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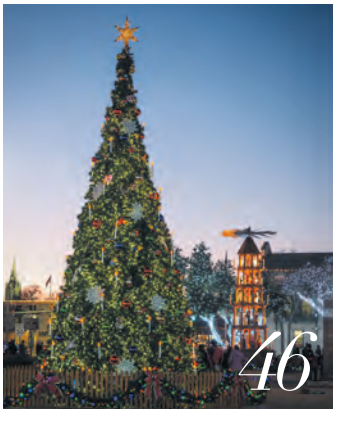
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ON THE COVER: GRACIOUS GARLANDS OWNER, ELLE WORSHAM, CELEBRATES THE SPLENDOR OF THE SEASON AT HOME ENTERTAINING DEAR FRIENDS AND ENJOYING DELIGHTFUL BITES, STARTING ON PAGE 28.









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A LOOK BACK

I've been trying to find a way to describe 2020, and the best I can come up with is to draw an analogy to camping.

When you go camping, you give up the modern comforts of home, make do with what you have, don't stress about what you forgot, and appreciate the experience for what it is. Sleeping on the ground, forgoing a shower, eating out of a can, and going without electricity are all part of the experience. Sure, it's not how you would choose to live every day, but for a short time, you are okay with enjoying a simpler existence out in the incredible beauty of nature.

This is, in my humble opinion, how we should view 2020. It hasn't been ideal. It didn't unfold as we expected. But that's what happens in life — not everything goes according to our master plan.

When I'm about to do something I'm not really looking forward to, I often have no expectations. After it is over, I often realize I found something enjoyable anyway. Perhaps I learned something new about myself, met fun people, or it became a stepping stone to another opportunity I could have never imagined.

For many of us, 2020 gave us the chance to do a lot of things we didn't plan. We got to spend extra time with our families and fewer hours commuting. We cooked more and ate out less. We had occasions to do the things we never had time for including cleaning out the garage, redecorating, gardening, or cooking. I heard from friends who rediscovered old hobbies and spent time unplugged doing a jigsaw puzzle, playing board games, knitting, hiking, cycling, baking bread, etc. We actually had the freedom to do the things we can usually never disconnect long enough to do. Yes, we can thank 2020 for this.

To quote the famous line from *Forrest Gump*, "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." The key is what you make of what you do get, and I hope you all made some incredible memories amongst the absurdity of the time.

Happy Holidays!



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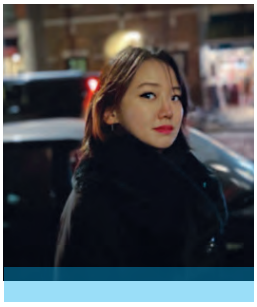
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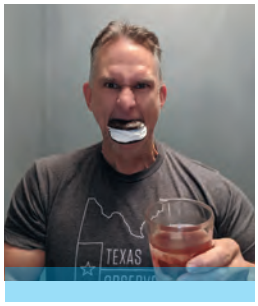
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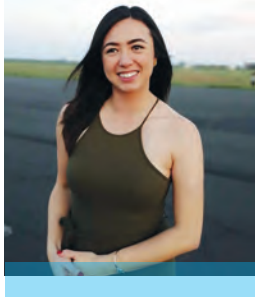
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A Century in the Making

Relive New York's Roaring Twenties at the new Gramercy

By Jamie Twitchel

Nestled in the heart of the Oaks At Lakeway is The Gramercy, a stylish, elegant restaurant that opened in October. It was brought to life by Suzanne and Billy Joe Hunt. With its art deco touches and 1920's influence, The Gramercy sweeps its guests back to a bygone era when boutique hotels epitomized sophistication and fun.

In the 1940s, The Gramercy Park Hotel in Manhattan was owned by the Hunt family, and many family members worked there. "We wanted to pay homage to this New York City staple and our lineage by bringing its grandeur, hospitality and service to the amazing people and great city of Lakeway," says Hunt.

The Gramercy seeks to be a comfortable, relaxing refuge for guests and offers a variety of indoor and outdoor seating options with safe distancing in mind. Guests can enjoy classic libations like a Moscow Mule or Manhattan, or try a signature cocktail like the Mountain Flower or Lakeside while feasting on American bar food taken to new heights. The mouthwatering menu includes offerings like steak frites, pork belly sliders and a Texas-sourced kielbasa with house mustard.

Gramercy translates to "great thanks;" the Hunts seek to make every guest feel the time they spend at The Gramercy is valued. "There is no better way to welcome our guests in the community we call home than incorporating gratitude into our brand," says Suzanne Hunt.

1516 Ranch Road 620 S, Suite 200, Lakeway
www.gramercylakeway.com

'Tis the Season to be Shopping

Hill Country Galleria adds new stores *By Jamie Twitchel*

Visitors to the Hill Country Galleria now have additional 'shopportunities' with the openings of Urban Chic, Bokabuku, Signed Sealed Delivered and Amy's Ice Cream.

What Marble Falls shoppers once knew as The Embellished Cottage has become Urban Chic in Bee Cave. Founded by Charlene Hardy, the store offers women's apparel, accessories, home décor and gifts that cater to a variety of styles, ages and budgets. Featured brands include Aratta, Wishlist, Love Tokens, Ornamental Things and Dot and Dash.

Right next door, shoppers will find Bokabuku. With a moniker inspired by founder Rebecca Carpenter's childhood nickname, the store offers gift items, accessories and ethically produced, locally sourced clothing collections. Designs come in solid colors and bold prints in flowing lines meant to fit and flatter women of all shapes and sizes.

When you're finished decking yourself out, deck your halls with a visit to Signed Sealed Delivered. This shop offers a plethora of seasonal and holiday décor and gift items such as wreaths, florals, candles, scents and soaps by brands such as Aromatique, Archipelago Botanicals and Trapp Fragrances. In-home decorating services are also available.

Cap off your shop-a-thon with a sweet treat from Amy's Ice Creams. With more than 55 flavors sold at all times (and more than 350 in rotation)—Mexican Vanilla, Belgian Chocolate and Cocoa Pudding are just three tempting examples—as well as many fruit ices and vegan offerings on the menu, there's a sweet something for every palate.

Urbanchictx.com | Bokabuku.com
Signedsealeddelivered.com | Amysicecreams.com



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Year-Round Fun for Everyone

Massive New Kalahari Waterpark Makes a Splash *By Jamie Twitchel*

Billed as America's Largest Indoor Waterpark, the African-themed Kalahari Resorts opened its newest resort on November 12 in Round Rock. Joining sister resorts in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, Sandusky, Ohio and the Pocono Mountains, Pennsylvania, the massive 350-acre complex boasts five restaurants, 975 guestrooms, a 223,000-square-foot waterpark, plus Tom Foolerys Adventure Park, outdoor pools, shops, and meetings and events space.

Water lovers will adore the 20 pools and whirlpools, 30 waterslides, and attractions such as the FlowRider surf machine, 23-foot-tall LED-TV screen above the pools, adult grotto swim-up bar, cabanas and waterfalls.

Land lovers can instead head to 80,000-square-foot Tom Foolerys to enjoy the arcade and the numerous carnival rides or the Cave of Mirrors, escape rooms, bowling, miniature golf, rock-climbing wall and ropes course. If complete relaxation is more your style, a full-service spa offers massages, facials, manicures, and color and salt therapy treatments. Or, head to the shops for some retail therapy.

Refueling choices include sweet treats from The Last Bite, picnicking bites at the Marrakesh Market Eatery, and hearty meals at Sortino's Italian Kitchen or the Great Karoo Marketplace Buffet among other dine-in options.

With so much to see, do and eat, Kalahari Resorts—located on U.S. 79 across from Dell Diamond in Round Rock—has something for everyone.

www.kalahariresorts.com/texas

Poke? OK!

Poke House Offers a Taste of the Islands *By Jamie Twitchel*

Poke House, the Austin-based restaurant known for its Hawaiian poke bowls, is set to open its newest location in West Lake Hills in December or early 2021. It will be the third Poke House, which has additional locations in Northwest Austin and Round Rock. Poke House first launched in 2017, born from the owners' desire to sell fresh, delicious poke bowls at a reasonable price.

With several types of high-quality, sustainably-sourced fish, nine sauces, thirteen vegetables and fixings and twelve toppings to choose from—not to mention vegan and gluten-free options—all guests can completely customize their poke bowls. Prefer to eat with your hands instead of a fork? Then try the pokerrito, which offers all the same ingredient options but enveloped snugly in a seaweed or hot Cheetos wrap. For vegetarians, Poke House offers veggie bowls and tofu to replace one of three tuna options (ahi tuna is the traditional fish in poke bowls in Hawaii), salmon or shrimp. And if the array of ingredient options somehow doesn't make you want to yell "aloha," maybe the miso soup or mochi ice cream will.

Regardless of what diners choose to fill their bowls with, Poke House prides itself on offering healthy menu options, so patrons never leave worrying about what they've eaten, even after washing down the meal with a coconut water or Mexican Coke.

Poke House | 3652 Bee Cave Road, West Lake Hills
www.pokehousetx.com



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Simple and Sweet Holiday Entertaining

Enjoying Friends and Family for the Holidays is More Meaningful than Ever in 2020

By Jane Coloccia



Holiday entertaining will look and feel a bit different this year. While the guest list may need to be trimmed in addition to the tree, there's no reason you can't host a fabulous soirée complete with some amazing desserts.

Tavel Bristol-Joseph, pastry chef and partner at Austin's Emmer & Rye, Hestia, Kalimotxo, Henbit and TLV, is happy to suggest some sweet treats to adorn your holiday table while offering practical advice for entertaining in the 'new normal.'

It All Started with Pound Cake

Bristol-Joseph was named one of *Food & Wine* magazine's 2020 'Best New Chefs,' but his path to culinary greatness wasn't a traditional one. As a young boy, he was shifted around among relatives and never really felt he belonged. His aunt would punish him for breaking curfew by making him bake for the kids attending Sunday school at her church. He soon realized that cooking made him feel happy.

Chef Tavel is the first to admit that his entrée into the culinary world wasn't inspired by a desire to see how he could elevate the traditional apple pie. He chose the culinary arts simply because all of the girls in his high school took Home Economics. After a while, he realized he was actually quite good at baking and knew that was what he could do with his life. It became his passion to take care of people and make them feel happy through his food. Who knew that when he baked his first dessert as a young boy—a pound cake—it would foretell his future career?

Chef Tavel welcomes guests into his restaurants every day—he is an avid entertainer at home as well—so we asked him to share some professional tips for making the most of holiday entertaining.

Keep the Guest List Short

While current regulations cap home entertaining at 10 people, it's a smart move to invite only those



people in your immediate circle and with whom you feel very comfortable being in close quarters.

Don't Stress Out About Entertaining

People have a lot of anxiety about entertaining, but being together during the pandemic—especially during the holidays—is more special than it's ever been. There's no need to make it complicated. The focus should be on cherishing shared moments with one another. The food and décor are secondary.

You Can't Go Wrong with Ambrosia

When he entertains at home, Chef Tavel always puts out Ambrosia (see recipe on next page). "It's simple, easy and delicious," he says. "You drop a few cookies on the side, and it's money!" Other favorites to consider for the holidays include cheesecake, red velvet cake, carrot cake and spiced apple cake.

Encourage a Few Low-Key Sanitary Practices Upon Entry

Start with a nice bottle of hand sanitizer by the door when everyone arrives, and request that they remove their shoes.

Serve with Safety in Mind

Make sure you have enough serving utensils out so that nobody double-dips and plenty of napkins at the serving table to keep diners' hands clean. There should be enough plates out so that everyone can walk away and sit down somewhere to eat away from the buffet. This simple setup discourages people from standing over the food while enjoying conversations, which minimizes transmission risk.

Consider Foods that can be Presented Individually

When you set up your platters, ensure that no food item is touching another so that guests only touch the item they will consume with the item's utensils. Slice all bread in advance. Think about making cupcakes instead of a cake or individual plates of panna cotta instead of larger single portions.

Catered Food can take the Worry out of Prep

Many Austin restaurants, including Chef Tavel's, are offering catering for the holidays. Chefs have been trained to follow all current sanitary guidelines and can provide great recommendations on how to keep everyone safe. They can come to your house, prep in the kitchen and then depart while you are getting ready, or they can prepare the meal and pack it in boxes for delivery or pickup for you to unpack and serve at home. >>

PHOTOGRAPHY THIS PAGE: ERIN FRAZIER/HESTIA; OPPOSITE PAGE EMMER & RYE



This year more than ever, let's relax, enjoy, eat, drink and celebrate being with loved ones. Happy Holidays!

CHEF TAVEL BRISTOL-JOSEPH'S SPICED AMBROSIA

3 cups sour cream
1 cup condensed milk
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp allspice
2 tbsp spiced rum
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
1 banana, diced
1 pear, diced
1/2 cup maraschino cherries, halved
1/2 cup blueberries
4 strawberries, diced

1 medium mixing bowl
1 rubber spatula
Measuring cup and spoons
Cutting board
Small paring knife

In mixing bowl, combine sour cream, condensed milk, salt, cinnamon and allspice.
Add vanilla and spiced rum.
Add in fruit.
Stir until combined.
Taste! If the tasting prompts you to want to add more fruit, rum or any other ingredient, do that and stir it in.
Chill in the refrigerator for 20 minutes.

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HOME *for the* HOLIDAYS

Virtual events the whole family can enjoy *By Jamie Weissman*

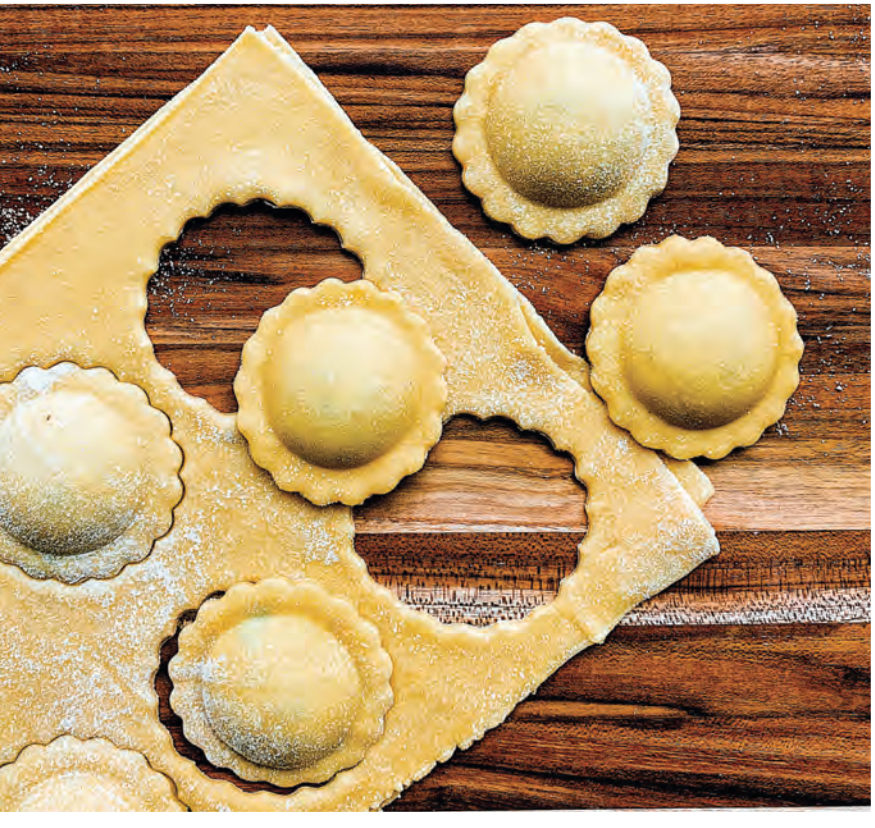
A vacation is all we ever wanted for the holidays, but how we spend it this year may look a bit different. While your seat on a plane may be traded for a seat on the couch, there's no reason a more low-key 'staycation' approach to the holiday season can't still be full of cheer.

For the gift of togetherness, give virtual classes a try. They're a fun, safe and group-friendly approach that even supports local businesses. From chocolate-making to art classes and everything in-between, these activities will transport you out of your home and into a fun gathering with loved ones. Plus, they'll actually make you look forward to being on Zoom.



INDULGE IN COMFORT FOOD

A trip to Italy may be off the table this year, but that doesn't mean fresh pasta has to be. At Pasta Social Club, expert pasta-maker Meryl Feinstein is taking her talents to the small screen with virtual sessions to teach viewers how to make dough from scratch—no equipment required. She'll even provide recipes for homemade sauces so you can make the most of your meal. ***$95+; pastasocialclub.com***



SATISFY YOUR SWEET TOOTH

Just when you thought you couldn't look forward to dessert anymore, Intero Restaurant has found a way to turn it up a notch. To add a bit of sweetness to your holiday season, the restaurant is offering a live chocolate-tasting class during which groups will be led through a 10-piece sampling set of selected chocolates. The one-hour session begins with an introduction on how to taste chocolate and leads participants through the history, process and lingo of each bite before ending with an artisan truffle box.
$25+; interorestaurant.com



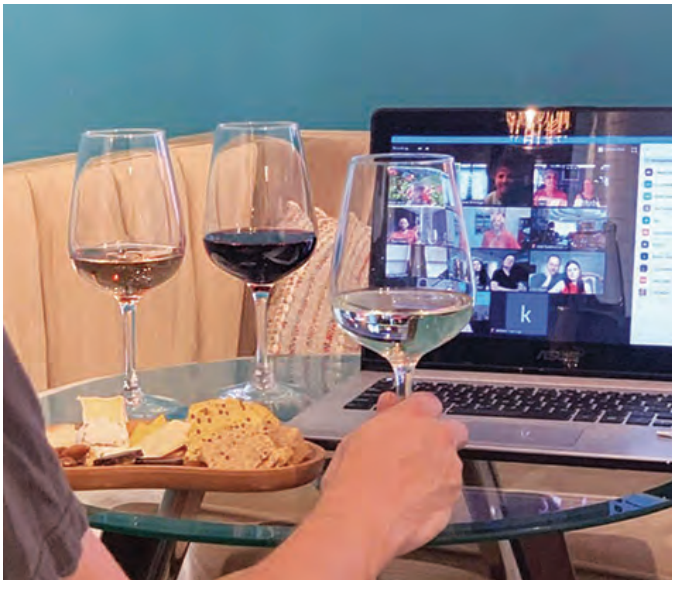


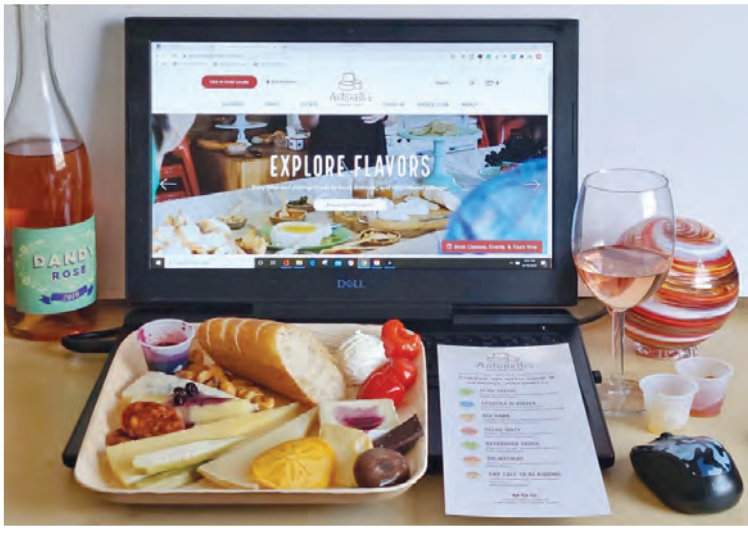
BELIEVE IN FLOWER POWER

One of the most delightful holiday traditions is to spruce up your home with cheery décor. At Flower Social Austin, the team is taking it up a notch with virtual wreath-making workshops that are sure to bring joy beyond the holidays. Classes include the necessary greenery and supplies for the project, which can either be picked up locally or delivered. ***$50+; theflowersocialaustin.com***

SHOW OFF YOUR CREATIVE SIDE

Whether you're a seasoned pro or picking up a new hobby, The Contemporary Austin is offering live virtual classes to refine your skills. Classes, which include drawing, painting and ceramics to name a few, are available for children, teens and adults and are taught in real time by the art school's faculty. ***$121+; thecontemporaryaustin.com***





TOAST THE HOLIDAY SEASON

With the holiday season comes the end of the year and there's no better way to celebrate than with a toast. To help, House Wine converted its Wine 101 class into weekly virtual wine-tasting courses via Zoom complete with vino, cheese and expert instruction. Cheers! ***$35+; housewineaustin.com***

DO SOMETHING CHEESY

Regardless of whether you are cooking a large holiday meal this year, you deserve to at least splurge on a quality appetizer. To help, Antonelli's Cheese Shop is offering both private and public virtual classes led by one of its experts on specialty cheeses. Classes include a contactless pickup of cheeses, food pairings, and accompaniments like bread and nuts. ***$40+; antonellischeese.com***

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF PASTA SOCIAL CLUB; COURTESY OF INTERO; PHOTOGRAPHY BY MEL FRONTINO; COURTESY OF THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN; PHOTOGRAPHY BY HAYDEN WALKER; COURTESY OF HOUSE WINE

HOME sweet VACATION home

LODGEWELL HELPS YOU FIND THE PERFECT HILL COUNTRY HIDEAWAY

By Cindy Brzostowski



Good Morning Ranch

You are probably dreaming of getting away for the holidays, but you hate the idea of dealing with the COVID issues that are now as much a part of taking a long trip as boarding passes. Lodgewell—a newly launched, Austin-based, boutique-destination rental company—is ready to roll out "the red welcome mat" for you or any relatives who might be visiting from out of town for the holidays.

"Lodgewell still has all the fundamentals and core values of Top Trip Rentals—our curated collection of well-designed, comfortable homes in prime locations where each guest is treated as a good friend of the owner," says founding CEO Chereen Fisher. "But something felt 'off' about Top Trip as we grew and hosted more and more people with varying needs. Top Trip Rentals was about offering great homes in great locations. Lodgewell [the company's new name since August] is about caring for people while they stay in these great homes in great locations."

One example of Lodgewell's attentiveness to guests is its signature #705 Pit Stop. This loft at The Littlefields in downtown Austin is a welcoming space where guests can grab a beverage, store their luggage and get local recommendations until their rental is ready. The company also has plans to launch The Lodgewell Lounge, where they'll host intimate concerts and dinner parties with celebrated chefs.

Fisher believes that Lodgewell's in-person hosting assistance is what sets it apart from competitors like Airbnb and VRBO. "We >>


Bloomhouse

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF TWIST TOURS; SABRINA BEAN

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Bloomhouse

Lodgewell—a newly launched, Austin-based, boutique-destination rental company—is ready to roll out "the red welcome mat" for you or any relatives who might be visiting from out of town for the holidays.

know people rely on them as a search engine, and they are a fantastic service for that, but we hope that Lodgewell will be considered as well when guests are looking for a professional hosting experience," says Fisher.

Lodgewell currently lists more than 40 heavily vetted homes in Austin and the Hill Country, and many of them are either owned or master leased by Fisher. But it doesn't stop there as the company is adding about one new listing every couple of weeks.

Lodgewell properties include a range of unique and historic dwellings. The Good Morning Ranch in Wimberley, for example, boasts 10 acres to roam. The Shorewood in Granite Shoals is a roomy lake house with direct water access. The Darlin' is a charming 1920s bungalow in downtown Austin. And The Bloomhouse is a curvy, otherworldly abode in West Austin.

While Lodgewell properties make for memorable getaways, some are also available as event spaces for celebrations, meetings, photoshoots, fundraisers and other events. Fisher highlights The Graeber on 6th Street as one example—a property that has hosted SXSW brand launches as well as Captain America himself, actor Chris Evans, for a Super Bowl party weekend.

Fisher invites travelers who desire a personal touch from an experienced hospitality provider to see what Lodgewell can deliver for them. ***Details: www.lodgewell.co***


Shorewood


Good Morning Ranch


Camp Blanco


Camp Blanco

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF SABRINA BEAN; TWIST TOURS; TWIST TOURS; TEXAS RANCH BROKERS

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Try answering these five questions to help identify opportunity areas where financial planning may bring greater confidence into your life today and in the future:

1. Do we have enough saved in cash (not retirement accounts) to go without income for six months if we had to?
2. Do we have enough insurance to keep our home and support our lifestyle if one or both of us gets sick, hurt or dies unexpectedly?
3. Are we holding the right investment portfolio to get us safely to and through retirement?
4. Do we know how college will be paid for?
5. Are we paying only as much in taxes as we legally have to and no more?

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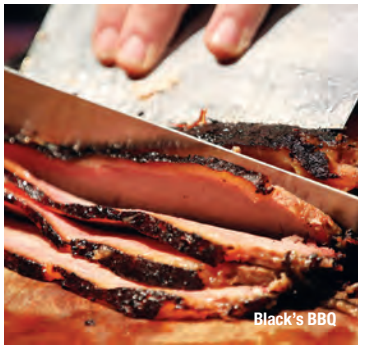


NEXT STOP? BARBECUE!

These out-of-town BBQ joints are worth the drive

By Cindy Brzostowski

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON TYSON/UNSPLASH; OPPOSITE PAGE: COURTESY OF BLACK'S BBQ; MILLER'S SMOKEHOUSE; LOUIE MUELLER BARBECUE; SCHOEPF'S BBQ; SMITTY'S MARKET


Black's BBQ


Miller's Smokehouse


Louie Mueller Barbecue


Schoepf's BBQ


Smitty's Market

You may not be leaving the state as you usually do during the holidays, but that doesn't mean you need to stay put and settle for dining at the same restaurants in your neighborhood every weekend.

The great state of Texas is blessed with some of the best barbecue restaurants in the nation—the best in the opinion of many proud Texans. And BBQ-loving Austinites are in luck because the city can serve as the perfect hub for sampling the bodacious barbecue establishments in surrounding towns—all within an hour's drive.

If you're down with traveling a few miles for memorable food, these renowned spots should be musts on your barbecue bucket list.

Snow's BBQ in Lexington

Recently featured on the BBQ season of Netflix's *Chef's Table*, Snow's BBQ has been named the best barbecue joint in Texas by *Texas Monthly*. At the helm is world-famous octogenarian pitmaster Tootsie Tomanetz, often called the First Lady of Texas BBQ.

The restaurant takes particular pride in its excellent customer service and friendly atmosphere. While visiting, be sure to try the brisket, pork spare ribs and pork shoulder steak.

516 Main St., Lexington | snowsbbq.com

Louie Mueller Barbecue in Taylor

Louie Mueller Barbecue was honored with an America's Classics Award from the James Beard Foundation in recognition of its importance as a regional restaurant. You might hear the place fondly referred to as the 'Cathedral of Smoke,' and this joint is the perfect spot to worship authentic Texas barbecue.

As this restaurant is most famous for its beef products, the beef ribs and brisket come highly recommended. In fact, the brisket and sausage have been their main fare since the 1950s.

206 W. 2nd St., Taylor | louiemuellerbarbecue.com

Kreuz Market in Lockhart

Kreuz Market brings time-tested techniques to the table, befitting a history that dates back more than a century. Unlike some other barbecue restaurants, they only cook in offset smoking pits with seasoned post oak wood, so there are no rotisseries or assisted smokers around.

Don't miss out on ordering Kreuz Market's original hand-tied sausage, available in original or jalapeño cheese. Based on a traditional German recipe, it's the most celebrated item on the menu.

619 N. Colorado St., Lockhart | kreuzmarket.com

Smitty's Market in Lockhart

The histories of Smitty's Market and Kreuz Market are closely intertwined. While a family 'beef' may have led to the split that created the two establishments, there's no denying that Smitty's is steeped in tradition, too, and holds its own as a famous barbecue joint.

If you're wondering what to get, go for the prime rib or jalapeño sausage—both popular choices. And don't bother pulling out your Visa or MasterCard because this place doesn't take cards. Cash still rules there.

208 S. Commerce St., Lockhart | smittysmarket.com

Black's Barbecue in Lockhart

Black's Barbecue has remained in the same family since opening in 1932, and the proprietors embrace long-held traditions. While there is a Black's Barbecue outpost in Austin, the one in Lockhart is the original location.

The brisket, giant beef ribs and homemade sausages are particularly popular. And speaking of the sausage, Black's takes pride in the fact that high-quality, ground-up brisket is used to make it.

215 N. Main St., Lockhart | blacksbbq.com

Miller's Smokehouse in Belton

If you find yourself traveling up I-35 to Dallas, Miller's Smokehouse makes for a satisfying pit stop. The restaurant is open for breakfast every day, and the smokehouse opens in the early afternoon.

While it's possible to order barbecue by the pound, Miller's also offers signature combinations as sandwiches or bowls. These include the Fire in the Bowl (chopped brisket, pulled pork, beans, Fritos and jalapeños) and The Big'un (brisket, sausage, pulled pork and slaw).

300 E. Central Ave., Belton | millerssmokehouse.com

Schoepf's BBQ in Belton

Just a couple of blocks from Miller's Smokehouse is Schoepf's. This restaurant is open daily with an early-morning start on Fridays at 6:30 a.m.

The star of the menu is Schoepf's prime brisket, which is hand-trimmed before cooking. Other popular dishes include the two-inch-thick pork chops and chicken halves. If you like your barbecue with a hint of Tex-Mex, try the brisket nachos or brisket tamales.

702 E. Central Ave., Belton | schoepfsbbq.com

Opie's Barbecue in Spicewood

Opie's exclusive use of mesquite gives its barbecue that unique flavor. When you walk through the doors, you'll immediately see (and smell) Opie's massive pit, which showcases all of its delicious meats.

Interestingly, one of the signature items at Opie's isn't even meat. Formerly available only as a dine-in item, the beloved butter beans are now offered for takeout too. Another worthwhile side is the tater tot casserole.

9504 Highway 71, Spicewood | opiesbarbecue.com

DECK THE HALLS

Holiday Decor Help from Gracious Garlands *By Cindy Brzostowski*



Festive decorations are an essential part of embracing the holiday season, and there's nothing like a bit of greenery to bring your home alive. For anyone who needs a helping hand creating an at-home winter wonderland, Gracious Garlands, an online greenery boutique headquartered in Austin, is there for you. We talked with Elle Worsham, the owner of Gracious Garlands, to learn more about her business—and to get expert tips for sprucing up your home for the holidays.

Seeds of Success

Gracious Garlands' roots go back about 20 years to when Elle's mother Vicki started the company in Nashville. Vicki was known for bringing back greenery from the Appalachians in North Carolina for her Christmas decorations, and her friends and neighbors took note as they sought out higher-quality greenery than they could find locally. Eventually, one friend planted the seed in Vicki's mind that she had a business opportunity. As orders grew, they went from filling a Suburban with greenery to a U-Haul trailer and then a big Penske truck.

In 2014, Elle took over Gracious Garlands from her mom, revamping the business so that orders could be processed online. A year later, Elle moved to Austin and began developing the market here. "Within three years, we actually met the demand in Nashville, which is crazy," says Elle. "It just goes to show that there really wasn't a high-quality source, and it has been really fun to grow the business here in Austin."

While most of the greenery still comes from North Carolina, Gracious Garlands has developed relationships with additional farms across the country, including in Florida and California.

Your Pick of Plants

Peruse Gracious Garlands' online shop and you'll find wreaths and garlands made from an assortment of natural greenery, such as magnolia, white pine, Fraser fir, leather leaf and seeded eucalyptus. The Tri-Mix, made from Fraser fir, white pine and boxwood, is by far their bestseller, offering a holiday feel with a modern touch that sets it apart from alternatives you might find at local stores.

While much of Gracious Garlands' business revolves around their holiday operation, they do offer products year-round in their spring, summer, fall and winter collections.

"The greenery is such high quality and so beautiful that it really does the decorating for you. We really do try to empower our customers to be their own modern-day tastemakers and designers," says Elle. "You can shop these beautiful products in your pajamas and have it all of a sudden arrive on your doorstep, all year long."

If you prefer a bit more decorating guidance, Gracious Garlands also offers consultations to help customers decide what to order for their homes as well as a custom design and installation service.





PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANDON HILL


the menu





Spreading Holiday Cheer

Wondering where to start when decorating your home with fresh greenery? Elle says you can't go wrong with a wreath for your front door. When it comes to garlands, she suggests placing them along your banister, over your mantel, over your front door or across your table.

Other ways she recommends adding a little green throughout the house is by hanging garland over the archway into a room (mistletoe kisses, anyone?) and placing leftovers from the garland on your bar cart or at your bar.

"I think that people can get really crafty," Elle explains. "Something we've started doing a lot more of is actually weaving garland into chandeliers above dining room tables and wiring it up there to give this warmth and festive spirit to your table."

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Needless to say, using real greenery means working with a certain lifespan. Elle recommends familiarizing yourself with the different types of greens and how long you can expect them to remain fresh, citing her company's blog as a helpful resource. She also strongly urges people to pause before throwing out their greenery decor when it inevitably starts to dry out.

"Once you're ready to take that wreath down, you might consider sunbathing it. Try to protect it from any rain, but really dry it out in the sun for several days," says Elle. "Then you have a dried wreath for next autumn, which is amazing."

She adds, "We also encourage people to spray-paint their wreaths, so for New Year's, you could spray-paint your wreath silver or gold. There are many ways to continue to hold onto your greens and florals and use them in new and creative ways."



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANDON HILL; HEATHER DURHAM



2020 Gift Guide

'Tis The Season To Spread Good Cheer With Gifts For Everyone

Gifting Glam

Can't-miss makeup and skincare collections for the 2020-2021 holiday season By Cheryl Son

The holidays are like festival season for beauty lovers. Beauty brands fill the shelves with limited editions and gift sets that are available only during the end-of-the-year season. Here are some holiday makeup and skincare collections you won't want to miss.

2020-2021 Holiday Makeup

CHANEL

Les Chaînes d'Or de Chanel

Inspired by Chanel's iconic gold chains, the new Chanel holiday collection pays tribute to the classic ornament with a modern twist. Lucia Pica, Global Creative Makeup and Color Designer at Chanel Beauty, says, "By accentuating a classic symbol of the House and exploring all of its facets, I infused these existing ideas and images with a new energy, a new spirit."

The exclusive collection includes Illuminating Blush Powder, four shades of Ombre Première eyeshadow, Rouge Allure lipsticks in four colors and Le Vernis nail polish. All powders are embossed with a luxurious chain motif. The Illuminating Blush Powder has a rosy undertone that enhances facial contours. The shimmery powder finishes with a refined satiny effect. The Ombre Première eyeshadows come in luminous antique gold, platinum gold, warm coppery pink and rich khaki brown. Also available in four colors are the Rouge Allure lipsticks, which are enriched with scintillating golden sparkles. The Rouge Allure shades in Chanel's signature gold and black tubes are caramel beige, brick red, gold-speckled red and a shimmery plum. The Le Vernis nail polish is a bold golden hue glistening with sparkles in honor of the festive season.

Available exclusively at chanel.com and at Chanel boutiques



Rouge Allure $45



Le Vernis Chaîne d'Or, antique gold $28



$160 / Available at us.amorepacific.com



Eyeshadow Golden Snow/ Black Night $63 Available at dior.com

CHRISTIAN DIOR

Dior Golden Nights

Dior's 2020 holiday collection is a fairytale-like parade of black and gold—and bedazzled and frosted colors. "Golden Nights puts a twist on the holiday classics," says Dior Creative Director Peter Philips. "I thought of black and gold, of course, but also the graphic elements that evoke this festive season, as well as snowflakes, through a set of chic and festive crystals."

All eyeshadows and lipsticks are stamped with delicate snowflake patterns. Featuring assorted eyeshadow colors in a golden tone, the 5 Couleurs Couture Golden Nights Collection is available in Black Night and Golden Snow. The Rouge Dior Couture Collection is glamorously enriched with five colors: Hypnotic Matte, Classic Matte, Rialto, and the iconic 999 shade in both Matte and Satin. The Diorific Golden Nights lipsticks are beautifully coated and engraved with glitter snowflakes. The four shades are dazzling beige, glittery rose, shimmery red and dark sparkle. The Diorific Vernis nail polishes include classic red and dark purple shades with a shimmery top coat mixed with white and gold glitter.



$119 / Available at fresh.com, sephora.com and Sephora stores

FRESH

Black Tea Firming Beauty

Fresh has all kinds of holiday gift sets for your loved ones. Among them, we recommend the Black Tea Firming Beauty set, an all-in-one lifting skincare line. Four anti-aging and skin-firming products—Kombucha Facial Treatment Essence, Black Tea Firming Overnight Mask, Black Tea Age-Delay Eye Concentrate and Black Tea Firming Corset Cream—are packaged in a gift set that promises immediate results. Formulated with anti-pollution ingredients, these products aim to reduce lines or wrinkles, minimize puffiness, increase hydration and boost skin elasticity.

AMORE PACIFIC

Unleash Your Inner Vitality

Unleash Your Inner Vitality is one of Amore Pacific's luxury skincare holiday gift sets. The set includes Moisture Plumping Nectar Cream and a Vintage Single Extract Essence. The silky moisturizer and anti-aging essence contain plant-derived ingredients that amplify radiance for a nourished and youthful complexion.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF CHANEL, AMORE PACIFIC, FRESH, CHRISTIAN DIOR; OPPOSITE PAGE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZARUBINA VIKTORIIA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Five Fresh Fragrances

Greet the Newest Perfumes to Make your Holidays Bright

By Cheryl Son



ACQUA DI PARMA
Colonia Futura Eau de Cologne
Acqua di Parma just created this new fragrance from its 99-percent-natural ingredients and redesigned the packaging. The brand's eco-friendly message comes through with this description of its latest edition: "a vibrant explosion of natural ingredients, beautifully blended but completely untamed." The fragrance notes contain bergamot, lemon, pink pepper, lavender, clary sage and vetiver.

100ml $170 / Available on sephora.com

CHRISTIAN DIOR
J'adore Infinissime
The newest edition of Dior's most iconic floral fragrance celebrates a woman with a powerful narrative: "She is Woman, infinitely. Proud and noble, head held high, no compromise—chin up." The floral-potent fragrance is crafted with ingredients such as centifolia rose, jasmine sambac, lily and ylang ylang. This newest J'adore product also incorporates blood orange, Grasse tuberose and sandalwood to add a woody splash at the end.

1.7oz $115, 3.4oz $145 / Available on dior.com





BYREDO
Tobacco Mandarin Night Veil
As the newest addition to Byredo's signature Night Veils collection, Tobacco Mandarin is a highly concentrated fragrance for women and men. The top note contains mandarin, coriander and cumin, and the heart note is composed of labdanum, leather accord and tobacco leaves. The intense elixir has the base notes of olibanum, sandalwood and oud wood.

$330 / Available on byredo.com



KILIAN — Angels' Share
Angels' Share is a one-of-a-kind fragrance that will add excitement to the festive moments of the holidays. It's a tribute by acclaimed perfumer Kilian Hennessy to the cognac sold by his family since the 18th century. The fragrance combines cognac oil with cinnamon essence, tonka bean absolute, sandalwood, praline, vanilla and oak absolute.

50ml $195 / Available on Bykilian.com, Bloomingdales.com, BergdorfGoodman.com, NeimanMarcus.com, Nordstrom.com, SaksFifthAvenue.com and Sephora.com



GIORGIO ARMANI — My Way
Created by master perfumer Carlos Benaïm, My Way is the newest fragrance from Giorgio Armani. The scent is made from the finest natural ingredients worldwide: vanilla from Madagascar, tuberose from India and orange blossom note from Egypt. The graceful bottle of My Way is made entirely with recyclable materials to minimize waste.

10ml $29, 30ml $74, 50ml $97, 90ml $126 / Available on giorgioarmanibeauty-usa.com

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ACQUA DI PARMA; KILIAN; GIORGIO ARMANI; BYREDO; CHRISTIAN DIOR



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Very Merry Gifting (Hers)

Perfect presents that she will love.

By Edie Henry



JKT NYC Alexa Gold leather jacket, $341. Grove Hill ATX



Whiting & Davis Heritage collection, Mesh handbag, $370. Lux Rox Boutique



Ramy Brook Sammy blouse, Mulberry, $356. Grove Hill ATX



Anna Cate Gabrielle Gold earrings, $75. Grove Hill ATX



Zadig & Voltaire Board Sparkle sneaker, $298. Lux Rox Boutique



PAIGE Melila vegan leather pant, $229. Grove Hill ATX



Alice + Olivia Zebra beaded handbag, $495. Lux Rox Boutique



Zadig & Voltaire Tink Satin, Bordeaux blouse, $298. Lux Rox Boutique



Sanctuary Mock sweater, magenta, $80. Grove Hill ATX



Cassandra Collections Silver leather tassel earrings $200. Lux Rox Boutique



Zadig & Voltaire Jaden metal gold leather skirt, $898. Lux Rox Boutique

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANDI NELLIS

DESTINATION

DRIPPING SPRINGS

DSTX



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One of the hottest trends we've noticed is homeowners transcending styles from one era to another, like mixing mid-century with modern. If you have eclectic taste in décor, then Curated Cottage is your store. Our decor and furnishings are beautiful, eclectic and always affordable! : **@curatedcottageds**



PANACHE

Panache is a eclectic boutique in the historical district of Downtown Dripping Springs. Debbie Frost opened in 2020 to bring her vision and flare to the Hill Country. Offering unique home décor and furnishings, art, handmade jewelry from Texas artisans, rugs, and other fineries. **www.panachehillcountry.com**



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: **@hausofjayne_official**

Very Merry Gifting (His)

Perfect presents that he will love.

By Edie Henry



Brackish Wayfair pheasant & peacock bow tie, $195. Hutson Clothing Co.



Brax James cardigan sweater, $248. Gatsby's



Mark of Distinction Black Paisley jacket, rental price $190; purchase price $395. Gatsby's



David Donahue necktie, $115;
Robert Talbott necktie, $145;
Jack Victor Neckwear $98.50.
Hutson Clothing Co.



Haupt Check shirt, $195. Gatsby's



David Donahue Purple pre-tied bow tie, $65. Gatsby's



Peter Millar Olive Quilted vest, $185. Hutson Clothing Co.



S. Cohen Logan blue & black sport coat, $695. Gatsby's

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANDI NELLIS



Marcoliani Marjewl 3, $80. Hutson Clothing Co.



Jonathan Wachtel Red and gold cuff link set, $125. Gatsby's



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Tech the Halls

Gift Ideas for the Tech Lover in Your Life

By Jamie Twitchel



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Anker Nebula Capsule

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Contemporary Holiday Cocktails

By Dutch Simmons

The holiday season is right around the corner. If you are ready to become the "Host with the Most," Waterways has got some updated holiday cocktail recipes for you to elevate your gatherings to the next level!

With a nod to some of Austin's local distilleries, these three thoroughly modern holiday cocktails are guaranteed to land you on the "Nice" list!

CHRISTMAS OLD FASHIONED

What better way to blend the old with the new than with an Old Fashioned? This modern take on an Old Fashioned utilizes some festive seasonal additions like a cranberry simple syrup and sugared cranberries for decoration.

The perfect Old Fashioned begins with a great Rye. We love the Kooper Family Rye which is a blend of their 3 and 5-year-old rye whiskeys. The nose of cinnamon and baking spices from this Rye really complements the cocktail's holiday aroma!

Kooper Family Rye
Cranberry Simple Syrup
Angostura Bitters
Cranberries
Sugar
Orange Wedges

In a separate glass, muddle three cranberries, an orange wedge, and one-ounce cranberry simple syrup. Add two ounces Kooper Family Rye and stir. Pour over ice in a rocks glass, and add a few dashes of Angostura bitters and an orange wedge to garnish. If you like, you may rim the glass with sugar to cut some of the cranberry tartness. A garnish with sugared cranberries adds a festive touch.

Cranberry Simple Syrup:
Combine two cups of granulated sugar with 2 cups of water in a small saucepan. Set on low heat and stir until the sugar dissolves. Bring to a simmer, and add 2 cups fresh cranberries. >>

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Avoid boiling or the cranberries will burst. Pour mixture into a bowl and refrigerate for at least 8 hours. Drain cranberries and reserve the liquid. This is your simple syrup, and it can be made days in advance!

BLACKBERRY CHAMPAGNE FIZZ

This holiday cocktail can do double duty being served as a non-alcoholic version for kids and designated drivers to enjoy as well! Plus it's super easy once the blackberry puree is made ahead of time. This drink is versatile because you can substitute raspberries (or really, almost any berry) to make it uniquely yours!

Nothing celebrates the holidays like sparkling wine. We really like William Chris Vineyards Petillant Naturel Rose for this cocktail. With its sweet strawberry profile and hint of lemon creaminess, it is the perfect match for this berry sparkler.

1 pint blackberries (rinsed)
1 ½ tbsp sugar
William Chris Vineyards Petillant Naturel Rose
Chambord Raspberry liqueur (optional)

(Note, for the nonalcoholic version, simply substitute SoCo ginger beer and omit alcohol.)

In a food processor mix the blackberries with the sugar and puree. Strain the puree to remove any seeds. Place 1-2 tbsp of the puree in the bottom of a champagne flute, and top with William Chris Vineyards Petillant Naturel Rose. Splash with Chambord and garnish with a blackberry.

MISTLETOE MARTINI

Get ready to embrace your inner James Bond with this shaken, not stirred martini. What holiday party is complete without a signature martini? This modern take infuses elderflower liqueur to give it a subtle floral, lemony hint that balances the simple syrup and cranberry juice. The result is a light, refreshing cocktail that still packs a punch. Plus, we can't imagine a vodka martini with anything other than Tito's Vodka.

It is a wonderful alternative to heavy eggnog, which, let's be honest, nobody *really* likes eggnog. Plus, it can be made in a large pitcher ahead of time, which means this low maintenance cocktail will free you up for more time engaging with your guests.

1 ½ ounce Tito's Vodka
½ ounce St. Germain Elderflower Liqueur
1 ounce cranberry juice
½ ounce cranberry simple syrup (use the cranberry simple syrup recipe from the Old Fashioned recipe)
Cranberries (for garnish)
Mint Leaves (for garnish)

Fill a cocktail shaker midway with ice. Add the Tito's Vodka, St. Germain Elderflower Liqueur, cranberry juice, and cranberry simple syrup. Shake vigorously for at least 30 seconds until well chilled. Strain into a martini glass; add a couple of cranberries and mint leaves for garnish.

Feel free to experiment with the desired level of sweetness or tartness with the martini. The brightness of the elderflower liqueur can counteract the tartness of the cranberry juice. Just don't go heavy on the simple syrup - nobody wants a post-holiday hangover!

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Celebrate The Season!

Enjoy a German Heritage Holiday in Fredericksburg

By Shelley Seale

Germany is well known for its festive holiday markets and advent celebrations. But you don't need to head to Berlin or Munich to get a taste of German holidaymaking. Central Texans are fortunate to have an historic German town right in our midst: Fredericksburg, in the heart of the Hill Country and only a 90-minute drive from Austin.

Founded in 1846 by the first German settlers in the area, Fredericksburg is still steeped in the authentic culture and heritage they brought from the Old World. This history is especially kept alive on Main Street, which is lined with the original limestone buildings. If you're looking for a winter holiday getaway—whether for a few nights or just a day trip—Fredericksburg provides a magical setting in which to make merry.

SHOPPING SPREE AT THE TREE

The centerpiece of the holiday season is Marktplatz, a green space in the middle of town that serves as its social hub. From late November through early January, the square is flanked by a 30-foot-tall Christmas tree on one side and a 26-foot-tall traditional German Christmas Pyramid, complete with moving wooden figures and a spinning windmill, on the other. The entire Marktplatz glows with colorful lights, and walkable Main Street is a shopper's delight where you can find gifts for everyone. Holiday shopping in town reaches a fever pitch during the Luckenbach Christmas Bazaar (December 5) and Fredericksburg Trade Days holiday edition (December 18-20).

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

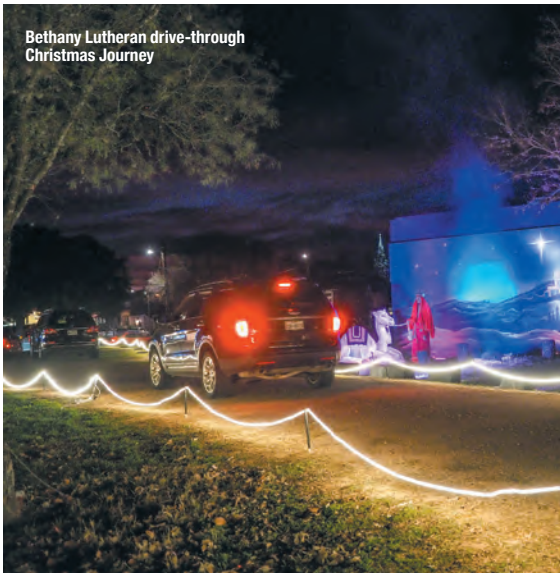
There is so much to do in Fredericksburg, it's hard to know where to start. Kids and adults alike will love carving ice at the Eisbahn Outdoor Ice Skating Rink (open Nov. 27-Jan. 3) as well as the drive-through live Nativity story. Or you can check out fun family events such as A Ranger Christmas at the Texas Rangers Heritage Center (December 5—the same day as the aforementioned Christmas Bazaar). A third event on December 5 is the Pioneer Museum's Kinderfest, a tradition that has lasted for more than 40 years. Kids can bring stockings to hang above the fireplace, which are filled while they enjoy Christmas stories, songs, crafts and refreshments. >>



Luckenbach



Fredericksburg



Bethany Lutheran drive-through Christmas Journey





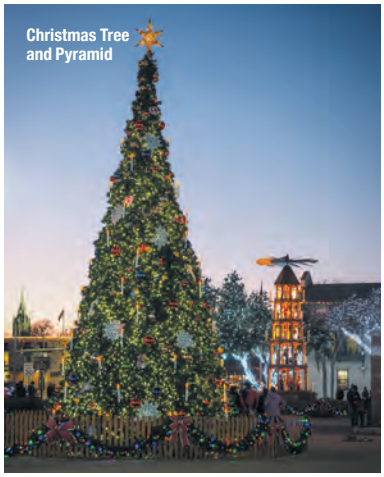
Fredericksburg Brewing Company






German Christmas Pyramid


PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRISH RAVLS


Christmas Tree and Pyramid

PERFORMING ARTS AND A PARADE

A range of performing arts provides holiday entertainment, from a Cowboy Christmas show and live music at Rockbox Theater to the classic Nutcracker ballet presented by the Fredericksburg Dance Company. The fun and raucous Nunsense Christmas Musical plays at Fredericksburg Theater Company if you're looking for a laugh. And the highlight of the holiday season is the spectacular Light the Night Christmas Parade (December 4), with more than 130 floats, bands, animals and more taking part in the spectacle.

HOLIDAY WINING AND DINING

Adults might like to take advantage of the area's intoxicating 290 Wine Road, home to some 22 wineries, to enjoy tastings and events, including live music. The holidays are special at the area's vineyards, with tasting rooms cloaked in lights, warmth and seasonal fun. At the Christmas Wine Affair (December 4-20), you can sample wines at participating wineries on a self-guided wine trail tour. If beer is more your thing, you won't want to miss Fredericksburg Brewing Company, the oldest brewpub in Texas, which pours many medal-winning beers.

Fredericksburg is also quite the foodie town, with a wide range of offerings from German favorites such as The Auslander to great Tex-Mex fare at Bejas and fine dining at establishments like August E's. If you're eating out with small children, Tubby's Ice House is a very family-friendly restaurant as well as a protected haven for monarch butterflies.

If your group is interested in indulging in a private dining experience, there is no more exquisite setting than Das Peach Haus. Serving three- and six-course tasting menus next to a small lake and historic log cabins, this is a culinary adventure like no other. There's also a wonderful gourmet market onsite and cooking classes.

With Fredericksburg so close to the Austin area, and with so much to offer, it's truly a place to discover something new on each visit. And there's no more lovely time of year to enjoy the historic German-like town than during the holiday season.



MainStreet lights



Settlers Crossing

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Christmas Parade

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What's Your *Superpower?*

Austin-based Firm Matches Locals and Businesses with Charities *By Mark Lambert*

The holiday season is always a tough time for people in need. But as we wind up our busy work schedules and prepare for an equally hectic end to the year, the sad reality is that the COVID-19 pandemic is making a tough situation even worse for many vulnerable people living in Austin.

Our community is filled to the brink with generous folks eager to volunteer their time and resources to help. But where to start? How do we get out there and make a real difference when so many corners of our community need a helping hand right now? The problem isn't generosity; Austin residents have plenty of that. It's where to focus that energy.

Here's where the good news begins, thanks to a local consulting firm. Magnify Impact cofounders Hannah Nokes and Maggie Miller are helping Austin's business community make its charitable efforts more effective. It's not what you have, they say, it's how you use it.

"Companies are often generous, but their giving is unfocused," Nokes explains. "They need help putting together a plan that helps them use finite resources wisely."

Amplify Credit Union is a great example. The Austin-based credit union has long been involved in helping the local community, but recently set a goal of amplifying its impact. That led Nokes and Miller to ask them the deceptively simple question they pose to all clients: *What's your superpower?*

"Because they do a lot of home mortgage lending," says Nokes, "we helped Amplify work alongside Saint >>



Magnify Impact cofounders Maggie Miller and Hannah Nokes



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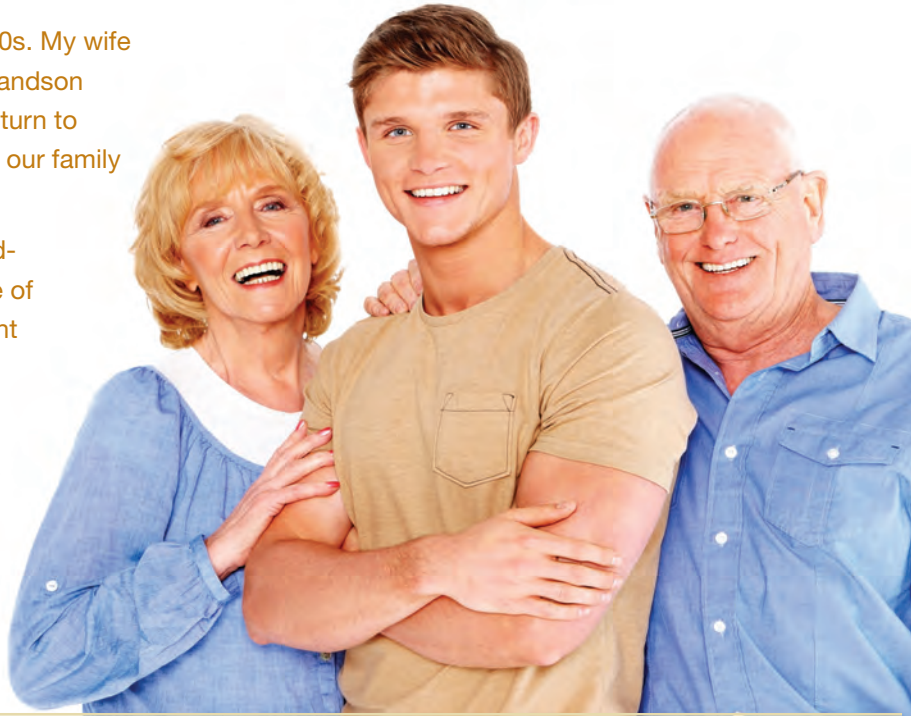
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Louise House (a local safe housing charity) to provide essential living supplies and furniture for families in need. Amplify's superpower lies in its home lending experience and the energy of its customers and employees to help others live comfortably and securely."

It's a happy success story in a year filled with hard moments, and businesses are leaping on board with Magnify Impact, eager to see their limited resources deliver even more good to the community.

"We've seen amazing things happen," Nokes says. "A local hair salon is making wigs for women with breast cancer. An accounting firm is offering free tax services to struggling businesses. We recently worked with a construction company that now offers roofing repairs to elderly homeowners after big storms."

Magnify Impact has even worked with local companies to respond swiftly to the pandemic. "One great COVID example is a local vodka company," says Nokes. "We helped the distillery make and distribute hand sanitizer throughout the national shortage."

A bit like movie superheroes, local businesses are finding ways to leap into action right when and where their help is most needed. It's a fun idea as it's hard not to get excited by the image of Clark Kent-like executives or employees donning superhero capes and using their unique (super) powers to make a difference.

You Can Wear a Cape Too

Can this super idea work for individuals? "Absolutely!" says Nokes. "Just as with our business examples, the trick for Austin locals is to start with what you're most passionate about first. Are you great at hosting parties? Try supporting your cause with a socially-distanced event—maybe a virtual wine and cheese tasting through Antonelli's Cheese Shop. Or you can create your own low-key fundraising event by inviting a friend to join you in dropping off cans of food or a gift card at your favorite local charity.

"Shoppers can support causes like The Salvation Army Angel Tree Program or Foster Angels Toys for Teens. And if your superpower is donating funds, that's cool too. Two of our favorites we will be donating to this holiday season are World Central Kitchen and Helping Hand Home for Children."

Volunteering during the COVID pandemic can be challenging, but Magnify Impact steers volunteers to opportunities that incorporate social distancing or that can be done remotely. "One great way to help from home is writing letters to active military and veterans through Operation Gratitude. Or you can drop off care packages to elderly people isolated in local assisted living facilities. They love to receive greeting cards or hand-drawn pictures from children, so that is a fun way to get your kids involved!"

Time, Talents or Treasure?

It hasn't been the easiest of years. Good news about a local duo helping Austinites to unleash their hidden charity superpowers feels like a refreshing change of pace.

"It doesn't matter if you're part of a thriving local business or just one person wanting to change someone's life this holiday season," says Nokes. "Whether it's your time, talents or treasure, you have a superpower. You just have to find it."

If you're thinking about how to help your community this holiday season, you might start by drawing your curtains, throwing on a cape and asking yourself, *What's my superpower?* Just watch out for those drones when you're saving the world.

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We can all agree THIS HAS BEEN A YEAR and the holidays bring us a perfect excuse for joy, laughter, and GIVING – and no, I'm not just talking about presents. December 5th is International Volunteer Day, and our team at Staying Bothered has decided to carry that spirit through the entire month. An hour or a dollar can make more of a difference than you may think; if you need inspiration for ways to get involved, head over to stayingbothered.com/resources for ideas. **I hope you'll join us in making this season extra special so we can kick off the new year with full hearts.**

With Gratitude. Jamie Amelio

p.s. It's more fun when we're in this together. Find me on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter so we can share ways to make a difference and cheer each other on in our Staying Bothered journeys.





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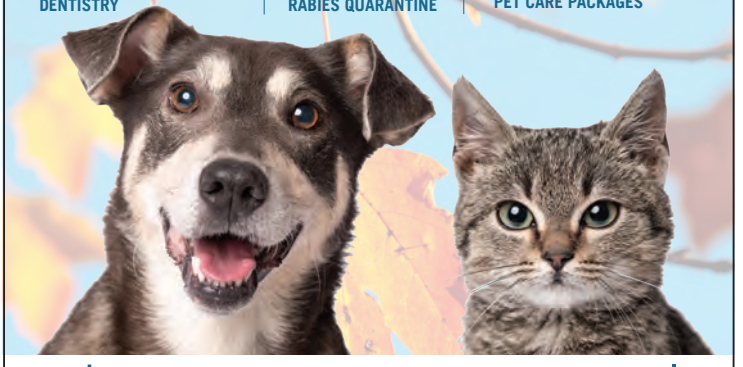
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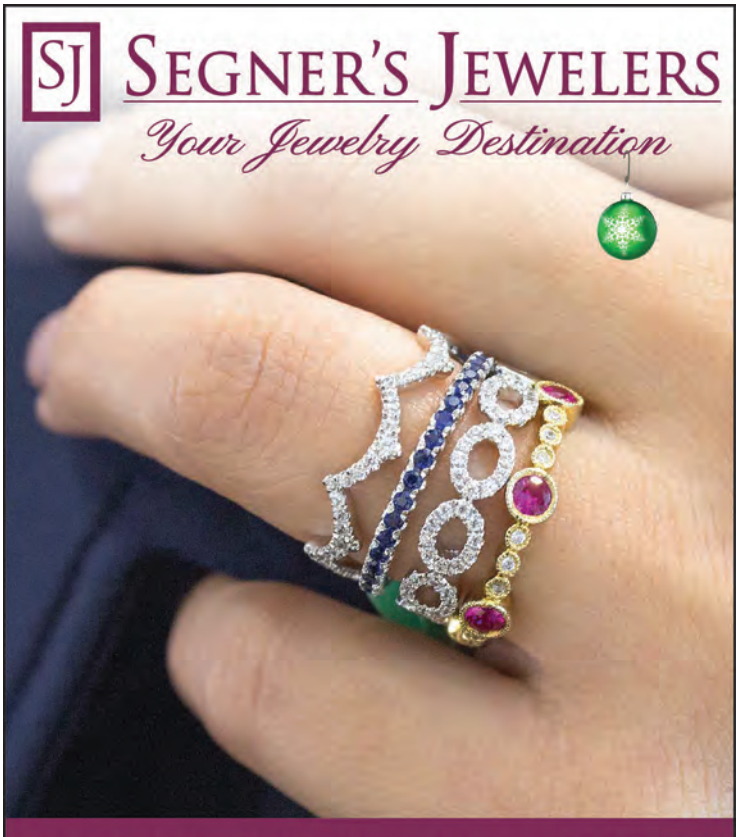
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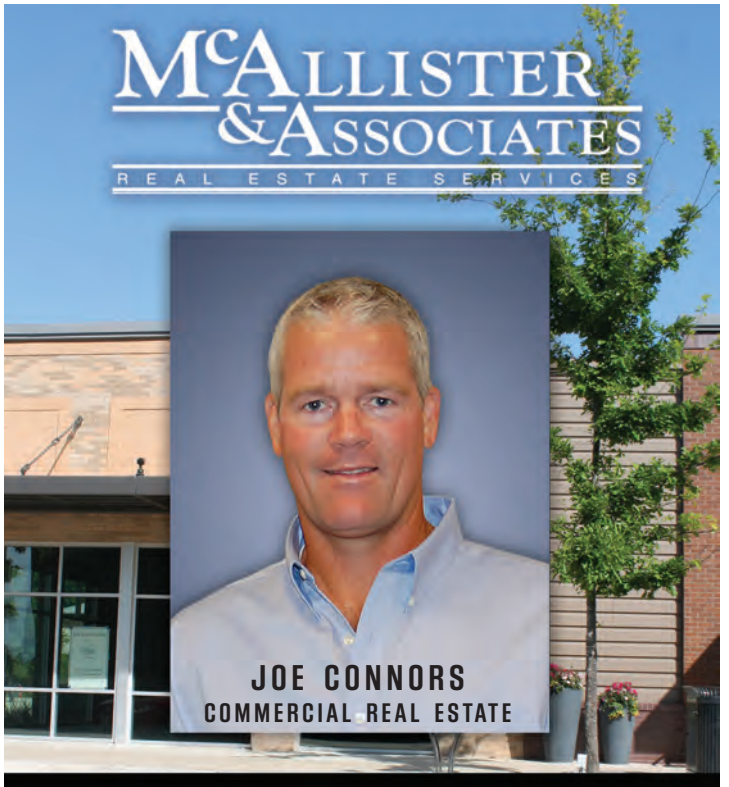
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Missed Connections *By Dutch Simmons*

Jenny wondered if anyone still bothered to read the Craigslist "Missed Connections" section. It seemed antiquated to her, but it was worth a shot. There had to be better technological options to determine how to connect with someone who she met briefly at William Chris Vineyards last Saturday. Unfortunately, Jenny may have been the only Austinite that was technologically challenged.

She laughed at the audacity of the posting in the first place.

"We met briefly when you gallantly jumped behind the counter to fill my empty glass. You were thrown out just as you were about to fill yours. Maybe we could open a fresh bottle in a neutral setting where you won't get kicked out?"

Jenny didn't recognize herself anymore. Pining away at the vision of some rugged do-gooder was clearly due to one too many Match dates gone awry, coupled with her parents' awful attempts at matchmaking. With the holidays quickly approaching, it would be nice to have some arm candy to make the rounds to all of the holiday parties. She didn't need the Hallmark Channel beating home how the holidays are the loneliest time of the year.

It was more than that. He radiated warmth and a gentle, but mischievous nature that sparked something deep inside. The superhero who rescued a damsel in distress at a winetasting with an empty glass and a host that disappeared into the ether.

Jenny admired the chivalrous approach and the bashful gallantry as he filled her glass and said, "It's still too warm in these parts, and too nice a day to be parched."

Before she could respond with something witty, the wine host returned to find her knight in shining armor pouring significantly more than the allotted 3 ounce pours. He was escorted out before he ever got to try the wine.

Like a stray breeze, he dazzled her briefly and disappeared.

Nothing ventured; nothing gained.

Jenny posted the missed connection and decided she would keep it to herself. No reason to incite her friends' concerns about stalking strangers and inviting trouble. As it was, she had a party to prepare for this evening. The Fergusons had a tradition of hosting the earliest Christmas party every year, the first weekend after Thanksgiving.

The Fergusons went all out with their holiday party and made sure that each year had a specialty drink which could not be repeated at a future party. Their disappointment was palpable when Jenny responded that she would indeed be arriving solo.

Brenda Ferguson immediately consulted her Facebook page for a roster of potential last-minute escorts for Jenny, who politely declined. This was going to be her special present for Jenny for the holidays. Most of the potential suitors >>

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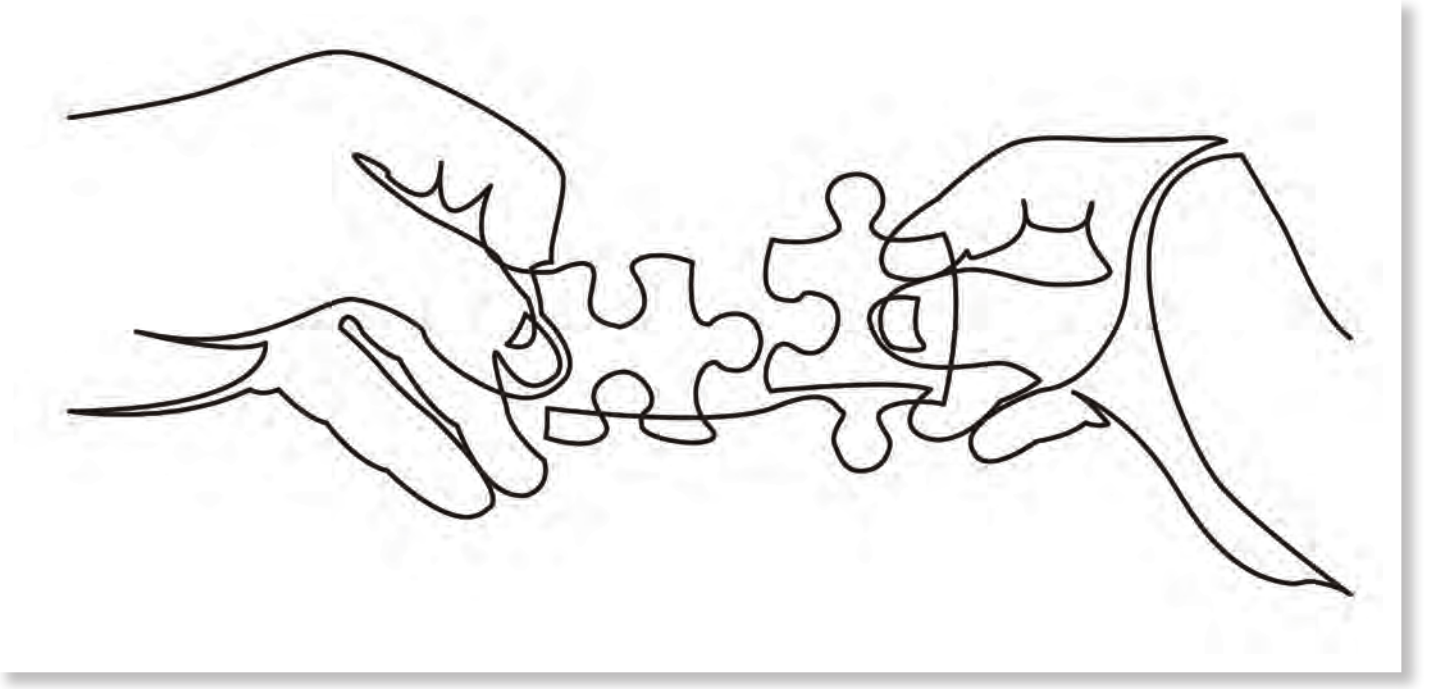
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seemed better suited for mugshots. Brenda vouched for every one of them as to having "*tremendous personalities.*"

The more Jenny thought about it, the more she thought about staying home and drinking the bottle of wine she got from the winery and watching "It's a Wonderful Life" by herself.

The wine!

In the hazy aftermath of her handsome bartender being led away, she never picked up the bottles of wine she was planning on bringing for a hostess gift and the Secret Santa!

Now she was forced to leave early and stop at Total Wine to pick up the bottles she forgot. Rushing to get ready was not part of the plan.

She checked herself in the mirror once more before she left. Despite the frenzied rush, she admitted she looked great. Her friends and colleagues' protestations to the contrary, she most certainly did not need a date, nor a man to complete her. The company would be nice, however. She blew her lip out in a pout and then smiled at her reflection as she ran downstairs to the waiting Uber.

Jenny briskly covered the aisles in Total Wine. Something sparkling and festive would be perfect for the Fergusons, and a bottle of the chardonnay from the winery would make a great Secret Santa gift.

As she turned the corner in her haste, she ran smack into another patron and sent his bottle tumbling to the floor. It shattered and sprayed them both.

Horrified, she looked up to apologize.

It was him!

Her gallant bartender.

Her knight in shining armor who was about to start rusting thanks to the shattered bottle.

Before Jenny could say anything, the stranger looked at her with instant recognition.

"I'm starting to think you just don't want me to have a glass of this wine!" he teased easily.

Jenny blushed; his warm smile put her at ease.

"Oh, you didn't think I would remember you? I've been racking my brain trying to figure out how to get in touch with the brief vision of loveliness who got me kicked out of the winery. I figured at the very least you owed me a glass of wine for getting tossed. After this, I think it's a whole bottle!"

Jenny was emboldened by his charm and her dance with serendipity.

"I have a much better idea. How about joining me at a little holiday get-together tonight? Wine included, and I promise you won't get thrown out!"

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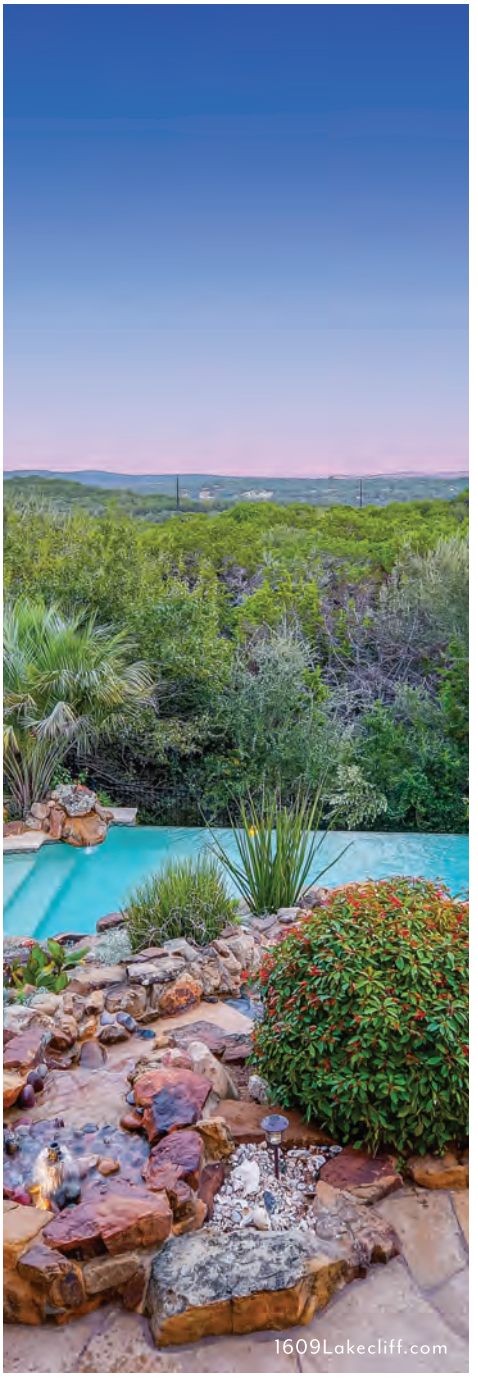
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