

How many calories in BBQ sauce?

The three months that start with left-over Snickers bars and end up knee-deep in Super Bowl guacamole are hard on our health. It's probably the worst time of year to resolve not to overdo.

The last thing we need is the government wagging its finger at us about it all.

TMI, FDA!

When word got out that **Perkins Restaurant & Bakery and Carrabba's Italian Grill** in Port Charlotte, among others, had cooperated with a 7-year-old Affordable Care Act rule requiring restaurants to print calories on their menus, reactions ran the gamut.

At one end of the spectrum was the virtuous, "It's about time people knew what they're putting in their mouth!"

At the other were those about to tuck into a great big plate of Perkins' Southern Fried Chicken Biscuit Breakfast plus, oh, why not some hash browns, too? When their eyes lit on the sobering information that this amounted to 1,830 calories — very nearly the daily allowance for a grown woman — one cried, "I really don't want to know!"

Even the mind-boggling buffet line at Golden Corral has dutifully affixed calorie tags to its sneeze guards.

Vera Tharp, co-owner of two Corrals, including Punta Gorda's, said, "The salad bar will even tell you the calories in cucumber slices. Unless you're looking for the tags, you don't really see them, but they're there — if you want to know!"

Though Golden Corral patrons' desire to know is probably nil, FDA commissioner Scott Gottlieb insisted in a November press release, "The information we get in restaurants and takeout meals isn't consistently available."

The FDA announced in May that it would delay implementation of the calorie-printing rule. But now Gottlieb is "committed to making sure we implement these provisions in a way that is

THE SCENE



Sue
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COLUMNIST

practical, efficient and sustainable" by May 2018. Meanwhile, try to enjoy your holidays guilt-free.

Englewood's smokin'

Englewood has always been known for down-home cooking.

Smoked mullet feasts were Don Platt's specialty out at the old Lemon Bay Marina.

Country Hound co-owner **Tomma Rolfe's** grandpa was an Englewood fisherman whose wife made fish fry with homemade biscuits and gravy every weekend. Tomma's dad, who started Lemon Bay Electric, had people pull their campers into his yard, where they cooked over the campfire all weekend.

That the town has had no eateries dedicated to barbecue lately is nothing short of sinful. Now, as if to make up for lost time, it's got four, pumping out hickory smoke all over Englewood.

There's **Beno's Barbecue's** (\$) new mobile enterprise, alternating service at Sunfresh Produce, Gulf Coast Hardware and **The Backyard** at Skip's Placida Marina.

Claiming the first on-site smokehouse in Englewood, **Lighthouse Grill at Stump Pass** (\$\$) serves smoked salmon, baby back ribs and half-chickens in its "Smoke on the Water" menu.

SandBar Tiki & Grille's (\$\$) new monster hickory smoker, for which staff trained for weeks in Georgia, has its own new menu, with signature rub. Visiting celebrity chef **Emily Ellyn** proclaimed it "dangerously good barbecue."

Texan Bob Murphy vacationed with his

family in Englewood for 17 years before recently retiring there. After carefully testing all the local 'cue he could consume, he reached a competitive conclusion before opening **Texas Best Barbecue**.

He drawled, "There was nothing like Texas slow-cooked brisket barbecue in Englewood. So, about a year ago, we decided to open a place with that and Texas comfort food."

"I've cooked brisket, chicken quarters and a whole lot of ribs over the years. We've been practicing ribs here for two months and settled in on a method of preparation for the rub. We also make our own barbecue sauce, unlike anything else we've found in this area."

"Preparation of our brisket starts with five days' steeping in a secret blend of herbs and spices before we cook it. Then it goes in our smoker for at least 12 hours, using natural oak hardwood for heat and hickory for flavor."

"We want to be the kind of place where Englewood can get a nice hot brisket sandwich or a nice plate with all the fixin's."

He's keeping the menu simple — smoked chicken, sliced or chopped barbecue beef brisket, kolbasz sausage, pulled pork and special baked potatoes. "As time goes by, we'll add things," said Bob.

In fact, they've already added Friday and Saturday night Rib Fest. From 4 to 8 p.m., there are fall-off-the-bone St. Louis-style pork ribs, slow-cooked for six hours, at \$19.95 for a full slab and two sides, or half a slab with two sides at \$12.95.

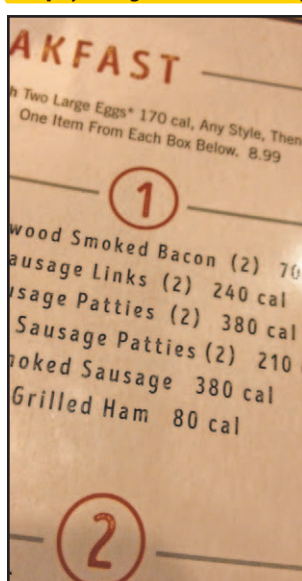
Comfort sides include Tex-Mex cornbread, jalapeño-cilantro pinto beans, mac and cheese, potato salad and cole slaw.

Bob's wife, Yvette, has dessert-baking background, so you'll also find banana bread, a traditional Texas pecan pie and Texas chocolate sheet cake. For a real Lone Star treat, you can top them with a scoop of Blue Bell Ice Cream,



PHOTO PROVIDED

The Texas Best Barbecue family: Bob Murphy, father-in-law Ronald Coker, wife Yvette Coker, daughter Lauren Murphy, son Henley Murphy, and Taylor Al-Hamod.



SUN PHOTO BY SUE WADE

The good news? Two slices of Perkins, applewood-smoked bacon, at 70 calories, are practically diet food.

churned in Brenham, Texas, since 1907.

"We've been open about three weeks and are just thrilled with the response we're getting from local folks."

Texas Best Barbecue (\$\$), 941-460-9577, 801 S. Indiana Ave., is open Tuesday to Saturday 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Send restaurant and bar news and recommendations to columnist Sue Wade at suewade47@aol.com.

Average price ranges are \$ = inexpensive (under \$10), \$\$ = moderate (\$11-\$30), and \$\$\$ = pricey (over \$30), including tip and beverage.



SUN PHOTO BY SUE WADE

Does the FDA really expect people to think twice before snagging that Golden Corral cinnamon roll?



PHOTO PROVIDED

Texas Best Barbecue is next to Englewood's Sportsman's Pub, in the former Gramcracker Café location.

COMMUNITY NEWS BRIEFS

Peace River Harvard Club to meet

The Peace River Harvard Club will meet at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 14, at the Isles Yacht Club, 1780 W. Marion Ave., Punta Gorda, in the main dining room. Lunch will be at noon followed by the featured speaker, Jerry Mallet, director of emergency management for Charlotte County. Mallet will give a PowerPoint presentation on Hurricane Irma and will also be available to answer questions regarding the emergency management department functions.

The Peace River Harvard Club invites all Harvard graduates, family and those who have attended Harvard University to go their monthly meetings. Reservations for lunch can be made by calling 941-575-2345. The PRHC is known for their yearly presentation of the distinguished teacher award of \$1,000 to Charlotte County teachers for the past 10 years.

First Methodist sets Christmas cantata

The First United Methodist Church Punta Gorda Chancel Choir will perform a Christmas cantata, "The Silence and the Sound," at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 10, in the Life Center building 507 W. Marion St., Punta Gorda. The performance is free and open to the public. The piece, written by well-known Christian composer Heather Sorenson, is an "amazing musical story that captures both the cacophony of exuberance of the coming of the Christ Child and the silent awe of such an amazing event," said Shane R. McDonald, church music director.

The choir will be accompanied by a chamber orchestra of professional and semi-professional musicians from the area. For more information, call 941-639-3842.

ECH celebrates surgical robot

Englewood

Community Hospital is hosting a birthday party for "ERICA the Robot," the hospital's surgical robot. The community is invited to an open house to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the availability of robotic surgery technology from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday in the front lobby at ECH, 700 Medical Blvd., Englewood. Erica assists the surgical team to perform Urologic, Gynecologic and various types of General Surgery. Compared with open surgery, patients having robotic surgery may experience shorter hospitalization, reduced pain, faster recovery, smaller incisions, less blood loss and minimal scarring. ERICA stands for Excellence, Respect, Integrity, Compassion and Accountability that are important values held by the Englewood Community Hospital team.

Attendees will have the opportunity to test drive the robot with professionals on hand to discuss this less invasive surgical technique. Light refreshments will also be served. Please

RSVP at Englewood-CommHospital.com or 941-473-3919.

The club will also be giving away items at the festival which also includes bounce houses, food vendors, games Santa photos and a free toy for children while supplies last.

Residents should be alerted that a portion of Sumter Boulevard from Sylvania Avenue to Price Boulevard will be closed down before, during and after the parade which begins at 5 p.m.

There is no parking on Sumter Boulevard along the parade route. Residents will have to park and walk to the route which ends at City Hall with Santa helping light the Christmas tree to kick off the festival.

AMVETS Christmas

Sons of AMVETS Post 2000 hosts a children's Christmas Party from noon-3 p.m. Dec. 17 for kids 13 years old and younger. Any children in need are invited. Call the post to register at 941-429-1999 or stop by the post to sign up at 401 Ortiz Blvd., Warm

Mineral Springs. The last day to register is Dec. 10.

Charlotte Arts 'Art in Public Places' holiday artist reception

Charlotte Memorial Funeral Home and Cemetery, 9400 Indian Springs Cemetery Road, Punta Gorda, will host Good Grief!! It's a Charlie Brown reception. Bring your holiday spirit - and everything else will be provided. On Thursday, Dec. 14 from 5-7 p.m., help celebrate the art work of Larry Palmer. His Coastal Beauties are painted from the wildlife and scenery seen around us every day. Enjoy lively holiday music from Homegrown, a "Charlie Brown Christmas" will be playing on the big

screens, great food and wine and lots of holiday fun. For more information, call 941-639-1171.

Holiday Dinner and Cookie Exchange to be held

Hickory Bluff Chapter NSDAR will host its holiday dinner and cookie exchange on Thursday, Dec. 14, with a social time of 5:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. meeting at Charlotte Harbor Yacht Club, 4400 Lister St., Port Charlotte. Reservations must be made in advance. Cost is \$25 per person. For more information or to make reservations, call Melissa Othon and 941-628-6428.

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