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Dallas’ Team Mystikka Masala wins The Great Food Truck Race: Gold Coast

by Tammye Nash, Page 8
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‘Great Food Truck Race: Gold Coast’ contestans Andrew Pettke, Navin Hariprasad and Sarah Hartshorne with the Team Mystikka Masala truck, Photo courtesy of The Food Network. Design by Kevin Thomas.

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Remdesivir shows some promise in fight against Covid-19

Remdesivir, a drug made by Gilead, is showing some promise in fighting Covid-19 by reducing by four days the recovery time, according to the New York Times.

The drug was developed to fight Ebola but didn’t work well in trials in Africa. Earlier tests of the drug didn’t prove that the drug had much effect but showed that it caused no harm and was safe to take.

In this latest trial, 1,063 patients with Covid-19 were given either remdesivir or a placebo.

For those who received remdesivir, recovery time averaged 11 days.

For those on the placebo, recovery time averaged 15 days.

And there were fewer deaths among those on remdesivir, but not enough to make a statistical difference, Dr. Anthony Fauci said while announcing the results.

Remdesivir hasn’t been approved to treat any illness, but the Food and Drug Administration plans to announce emergency-use authorization.

— David Taffet

Some restaurants opening today

As people debate the wisdom, process and practicality of reopening restaurants at 25 percent capacity with social distancing protocols in place, several area restaurants have announced their intention to reopen today (Friday, May 1), the first day after the expiration of Gov. Abbott’s lockdown.

(Dallas rules still require closures, but the statewide order overrules them.) Among those reopening at most local locations:

• Cremona Bistro • El Fenix • Taqueria La Ventana • Snuffer’s • Meso Maya • Village Burger Bar • Jalisco Norte • Rodeo Goat • Flying Saucer • Flying Fish • Miriam Cocina Latina • Lockhart Smokehouse • Primo’s MX Kitchen • Nosh Bistro • Overeasy • Scout • The Rustic • Cantina Laredo • El Chico • Lucky’s • III Forks • Silver Fox.

— Arnold Wayne Jones

COVID-19 forces layoffs at HRC

The Human Rights Campaign on Tuesday, April 28, laid off 22 employees because of the coronavirus pandemic.

HRC told the Washington Blade that Alphonso David, the organization’s president, *personally reached out to every single*
person affected to see how he can help them moving forward — both as HRC and whatever way he can personally.” HRC did not name the employees who were laid off, citing privacy laws.

David and other members of HRC’s executive and senior leadership teams have also decided to cut their own salaries. HRC has converted three full-time positions into part-time positions, has frozen its fellowship program and will not fill two dozen open positions.

The laid off HRC employees will receive severance packages that include at least eight weeks of their salary based on the number of years they worked with the organization and health insurance coverage through COBRA for at least three months.

HRC will allow them to access its Employee Assistance Program “to help with the financial and emotional transition.” The laid off employees will also be able to borrow computers to allow them to look for a new job.

— Michael K. Lavers, Washington Blade

Covid-19 is many times more severe than the flu

Covid-19 has been compared to the flu, so Dallas County Health and Human Services released figures that compared the two viral illnesses. Covid-19 is many times more severe.

Since Sept. 8, 2019, there have been 1,900 people hospitalized with the flu. Of those, there have been 25 deaths in 14 Dallas County hospitals or instances in which influenza was listed as cause of death on Dallas County death certificates.

The first Covid-19 hospitalizations took place the week of March 14. Since then, 796 people have been admitted to Dallas County hospitals with the virus. Of those, 94 have died.

So, that makes 94 deaths from Covid-19 in a little more than one month compared to 25 influenza deaths in about nine months.

As for Covid-19 being a seasonal illness going away on the same schedule as flu, the last ICU hospital admissions for flu were the week of March 14. That was a week after the first ICU admissions for Covid-19 in Dallas County. If coronavirus were seasonal like the flu, it would have been petering out at the time it was just taking off locally.

— David Taffet

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Peter Triporo, NP named Top 10 in 2018 America’s Top Nurse Practitioner Awards presented by Point of Care Network
Woof! Cancer and our pets

Hello Dallas Voice readers! As always, thank you for taking the time to read my column. I know how crazy these times are, but I hope everyone is hanging in there. During my last column, we talked about COVID-19 and how it relates to our pets. This time, we are shifting gears to another important topic.

May is National Pet Month. To many of us, our fur babies are our kids and a vital part of our families. Now some of us may not be aware that May is also “Pet Cancer Awareness Month.” I wish none of us had to endure seeing anyone go through cancer, but the sad reality is it happens. With our pets’ average life spans continuing to increase due to advances in the medical and technology fields, we are seeing more and more of our pets go through cancer at least once in their lifetimes. It almost feels like cancer is a way that life reminds us that no matter how hard we try, we all have an “expiration date.”

A lot of people ask about that one test that diagnoses “cancer.” While I don’t doubt that technology will get us there at some point, our current reality is that no single test can determine if our babies might have cancer anywhere in their bodies. For that, we have to look into symptoms and potentially identify the source of the ailment then follow up with different diagnostic tests, ranging from blood work and radiographs to advanced imaging and specialized testing.

Even though the word “cancer” scares us all, not all types of cancer are terminal. Some types can be benign, meaning that they are usually not life threatening, and surgical excision or removal may prove curative. The more complicated types of cancer may require chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

That being said, each type of cancer is different. The challenge for us as pet parents comes when we have to determine how far we are willing to go to help our babies. As humans, sometimes we can be selfish by wanting our fur kids to live forever. But sometimes we have to take a step back and determine if what is medically recommended is what is actually best for our babies. This needs to be an honest conversation between you and your veterinarian.

Most of our fur babies that develop cancer are usually at least 7 or 8 years of age (dogs and cats). That being said, cancer can also be seen in our younger babies, too. We usually associate cancer with obvious masses that can be easily seen on the skin, but many types of cancer are masses inside the body or microscopic masses you can’t see with the naked eye.

Technically, any organ can develop different types of cancer. This is why it is important to have your veterinarian examine your baby at least every six months and perform a blood work study at least every six to 12 months. I have some pet parents that perform radiographs on their senior babies once yearly to be as thorough as possible.

I also recommend that you thoroughly examine every inch of your senior babies’ skin at least once a month at home. Parents are very commonly the first ones to notice something is not OK with their babies, so this thorough “mass check” is crucial for early detection. If you notice what may be a lump on your baby or notice appetite issues, weight loss or any other issues, please visit your veterinarian right away.

I know this is a depressing topic, especially during these unreal times. But we need to make sure that our loved ones are as happy and healthy as they can be to continue being part of our families, especially during these trying times. While cancer can be a sensitive subject, please know that we must not focus on the current negative reality, but also on the amazing years we have had with our loved ones. We only live once, and we need to cherish all of those beautiful moments that we have enjoyed together.

Life is not a still picture of our final moments, but a series of experiences that lead us through life while changing others as we navigate together. There is always something positive in everything, don’t forget that! Abrazos, until next time!

Dr. Josh owns Isla Veterinary Boutique Hospital in 14380 Marsh Ln. Ste. 110 Addison. Call him at 972-738-1111 or visit IslaVet.com.

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A winning recipe

TAMMYE NASH. I. Managing Editor
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We knew this was going to be a challenge,” Andrew Pettke said of having to keep secret for months the fact that he and his husband Chef Navin Hariprasad and their business partner Sarah Hartshorne — aka Team Mystikka Masala — had won The Great Food Truck Race: Gold Coast last summer.

“When we and [Team Lunch Ladies] found out we were the final two teams, we talked about it, and we made a pact that after it was over, we would tell everyone that they recorded two different endings, so we didn’t know who actually won. That took the burden off of everyone trying to get us to tell them how it turned out.”

The secret finally came out on Thursday, April 23, in the final episode of the 12th season of the popular Food Network show — right in the middle of the COVID-19 epidemic, which shut down restaurants and other businesses across the country. In fact, the trio’s Dallas restaurants, Spice in the City and Lucky Cat Vegan, hadn’t even been able to open for delivery and take-out, because “our restaurants share a residential lobby with a loft in downtown,” Navin explained the day after the finale aired.

“We felt it was too risky to operate. We are exploring the variables now on when it will be safe to open again.”

The couple’s share of the $50,000 prize money for the Great Food Truck Race will hopefully help bridge that gap.

About two years ago, Navin, a registered dietician and the chef behind the spicy fusion menu at the two restaurants, was recruited to compete on another Food Network cooking competition, Guy’s Grocery Games.

Navin said, “I agreed to do it, and [the publicity from that] ended up bringing us a good chunk of business. With that momentum behind us, we decided it was a good option to apply to participate in the rest of the Food Network shows.”

About a year later, he added, they got the call that they’d been accepted for The Great Food Truck Race. Because they needed a third team member, the men said, they talked Sarah, their friend and business partner, into participating, too.

Sarah, who was still recovering from a then-recent hip surgery, wasn’t so sure about being on TV. But Andrew and Navin managed to convince her to go along for the ride.

Then they had to come up with a concept for their food truck, which really wasn’t that hard considering that they already had a popular and successful concept with their restaurants.

“We decided we would showcase our fusion dishes,” Andrew said. “They are delicious and tasty and visually amazing, and it would be something that could get people to move out of their comfort zone and try something new.”

The food truck provided by the network was eye-catching, too: bright pink and orange, with a blue-colored map of Texas on the side. Andrew explained, “The orange and pink colors were our idea. The state of Texas outlined was something they added in.”

So they had their menu, and they had their truck. But they knew they had to have a message, a gimmick, if they really wanted to get people’s attention and draw in customers.

“We had several messages that we really wanted to push while we were on the show,” Navin said. “The first one was that Andrew and I are a successful long-term [same-sex] couple. We’ve been together for 13 years, and married for one.”

That, combined with their menu of healthy ethnic cuisine, was a great message. But what about a gimmick, that hook that would get the customers to the truck to hear the messages? That’s where Mystikka Masala came in.

“I had already done drag a couple of times in the past,” Navin said. “The first time was back in the old Rose Room inside Village Station. I enjoyed drag, but I ended up going the college route instead. But I kept doing the drag occasionally, for charity events and things like that. I really love the androgyny of drag, and I love portraying that different character up on stage.”

“So, we were talking about it, asking ourselves, what hasn’t been showcased yet on The Great Food Truck Race? And Mystikka Masala was born,” Navin continued. “We really created her as something that would push us out of our own comfort zones but that would, at the same time, break some barriers with people who hadn’t really been introduced to the LGBTQ community yet. And drag is really hot right now, so we wanted to ride that wave.”

The competition

So, they had a team. They had a concept. They had a truck. They had a menu, and they had a gimmick. But the hard part was just getting started.

“The biggest challenge,” Andrew said, “was that every episode was in a different city, and every city was a new city to us that we were unfamiliar with. We had to find the perfect place to park our truck for the right time of day, and then we had to get permission to park there. That proved to be really challenging in Las Vegas, because the best places, obviously, are on The Strip, and you can’t just easily call up the owner of a big casino to get their permission to park your food truck in front of their business.”

On top of that, he said, the kitchens in the food trucks are small and cramped, so the team had to adjust to working in a confined space. And the trucks themselves are used and all have their own little quirks.

“You have to find work-arounds,” Andrew said. “Like water. You have to bring your potable water. And then there was the heat; the heat was unbearable. It was the middle of the summer, and the trucks had no air conditioning. One day that we were in Palm Springs, it was 117 degrees. I drove a truck with no air conditioning across the desert, twice, in the middle of the summer. It got so hot that a can of soda literally exploded one day.”

Sarah and Navin usually rode in an air-conditioned car while Andrew drove the truck. But even they weren’t safe from the heat. The three had plastic visors they were as part of their uniform, and one day a visor left in the back window of the car melted in the heat of the sun coming through the rear windshield.

“I think we have always considered the option of having a food truck, and we had talked to people with food trucks in Dallas. They had told us how difficult it can be,” Navin said. “But being on this show takes it to a whole new level. There are so many things to consider: location, weather, marketing, permission, price points, competing side by side with other food trucks.”

“We really had to be creative and be able to adapt right on the spot,” he continued. “Since the show, we have definitely said we probably would not do a food truck as a regular concept, although we are open to considering a catering truck for special events. But this definitely opened up our eyes to the challenges that food truck owners face, and we had the show helping us get into places and maintaining vehicles.”

“It’s a lot of work. Hats off to all the food truck operators out there. You have to constantly hustle, and you have to go where your customers are,” Navin said.

The aftermath

After winning, Andrew and Navin spent months keeping their secret and anticipating the boost in publicity from the show would bring their Dallas...
Making sure LGBT Texans have health insurance

Lambda Legal’s Dallas office is asking the governor to expand Medicaid during this health crisis

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Lambda Legal attorney Shelly Skeen said that while her organization is known for its impact litigation, there are other ways to get things done — like sending a letter to the governor of Texas. The Dallas office of Lambda Legal sent an eight-page letter to Gov. Greg Abbott asking him to expand Medicaid coverage to Texas under the Affordable Care Act, at least temporarily.

The point of the letter is to help the state save millions of dollars, Skeen said, noting that sometimes a letter pointing out statistics and other facts can be the most effective tool for change.

“We don’t know what will look like in the future,” Skeen said. “The peak [of the COVID-19 epidemic] might not hit until June. We may have a second wave.”

She said if the governor looks at all of the facts, he would see that now is a good time to expand Medicaid to Texas.

Lambda Legal’s letter highlights how expansion will help the LGBTQ community. But, Skeen said, because Texas has the lowest rate of health insurance coverage among the states, expanding Medicaid now will help people across the state regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

“Within the LGBT community, 26 percent don’t have coverage, and 27 percent of us are food insecure,” Skeen said. “Twenty-six percent of us make less than $24,000, and 34 percent of transgender people live in poverty.”

But does the current administration care whether more than a quarter of LGBT Texans have healthcare coverage? If not, then they definitely should.

Skeen said that $6.8 billion in healthcare in Texas is uncompensated. That’s during a normal year. With Covid-19 not even having yet peaked, who knows what that figure will be this year. In other words, doctors, hospitals, labs and more would be compensated for more of that amount if Texas expanded Medicaid.

Skeen said the purpose of the letter is to convince the governor to expand Medicaid to help the state reduce its economic costs as the pandemic continues, reduce loss of life by insuring more people and reduce the economic impact on uninsured Texans.

Texas is just one of 14 states that has not expanded Medicaid coverage since the ACA went into effect. As a result, the Lone Star State has the highest rate of uninsured people of all the 50 states.

In the LGBT community, 8 percent were unemployed pre-Covid-19 when the state’s unemployment rate overall was hovering around 3 percent. That translated into more than a quarter of a million LGBT Texans who had no health insurance.

For the transgender community the statistics were far worse — 17 percent unemployed, 34 percent living in poverty, 77 percent without identity documents that match their gender.

Lambda Legal’s letter to Abbott explains how this puts the community at risk.

Research shows that people who are uninsured wait longer to seek medical attention. Not only do they have poorer health outcomes themselves, but with the onset of Covid-19, uninsured people are more likely to spread the virus to others putting everyone else at risk.

“Regardless of the source consulted, whether it is the NIH, the CDC or federally funded programs such as the National LGBT Aging Center study, LGBT adults and seniors face significant and unique hardships when compared to their non-LGBT counterparts,” Lambda Legal argues in its letter.

Therefore, the signers of the letter conclude, “there is an immediate, crucial and growing need for temporary Medicaid coverage and expanded Medicaid coverage for all uninsured Texans, including LGBT Texans.”

The Dallas Lambda Legal office summarized its position by saying, “There is simply no downside to agreeing to accept additional Medicaid funds at this precarious time in our state’s history.”

The letter is from the Lambda Legal’s non-political Defense and Education Fund, Inc. In addition to Skeen, Regional Director Avery Belyeu, attorney Paul D. Castillo and Law Fellow Avatara Smith-Carrington signed it.
Earlier this month, Texas Pride Impact Funds suspended its normal grant-making cycle to get money as quickly as possible into the hands of LGBT agencies around the state that can provide emergency help to people who needed it.

TPIF granted a total of $120,000 to 26 agencies, including eight in Dallas and North Texas.

“We were in the very early stages of the 2020 grant cycle” when the COVID-19 epidemic hit, explained Judy Sherman, a TPIF officer and director. That’s when immediately TPIF shifted from a formal process into emergency mode.

Sherman said the board was very conscious of the needs of smaller communities around Texas as well as the major metropolitan areas. Among the groups receiving funds were Texas Tech LGBTQIA in Lubbock, Eagle Pass SAFE and River City Advocacy in New Braunfels.

“We wanted to reach out to every region in the state and send money to the largest players in the area,” Sherman said, adding that TPIF did some research to reach agencies on the front lines.

And while TPIF already had a relationship with the major agencies in Austin, Dallas and Houston, they didn’t have the same relationship in San Antonio. But they quickly discovered that MCC San Antonio was getting meals to the LGBT community in that city, so they granted the church $5,000.

In Dallas, Resource Center received $7,500 to continue its work delivering food through its food pantry and providing other services to people in need.

TPIF grants helping 26 LGBT agencies provide needed services through the pandemic

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Resource Center CEO Cece Cox said that the TPIF grant came just as the community’s need was growing and the center’s signature fundraising event was canceled.

“It does help fill the gaps,” Cox said of the TPIF grant.

Cox said when the epidemic hit, the food pantry quickly changed its model to one where food is packaged and loaded directly into cars. But the last thing they want to do is send food home that will be thrown away. Staff members, Cox said, have a good sense of what some clients can eat, so they’re careful to satisfy their preferences when possible.

The grant money, Cox continued, is helping the food pantry and other programs adapt and continue.

HIV and STD testing also continues, Cox said, along with treatment. Appointments are necessary for tests, and what can be taken care of through telehealth is handled by computer.

Both Youth First and Thrive (for older adults) programs are continuing virtually. That took additional equipment as well as some innovation.

Counseling also switched to online sessions, and case management continues, Cox said, after the county agreed to accept certain documents virtually.

“I’m a huge fan of TPIF,” Cox said. “There aren’t very many foundations or funds dedicated to LGBT needs.”

She said that not only does the foundation fund LGBT agencies doing important work, it also educates the broader philanthropic world about those needs. And TPIF is educating LGBT people and allies about the importance of giving within our community.

“We’re a giant state with huge needs,” Cox said. “TPIF’s ability to direct funds into smaller communities is something to be proud of.”

Other agencies in the area received funds as well.

Dune’s LGBT Homeless Solutions Foundation is a new Fort Worth group addressing the problem of youth homelessness in the community. TPIF granted them $5,000.

Black Trans Advocacy Coalition stages a national convention in Dallas each year, and that convention accounts for a good portion of the organization’s income for the year. The convention should have been taking place this week. Instead, the group is using its resources to get information to its members and conference attendees. The $3,000 it received from TPIF helped in that effort.

Legacy Counseling is counseling virtually. Legacy Founders Cottage helps return people to health so they can live independently again. CEO Melissa Grove said she doesn’t know what she would do if she lost any of her dedicated staff during this health crisis, so she is grateful for the $5,500 grant TPIF gave her agency. That money makes a huge difference, she said.

Rob Emery, a founding board member of Coalition for Aging LGBT, which received $5,500 from TPIF, said the money would “help us bridge that gap so we can survive.”

He said the money was more important now than ever as the group is putting together a new robust online presence. Part of the TPIF grant money will be used to put the coalition’s senior housing guide online, and part will be used to keep seniors connected to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness.

“Our mission is more vital than ever because of this pandemic,” Emery said. “We continue to work to protect the lives and mental health of LGBT seniors in North Texas.”

In addition, Abounding Prosperity Inc., Dallas Hope Charities and Trans Pride Initiative each received $3,000 from TPIF.
Black Tie Dinner on Thursday night, April 30, officially announced the 17 beneficiaries and the theme for 2020 during the organization’s very first digital kickoff event.

Jeremy Hawpe, 2020 BTD co-chair, said these 17 nonprofits beneficiaries, which will share the proceeds from the Black Tie Dinner’s 39th annual gala in October, are a “diverse and incredibly hard-working group of organizations, whose work in our community is more important now than ever during these unprecedented times.

“Selecting our beneficiaries is one of the most vital decisions our board makes every year, but it is also rewarding because of the remarkable work these organizations are doing in our community,” Hawpe added.

Returning local beneficiaries of Black Tie Dinner for 2020 are AIDS Outreach Center, AIDS Services of Dallas, Big Brother Big Sisters, Cathedral of Hope, Celebration Community Church, Equality Texas, Lambda Legal, Legacy Counseling Center, Northaven United Methodist Church, Planned Parenthood, Promise House, Resource Center, Turtle Creek Chorale and Uptown Players.

New local beneficiaries are the Health Education Learning Project and Coalition for Aging LGBT. And Black Tie Dinner’s national beneficiary is the Human Rights Campaign Foundation.

In addition to announcing its beneficiaries during its first-ever digital kickoff event, Black Tie Dinner also officially unveiled the theme for its 2020 dinner — “MOMENTUM: Our Future Is Calling.”

CO-chair Brand Pritchett said the board “chose this year’s theme for numerous reasons. First, we wanted to acknowledge the importance of continuing the positive momentum of defending the rights of the LGBTQ community especially in the uncertain times we are in. As we continue to push for equal rights and equal dignity for the LGBTQ community, we are excited to continue the progress through supporting our beneficiaries.”

The 2020 Black Tie Dinner, the nation’s largest LGBTQ fundraiser dinner of its kind, is set for Saturday, Oct. 3, at the Sheraton Dallas hotel. As of now, officials said, the dinner is scheduled to continue as planned. But, they added, the scope, size and specifics of this year’s dinner will be based on the guidance of local and state authorities, the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization. And that means that dinner plans are subject to change, “as the health and safety of guests are of utmost importance,” dinner officials said.

For more information about the beneficiaries, the BTD organization and the 2020 dinner, visit blacktie.org.
Republicans: The party of death during COVID-19

Currently trending political advice: Do not chug Lysol. Do not inject bleach. Do not smoke Clorox wipes. Also add to that list: Do not vote for Republicans.

My God, what a sick and dangerous joke this president and his party are!

In some ways it makes sense, this fierce protectionism of the most unqualified person to ever hold the highest office in the land. Republicans are completely incapable of governing. After all, they don’t believe that government is capable of being competent or helpful, and so they have an incentive to be terrible. And, my oh my, do they meet even the lowest, most cynical expectations. Trump is so terrible that he has people waxing nostalgic about George W. Bush and Democrats getting misty-eyed over Ronald Reagan. (Note: when one person is MORE terrible than another, that doesn’t make the less terrible person not terrible.)

The COVID-19 pandemic makes the difference between Republicans and Democrats nakedly clear. One party is taking advice from the country’s top medical experts about how to navigate this crisis; the other party puts a guy on TV every night who believes that windmills cause cancer and that we should try to kill coronavirus by beaming sunlight into a body — literally putting sunshine to kill coronavirus by beaming sunlight into a body — literally putting sunshine where the sun doesn’t shine.

One party takes unprecedented steps to save American lives; the other party encourages protestors wearing Confederate flag tube tops and waving “Don’t Tread on Me” banners to descend upon state governments who dare to take these steps.

One party thinks that staying alive is goal No. 1; the other party thinks that life only matters when it’s inside a womb.

There are more than 50,000 Americans dead as I write this. Surely there will be more by the time you read it. And that’s just the deaths we’re counting. There are likely more.

The number of people who are sick is no doubt being undercounted due to the Trump administration’s botched response to this crisis. We didn’t test. We didn’t do contact tracing. We didn’t do shit.

The only thing Trump offered to fight this virus was racism against the Chinese, and guess what: Racism is as ineffective against COVID-19 as mainlining Purell.

As crass and narcissistic and awful as Trump is, it is astounding to me that he has yet to show any care or concern for tens of thousands of people who are dead. I mean, it’s not astounding to me that he doesn’t care; it’s astounding to me that he doesn’t have advisors saying, “You probably should express some kind of condolences.”

Actually, wrap that. I suspect he does have those advisors, but he is so out of control, so completely off leash, so totally insane that he listens to no one. Not even Ivanka.

Trump’s Republican Party claims to be pro-life, but when it comes to life outside of the womb, they DGAF. There are Republicans across the country making the argument that letting scores of people get an incredibly infectious virus and die is preferable to hurting the economy. They argue that death is the lesser evil when compared to a tanking stock market.

And then they want to turn around and pretend they’re holier than thou because they oppose abortion.

In Michigan, where I live, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat known to Trump as “that woman from Michigan,” has gotten some pushback from Trump supporters for her “Stay Home, Stay Safe” order, which has been extended until May 15. She’s had protesters in front of the Capitol and even her house. People are protesting her audacity to limit their liberty in an effort to not kill thousands of people. They are taking “Give me liberty or give me death” to the extreme here.

And Michigan Republicans are with the protesters on this. They have a majority in the state House and Senate, and they have forced both bodies to meet in person in Lansing, most recently so that the Republicans could pass bills stripping Whitmer of some of her power — bills that Whitmer is obviously not going to sign.

So, the whole thing is just a political stunt — a political stunt that puts peoples’ health and lives at risk. This is even after Rep. Isaac Robinson, D-Detroit, DIED in March from COVID-19.

Michigan’s Republican Party is a ghoulish circus of nightmare clowns.

But they, of course, take their cues from their Dear Leader who tweeted “LIBERATE MICHIGAN” as protesters without masks crammed together elbow to elbow, toting assault rifles and boasting about their allegiance to white supremacy, and intentionally blocked streets in the capital, including access to a hospital.

Remember those death panels Republicans warned us about when Obama dared to give people health insurance? Well, they’re here. And the panelists are Republicans. Vote them out before they kill you.

D’Anne Witkowski is a poet, writer and comedian living in Michigan with her wife and son. She has been writing about LGBT politics for over a decade. Follow her on Twitter @MamaDWitkowski.
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When Kent Rathbun arrived in Dallas in 1990 to start working at the famed Mansion restaurant, he already knew a lot about cooking. But what he quickly realized was how much he still had to learn.

“I thought I was a very good cook, until I got into a kitchen like the Mansion and worked with Dean Fearing,” Rathbun says. As the morning sous chef, he was expected to come up with creative breakfast and lunch items based upon ingredients left over from the dinner menu.

“I would have mise-en-place left over from the Friday/Saturday/Sunday menu — a box with all this beautiful prep: vinaigrettes, pastas, sauces... an average of a dozen to 20 items I had to figure out how to use. The brilliance of this was, my goal was always to turn those ingredients into big money. So I became the Leftover King. I developed [recipes] that even today I am proud of,” he says.

A storied career later, Rathbun still finds the process of looking into someone’s pantry or refrigerator and figuring out how to turn odds and ends into something special as his sweet spot. Many chefs are like that; it’s what makes them great chefs. So during a time when many of us are cooking more at home — and probably running out of inventive ways to spruce up the same go-to meals — having experienced chefs share some of their kitchen hacks to spice up your quarantine cuisine.
hacks can be a godsend. And North Texas is teeming with great chefs.

“Cooking can be great therapy, especially during these times,” says Avner Samuel, who retired earlier this year from Nosh Bistro and has opened more than a dozen restaurants over his career. “It will make your quarantine a bit more fun. I suggest thinking outside the box and getting really creative.”

Here, then, are suggestions from more than a half-dozen of the area’s most respected culinary masters for how to perk up your recipes with some flavorful and easy ingredients and techniques.

Breakfast

“The easiest [way to perk up breakfast] is the Thai omelette,” also called kai jeow, says Nikki Phinyawatana, chef-owner of Asian Mint: “Just crack three eggs, add some light soy or fish sauce (preferred), and beat with a fork until frothy. Heat a pan to high heat with a lot of oil — like, 1/4 cup. Once hot, pour in the egg in one swoop. It will puff up! Give it 30 seconds and flip. (It doesn’t have to be perfectly round.)

Serve over your leftover rice from your take out and top with sriracha.” (Adds Samuel: “When making scrambled eggs, use heavy cream instead of milk to enhance the flavor.”)

Veggies

Monica Greene has spent much of her culinary career tweaking Tex-Mex dishes, adding in more of the Mex from her native country to the familiar gringo variations. But she also celebrates vegan cooking in many restaurants, including Monica’s Mex-Tex Cantina in The Cedars.

“I’ve been making healthy Mexican food since Monica’s Aca y Alla” in Deep Ellum, she says. And her recipe for a tostada is simple, good for you … and perfect for ushering in Cinco de Mayo later this week.

“It’s a stir fry: Just chop up onions and put in a pan [with oil], and when it’s translucent, add celery and garlic. Then add the pico de gallo ingredients — poblanos and other peppers. Then get tofu, but press it down to get out the

Recipes and Qs

“Look in cookbooks of other cuisines, because it’s always super fun to do something you haven’t done before,” chef Kent Rathbun suggests. “Take this time to do something out of your wheelhouse.”

Finding the perfect cookbook can be difficult, though, so here are two we checked out to get you started.

One Pot, One Pan. This collection of kosher recipes may be the first step in looking outside your wheelhouse, though there are recipes for Israeli salad, shawarma and chicken soup (aka Jewish penicillin), these recipes for beginners have broad appeal, from soups and salads and side dishes to drinks and desserts. (Look for some of the recipes online at DallasVoice.com.) Available at Amazon.com.

Cooking in Color. Worried about how a sedentary lifestyle and cooking at home can affect your health? The American Heart Association has put out this lovely collection of healthy-eating recipes. It’s short and free to download for the digital version ($5.95 for the physical copy) while providing great tips for cobblers, smoothies, kebabs and more, all broken down by their colorful benefits to your immune system, energy or overall positives. Available at Heart.org.

— Arnold Wayne Jones

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Pasta
Rodarte says. “You can always add meat if desired,” texture. Season with Italian seasoning.
with tomatoes to help with a saucy my absolute favorite! Simply dice all the
tables: A quick bolognese with the same
ingredients, plus shallots. “Shallots are my absolute favorite! Simply dice all the
ingredients into a small dice, and saute with tomatoes to help with a saucy
texture. Season with Italian seasoning. You can always add meat if desired,” Rodarte
says.

Meatballs
“Let me start with a few suggestions on meatballs,” says Samuel. “You can
elevate this family favorite by adding exciting things like heavy cream and
European butter — it will soften them and add incredible flavor. Instead of
off the grill.”

Rather than flipping it and risking
overcooking, Rathbun suggests using
the oven to your advantage. “First, pre-
heat the oven to 350 degrees. Then [on
the stovetop], preheat the pan you’re
going to saute the fish in — at least 90
seconds. Have the fish seasoned up
and ready. When choosing an oil, select
between canola, peanut or grapeseed
— all have a neutral flavor and burn
high. Add the oil, then immediately
put your fish in the pan,” probably for
about three minutes, depending what
kind of fish it is and how thick. Then
put the pan in the oven for another three
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Techniques
Recipes aren’t the only way to
tweak the cooking experience (though
you can check out a cookbook, see
sidebar); you can also find ways to
make the cooking process go smooth-
ly.

“Now that I’m home and cooking
multiple meals a day, [like] thinking
ahead and taking time to prep like I
would at the restaurant,” says Jeana
Johnson, chef at the Canvas hotel.

“Rather than taking an hour to
cook dinner every night, I have found I am
better served by setting aside a couple
hours the day I grocery shop and
breaking down everything into kits.
So I peel and chop all my garlic, set
up a blanching pot and blanch every-
thing at once. This cuts down on dish-
es. And more importantly it keeps my
daily cooking time quick, which really
helps me enjoy it. And having an Echo
in the kitchen has really changed the
mood, too.”

“I would encourage people to cook
sous vide at home if they can,” adds
Samuel. That way, they can store food
longer.”

My own suggestion to the chefs?
How about black lava salt on vanilla
ice cream? Or a healthy homemade
salad dressing of brown mustard, lime
juice, olive oil and salt-and-pepper?
Or even a shot of bourbon in your
oatmeal? “That’s a good fit!” Rathbun
exclaims. “Can you imagine a little
bit of reduced cream with bourbon in
your oatmeal, or for pancakes and
waffles? I love mixing cream with
whiskey. That’s the thing with cooking:
If it sounds like it will go good
together, it probably will.”

Avner Samuel prepares a different menu
every day for delivery. Follow him on Face-
book for his daily menu.

Nikki Phinyawatana’s Asian Mint offers
kits for home cooks as well as online classes

Kent Rathbun prepares large-scale
cooked meats and fishes every weekend
for pickup at Lovers Seafood. Pre-orders
required at ChefKentRathbun.com.

Julian Rodarte’s Beto & Son offers curb-
side pickup at Trinity Groves. BetoAnd-
Son.com.

Monica Greene has opened many restaur-
ants, including her current Monica’s
Mex-Tex Cantina.

Donny Sirisavath’s Khao Noodle Shop
opened in Old East Dallas in December
2018 and was named Dallas Voice’s best
restaurant of the year.

Jeana Johnson opened the kitchen at the
Canvas Hotel kitchen last year.
Come out, come out wherever you are! As a community, we always encourage people to come out of the closet whenever it makes sense for them. And with the weather turning nice, we all want to come out... of our homes, to socialize. But as the shelter-in-place policy continues to flatten the curve and thwart those efforts, here are some movies and TV shows you can look for that celebrate being “out”... even if only in their titles.

**Outbreak.** This cheesy thriller from 25 years ago was never great cinema, but it was more-or-less fun popcorn entertainment about a virus that makes its way to the U.S., while the government both strives to contain it and cover up America’s hand in creating it. The graphic where they predict the spread if action isn’t taken quickly may look all-too-familiar, but there is an upside to seeing a vaccine take care of everything for us.

**Get Out.** The title alone sounds encouraging during a lockdown, although let's face it: It's as hard for us to get out (out of the house, out of this predicament) as it is for the hero being scammed by sinister white folks with a misguided sense of racial integration. Serious filmmaking (it won an Oscar for its screenplay) with the patina of horror ... well, that sounds almost like the daily White House briefing.

**Outlaw King.** Chris Pine stars as 14th century revolutionary Robert the Bruce, the Scotsman who led an uprising against the repressive British crown. There’s a touch of historical hokum, but it’s an exciting swashbuckler in its way, and there’s even some male full frontal. And if you gotta shelter in place, might as well have that going for ya.
Ask Howard
How to do the wrong thing right

Hell, I don’t know. Nobody does. How all this is gonna end. The only universal conclusion seems to be that whatever our new world order ends up looking like, it’ll bear little resemblance to the former “normal” as we knew it. The five stages of dying fly by in a mere five weeks, swiftly bypassing denial, anger, bargaining and depression to where we find ourselves standing today, astride the sixth week: acceptance. This week, for me, also marks the 20th anniversary of a very dear friend’s untimely, totally unexpected death. I’ve tried imagining what I’d say to Diane had she instead only been in a coma these past two decades, and just woken up. “Howard?” Diane might ask, blinking. “What day is it? Where are we? And why, exactly, are you wearing a biohazard mask? Am I contagious?”

“No, Di, but anyone else could very well be. A plague has been let loose. A global pandemic. We need to get you home and self-quarantined, quickly. Grab those rolls of toilet paper. Let’s hurry… where’s your smartphone?” “My what? Howard, your hair’s gone gray at the temples! How long have I been… hibernating? Where’re Mom and Dad?” “Sweetie, they died of old age a while back. You’ve been Rip Van Winkling it for 20 years!”

“Are you kidding me? Why, I must look old as you – where’s a mirror? What color’s my hair?”

“We’ve gotta find you a mask, Di. They’re obligatory now in Dallas County whenever outside your home… and gloves. You see any latex gloves layin’ around here?”

“Gloves, yes… look at my nails, they’re a Highland Park scandal! Howard, can we run inside your home… and gloves. You see any latex gloves layin’ around here?”

Everyone whose last name begins with the letters A to L is now permitted access to the Trail on Thursday and Saturdays, while Fridays and Sundays are given over, exclusively, to those whose last names fall in the M to Z range. Monday to Wednesday permits universal access, because, as everyone well knows, our sweet friend, Miss Rona, takes herself a long weekly holiday every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday… that lazy, infectious bitch! The Reichstag (again, my bad, city of Dallas) greatly appreciates your “voluntary compliance” in requesting that everyone please be vigilant of those in violation of the six-feet-apart social distancing decree. Be a good citizen, turn them in!”

For a more complete Community Calendar online, visit Tinyurl.com/dvevents.

This week’s solution

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Ben Early, Starbucks

Sahra, nurse

Betty Neal, Walmart

Scottlynd Colgrove, assistant autopsy supervisor at Dallas County Medical Examiner’s Office

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