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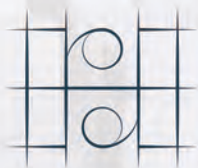
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Frisco



NATIONAL
VIDEOGAME
MUSEUM

SPECIAL ISSUE

Best of the City 2020

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BEST PARK
HEMISFAIR

BEST GUAYABERAS
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BEST BREWERY
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ON THE COVER

The cover features a variety of reader winners, photographed by Josh Huskin. Best influencer, @s.a.foodie, Amanda Spencer, is at Ivy Hall (best selfie spot), wearing a dress from Grey Moon Vintage (best vintage clothing) and carrying a handbag from Feliz Modern (a winner in several categories).





EXPLORER. BROTHER. TOADSTOOL WHISPERER.

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MARCH 2020 / VOLUME 15 / ISSUE 5

“
IF YOU WERE
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ONE BEST OF THE
CITY WINNER, WHO
WOULD IT BE?”

Rebecca Fontenot Cord
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for the Alzheimer’s
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North Padre and Mustang Island and top your summer off with an ice cream sundae at Scoopy's. Extra sprinkles, please.

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I'm writing this from a sunken leather couch with a dimly lit lamp on the table beside me and large concrete pillars and exposed brick walls in front of me. Blues and indie tunes play overhead. There are a few other people scattered on chairs and couches around the room, also working or chatting quietly, while tourists walk in and out. It's my own personal best of the city—best place to go when it's technically closed.

Tucked off the lobby of Hotel Emma, Sternewirth, delights locals and travelers with cocktails and ambiance each night, but before it pours its first drink of the day, its ambiance provides the perfect cozy escape. When I need a change of pace from my cluttered desk in our Full Goods Building office across the Pearl complex, I grab a coffee (or my current go-to, a Mexican hot chocolate) from Larder and find a comfy seat in a quiet corner at Sternewirth to focus undistracted on a task.

This month, we devote our entire issue to celebrating reasons we love San Antonio, including a special focus on some classics of the city—like the news anchors we've trusted to keep us informed for 30 years, the company making the best Fiesta (or anytime) uniform for men and the theater that makes an evening feel special whether it's your first or 101st visit.

You hear it often that San Antonio is a big city that feels like a small town, and one of the greatest parts of that is that there are always more business, places and people to discover. So, what's your personal best of the city? I'd love to hear about it. Even though it's our job to investigate the ins and outs of San Antonio, our staff has a limited reach and we count on our acquaintances, friends, family—and you, our readers—to tell us about the great stories of the city that deserve to be shared.

Send me an email and let me know what you love most about San Antonio and what the rest of the city *needs* to know about. And if you're intrigued by any of the winners featured in these pages, go say hello! I'm confident you'll be met with the friendliness of a small town.

Rebecca

Rebecca Fontenot Cord
Publisher & Editor in Chief

BEHIND THE ISSUE



Randy Beamer told us he considered himself a shy person when he got into the business and that he still likes being behind the camera when he can. Case in point: After letting us photograph him and Don Harris together, Beamer insisted on turning the camera around and photographing SAM executive editor Kathleen Petty, photographer Vincent Gonzalez and his wife, Rebecca Gonzalez. Read about the stories that have most impacted the broadcast pros during their 30 years at WOAI on page 22.



Want to see your photo published in San Antonio Magazine? Tag us in your best shots on Instagram. We'll be printing our favorites in issues throughout the year.
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PARTY TIME

Want to try out some of the treats we laud here? Join us for the annual Best of the City Party that brings these pages to life. Friday, March 13, we're gathering some of the Best of the City winners together in one place, on the grounds of the Witte Museum. Enjoy eats and drinks, pop-up shops and some good old-fashioned fun, while mingling with winners, readers and others who all have one thing in common: a love of San Antonio. Tickets are \$40 for general admission or \$75 for VIP, which includes an exclusive experience and early admission, free valet and a gift bag.
sanantoniomag.com/samagbestof

COMING UP NEXT MONTH

Have an adventurous side? Don't miss our guide to adventure in and around SA.



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style

From soft flowy fashions to fresh flavors
and timeless decor... spring trends are
blooming under the smokestacks.

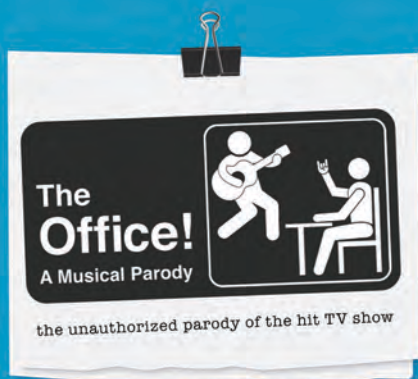
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Culture + Personalities

INSIDE / BEST CLASSIC TV ANCHORS p.22 / BEST

EVENTS TO MAKE YOU THINK p.27

BY LAUREN MORIARTY,
BONNY OSTERHAGE,
KATHLEEN PETTY AND
KATHERINE STINSON

READERS' WINNER
BEST ATHLETE

Patty Mills

As the Spurs have found their new rhythm without the Big Three, it's been Patty Mills who's thrived as a leader—on and off the court. The guard hit his 800th three-point shot coming off the bench for the Spurs this year, becoming just one of three players to accomplish that with one team. He was averaging nearly 12 points per game in the middle of the season, three points higher than his career average thus far. And while his grit for the game is admirable, we're guessing it's the Australia native's easy-going personality

and love of San Antonio that led him to win this category by 800 votes. A Southtown resident, he and wife Alyssa are often spotted around town supporting events and local businesses. We also love his penchant for using his celebrity to raise awareness of his heritage and homeland. Earlier this year, he used his Instagram feed to advocate for support in fighting the Australian wildfires, and in January he teamed up with the Spurs to host the first-ever Indigenous Night that paid tribute to San Antonio's Tapilam Coahuiltecan Nation. As they say in Australia, "Good on Ya'," Patty.



San Antonio Classics

BEST TV ANCHORS

WOAI's Randy Beamer & Don Harris

The technology, newsroom and stories may have changed over the last 30 years, but WOAI anchors Randy Beamer and Don Harris say the art of storytelling remains. “No matter the platform—Facebook or Twitter or Instagram or TV—storytelling is always going to be important and necessary and wanted by the public,” says Harris, a San Antonio native.

When the two began at WOAI in 1989, Beamer, now an Emmy- and Edward R. Murrow-award-winning journalist, had just returned to San Antonio as a reporter following a stint with a station in Denver. Harris, now an Emmy-winning sports anchor

and director, had just accepted an internship making \$6 an hour. “That was back when the newsroom was full of cigarette smoke and typewriters,” Harris says. “Oh,” responds Beamer, cocking his head toward Harris before agreeing that things really have changed that much. In just a few years, Beamer was promoted to anchor and Harris followed. Since then, the two have collectively told stories around the world and interviewed renowned athletes, leaders and locals whose stories they say continue to touch them today. “It’s not about you,” says Beamer, adding that he’s ready to put the accolades that came with celebrating 30 years behind them. “It’s about your ability to get someone to open up and tell their story or to find out something fascinating and tell it in the best way you can.”

What's kept you here in San Antonio?

DH: When people get into this business, their goal is usually to be on ESPN, but my priorities changed. My parents live here, my wife's parents live here. This is home, and after a while you never want to leave. San Antonio is awesome. I love it. I love the people, the culture. Also, I grew up here and know the sports and have been able to develop real valuable relationships with coaches and administrators and nonprofits and athletes. I'm living the dream.

RB: I just love San Antonio. I came here initially for a job at a different station. I had the opportunity to go to Denver after that and I loved it, but it wasn't San Antonio. There's a warmth here. People who leave and come back here sometimes appreciate it more. It's home. There are so many different things to report on. We cover from Del Rio to Gonzales up to Austin and down to Laredo. I've done stories in Mexico and South America and because of the military here I've gotten to do stories in Iraq and Sri Lanka.

What have been some of your favorite stories?

DH: You know, that first Spurs championship in 1999, we had the games on NBC so we did an hour of pre-game and post-game coverage and we were on air until like 3 o'clock in the morning, and Beamer was live on the River Walk being drenched in beer by fans.

RB: And sweating profusely.

DH: Those are the highs, but there have also been a few tragic stories where I've enjoyed getting to know—and have been inspired by—the subjects. Eddie Moreno, an Alamo Heights basketball player who was shot randomly in a drive-by while he was in the drive-thru at McDonald's—his courage is just amazing. He's completely paralyzed and he's just a real inspiration. We still keep in touch.

RB: Yeah, there have been so many. Obviously going to Iraq with people from here at Wilford Hall. That's probably one of the most memorable. But, also just the positive stories and the people stories I've been able to tell here in San Antonio. I still keep in touch with a family whose mom was shot in a random, stupid drive-by and I was able to kind of tell how that shooting impacted everyone, from the victim's kids to the shooter's family. That kind of thing sticks with me. Then there are the weird stories and the history. Did you know there's a nudist "resort" southeast of San Antonio?

You hit 30 years in 2019, but you're not going anywhere. What's still on your to-do list?

RB: There are always still things I want to do. I'd love to go to Afghanistan. I've been approved to go a couple of times and for different reasons I haven't been able to go in the end, but I'd love to do that.

DH: One of the things I really enjoy doing is growing young talent and mentorship. I'm really proud of the kids who were here and are now working as sportscasters in other markets.

I've done everything I've ever wanted to do—Super Bowls, World Series, All-Star games. I've met Michael Jordan, Muhammad Ali, it's been way beyond my wildest dreams. Wimbledon would be on my bucket list, but we don't really cover that. Mostly I just want to continue doing what we do well: Spurs, Cowboys, high school sports. Red McCombs told me the key to success long-term is to never stop learning. I want to continue to learn and adapt.

What advice would you give to new reporters?

DH: Learn it all—shoot, write, edit, produce, report, read. Read, read, read—read a lot. You can't be a good writer if you're not a good reader. Success isn't going to happen overnight.

RB: Keep at it, and don't expect to get paid a lot of money. These days with the convergence of medias, there are fewer people and you can do a lot of things. Stay curious and if there's anything that you're ever passionate about, go ahead and pursue that story even if you don't think it will be something right away. The only dumb question is the one you don't ask. Stay curious.

+2 More San Antonio Classics



BEST THEATER Majestic Theatre

The Majestic Theatre is so committed to the preservation of its classic ornate carvings, tiled floors and star-lit ceiling that it employs a restoration artist to come in four days a week and ensure every last Baroque, Mediterranean and Spanish Mission-inspired architectural flourish remains intact. It's that attention to detail that makes a concert, Broadway show or comedy in this 1929 theater an experience that goes far beyond what's on stage, and one every San Antonian should take in at least once. 224 E. Houston St., majesticempire.com

BEST RETIRED ATHLETE David Robinson

With two NBA championships and a legacy as one of the sport's top centers, David Robinson didn't have to do anything after retiring from basketball to be remembered by San Antonians. But the Admiral long made it clear his mission was about more than just sports and he's continued to pour into the community since his last game in 2003, including investing \$9 million to found Carver Academy (now IDEA Carver Academy). In the last year, he and his son David Robinson Jr. launched *The Fundamentals* podcast, he touted the importance of arts as honorary chair of SA's Gurwitz International Piano Competition in January and he's helping to raise \$50 million for an investment fund meant to help economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in Texas.



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Music in the Museums

The creative ways that museums draw visitors in to enjoy art in its various forms continues to inspire us. At the McNay Art Museum and San Antonio Museum of Art, live music has brought galleries and entryways at both institutions to life. Whether it's San Antonio Symphony musicians performing based on a piece in a special exhibition at the San Antonio Museum of Art or a date night performance or the progressive "Headphone Operettas" concert composed by Nathan Felix that was performed inside the *Picasso to Hockney* exhibit at the McNay Art Museum (above), the collaborations let guests experience art in new, exciting ways and is something the museums have committed to continuing this year. 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave., mcnayart.org; 200 W. Jones Ave., samuseum.org



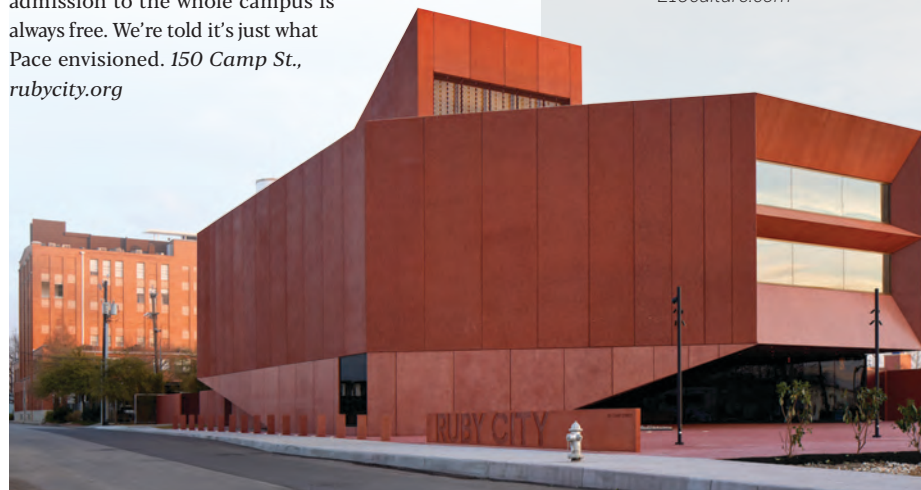
BEST ARTS ORGANIZATION FOR YOUTH
SAY SI

In its first 25 years, SAY Si grew from a small arts education program that served 12 students to a major nonprofit that works with around 200 middle and high school students through its year-round arts education

offerings as well as over 4,000 others through its community outreach programs. They're committed to making art accessible to *all* youth and are as diverse in the topics they offer as in the students they serve. Later this year, the organization embarks on its next chapter as it moves from Southtown to a larger location on the West Side that will allow the nonprofit to serve more students and to add programs in culinary arts, journalism and digital music composition. saysi.org

BEST NEW CULTURAL HUB
Ruby City

It's not often that something 12 years in the making lives up to its hype, but Ruby City—the contemporary art center that was the vision of the late art collector and philanthropist Linda Pace—surpassed even our greatest hopes. Situated along San Pedro Creek and designed by renowned architect David Adjaye, the 14,500-square-foot art center shines from blocks away thanks to its precast red concrete exterior that's accented with small pieces of glass to make the building literally sparkle when the sun hits it. Inside, every detail was designed with intention to show off pieces from Pace's 900-piece collection while also engaging visitors with the art. The sculpture garden is ideal for lunch break lingering and admission to the whole campus is always free. We're told it's just what Pace envisioned. 150 Camp St., rubycity.org



BEST CULTURAL EVENT
Fiesta San Antonio

BEST ART GALLERY
Presa House Gallery

BEST LIVE MUSIC VENUE
Tobin Center for the Performing Arts



BEST MUSEUM
McNay Art Museum

BEST NEWS STATION
KSAT

BEST PODCAST
210 Culture

Hosts Genaro Garcia III, Donna Salome Mascarro and Dominic Marcellius Worch discuss the best news around town in their weekly podcast, which often spotlights local talent and small business owners. "It's beautiful when these people share their stories because it brings a sense of community and inspiration," Garia III says. 210culture.com

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BEST BLOGGER FOR DINNER IDEAS Cassy Joy Garcia's Fed + Fit

Cassy Joy Garcia has made a name for herself by perfecting the art of easy-to-prepare home-made meals that are not only delicious, but also good for you. A certified holistic nutritionist-turned-author, Garcia takes a realistic approach to healthy living that focuses less on limiting the foods you eat, and more on eating as many foods as possible that work for your body. Her most recent cookbook, *Cook Once Eat All Week*, is filled with meal prep tips and guidance to help you minimize your time in the kitchen and maximize your time sitting around the family table with nourishing foods. fedandfit.com



BEST NEW IDEA

Free Tuition Programs at San Antonio College and UTSA

The local leaders behind the Alamo Promise program and the UTSA Bold Promise program aren't just talking about increasing the number of college grads in San Antonio, they're making sure it happens. Alamo Promise provides financial support to graduating seniors from participating high schools who wish to earn a certificate or associates degree at one of the five Alamo colleges. The UTSA Bold Promise program has a similar mission and is designed to cover 100 percent of tuition for promising students who may not otherwise be able to afford a college education (which according to UTSA could be an estimated 4,100 newly admitted students in the fall 2020 semester). alamo.edu/promise, future.utsa.edu/promise

BEST COMMUNITY MOVEMENT

South Texas Trauma-Informed Care Consortium

When children experience trauma without any intervention, data shows it leads to high rates of chronic disease and lower life expectancies, as well as higher rates of abuse

and neglect. With intervention, that—and the future of San Antonio—can all change. That's the grand vision of the South Texas Trauma-Informed Care Consortium, which has a goal of integrating trauma-informed approaches into schools, health care systems, nonprofits and other sectors. It will be a decades-long process but it's a commitment to change we continue to admire. sanantonio.gov/health

BEST TWITTER ACCOUNT

Shea Serrano

New York Times bestselling author and San Antonio native Shea Serrano is known for his frank and funny tweets as well as his spontaneous acts of charity on Twitter—including the time he paid a follower's electrical bill and in December when his nearly 323,000 followers, known as the FOH (F*** Outta Here) Army, raised over \$28,000 that Serrano donated to the Martinez Street Women's Center, which provides health care and education programs. [@SheaSerrano](https://twitter.com/SheaSerrano)



BEST COUPLE GOALS

Patty & Alyssa Mills

Whether walking their dog together near their Southtown residence or arriving for an away game in style, Patty and Alyssa Mills complement each other in that easy-going way that makes it hard to look on without smiling. Wed in Hawaii last summer, the two met in college and have been there for each other since. In addition to sharing their personal passions, like fashion, fitness and Patty's native Australia, the two actively promote their love of San Antonio. In a video last year, they shared some of their favorite local spots—from the Mission Reach to Herb-n-Juice. "It feels good to come back home to San Antonio and get back into a routine and enjoy it," Mills told fans, adding that they're just "everyday people" who like to go for coffee and walks with their dog.

Best Events To Make You Think If...



YOU'RE A POWERPOINT JUNKIE **PechaKucha**

Start by meeting someone new during a happy hour mixer before spending the evening hearing from artists, CEOs, entrepreneurs, musicians and others talk about a topic on which they're passionate. The catch? They only get 20 seconds to talk about each of the 20 images they've selected to scroll on a big screen behind them. Named for the Japanese term for the sound of chit-chat and meant to be informal, the event started in Japan in 2003 and has become a nearly 10-year tradition in San Antonio. pechakucha.com

YOU LOVE A GOOD STORY **Texas Public Radio's Worth Repeating**

Seven storytellers take the stage for seven minutes each and while there's always a central theme, the personal tales cover a wide array of topics and emotions that leave us laughing, crying or wanting to learn more. tpr.org/programs/worth-repeating

YOU WANT TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION **Pub Theology**

Co-host Bekah McNeel aptly describes these Wednesday gatherings at The Friendly Spot as "what happens in the best moments in a pub when things get real." We love the informal atmosphere that allows people from various backgrounds to sit together and discuss everything from immigration to art. Pastor and founder Gavin Rogers wants to hear how faith impacts people's views, but he works to keep diversity among his featured guests and has invited city leaders and advocates plus individuals from Christian, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish and other backgrounds. facebook.com/pubtheologysa

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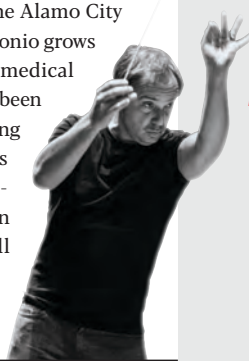
*Irish Whiskey Sale runs 3/9/20-3/21/20. Discount off regular priced 750ml bottles of Irish Whiskey. Spring wine sale runs 3/16/20-4/11/20. Valid on regular priced 750ml bottles of wine. Some exclusions apply. Please drink responsibly.

BEST PHILANTHROPIST
Gordon Hartman

Dad and local philanthropist Gordon Hartman has more than made his mark on the city with Morgan's Wonderland, the 25-acre all-accessible theme park inspired by his daughter, Morgan, who lives with special needs, but he's not stopping there. The Gordon Hartman Foundation is building a sports facility nearby that will be fully accessible as well as a Morgan's Wonderland Camp. The camp is slated for north of San Antonio and will eventually host over 500 campers and staff for retreats where individuals with (and without) special needs can swim, float the river, horseback ride, learn archery and more. And because Hartman knows how tough it can be to navigate services for a loved one, the foundation also is creating a multi-assistance center that will offer a new approach to coordinating therapy, medical and social services. gordonhartman.com

BEST ARTS ADVOCATE
Sebastian Lang-Lessing

San Antonio Symphony music director Sebastian Lang-Lessing steps down from his role this spring after a decade with the symphony. He's not only seen the organization through tumultuous times, Lang-Lessing also has been a vocal advocate for all fine arts in San Antonio, sharing honest realities about the increased support arts in the Alamo City need to survive *and* thrive. As San Antonio grows and works to become a hub for tech, medical and other industries, Lang-Lessing has been there to remind leaders that flourishing arts scenes are part of what makes cities truly great. We'll miss his frank perspective and are glad to hear he's staying on as music director emeritus, which will bring him back to San Antonio at least once a year. sasymphony.org



READERS' WINNERS

BEST PUBLIC ART PIECE
Murals Under I-35 at St. Mary's St.

BEST ARTIST
Kenny Plaster

BEST BAND/MUSICIAN
Los Nahuatlitos

BEST INFLUENCER
@S.A.Foodie

Over 100,000 followers drool over Amanda Spencer's mouthwatering photos that highlight the best eats around town, from steaming udon noodle bowls (at Artea) to cupcakes (from Bird Bakery).

Spencer started her popular Instagram account in 2015 when she was bartending and looking for a creative outlet. In January 2019, she quit her bartending job and now works on @S.A.Foodie full time. "I finally have my dream job and couldn't be happier," she says. instagram.com/s.a.foodie, eatsandtravels.net

3 Dishes @S.A.Foodie Recommends

Garlicky cold noodles
at Sichuan House

Wet bacon cheeseburger
at Mr. Juicy

Torta moreliana
at Carnitas Don Raul

BEST MAKER
Very That

BEST MASCOT
Coyote

BEST POLITICIAN
Julián Castro

BEST TV PERSONALITY
David Elder

READERS' WINNER

BEST CHEF
Tatu Herrera
Owner, Folklores Coffee House

If you'd asked Tatu Herrera five years ago what he'd be doing in 2020, running coffee shops would not have crossed his mind. The South San Antonio native and Culinary Institute of America San Antonio grad was the chef de cuisine at a local Hyatt then and had the goal of opening his own restaurant.

After he and his wife Emily backpacked through Europe, though, they realized it was a coffee shop, not a restaurant, that their South Side neighborhood lacked. "All the coffee shops over there were real homey and had this neighborhood vibe," he says. "We didn't have that here. The closest place, other than Starbucks, was at Pearl."

So, in 2018 they launched Folklores Coffee House on South Flores Street. It recently expanded to a second location on the East Side.

Herrera still works as a chef through private catering and by participating in things like the April 16 Taste of the Republic Fiesta event. He also hosts a market at the South Side Folklores each fourth Saturday so younger chefs and vendors have a place to pop-up and introduce themselves.



To fall in love with coffee the way he had with cooking as a kid, Herrera says he looked at their menu like a restaurant menu, creating lattes with housemade cereal milk, brûléed bananas and homemade vanilla syrup. KSAT also features him regularly in online cooking videos where he teaches locals how to master dishes at home with everyday ingredients.

And while his shop has become a hot spot for coffee, Herrera says

he's more proud that it's also become a community hub and a place people know they can turn to for support. Along with volunteering in the neighborhood, Herrera also speaks to youth whenever he can. "I grew up in a gang on the West Side. That was my story. I grew up in the 1990s when people were getting killed all the time. I am that story of survival," he says. "I want kids to know that we all make mistakes but you can achieve anything you want."

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Fun

INSIDE / BEST PLACES FOR FUN WITH DOGS p.32 / BEST PLACE FOR FUN EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK p.34 / BEST ALTER EGOS p.36

BY LAUREN MORIARTY,
BONNY OSTERHAGE,
KATHLEEN PETTY AND
KATHERINE STINSON



READERS' WINNER
BEST BAR FOR TRIVIA

El Luchador

Comedy, popular TV shows and a little friendly competition collide each Tuesday night at El Luchador, the bar that opened on the edge of Southtown in 2017. The owners recruited local comedian Tori Poole to lead the games, which are written by the trivia company Who Wants a Dollar? Co-owner Vanessa Martinez says they're fans of TV so they select themes based on some of their favorites, from *The Office* to *Stranger Things*. "We're all kind of TV show nerds so we pick things that we would love to play that aren't really offered anywhere else," Martinez says. After Betty White's 98th

birthday, they hosted *Golden Girls* night and around the holidays *Mean Girls* often makes an appearance as a nod to its "Jingle Bell Rock" talent show performance scene. Teams of up to six answer six rounds with eight questions each. Correct bonus answers bring an award and first-, second- and third-place teams receive a cash prize. Guests are welcome to bring their own food, and there's always a trivia-themed drink special at the bar. Martinez says El Luchador may not have the chic exterior of downtown bars, but they deliver with luchador-themed décor and fun inside. "We have that trendy dive-feel," she says. 622 Roosevelt Ave., luchadorbarsa.com

San Antonio Classics



BEST PLACE WITH A SECOND LIFE

Kiddie Park

Since 1925, kids of all ages have flocked to the classic attractions at Kiddie Park, and thanks to its new home at the San Antonio Zoo that tradition will continue for years to come. The park's former owner approached zoo leaders in 2018 about the move as development encroached on the original Broadway location. The rides, including the Herschell-Spillman carousel that was built in 1918 and its original signage, moved over the summer and the park re-opened in October 2019 at the zoo. Along with continuing to provide a place for fun, Kiddie Park ticket revenue now supports the zoo's mission. 3903 N. St. Mary's St., kiddiepark.com

BEST PLACE TO TAKE OUT-OF-TOWNERS

Japanese Tea Garden

It's common for visitors to arrive in San Antonio with a list of places they already know they want to visit: the Alamo, Pearl, Six Flags Fiesta Texas. Acquiesce to those requests but also surprise guests with a stop at the Japanese Tea Garden at Brackenridge Park. Built into a former rock quarry in 1918, the garden features a 60-foot waterfall, lily pond stocked with fish and so much flora and fauna that it's tough to believe you're mere minutes from downtown. Stroll along the paths and footbridges, or admire it after tea at the Jingu House Café. 3853 N. St. Mary's St., sanantonio.gov/parksandrec

BEST HAUNTED SPOT

Menger Hotel

There's no guarantee you'll encounter a ghost during an overnight stay at this hotel situated next to the Alamo but it's rumored that dozens of spirits regularly roam its halls. Opened in 1859 by William and Mary Menger on the site of their brewery, the hotel's guests in recent decades have reported spotting the ghosts of President Teddy Roosevelt (who once recruited his Rough Riders at the hotel bar and is said to return for a drink), King Ranch's Capt. Richard King (who died in a second floor room that was once his suite and is the place he's reported to walk through walls today) and Sallie White (a former maid who was killed by her husband and whose spirit has been spotted carrying linens upstairs). Add to that the nearby ghosts of the dozens of men killed during the Battle of the Alamo and there's an intriguing aura around the ornate hotel. Even if you don't see a ghost, we promise you'll experience plenty of history. 204 Alamo Plaza, mengerhotel.com

BEST FUN WITH DOGS

PARK

Woodlawn Lake Park

Keep your pup on a leash so you can both enjoy a leisurely stroll around the lake and then let them loose in the 0.5-acre dog park nearby to get out the rest of their energy. This dog park may not have the equipment of popular spots like Hardberger Park, but the smaller crowds mean there's plenty of space for canines to play. Plus, with free wifi and benches for owners wanting to start or finish their workday outside the office, there are few better options for multitasking. In 2019, the Lighthouse Lounge opened nearby with a pup-friendly patio so you can continue the fun into happy hour. 1103 Cincinnati Ave., sanantonio.gov/parksandrec

BAR/RESTAURANT

The Cove

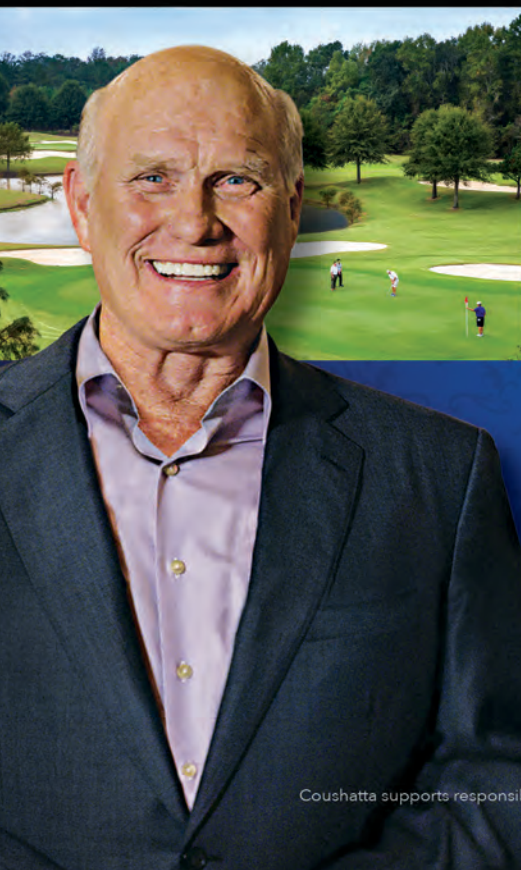
When The Cove says it's family-friendly that includes dogs and the Five Points-area restaurant does plenty to make pups feel welcome while their humans enjoy burgers, sweet potato fries and one of the 50-plus Texas brews on tap. Bartenders provide water bowls for dogs by request and there's ample seating in the large outdoor space. Health Department rules mean you can't let your dog share the meal you order, but The Cove has plenty of doggy bags so you can take leftover bites home for them to enjoy. 606 W. Cypress St., thecove.us



PLACE FOR SHOPPING

The Shops at La Cantera

Its motto of "sit, stay, shop" extends to four-footed shoppers at more than 50 retailers at this Northwest Side mall. Restaurant patios and other common areas are also dog-friendly, and the shopping center provides waste disposal bags on-site. To make it a "pawsitive" experience for everyone, pups must be on a leash at all times, be tagged and up-to date on shots, and any dogs exhibiting aggressive or disruptive behavior are not allowed (though that goes for humans too!). 15900 La Cantera Pkwy., theshopsatlacanter.com



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Best Fun on a...

MONDAY

All-Day Happy Hour

Because we all get a case of the Mondays every once in awhile, there's all-day happy hour deals on cocktails at Blue Box at Pearl, on dozens of craft beers at The Hoppy Monk and on drinks plus tasty food at Hanzo. blueboxbar.com, hanzobar.com, thehoppymonk.com/sanantonio

TUESDAY

Chicken + Champagne at Downstairs at The Esquire

Whether you're downtown to take advantage of free Downtown Tuesday parking or to see a show at the Majestic or Aztec theaters, don't call it a night until you've found a seat at Downstairs at The Esquire Tavern, where every order of champagne on Tuesday is accompanied with free hand-dipped, organic fried chicken. 155 E. Commerce St., esquiretavern-sa.com

WEDNESDAY

Cocktails + Culture at the Witte

Typically held once a month, these adults-only nights at the Witte Museum give the 21-and-up set the chance to explore exhibits that are often

crowded with little ones and to learn about everything from dinosaurs to mythical creatures. Beer and cocktails give it a happy hour vibe and there's food truck fare for sale on-site. 3801 Broadway, wittemuseum.org

THURSDAY

McNay Second Thursdays

Enjoy free general admission each Thursday evening at the McNay Art Museum thanks to H-E-B. On second Thursdays (March through October), the fun doesn't stop there. After a stroll through the galleries, find a spot on the grass outside for your blanket and lawn chairs to enjoy live music. Drinks and food truck fare are available for purchase and kids and dogs are always welcome. (This month's, March 12, will feature Bidi Bidi Banda.) 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave., mcnayart.org

FRIDAY

Donuts + Coffee at Artpace

Admission to Artpace is always free, but the gallery founded by Linda Pace sweetens the deal from 8-10 a.m. on Friday mornings when it offers free local

donuts from its rooftop, where Estate Coffee Co. sets up its cart with coffee, lattes and more for purchase. 445 N. Main Ave., artpace.org

SATURDAY

Second Saturday Artwalk

Those who don't get their fill of arts on First Friday can return to Southtown each Second Saturday for local art, food, drinks and more in the Lone Star and Collins Garden neighborhoods. Freight Gallery & Studios and Dorcol Distilling + Brewing Co. typically host artists or live music while area eateries, including Il Forno, Gold Coffee at Freight and The Fruteria, offer specials. Plan to walk between venues to soak in all of the ambiance. southtownsatx.com/second-saturday

SUNDAY

Paramour Drag Shows

Drag Queen Kristi Waters hosts over-the-top drag shows each Sunday at noon and 1 p.m. on Paramour's rooftop bar. Fill a plate with brunch goodies by Guerrilla Gourmet, order a craft cocktail from the bar and settle in for shows with themes that range from Broadway Babes to Viva Las Vegas. 102 9th St., Ste. 400, paramourbar.com



READERS' WINNERS



BEST DATE NIGHT
BEST FREE FUN
BEST GROUP OUTING
BEST TOURIST
ATTRACTION
 Pearl

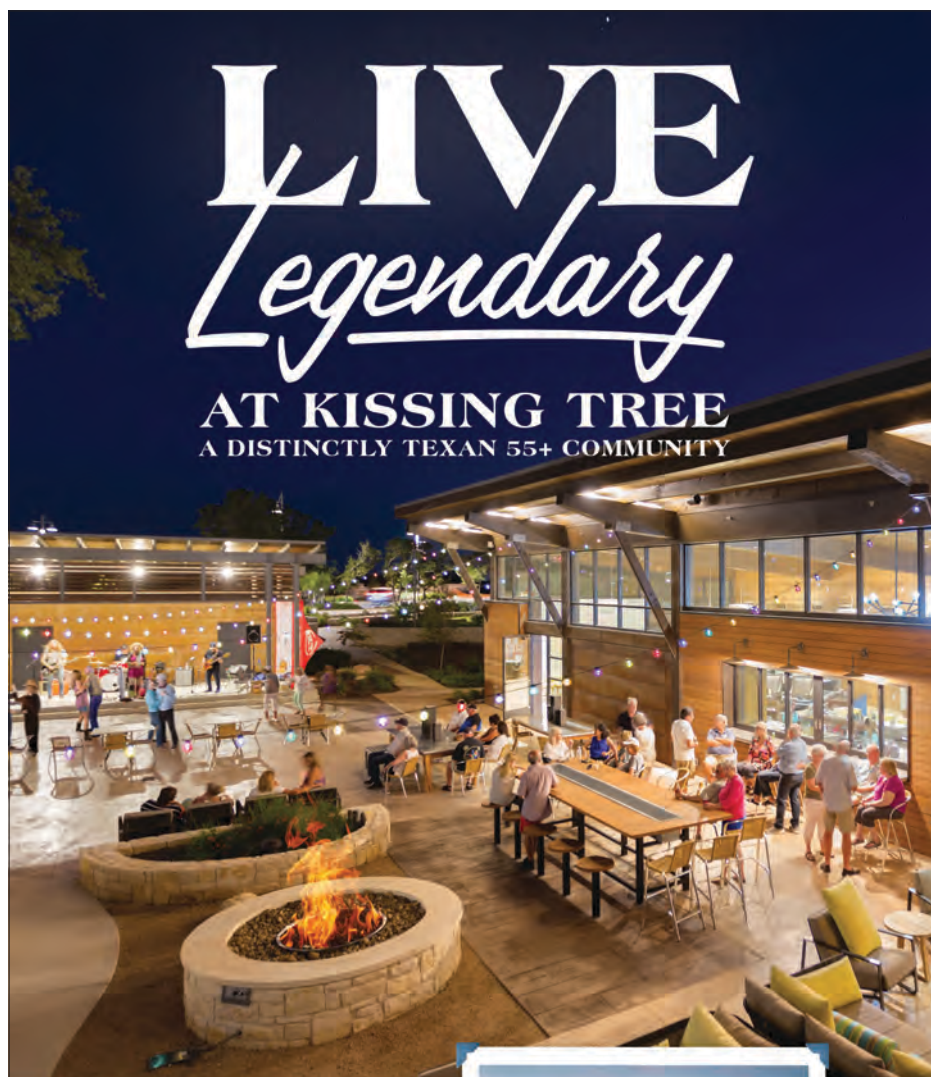
It's tough to argue with a multi-award winner. Pearl won the readers' vote in all of these categories—plus two more in the Culture section—and it's not difficult to see why. With weekly farmers markets, vibrant holiday celebrations (see Día de Los Muertos, Chanukah, Fourth of July and more) and regular live DJ music nights that complement the splash pad, Bottling Dept. Food Hall and myriad local shops and restaurants, Pearl continues to deliver whether you're looking for free family fun, a romantic date night or happy hour with friends. 303 Pearl Pkwy., atpearl.com

BEST FAMILY-FRIENDLY FUN
 San Antonio Zoo

BEST FIESTA EVENT
 King William Fair

The quirky, neighborhood parade is always fun and the streets filled with festively decorated historic homes, food booths, artist wares and more turn the fair into a full day event. kwfair.org

BEST HIKE/BIKE TRAIL
 Mission Reach



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**BEST ALTER EGOS****San Antonio Rampage Los Chimuelos & San Antonio Missions Flying Chancas**

The specialty jerseys and promotions (like dollar drink night) during these theme-nights when San Antonio's minor league sports teams take on their Hispanic-themed alter egos bring a fun energy to the crowd that's tough to beat. sarampage.com, samissions.com

BEST PLACE TO SPOT A CELEBRITY
Hotel Emma & Smoke + Ash

In December, Cher took to Twitter to exclaim that she'd stayed in "amazing hotels" all over the world but that Hotel Emma "might take the cake." She's just the start of celebs who've made reservations at the Pearl gem—from musicians to pro basketball players. Near Sunset Station, Smoke barbecue restaurant hosted Khalid, who performed karaoke at the venue last summer, while its neighbor, the downstairs bar Ash, served LeBron James and Anthony Davis. 136 E. Grayson St., thehotelemma.com; 1168 E. Commerce St., smokedowntown.com; 1170 E. Commerce St., ashsanantonio.com

BEST BINGE-WORTHY SA SHOW
Texicanas

The ladies behind Bravo's SA-based reality show caused quite a buzz with their May 2019 premiere. Narrated by local real estate broker Penny Ayarzagotia, the eight-show series follows a group of friends as they navigate careers, family life

and busy social calendars all while honoring their Mexican heritage. It's best enjoyed with a cocktail in hand and a girlfriend by your side. bravotv.com/texicanas

BEST CREATIVE TAKE ON
VOLUNTEERING
Shelter Paws

We can get behind any program that helps more pets find forever homes, which is why we love this "dog for a day" initiative launched in 2019 by the city's Animal Care Services Department. Staff match volunteers with pups that have been passed over for adoption and send the dogs home for anywhere from two hours to a full day so the volunteer can play, relax and take a walk or car ride with the animal. When they return the dog, a report is filled out providing details about the pup's personality, which helps Animal Care Services find them a family faster. It's a great way to get involved if you're not ready for a pet full-time, and it's been successful in matching dogs that might have been otherwise overlooked. sanantonio.gov/animal-care

BEST FOOD FESTIVAL
Titans of Tailgate

Chef Jason Dady hosts what he correctly describes as "the best tailgate party ever" each winter (in the weeks leading up to the Super Bowl) featuring chefs from throughout San Antonio who serve up grilled bites in every style imaginable. Aside from the food, we love the camaraderie among chefs and that it supports the next generation by raising funds for high school culinary programs.

BEST WAY TO FIND FRIENDS WHILE
GETTING FIT
SATX Social Ride

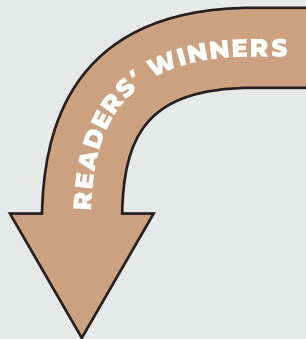
What started as a group of friends riding around downtown has now grown to a gathering of 200 or more who meet each Tuesday for a 10-12 mile evening bike ride. Founder Jeffrey Moore creates routes that are safe but also diverse, taking regulars through familiar and less-familiar pockets of San Antonio. More about fun than intense fitness training, the group has fostered many-a-close friendship and usually provides info on cycling safety. The rides often begin at Burleson Yard Beer Garden, but follow its Facebook group for updates on where to meet each week. facebook.com/groups/satnbc

BEST PLACE FOR PEOPLE WATCHING
Pearl

The city's largest weekend farmers market is as much a hub for observing customers—families with rambunctious kids, couples sipping coffee or brunch cocktails and dog owners galore—as it is for foraging for produce. Outside of the weekend, the 22-acre complex is home to some of the city's finest restaurants, unique boutiques and green spaces. Grab a cup of coffee at Merit Roasting or Larder, treat yourself to a pastry from Bakery Lorraine and find a chair near the park, the fountain near Southerleigh Fine Food & Brewing or along the river and take in the sights as locals enjoy this ever-evolving treasure. 303 Pearl Pkwy., atpearl.com

**BEST PLACE FOR AN URBAN ESCAPE**
Denman Estate Park

Its vibrantly colored Pavilion of Gwangju sets this escape amid the city apart while its majestic live oaks, crepe myrtles, picturesque pond and perennials add to the serene setting. A spiraling pathway known as "the Moon Labyrinth" is meant to inspire meditation while meandering. It's truly a hidden gem. 7735 Mockingbird Lane, sanantonio.gov/parksandrec



BEST DOG-FRIENDLY FUN
BEST HAPPY HOUR
 The Good Kind

BEST POP-UP
CREATIVE CLASS
 Belle & Union Co.

Join the fun at this Quarry shop with new offerings each month. In March, the schedule includes embroidery with Nins & Needles (March 7), intro to letterpress (March 14), House Plant 101 with The Heirloom Revival (March 21) and cupcake decorating with Charity Teague Confections (March 28). 310 E. Basse Road, Ste. 103, belleandunion.com

BEST OUTDOOR FITNESS
CLASS
 Fitness in the Park

With dozens of classes to select from in parks throughout San Antonio, there's no excuse for not getting your sweat on. The best part? Every class, from Zumba to Boot Camp and yoga, is free. There are also walking groups, activities for kids and plenty of workouts you can try with the whole family. sanantonio.gov/parksandrec

BEST PARK
 Hemisfair

BEST SELFIE SPOT
 Ivy Hall

2019's Tyler Jordan
And The Negative
Space

BANDS TO WATCH

MARCH 20
 at SCHOLZ GARTEN
 AUSTIN, TEXAS

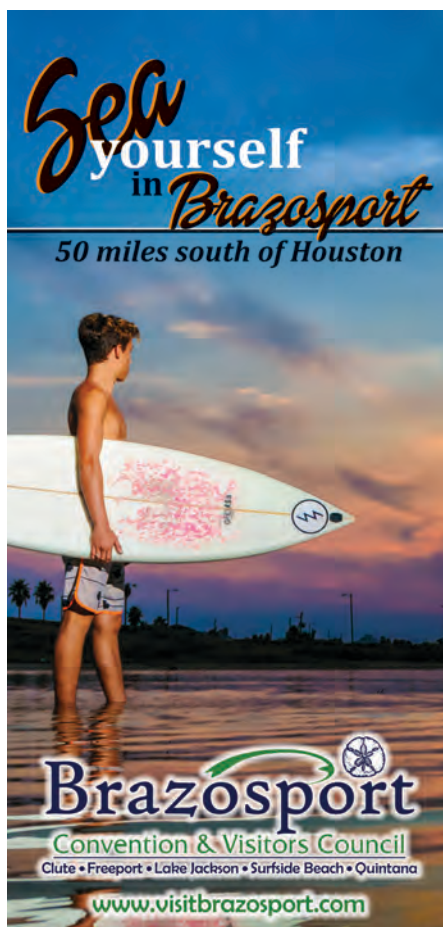
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Best Fun With Kids

3 reasons to love these 3 best places

PLACE TO PLAY OUTSIDE Hemisfair

Endless places to play—

From the splash pad to the sand pit to the playground that was designed with child development in mind—kids can literally spend hours without complaining they're bored. Plus, oversized chess and checkers, ping-pong tables and comfy chairs mean parents can have fun, too.

Events aplenty—Plan your visit to coincide with story time, Super Fun Saturday or a free outdoor movie.

Eat and drink—Whether you plan for dinner at Dough Pizzeria Napoletana, stop for a sweet treat at Paletteria San Antonio or Chocollazo or grab coffee at Common-Wealth Coffeehouse & Bakery before letting the kids play, there's no shortage of options. 434 S. Alamo St., hemisfair.org

INDOOR DESTINATION FOR PLAY The DoSeum

Special exhibitions—The museum keeps things fresh with its downstairs exhibition space that rotates from artist-in-residence works to visiting exhibitions. They're almost always interactive and always fun.

Something for every age—From the taco truck and H-E-B Market in Little Town for the youngest guests to the Spy Academy and Sensations Station, there's something for kids of all ages (even mom and dad).

Learning while having fun—Whether you bring the kids for an education event or just let them free play, they're guaranteed to go home having learned something new. 2800 Broadway, thedoseum.org

OPTION FOR FREE FUN Pearsall Park

Family fun zone—Featured in this 505-acre park are two splash pads, two basketball courts, a skate park and the city's largest playground with options for kids both young and old. Need we say more?

Fit fun—Thanks to a zip line, running trails and multi-exercise stations, you can teach the kids that staying active is fun. The park also boasts the nation's first 40-yard sprint timer.

Disc golf—Older kids who don't want to visit the playground will find an 18-hole disc golf course designed by professional disc golfer Paul Taylor. 4838 Old Pearsall Road, sanantonio.gov/parksandrec

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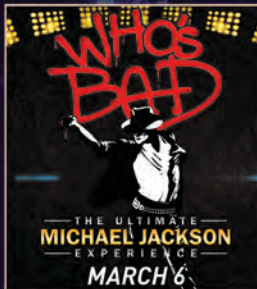
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Shopping + Services

INSIDE / BEST ALTERNATIVE TO A FARMERS MARKET p.42 / BEST REASON TO TRY YOGA p.44 / BEST FLORIST p.48

BY LAUREN MORIARTY,
BONNY OSTERHAGE,
KATHLEEN PETTY AND
KATHERINE STINSON



BarbacoApparel

Wearing your heart on your sleeve takes on a new meaning with BarbacoApparel's tees, pins, stickers and accessories that celebrate the city we love. The crew behind the local brand that grew in 2014 from an idea tossed around in the breakroom takes their role as San Antonio's "officially unofficial" T-shirt company seriously. "We wanted to build a brand that mimicked our experience of living in San Antonio and South Texas while also paying homage to our culture," says co-owner and designer Nydia Huizar. "We wanted to create something so specific to our city that you had to live here to

understand the references." Now full-time with the company after founding it while working for an educational publisher, Huizar shares ownership and responsibility with her husband, Matthew Contreras, friend and former coworker Richard Diaz and sister-in-law Catherine Contreras. Show your hometown spirit in style by snagging a traditional breakfast taco tee, main squeeze enamel pin or the best-selling Periodic Table of Tacos tee, which features the obvious BC (bean & cheese) plus things Huizar knows you've probably tried at home, like the PB (peanut butter). Because *almost* everything tastes better in a tortilla, right? barbacoapparel.com

+ 2 More San Antonio Classics



BEST GUAYABERAS Dos Carolinas

Located at the historic Pearl, Dos Carolinas is where men in the know go for the best selection of natural fiber, made-to-order guayaberas that are perfect for San Antonio's climate and culture. The styles are as varied as the men who wear them, ranging from elegant to casual, and can be made with long or short sleeves, and with or without embroidery. Designer and founder Caroline Matthews began sewing the shirts herself over 30 years ago and continues to fit clients and oversee the bustling workroom where her visions come to life. Looking for a custom shirt for Fiesta? Place your order now. They take between four and six weeks to make. 303 Pearl Pkwy., Ste. 102, doscarolinas.com

BEST PLACE FOR FIESTA DÉCOR Feather Fluff and Flings

When it comes to the city's biggest 10-day celebration, San Antonio residents pull out all the stops, turning homes into colorful casas with festive wreaths, ribbons, florals and more. Feather Fluff and Flings specializes in getting homes party-ready with elaborate door décor fit for Fiesta royalty. And, like the perfect party guest, the Feather Fluff and Flings crew will help with clean up, coming back to take down, pack up and store every colorful ribbon and paper flower on display. featherfluffandflings.com



BEST MEN'S DRESS SHIRTS The Perfect Shirt

The perfect shirt is the one that's made just for you—and the team at this San Antonio company wants to make “bespoke clothing” the “norm and expectation” in menswear by providing a wide range of prices and over 300 fabric choices. Book an appointment for a unique personalized experience unlike anything you've found at department stores and start transforming your wardrobe, one shirt at a time. perfectshirtusa.com

BEST ALTERNATIVE TO A FARMERS MARKET Chicho Boys Fruit Market

A hidden gem whose loyal customers have been raving about it for decades, this fruit market near downtown was created to provide a family-oriented place for high quality produce without the high prices, says founder Patricio “Chico” Gonzalez. Weekly specials are posted on Facebook and there's a counter in the back with fresh fruit cups, elote, raspas and more. 1631 S. Laredo St., chichoboys.com





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ACTIVIST PHOTOGRAPHERS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Exhibition on view
FEB. 15-MAY 31, 2020

This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement is presented by the Center for Documentary Expression and Art and the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Major support for the exhibition has been provided by the Bruce W. Bastian Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, with use of the Bob Fitch photographs courtesy of the Department of Collections, Stanford University Libraries.

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BEST REASON TO TRY YOGA
Puppy Yoga with Mobile Om and SNIPSA

Mobile Om and SNIPSA put the dog in *downward dog* with their puppy yoga classes that take place every month from March through November at Confluence Park. “Puppies are a reminder of the pure, childlike innocence that we can all access within our practice,” says Mobile Om owner Cassandra Fauss. Open to all levels, a portion of the \$20 drop in fee is donated to nonprofit SNIPSA, and all puppies that participate in the class are available for adoption. mobileomtx.com

BEST SHOP FOR TREASURE HUNTERS
Karolina's Antiques

From antique chandeliers and French cabinets to collectable toys, vintage clothing and handmade accessories (glitter avocado wristlet, anyone?), the corner that Karolina's occupies in Beacon Hill is a haven for gifts you won't find on Amazon plus items you don't know you can't live without until you see them. 1705 Blanco Road, karolinasantiques.com

BEST SHOP FOR PLANT LOVERS
Tillage

Tillage owner Kara Allen believes the right plant can transform a space, and she's become San Antonio's go-to plant lady for helping customers pinpoint which succulent, palm or other plant is for them. “There is so much joy in journeying along with our customers and the plant community as we grow plants in our homes and spaces,” says Allen, of her shop in the Broadway News lot that also offers workshops. 2202 Broadway, tillageplants.com

BEST PLACE FOR CBD PRODUCTS
Pharm House

There are so many CBD stores in San Antonio that it can be tough to know where to begin when making your first purchase. We found the staff at Pharm House welcoming and knowledgeable when they steered us toward a salve for muscles with lavender and eucalyptus. “We designed our store/barn to be a warm and inviting place to buy and learn about CBD,” says co-owner Candace Rohm, adding that they put a lot of research into merchandising. 2202 Broadway, facebook.com/thepharmhousestore



BEST ANTIQUES
BEST FURNITURE
Domestic Provisions

Domestic Provisions is an interior design junkie's dream come true—the Alamo Heights shop features carefully curated European antiques mixed with more modern furniture and accessories. Skip and Deanie Dampier's unique product selection has proven popular with loyal customers who appreciate the couple's discerning eye. “We work with pickers and collectors from around the world as well as tag sales and estate sales right here in San Antonio,” Skip says. “We love the thrill of the hunt and no place is off limits for us!” 5933 Broadway, domesticprovisionsltd.com



BEST VINTAGE CLOTHING
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BEST BOUTIQUE FOR THAT PERFECT CARD
Belle & Union Co.

There are still plenty of occasions when an email or text just doesn't cut it, which is precisely where this Quarry boutique comes in. Artist and co-owner Meg Sutton's cards are simple yet clever so you can say, "Congratulations," "Get Well," "Happy Birthday" and much more without being cheesy or trite. Each card that lines the 22-foot wall at the back of the shop is printed in-house on one of two 100-plus-year-old letterpresses and is as much a piece of art as it is mail. They're available online and have been sold at over 1,000 other stores, including places like Anthropologie, but you can tell friends that yours came from the artist's headquarters in San Antonio. 310 E. Basse Road, Ste. 103, belleandunion.com



BEST BOOK STORE
The Twig Book Shop

BEST MUSEUM GIFT SHOP
San Antonio Museum of Art

The boutique inside the museum's front doors reopened in February after renovations that brought a fresh look plus new products, from jewelry and art to home decor and pieces related to the art on display. 200 W. Jones Ave., samuseum.org

BEST FARMERS MARKET VENDOR
BarbacoApparel



BEST MEN'S
Bexar Goods Co.

BEST BARBERSHOP
Traveler Barbershop

BEST PET STORE
SouthPaw Waggers

Owner Marciela Guerra stocks food, treats, apparel and "swaggery" that are popular with owners and pets alike. Don't leave your pup at home—dogs are encouraged to join the fun. From the freeze-dried raw bar to swanky product selection, it's a doggone good time. 317 Lexington Ave., Ste. 4, southpawwaggers.com



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READERS' WINNERS



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Smart Barre

SALON
AK Lounge

SPA SERVICES
Jenn Pope's Lashes

**PET BOARDING/
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Lucy's Doggy Daycare

FLORIST

Tall Poppy Florals

Owner Samantha Garcia's Tall Poppy Florals is known for bouquets that break the mold. "Floral design is a form of expression for me in which I convey an experience told through the beauty of flowers to my clients and customers," says Garcia, explaining that she draws design inspiration from the flowers themselves. facebook.com/tallpoppyflorals

3 Tips from Garcia for Arranging Flowers at Home

1. Don't be shy or afraid to be bold. If you see a flower or greenery that excites you—work with it!
2. Look for greens and flowers that add interest and texture and can fill empty spaces.
3. Have fun! Garcia says she reminds people that Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "The Earth laughs in flowers," so feel the joy that flowers can bring as you work with them.



WOMEN'S

La Casa Frida

Housed in a vintage Airstream trailer, La Casa Frida's colorful clothes and handmade accessories are fashionable finds you can feel good about. Owners Ruby Hernández and Gaby Martinez carefully source their colorful pieces from Mexican artisans. "Working with Mexican artisans and designers is my way of not only supporting their respective works and business, but also supporting the preservation of our traditional crafts," Hernández says. "I focus on looking for items that have a story behind them, which showcases the artisans' unique style behind the piece. I want our customers to feel like they found a gem of Mexican culture in our store that they won't find anywhere else." 2202 Broadway, la-casa-frida.myshopify.com



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Arnold Rönnebeck (1885–1947). "Rain in the Jemez Mountains, N.M.," 1931.
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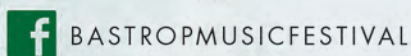


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Enjoy the history and charm of Bastrop — situated along the banks of the lower Colorado River (just 30 miles from Austin).



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Eat + Drink

INSIDE / BEST TWISTS ON A CLASSIC p.52 / BEST QUICK LUNCH SPOTS p.54 / BEST PANCAKES p.62

BY KATHLEEN PETTY,
KATHERINE STINSON
AND EDMUND TIJERINA



READERS' WINNER
GLOBAL EATS

In Cup Brazilian Street Bites

Brandon and Beatriz Slayton sometimes have to coax first-time customers into trying something other than a familiar churro, but once they taste a beef-filled pastel or shredded chicken coxinha, they're usually hooked. "People tend to resort to what they know, but as soon as they try it, they're in," Brandon says. The couple launched their catering business in 2018 and expanded into a food trailer in early 2019, serving the traditional Brazilian recipes that Beatriz's family perfected in their bakery and restaurant in her native Brazil. The pastel looks like an empanada but is made with a thin-crust dough that's filled with ground beef, green olives, parsley, garlic

and mozzarella. "The dough is the most important thing," Brandon says, adding that his father-in-law spent hours teaching them his recipes and business model. The coxinha is a Brazilian croquette and finger food that consists of shredded chicken, covered in dough that's battered and fried. And while Slayton says churros are plentiful in San Antonio, theirs differ from the Mexican-style treat. Instead of infusing flavors into an already fried churro, theirs are made with chocolate, dulce de leche or white chocolate already inside of the dough capsule. "We serve finger foods that you'd find in trailers and farmers markets and bakeries all over Brazil," he says. 2202 Broadway, [instagram.com/incupofficial](https://www.instagram.com/incupofficial)

San Antonio Classics (WITH A TWIST)

BEST CONCHA

**Concha La Flor Beer
at Isla St. Brewing Co.**

Snag this specialty brew whenever it's available and enjoy the rich and creamy texture with vanilla and sweet notes that evoke the flavor of a classic Mexican pastry. Who knew that South Texas flavors played so well with the Irish stout style? But watch out—it's strong, so you may find yourself trying some cumbia steps after a few sips. 11911 Crosswinds Way, Ste 201, isllastreetbrewing.com

BEST MEXICAN DISH

**Duck Street Tacos
at Julia's Bistro**

Rich, tender and juicy pieces of duck give an almost carnitas-like sense to this can't-miss appetizer. A topping of a bright and vibrant corn pico de gallo, a few chunks of avocado and a squeeze of seared lime, elevate it even higher. 1725 Blanco Road, juliasonblanco.com

BEST CHICKEN-FRIED STEAK

**Kobe Chicken-Fried Steak
at Eastside Kitchenette**

The combination of chicken-fried steak and gravy topped with a fried egg and served with an ear of Mexican-style street corn captivates diners. It's a dish that sets the tone for a menu filled with elevated comfort food. Founding chef Jeff White parted ways with the restaurant, so here's hoping that the quality of this dish stays strong. 2119 N. I-35, eastsidekitchenette.com



BEST VERSION OF A CAJUN CLASSIC

**Blackened Redfish at
Kindling Texas Kitchen**

It took a young Texas couple to breathe new life into a once-stale culinary workhorse. This version features a spice rub that conveys complexity and subtlety instead of the all-too-familiar hot and salty combination that many places still serve. The redfish fillet sits atop bay leaf-infused white rice and a lovely version of gumbo. It's definitely not the usual blackened redfish; it's better. 209 N. Main St., Cibolo, kindlingtexaskitchen.com

BEST PLACE TO EAT AT THE BAR Ocho

This oasis of a bar overlooks a lightly traveled portion of the River Walk and is only a short stroll from the Tobin Center. Sip on a mojito or Hemingway daiquiri while nibbling on a salsa sampler appetizer or chowing down on the Cuban sandwich or terrific pork chop. 1015 Navarro St., havanasanantonio.com

BEST NEW SEAFOOD CLASSIC

**Som Tam Oysters at
Cookhouse**

The bright, sour and lightly fermented flavors of Thai green papaya salad marry spectacularly with simple briny raw oysters for this new favorite dish. The flavors may be rustic, but the presentation is refined. After tasting it, the pairing seems obvious. Maybe that's why it's so brilliant. 720 E. Mistletoe Ave., cookhouserestaurant.com

BEST WAY TO EAT YOUR VEGGIES

**Cauliflower with Turmeric
at Maverick**

Admittedly, this mixture of brown and gold is not the most Instagrammable dish, but the richness of pureed cauliflower with turmeric topped with a few roasted florets, pickled golden raisins and shaved almonds absolutely rocks. Whether as an appetizer course or a side dish, it's a true treat. 710 S. St. Mary's St., mavericktexas.com

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Best Place for a Quick Lunch

NORTHWEST AND CENTRAL Picnikins Patio Cafe

Get to either the location near UTSA or North Star Mall early to beat the lines at lunch and know that there are no wrong choices among the soups, salads and sandwiches on this menu. If you need a hint, consider The Fabulous sandwich, which more than lives up to its name with a generous helping of roast beef and spicy horseradish or try the Mediterranean Vegetarian with hummus and cucumbers. 6901 Blanco Road; 5811 University Heights Blvd., picnikinspatiocafe.com

PEARL Larder

We love hanging out at Pearl, but when we need to grab a quick bite, we skip the full-service spots and zip over to Hotel Emma's Larder market for a sandwich made-to-order with in-house cured meats and housemade chips or something from the refrigerator case. It's grab-and-go, Pearl style. 136 E. Grayson St., larderatemma.com

DOWNTOWN Pinch Boil House

You can take a leisurely lunch and order a Viet-Cajun seafood boil or keep it efficient and tasty with either a Vietnamese-inspired bowl or sandwich. It's hard to resist the contrast of roast pork with crisp cucumbers in the banh mi, but the Korean fried chicken works nicely, too. A vegan option with Sriracha fried tofu, cucumbers and carrots keeps the flavor party going. 124 N. Main Ave., pinchboilhouse.com

FAR WEST Rocoto's Grill

Stop in for a fast lunch and then go back for a longer, leisurely dinner. At lunch, get an order of pollo a la brasa, the delicious Peruvian rotisserie chicken that will quickly turn into your next craving. Then come back later for dinner and enjoy a pisco sour, some cebiche and more outstanding Peruvian home cooking. Not sure how to navigate the menu? Just ask. 10555 Culebra Road, rocotosgrill.com

READERS' WINNERS

BEST AMERICAN
Down on Grayson

BEST ASIAN
Golden Wok

BEST BAKERY
La Panadería

It was David Caceres' tequila almond croissant that had patrons lining up when this bakery opened in Alamo Heights five years ago after first launching as a farmers market stand, but the menu he and brother/co-owner Jose Caceres now offer has expanded to include everything from classic Mexican pastries to creative desserts and tortas on housemade bread. Along with opening a large café downtown, the Mexico City natives renovated their original location in 2019 and will open a third restaurant at The Rim this year. lapanaderia.com



BEST BARBECUE
Smoke Shack

BEST BREAKFAST/BRUNCH
Magnolia Pancake Haus

San Antonio Threads

Our mission is to provide a safe and nurturing shopping experience for teens (ages 12-21) who are homeless, in the foster care system, in emergency situations, or otherwise referred to the nonprofit. With increased social skills, confidence, and the right attire, teens served by San Antonio Threads are supported in reaching their education and career goals. In addition to allowing teens to focus on their education and careers, San Antonio Threads alleviates the stress on families to afford basic necessities.

San Antonio Threads is the only nonprofit in the state of Texas providing each referred teen with a genuine shopping experience of new items where they can select two complete outfits, full size toiletries, five pairs of underwear, five pairs of socks, a backpack, a hoodie, and a pair of shoes—all for free! San Antonio Threads also works with several underserved school districts, helping to keep students properly clothed and in school. To refer a teen, visit sanantoniothreads.org/referrals.

10446 Sentinel St. | SA, TX 78217
210-600-3989 | SanAntonioThreads.org



➔ Give on March 26: thebiggivesa.org/organizations/san-antonio-threads

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**BEST WAY TO
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**Spicy Miso Tantan-
Men at Tenko Ramen**

This crave-worthy bowl balances heat and flavor for a sensation you'll want to experience again and again. There's definitely a burn, but it's not overwhelming. Besides, it tastes too good to stop eating. 312 Pearl Pkwy., Bldg. 6, Ste. 6112, tenkoramen.com



GROUND PORK

Who knew that simple ground pork could make such a difference in flavor and texture?

ITO TOGARASHI

This finely shredded Japanese chile adds a slightly chewy texture and just a touch of extra heat.

SICHUAN PEPPERS

The heat from these Chinese peppercorns brings more of a numbing sensation and accentuates the chile oil burn.

PORK BROTH

The depth of flavor in this broth comes from simmering pork bones for many hours.

SCALLIONS

For some fresh, crunchy texture and more flavor.

CHILE OIL

This spicy layer shimmers on the surface of every bowl and beckons the faithful.

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It's Spring! "A Whole New World" for Family Fun

Get Out and Get Moving! Culinaria 5K Wine & Beer Run and Síclovía Combine Community Exercise With Play

The Culinaria 5K Wine & Beer Run at The Shops at La Cantera is a smooth 3.1-mile course and a one-of-a-kind race experience. Post-race festivities include awards ceremony; culinary, wine and beer tastings; and live entertainment.

Culinaria embraces the concept of a healthy lifestyle and understands the importance of balancing the consumption of food with fitness. This event offers that perfect balance.

The Shops at La Cantera, situated on the edge of the Texas Hill Country, is a dog-friendly property, so bring along canine family members too, on a leash, please. The start/finish lines are located on Main Street at Arbor, near Grimaldi's Pizza. For registration information visit culinariasa.org.



The first Síclovía of 2020 is March 29 and will feature more of what San Antonians have come to love about the free semi-annual event—food trucks, youth activities, exercise classes and treats for your pets. If you thought playing in the streets was a thing of the past, think again! Organized by the YMCA of Greater San Antonio, Síclovía is a day for walking, biking, skating, scootering and exercising on car-free streets that are closed specifically for the event. Find more info at ymcasatx.org/programs/community/siclovía.



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"A shining, shimmering, splendid magic carpet ride! Aladdin is glorious to look at, funny, topical—and definitely not just for kids."
—Deborah Wilker, The Hollywood Reporter

Aladdin, adapted from the animated Disney film and centuries-old folktales including "One Thousand and One Nights," is brought to fresh theatrical life in this bold new musical. Aladdin's journey sweeps audiences into an exotic world of daring adventure, classic comedy and timeless romance. This new production features a full score, including the five cherished songs from the Academy Award-winning soundtrack and more written especially for the stage.

The animated film Aladdin was released by Disney in 1992 and was a critical and box office smash, becoming the highest-grossing film of the year. The film won the Oscar for Best Original Score and introduced the hit song "A Whole New World," which won the second of the film's two Academy Awards as Best Original Song. The Peabo Bryson/Regina Belle recording of the tune soared to #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

Aladdin is designed by seven-time Tony-winning scenic designer Bob Crowley, six-time Tony-winning lighting designer Natasha Katz, two-time Tony-winning costume designer Gregg Barnes and sound designer Ken Travis.

Iconic music, sumptuous costumes, gorgeous sets all make for a must-see production at the Majestic Theatre March 25 through April 12. For tickets visit BroadwayInSanAntonio.com.

BEST PLACE TO BECOME A REGULAR Savor

The flagship restaurant of the Culinary Institute of America San Antonio creates nearly a new restaurant about every six weeks with a fresh menu and cooking and serving crew each term. The quality, though, stays focused and on point. 200 E. Grayson St., Ste. 117, savorcia.com

BEST UNDERRATED HAPPY HOUR BITE Wine + Chicken Liver Toast at Little Death

It's simplicity on a plate: A jar of velvety chicken liver mousse topped with schmaltz, a handful of small cornichons and a few slices of toasted Bakery Lorraine bread. It pairs with every wine by the glass and just about all of them available by the bottle. Order it and make any hour much happier. 2327 N. St. Mary's St., instagram.com/littledeathwine

BEST GERMAN-AMERICAN FUSION Künstler Brewing

From the Spanish-German motto "Hecho Mit Liebe" (made with love) to the German paraphernalia on the walls to the South Texas ingredients infused in the brews, this often-crowded spot brings a feel of Germany and South Texas to the Lone Star district. Head brewer and co-owner Vera Deckard, a German native, often relies on South Texas ingredients for her beers, while the menu combines German and Texas snacks. You'll want to introduce yourself to Germany Meets Texas—a scoop of housemade pimento cheese and a scoop of obatzda, a Bavarian brie spread—that will quickly become a new friend. 302 E. Lachapelle, kuenstlerbrewing.com



JOMANDO CRUZ



BEST REASON TO SEE A MUSICAL
The Pre- or Post-Show Visit to
Bella on Houston

If ever you're on the fence about whether or not to catch a show at the Majestic or Empire theaters, count a visit to Bella on Houston as a big reason to make the trip. It has made the move from a tiny location overlooking the River Walk into a much larger space on Houston Street with lots more foot traffic with confidence and finesse. Either before or after a show, it's always a good time for the polished dishes and service. 204 E. Houston St., bellaonhouston.com

BEST RESTAURANT EXPANSION
Sabor Cocinabar

The ambiance, dishes and service still evoke the feeling of a nice favorite in one of Mexico's larger cities (think Guadalajara or Monterrey) and it more than survived the move half a mile south on McCullough Avenue. Fans of the cozy original location, which a waiter here referred to affectionately as Saborcito, still have plenty of reasons to return. 4331 McCullough Ave., saborcocinabar.com

BEST NEW BURGER
Mr. Juicy

Leave it to culinary master Andrew Weissman to close down the best vegetarian menu in the city (Moshe's) to open the city's best new burger spot. His custom ground beef blend, housemade buns, richly flavored secret sauce, killer fries, housemade toppings and masterful shakes all elevate a burger experience into something sublime. Add the "wet" au poivre sauce on the burger or keep it simple—either way, the burger and the experience are outstanding. 3910 McCullough Ave., instagram.com/mrjuicyburger



**BEST PLACE FOR A COZY
COCKTAIL**
Pastiche

Step inside this unassuming East Side bungalow and experience the aura of a tiny European building cleverly converted into a quaint bar by co-owners Lucas Bradbury and Benjamin Krick. Inside, the cocktail creations of Krick incorporate a veritable library of little-used spirits and liqueurs to offer richly layered and memorable flavors. In back, a gravel patio featuring an array of antique doors—many from the neighborhood—repurposed as tables and walls offers quirkiness to burn. 1506 E. Houston St., facebook.com/pastiche.sa

Le Petit Prince

Ingredients

1 ½ ounces French gin
1 ounce Monbazillac
½ ounce Lillet Blanc
1 bar spoon Bigallet thym liquor
1 dash orange bitters
Sprig thyme

Preparation

Stir liquid ingredients together in shaker tin. Strain into Nick & Nora glass or wine glass. Garnish with sprig of thyme.



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Best Pancakes (on scale of healthy-ish to dessert)

HEALTHY-ISH



S.A. Stack at Five Points Local

With a rotating schedule of yoga classes upstairs, you can work out and feel better about ordering brunch. Known as a place that caters to the vegan and paleo crowd and for sourcing local and organic ingredients, Five Points sticks to its mission even with pancakes. Its S.A. Stack includes three light cakes topped with toasted Texas pecans, fresh banana slices and organic maple syrup that really hits the spot. You'd never know they're gluten and dairy-free. 1017 N. Flores St., 5pointslocal.com



Organic Buckwheat Pancakes at Magnolia Pancake Haus

The old-world buttermilk flapjacks at Magnolia Pancake Haus put it on the map as a local favorite when it opened 20 years ago. If you're looking to go healthier without giving up the flavor and fluff of pancakes, opt for the buckwheat cakes made with "hearty and healthy" organic buckwheat flour. "Quality and consistency are king in everything we do," says Marcus Carras, co-general manager at the Embassy Oaks location. 606 Embassy Oaks; 10333 Huebner Road, magnoliapancakehaus.com

Skillet Pancake at Barbaro

The brunch mainstay at this popular Monte Vista bar and pizza joint is a fluffy skillet-sized pancake that regulars top with bacon and ricotta salata or lemon ricotta and berries. Both options are equally delicious (and just the right amount of indulgent). Pair one with a classic brunch cocktail for the perfect start to any weekend day. 2720 McCullough Ave., barbarosanantonio.com



DESSERT

Bananas Foster Buttermilk Pancakes at NOLA

You can't visit Pieter Sypesteyn's NOLA without trying a beignet, but we suggest you also don't overlook these decadent dessert-like pancakes topped with chai rum caramel, vanilla Chantilly, powdered sugar and a banana brulee that elevates the dish from breakfast to brilliance. 111 Kings Court, eatatnola.com



BEST EXCUSE FOR MIDWEEK PIZZA **SoHill Café**

Enjoy some upscale flavors at neighborhood prices with any one of an array of delicious pizza flavors. Stick with a classic margarita, go fancy with prosciutto and fig jam, or scarf down a terrific mushroom or a fancy meat-lovers pie. Better yet, come for happy hour when you can snag a cheese pizza for five bucks or on Wednesdays when every pie is \$10. No matter when you visit, you'll have room in your wallet for a craft beer or a glass of wine to go with it. 1719 Blanco Road, sohillcafe.com

BEST FOOD STARTUP **Grain4Grain**

Matt Mechtly and Yoni Medhin opened Grain4Grain's milling facility in late 2018 and by October of 2019 their low-carb flour and pancake/waffle mixes were available on H-E-B shelves thanks to a third-place finish in the store's Quest for Texas Best contest. Made by upcycling grains leftover from brewing beer, the flour and breakfast mixes are low in carbs, high in protein and fiber and contain zero added sugar. We love that the pair of young entrepreneurs have found a way to reuse brewery waste (they currently work with Freetail Brewing Co. and Alamo Beer Co.) and that their concoctions don't sacrifice on flavor in their quest for health. grain4grain.com



BEST JUICE BAR/ACAI BOWL **Rise Up**

Whether a Cali smoothie with strawberry and pineapple or the AB Bowl with almond milk, strawberries and banana, Rise Up is a treat at any time of the day. 6401 Broadway; 18730 Stone Oak Pkwy., Ste. 100, riseupsatx.com

BEST BREAKFAST TACO **BEST DONUT** **The Original Donut Shop**

BEST BREWERY **Alamo Beer Co.**

BEST BURGER **Burger Boy**

BEST COFFEE SHOP **Theory Coffee Co.**

BEST DELI **Gino's Deli**

The Philly cheese steak is a must if you've yet to visit this convenience store deli on the North Side but you can't go wrong with any of the generously filled sandwiches served up by a staff that's known as much for their friendly demeanor as their food. With a No. 21 ranking on Yelp's 2020 list of the top 100 places to eat in the U.S., we have a feeling this won't be a hidden gem much longer. 13210 Huebner Road, myginosdeli.com

BEST DISTILLERY **Rebecca Creek Distillery**

BEST FOOD TRUCK **Smack's Chicken Shack**

A regular at Armadillo Boulders, The Block and Squeezebox, chef Keenen Hendricks is known for his creative takes on the classic chicken sandwich, from Nashville hot to Korean BBQ. With kitchen takeovers plus collaborations with other eateries, it's clear Hendricks is just getting started. [instagram.com/smackschickenshack](https://www.instagram.com/smackschickenshack)



BEST FRENCH FRIES **Down on Grayson**

The skinny Parmesan fries are just the right amount of crispy while a touch of garlic and hand-grated parm mean one shared plate is never enough for the whole table. 303 E. Grayson St, downongrayson.com

BEST GREEK/ **MEDITERRANEAN** **Demo's Greek Food**

BEST ITALIAN **Paesanos**

BEST MARGARITA **La Gloria**

BEST MEXICAN/TEX-MEX **Rosario's**

BEST OUTDOOR DINING **BEST VEGETARIAN/** **VEGAN-FRIENDLY** **The Good Kind**

We love the atmosphere at Tim McDiarmid's Southtown eatery so much that we hosted our staff holiday party in its backyard. The outdoor area has spaces that are large enough for events (complete with inflatable big screens if you want to watch a movie like we did) plus smaller nooks that are situated between greenery for quieter meetings or solo lunch breaks. 1127 S. St. Mary's St., eatgoodkind.com

BEST PIZZA **Dough Pizzeria** **Napoletana**

BEST SEAFOOD **El Bucanero**

BEST STEAKHOUSE **Bohanan's**

BEST TACOS **Sangria on the Burg**



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