of slimy, yucky... things. Earthworms produce mucus that keeps their bodies moist to help breathe in oxygen through their skin. In those milk jugs, they seemed to need a lot of mucus. On good nights there'd be more than a thousand of them squirming on the sports section. My bread and butter.

I counted them out by the dozen and put them, with a bit of peat moss, into old oleo, sour cream and similar containers that friends and relatives saved for me. Then into our basement fridge. Chilled, they went dormant but stayed alive.

And so the anglers came to our door, sometimes in the middle of the night, and bought my worms. Fifty cents a dozen. We'd open the container and stir the peat moss a bit with a finger to show the customer they were getting lively bait that couldn't fail. Then we'd wish them luck.

Barely more than a decade later, I was a newspaper designer and editor—still working at night, hovering over sports pages, but no longer knuckle-deep in slime. ■

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ITEM 93888/61899/63095/63096/63097/63098 shown

37956600 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

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SUPER COUPON

CENTECH 2/10/50 AMP, 12v Battery Charger and Engine Starter ★★★★★ (3978)

\$34.99 ~~\$54.99~~

Save 38%

Compare to
ITEM 60581/60653 shown

Compare to
Schumacher Electric
SE-1250
\$56.93

ITEM 60581/60653 shown

37957605 LIMIT 2 - Exp. 1/15/21*

Use Online & In-Store

SUPER COUPON

HaulMaster 18" Working Platform Step Stool ★★★★★ (5248)

\$19.99 ~~\$29.99~~

Save 50%

Compare to
Necraft
60635
\$39.99

ITEM 62515/66911 shown

37958291 LIMIT 3 - Exp. 1/15/21*

Use Online & In-Store

SUPER COUPON

WARRIOR 29 Piece Titanium Drill Bit Set ★★★★★ (5303)

\$10.99 ~~\$18.99~~

Save 81%

Compare to
Dewalt
DW1369
\$60.09

ITEM 5889/62281
61637 shown

37959251 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

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SUPER COUPON

COVERPRO 10 ft. x 17 ft. Portable Garage ★★★★★ (2041)

\$169.99 ~~\$199.99~~

Save \$135

Compare to
Shelter Logic 76377
\$305.29

ITEM 62859/63055
62860 shown

37959402 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 1/15/21*

Use Online & In-Store

SUPER COUPON

drillmaster 4-1/2" Angle Grinder ★★★★★ (6777)

\$9.99 ~~\$14.99~~

Save 56%

Compare to
Ironton 61451
\$22.99

ITEM 69645/60625 shown

37959492 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

Use Online & In-Store

SUPER COUPON

PREDATOR 3500w Super Quiet Inverter Generator ★★★★★ (3949)

\$769.99 ~~\$1,329.99~~

Save \$1,329

Compare to
Honda EU3000iS1A
\$2,099

ITEM 56720/63584 shown

37960396 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 1/15/21*

Use Online & In-Store

SUPER COUPON

PREDATOR 6.5 HP (212 cc) OHV Horizontal Shaft Gas Engine ★★★★★ (3849)

\$99.99 ~~\$124.99~~

Save \$230

Compare to
Honda
GX200UT20X2
\$329.99

ITEM 60363/69730 shown

ITEM 69727/68172
CALIFORNIA ONLY

37961438 LIMIT 2 - Exp. 1/15/21*

Use Online & In-Store

SUPER COUPON

THUNDERBOLT Alkaline Batteries AA, AAA - 24 PACK ★★★★★ (3990)

\$4.99 ~~\$6.99~~

Save 69%

Compare to
Energizer
551413526
\$16.24

ITEM 74904 shown

38087653 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/15/21*

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*Also available in C - 6 pack, D - 6 pack, and 9v - 4 pack sizes

SUPER COUPON

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC 3/8" x 50 ft. Retractable Air Hose Reel ★★★★★ (1767)

\$59.99 ~~\$79.99~~

Save \$46

Compare to
Kobalt
SEY-AIR184
\$106

ITEM 64485/93897 shown

37963205 LIMIT 2 - Exp. 1/15/21*

Use Online & In-Store

SUPER COUPON

PITTSBURGH 4" Ratcheting Bar Clamp/Spreader ★★★★★ (2062)

99¢ ~~\$1.99~~

Save 84%

LIFETIME WARRANTY

Compare to
Irwin
1964747
\$6.49

ITEM 44805/62242
60974 shown

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