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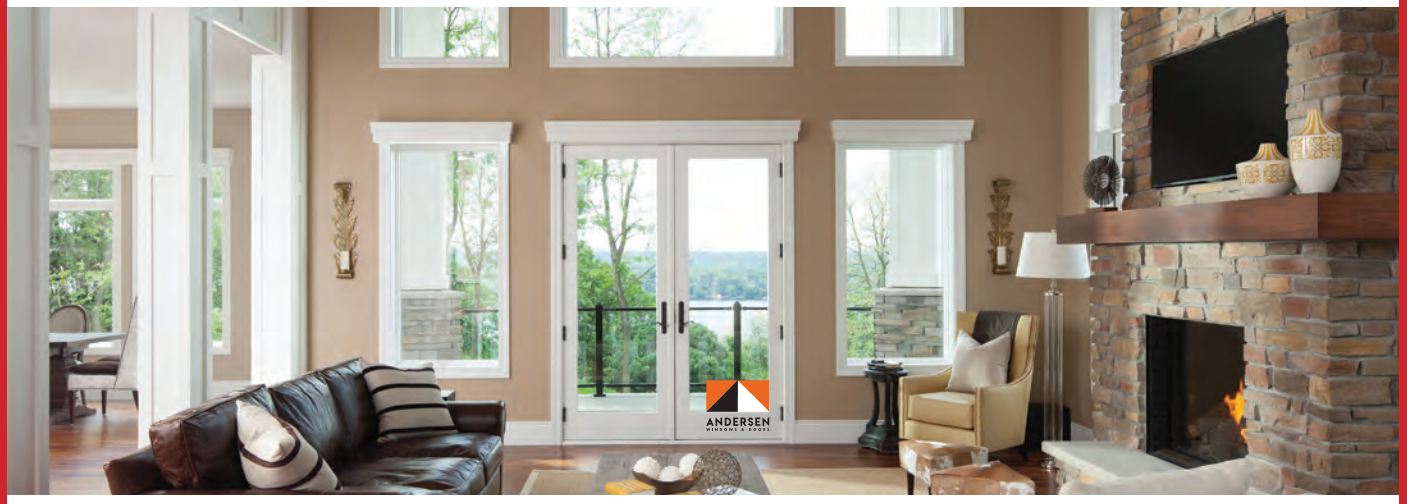
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South Carolina Living

THE MAGAZINE FOR COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

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2026 | nov/dec



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It's not rocket voodoo
Scientists have attempted to confirm what we all suspect: that cats are, in fact, liquid, Jan A. Igoe reports in a classic column.







Cheesecake bites made with South Carolina's classic benne wafers will be a hit this holiday season. Photo by Gina Moore.

FROM TOP: IULIIA NEDRYGAILOVA; SAVATREE; L.A. JACKSON

Co-op releases 2025 financial report

BECAUSE TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC is owned by its members, the cooperative annually releases to the membership a summary report of its finances. Tri-County Electric is a not-for-profit cooperative. Revenue in excess of expenses is returned to its members in the form of patronage capital. This audited financial statement for the fiscal year 2025 is approved and presented by the Tri-County Electric Board of Trustees.

2025 Financial Statement	2023	2024	2025
Average Number of Members	13,996	14,038	14,067
Average Number of Accounts	18,370	18,445	18,475
Gross Billing	$47,014,250	$52,639,766	$57,951,700
Average Bill	$213	$238	$261
KWH Sold	289,399,749	300,558,496	307,209,604
KWH Purchased	304,128,894	316,170,784	322,851,545
Percent Energy Loss	4.8%	4.9%	4.8%
Average Number of Minimum Bills Per Month	2,822	2,975	1,091
Percent of Minimum Bills	15.4%	16.1%	5.9%
Average KWH Used Per Month	1,313	1,358	1,386
Miles of Line	2,753	2,762	2,779
Average Monthly Revenue Per Mile	$1,423	$1,588	$1,738
Average Monthly Expense Per Mile	$1,490	$1,603	$1,757
Average Monthly Expense Per Mile—Wholesale Power	$729	$769	$906
Average Monthly Expense Per Mile Excluding Wholesale Power	$760	$834	$852

LONG-TERM DEBT	
Holder of Note:	
NRUCFC	$109,908,124
USDA Economic Development	+ $300,000
Total Long-Term Debt as of 12/31/2025	$110,208,124

ASSETS (WHAT WE OWN)	
Cash	$1,295,112
Temporary Investments	$928,725
Accounts and Notes Receivable (Net)	$6,413,276
Materials and Supplies (Merchandise and Electric)	$1,880,261
Prepayments	$346,742
Other Investments	$15,339,579
Deferred Debits and Accrued Assets	$106,000
Net Utility Plant	$151,031,416
TOTAL ASSETS*	**$177,341,111**

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS	
Operating Revenue	$61,794,414
Total Cost of Electric Service	- $58,607,257
Patronage Capital or Margins	$3,187,157

MEMBERS' EQUITY	
Membership Fees	$78,790
Patronage Capital	$39,629,395
Other Equities and Margins	$5,277,516

LIABILITIES (WHAT WE OWE)	
Long-Term Debt–RUS and CFC	$104,334,024
Lease Obligations	$1,124,685
Postretirement Healthcare Obligation	$6,528,007
Notes and Accounts Payable	$8,974,688
Current Maturities Long-Term Debt	$5,874,100
Other Liabilities	$3,540,923
Deferred Credits	$1,978,983
TOTAL MEMBERS' EQUITY AND LIABILITIES*	**$177,341,111**

TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
TCE
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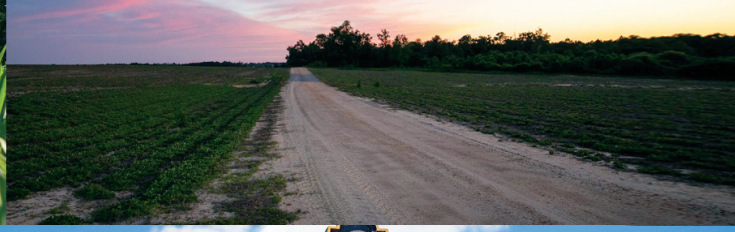
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Be A Part of the Power of Community at the 86th Annual Meeting

TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE TCE

Drive-Thru Only Registration:
Saturday, Nov. 21
9 a.m.– 2 p.m.

Tri-County Electric's Main Office
6473 Old State Rd., St. Matthews

Registration Gift



Each member who registers will receive a **$25 Credit on their electric bill.**

Members are limited to one registration per person and may not register for others who are not in attendance.

Virtual Business Meeting
Saturday, Nov. 21 2 p.m.

The business meeting will be available via livestream on YouTube. A recording of the meeting will be posted on our website, tri-countyelectric.net, for those unable to view it live.

Prizes

- **John Deere® ZTrak™ Riding Mower** with 54-inch deck
- Additional Special Prizes



Members who register will be automatically entered in the prize drawings.

The prize drawings will be held immediately following the virtual business meeting. Winners will be notified, and the results of the drawings will be posted on our website and Facebook page.

2026 ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

DISTRICT 1-A	DISTRICT 2-A	DISTRICT 3-B
Ida L. Dixon	Gary F. Geiger	James R. Dantzler

This year's candidates are running unopposed.

IMPORTANT: **All members are requested to bring their Official Registration postcard and will be required to present a photo ID to register.**

St. Matthews: (803) 874-1215
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Tri-County Electric will be closed for the holidays Nov. 26–27, Dec. 24 – 25 and Jan. 1.

Compliments to the chefs



IF YOU'RE A REGULAR READER of this magazine, you know the saying is true: We eat with our eyes first.

In an age when ChatGPT can blurt out a list of ingredients, *South Carolina Living* takes great pride in our recipes being originally developed, tested and thoughtfully photographed—by real, live humans!

Our recipes all start with **Chef Belinda Smith-Sullivan**, who's curated a themed set of original dishes for this magazine each month for the past 13 years. When she's not cooking something up for us, she might be golfing, traveling to France, cuddling her puppy, Beau, or working on her fifth recipe book (set to publish in early 2028).

I know Chef Belinda agrees: It's the photographs that sell each recipe. Four outstanding cooks and photographers, amazingly from around the world, have brought each dish to life for our magazine for more than a decade.

Karen Hermann, who lives near Minneapolis, has been interested in photography since her youth and started shooting stock photography, food in particular, nearly 20 years ago. In fact, an online stock photography forum first connected Karen and our three other food photographers with the opportunity to cook and shoot for *South Carolina Living*.

Iuliia Nedrygailova is an avid photographer and foodie. Her husband's work has taken their family to several countries during the years she's photographed for this magazine, and they currently live in Waterford, Ireland. Her searches to find Chef Belinda's ingredients in international countries, especially in South Korea, have bordered on heroic.

Then there's **Gwénaël Le Vot**, who lives in Brittany, France, with his wife and their two sons. Being accustomed to the metric system, he purchased U.S. measuring cups and spoons to follow Chef Belinda's instructions. When he can, he uses his own homegrown vegetables, fruits and herbs in recipes he photographs.

And, finally, there's **Gina Moore**, who works in tech in Los Angeles. Tasked with making and photographing Chef Belinda's benne wafer cheesecakes this month, but unable to find the Southern specialty cookies in her neck of the woods, Gina went the extra mile to bake benne wafers from scratch. I'm told that Gina's husband's colleagues love it when she makes desserts for *South Carolina Living*, because they are the lucky recipients of what's left after the photoshoot.

For each, this work is a hobby and a passion. It's not a full-time gig. They do it because they love it and because they care about this magazine and you, our readers. And because they like eating good food, to boot. As we enter this season marked by giving thanks, we share our thanks especially with this diverse and talented team behind the recipe pages.

Cheers (and *sláinte*—"to your health"—to you, Iuliia),

Sarah E. Owen

Editor, *South Carolina Living*

See ya next year!

As always, *South Carolina Living* does not publish a December issue. But don't think that means you won't hear from us!



KAREN HERMANN

Coming Dec. 1 to **SCLiving.coop**, our Chef Belinda will share her favorite recipes for making sweet holiday memories with your littlest chefs (get ready to clean up a little extra flour...).



L.A. JACKSON

Plus, our gardening columnist, L.A. Jackson, gives us a Christmas cactus lesson—it is, for the record, not to be confused with the closely related Thanksgiving cactus.

The annual Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Bowl football game will be played Saturday, Dec. 12, in Myrtle Beach. Tickets can be purchased at **touchstoneenergybowl.com**. *South Carolina Living* will have online coverage of the game and more.

We hope the coming holiday weeks are filled with joy and too many cookies for you all. We look forward to being back in your mailbox in January.

More at SCLiving.coop **Want more holiday kitchen inspo?** Check out Chef Belinda's archive of recipes, from Santa-approved cookies to make-ahead holiday feasts and more.

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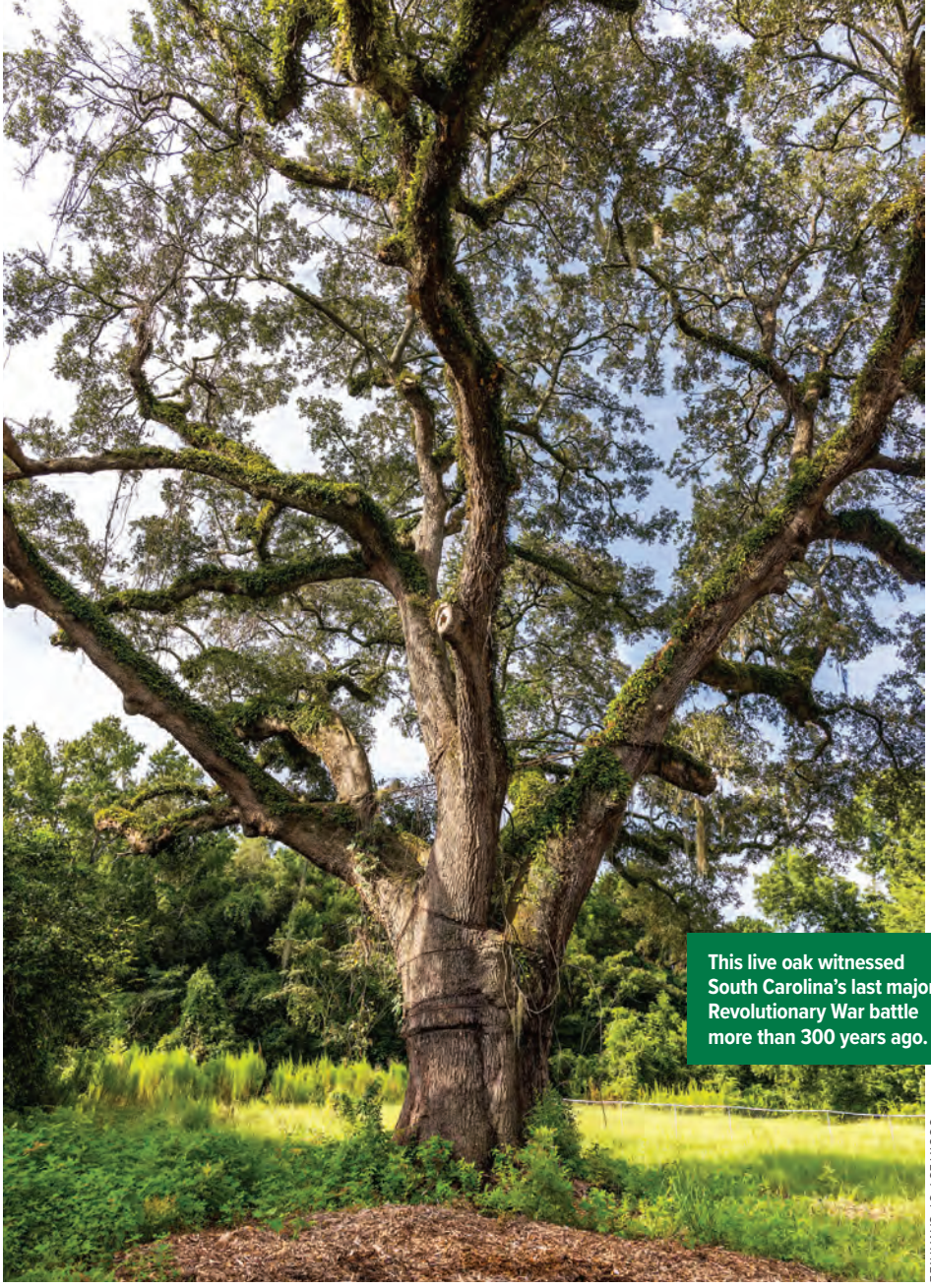
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New life for a 300-year-old witness

BY JOSH P. CROTZER



This live oak witnessed South Carolina's last major Revolutionary War battle more than 300 years ago.

COURTESY OF SAVATREE

HER NAME IS CATY GREENE. She is 45 feet tall and 6 feet wide where she touches the ground, and she witnessed one of South Carolina's most consequential Revolutionary War battles. More than two centuries later, she stands across the road from the park commemorating that battle—unchained, healing and celebrated.

Caty Greene is a live oak estimated to be more than 300 years old. She stood among Patriots and British soldiers at the Battle of Eutaw Springs, South Carolina's last major Revolutionary War battle. Led by Patriot Gen. Nathanael Greene, the brutal engagement pushed the British closer to Charleston and secured South Carolina for the Patriots.

Roughly 50 years ago, lightning split Caty's trunk. She was wrapped in iron chains and steel cables to hold her together, a common remedy at the time. But the metal buried deep in her trunk, and the hard-packed soil and adjacent driveway squeezed her roots.

"Trees of this age are remarkably resilient," says Aron Landsaw, a consulting arborist with SavATree, the company that helped save Caty. "But they require precise, scientific care when historical repairs begin doing more harm than good."

The American Battlefield Trust and South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust, with funding from the South Carolina 250 Commission and South Carolina Conservation Bank, acquired the 4-acre Eutaw Springs property in 2023. With arborists from SavATree, they used a formula that factored in her size, species and location to determine that Caty would have been alive during the battle.

They named the tree for Catharine Greene, Nathanael Greene's wife, and rallied with the South Carolina 250 Commission to pay for her care.

> "This tree, quite literally, would have been looking on to that key part of the engagement." —CATHERINE NOYES

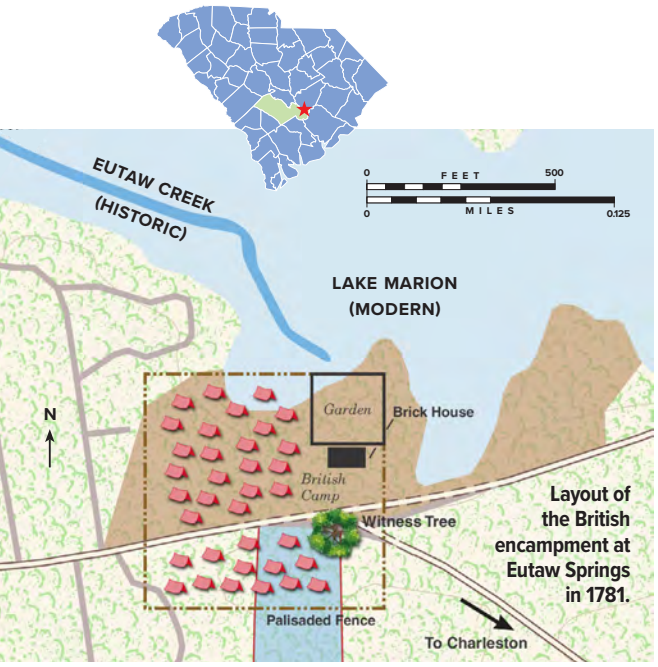
This summer, arborists cleared invasive vines, restored the surrounding soil and installed flexible cabling and lightning protection around the tree. Then, days before the 245th anniversary of the Battle of Eutaw Springs, they removed the old chains embedded in Caty's massive trunk.

Caty will continue standing as a living witness and, now, as the centerpiece of an expanded Eutaw Springs Battleground Park.

"The fact that it's a living relic and a tangible thing that people can come see is nothing short of a miracle," says Landsaw. "You can imagine ... how many people would be gathering under its canopy to get relief from the sun. Horses could have been tied to it, rifles propped against. It was a fixture of the landscape, and it survives."

The last battle in SC

On Sept. 8, 1781, British Lt. Col. Alexander Stewart and his more than 2,000 soldiers were encamped near the limestone spring that fed Eutaw Creek, in what is now Orangeburg County. Caty stood among them as they drilled,



Layout of the British encampment at Eutaw Springs in 1781.

AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST

rested and foraged for food. Greene had followed them there after a months-long effort to drive Redcoat forces out of South Carolina's backcountry.

That morning, some British soldiers were gathering sweet potatoes as Greene's forces marched from Burdell's Plantation, 7 miles away—among them were Francis Marion, Henry Lee and Andrew Pickens. Greene's advance guard surprised the foraging party, taking hundreds of prisoners, and then collided with the British along Moncks Corner Road. The Patriots drove the British beyond their tents, but beneath Caty's canopy, the battle's momentum turned.

Greene's men focused on capturing British troops positioned in a nearby brick mansion, allowing the rest of Stewart's forces to rally and counter-attack. The Patriots retreated, giving the British a tactical victory. But the costs were high, as Stewart's men sustained heavy casualties.

Within days, the British abandoned the camp for the safety of Charleston and never again threatened the South Carolina backcountry.

"This tree, quite literally, would have been looking on to that key part of the engagement," says Catherine Noyes, deputy director of land preservation for the American Battlefield Trust. "It's very unique to have a tree of this age still standing on a Revolutionary War battlefield. It's a tangible connection that will help ground the visitor experience in this place."

GET THERE Visit the Eutaw Springs Battleground Park at 12933 Old Number Six Highway, Eutawville.











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Source: MRI-Simmons reader survey, 2025

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Energy saving for renters

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

RENTING A HOUSE OR APARTMENT can put you in a challenging spot when it comes to energy efficiency. You can't make all the decisions about energy-efficient upgrades in your rental. At the same time, renters are usually responsible for paying the electric bill. That means if the home has inefficient equipment, you're going to use—and pay for—more energy.

Typically, it is the owner's responsibility to make efficiency upgrades, such as adding insulation or new heating and cooling equipment. Don't assume they won't make upgrades. If the home needs upgrades, just ask. I've had landlords let me pay for an upgrade and provide a credit on my rent to offset the cost.

In a situation where you don't have a say over all the decisions, choose to focus on what you can control.

- The **thermostat** is a great place to start. Nudging the thermostat a few degrees closer to the outside temperature can help you save energy and money. Adjust the settings when you aren't home or at night when you're sleeping.
- Hang thick **curtains** over windows to help keep heat out in the summer and make the room feel warmer in the winter. Add a **rug** to make a cold floor feel warmer in the winter. These additions can make it more comfortable to change the thermostat a few degrees.
- Make sure your property owner follows through with **annual maintenance** and **HVAC filter** changes. Ignoring these tasks can lead to unnecessary energy waste.
- **Lighting** is another element you can typically control. If your home has incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs, switch to efficient LEDs. If you don't have the ability to change the lighting that's installed in your home, consider using plug-in LED lighting or lamps instead.
- Check whether your **water heater** is wasting energy. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting it to 120 degrees. This keeps the water hot enough to be safely stored in the tank and prevents scalding. I recommend calling the owner or property management company to request an adjustment.



IT PAYS TO BE ENERGY EFFICIENT when renting. Here are just a few ways to lower your electricity bill when annual maintenance and major home appliances are the landlord's responsibility.

ONE OF THE BENEFITS of renting is that you aren't on the hook when equipment breaks down. If the water heater is more than 10 years old or showing signs of possible failure, such as leaking, unusual noises or discolored water, let the owner know. Upgrading to a heat pump water heater could be a great fit for your home, saving energy and preventing possible damage caused by a failed water heater.

Another way to save is by finding available rebates and incentives for your home. Because renters typically pay the electric bill, a landlord doesn't see the financial benefit of monthly energy savings. You can make it easier for them by finding opportunities for energy-efficient upgrades in your home. Your rental might be eligible for insulation, water heater or HVAC upgrades. You might also be eligible for discounts on products you can buy yourself, such as air purifiers, dehumidifiers or other small home appliances.

> It doesn't hurt to ask your landlord for energy efficiency upgrades. Providing information on eligible rebates or incentives could help.

Energy-efficient upgrades could benefit the homeowner by increasing the property value or keeping a good renter from looking for another place to live. It doesn't hurt to ask for upgraded equipment and provide information on eligible rebates or incentives. Partnering with your landlord on projects is a great opportunity to benefit both of you.

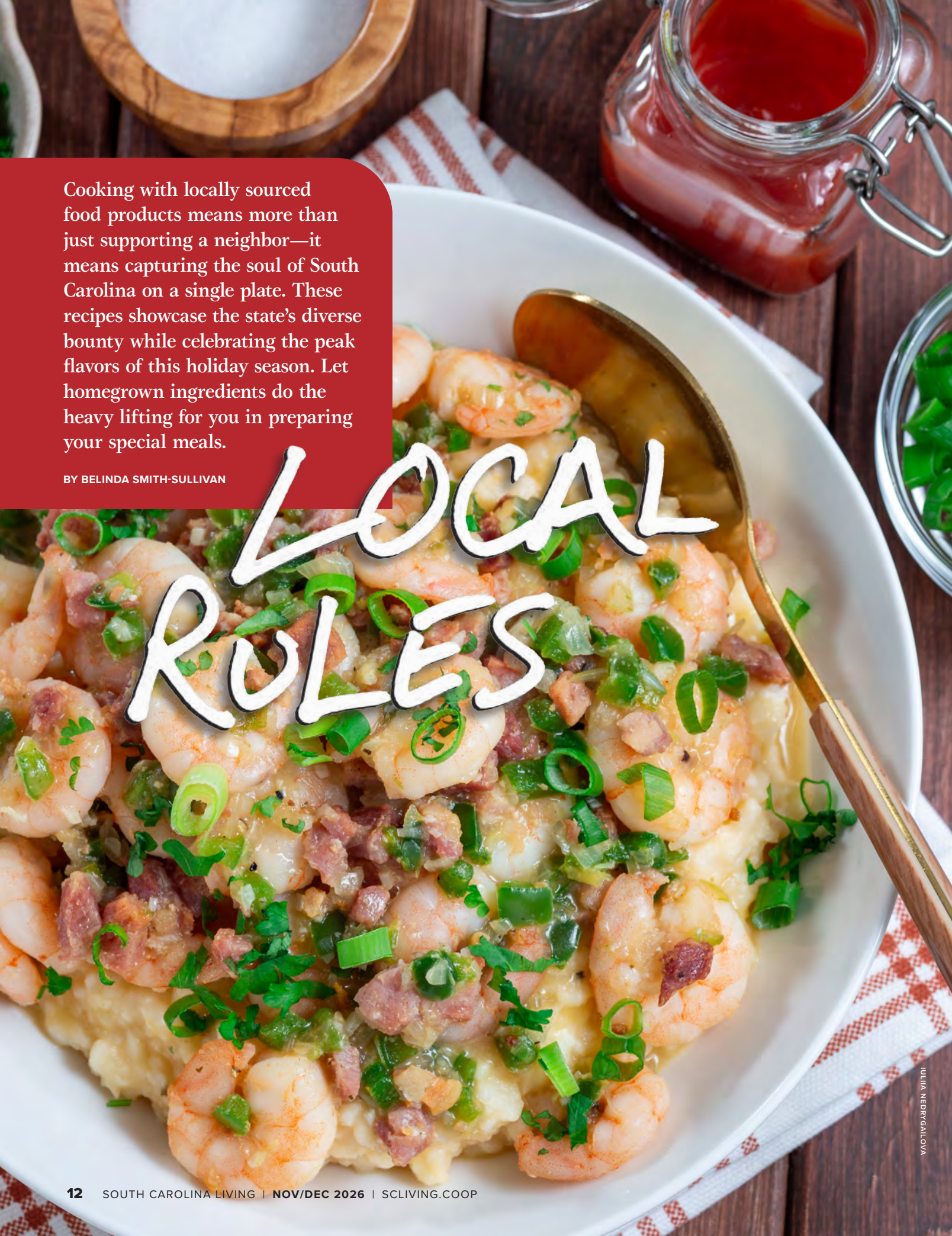
MIRANDA BOUTELLE *writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.*

PHOTOS BY MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

LOCAL RULES

Cooking with locally sourced food products means more than just supporting a neighbor—it means capturing the soul of South Carolina on a single plate. These recipes showcase the state's diverse bounty while celebrating the peak flavors of this holiday season. Let homegrown ingredients do the heavy lifting for you in preparing your special meals.

BY BELINDA SMITH-SULLIVAN



IULIIA NEDRYGAILOVA

ANSON MILLS GRITS SHRIMP AND GRITS

SERVES 4

GRITS

- 4 cups chicken stock or water (or combination)
- 1 cup stone-ground grits
- Kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ cup grated sharp cheddar cheese

SHRIMP

- 5 slices thick-cut bacon, diced
- 1½ pounds large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- Kosher salt
- Fresh ground black pepper
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, for garnish
- Sliced scallions, for garnish
- Hot sauce, optional

In a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-high heat, bring chicken stock and water to a boil. Slowly whisk in grits and a pinch of salt. Reduce heat to low and cover. Simmer for 25–30 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent sticking, until creamy and tender.

While grits cook, in a skillet over medium heat, fry bacon until crisp. Use a slotted spoon to remove bacon to a paper towel-lined plate, leaving rendered fat in the skillet. Increase skillet heat to medium-high. Season shrimp with salt and pepper and sear about 2 minutes per side until pink. Remove shrimp from skillet and set aside. Add onion and bell pepper to same skillet and sauté for 3–5 minutes until softened. Stir in garlic and cook for an additional minute. Pour in chicken stock, lemon juice and Worcestershire sauce. Scrape bottom of pan to release browned bits. Let liquid simmer and reduce by half.

Once grits are finished cooking, stir in butter and cheese until completely melted. Return shrimp and cooked bacon to skillet; toss gently for 1 minute to coat in sauce and reheat. Divide grits into four shallow bowls. Top with shrimp mixture and garnish with fresh parsley, scallions and hot sauce.

For more than a quarter-century, **Anson Mills** has been a leading source of native Carolina heirloom grains. Founder Glenn Roberts devoted himself to researching and resurrecting not only heirloom seed varieties but also the tradition of cold milling the grains into acclaimed kitchen ingredients.

The grains are sustainably grown in limited quantities across several states and are milled in downtown Columbia. Grains are packed and shipped the same day they are milled to retain maximum freshness and flavor. Freshly milled grains are best stored in the refrigerator after opening, or in the freezer for long-term storage. Heirloom grains cook differently than commercially processed products, so be sure to consult the cooking instructions on the packaging. Anson Mills offers eight varieties of grits and hominy corn through its online store—you might want to try the medium white or yellow quick grits for this recipe.

Learn more about their products at **ansonmills.com**.



GWENAËL LE VOT

PECULIAR PIG FARM APPLE CORNBREAD STUFFED PORK CHOPS

SERVES 4

- 4 thick-cut bone-in pork chops (1½ inches thick)
- Kosher salt
- Fresh ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 1 large Granny Smith apple, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh chopped sage
- 2 cups crumbled cornbread
- ½ cup low-salt chicken stock
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¾ cup white wine, optional

Preheat oven to 375 F. Using a sharp knife, cut a pocket into the side of each pork chop, being careful not to cut all the way through. (Your butcher can do this for you.) Season with salt and pepper.

In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion, celery and apple and sauté 5–7 minutes until softened. Stir in garlic and sage and cook for an additional minute.

Place cornbread crumbs into a large bowl and pour cooked onion mixture over the crumbs. Gradually add chicken stock, tossing gently until stuffing is moist but not soggy. Stuff each pork chop generously with cornbread mixture. Use toothpicks to seal openings to avoid stuffing falling out during cooking. (If there is any stuffing left over, bake in a small, buttered ramekin alongside pork chops.)

In a shallow bowl, combine flour with additional salt and pepper to taste and dredge each chop, pressing flour into sides. Set aside on a rack or parchment paper.

Wipe out skillet and heat oil over medium-high heat. Sear the chops for 3 minutes on each side until golden brown. Transfer chops to a foil-lined baking dish and add wine. Cover with foil and bake 30–40 minutes, basting occasionally, until temperature on an instant-read thermometer reaches 145 F. Remove foil during the last 10 minutes to allow meat to brown. Let pork chops rest 5–10 minutes before serving, and remember to remove toothpicks.

Peculiar Pig Farm owner Marvin Ross and his brother, Jada, are fifth-generation farmers on their family's Dorchester land. They raise heritage-breed pigs and prioritize ethical treatment and sustainable farming practices, including purchasing grains from local farmers. Restaurants across the Carolinas and Georgia now source meat from Peculiar Pig. You can find their meat in a few markets in and around Charleston, and you can order meat boxes directly from the farm online.

Chef Belinda prefers meat sourced from smaller farms, when possible, because it tends to have richer fat marbling (read: flavor). In particular, she raves about Peculiar Pig and has attended several whole-hog roasts featuring the farm's meat. "Their pork is divine," Chef Belinda says. "Their farm is their life, so I support them whenever I can."

Learn more about the farm at **peculiarpigfarm.com**.



KAREN HERMANN

Named for the golden husk that surrounds the grain, **Carolina Gold rice** seed is believed to have come to South Carolina with enslaved Africans well before the American Revolution. The flavorful, aromatic rice became the Palmetto State's first cash crop around 1690. As agriculture changed and tastes shifted, the rice fell out of favor with growers around the time of the Great Depression.

Reintroduced to South Carolina in the 1990s—largely thanks to Glenn Roberts and Anson Mills—Carolina Gold is a prized commodity among high-end chefs, foodies and home cooks who treasure its buttery, nutty flavor and its historical provenance.

Learn more about the rice at **carolinagoldricefoundation.org**.

CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA

IT'S A MATTER OF TASTE.

SC RECIPE IS SPONSORED BY SC DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CAROLINA GOLD RICE CHICKEN BOG

SERVES 6–8

- 1 whole chicken (3–4 pounds), inside packet/parts removed
- 6–8 cups low-salt chicken stock (enough to cover chicken)
- Fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 2–3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 pound andouille sausage, sliced into rounds
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2–3 celery stalks, diced
- 1–2 carrots, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1–1½ cups Carolina Gold rice, rinsed
- Kosher salt
- Fresh ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley
- Sliced scallions
- Hot sauce, optional

Place chicken in a large Dutch oven and cover with stock, thyme and bay leaves. Simmer for 50–60 minutes or until chicken is tender. Remove chicken and cool. Remove skin and bones and shred or chop the meat. Strain stock and set aside.

In the same pot, melt butter and brown the sausage. Add onions, celery and carrots, and cook until soft. Add garlic and cook an additional minute. Return chicken to the pot.

Add rice and 5–6 cups of reserved stock. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Cover and cook 20–30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until rice is creamy and tender. Season with salt and pepper and stir in parsley and scallions. Serve with hot sauce, if desired.

BENNE WAFERS

CHEESECAKE BITES

MAKES 12

- 12 benne wafers, whole
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- Peach preserves or crushed benne wafers

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a standard muffin pan with paper liners. Place one whole benne wafer in the bottom of each liner. In the bowl of a stand mixer, add cream cheese and sugar and beat until smooth. Add egg, vanilla and lemon juice and mix until just combined. Spoon mixture into liners, filling them about ¾ full. Bake for 15–17 minutes until centers are set but still slightly soft to the touch. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes, then refrigerate for two hours. Finish the tops with peach preserves or crushed benne wafer crumbs—or both!

Benne seeds are an heirloom variety of sesame seeds, brought to the colonial South by enslaved Africans. In West African and Gullah traditions, the seeds were considered a symbol of good luck. Nutty and buttery, benne seeds and their oil are staples in traditional Gullah cooking and lend themselves well to both savory and sweet cuisine, including these thin, snappy cookies that are deeply tied to South Carolina's Lowcountry.

It's not hard to make your own benne wafers, but they're easily and affordably sourced online and in a variety of stores—or, better yet, pop into the Charleston City Market to buy some the next time you're visiting the Holy City.

GINA MOORE

A whole lotta happy

A mountain of mismatched boxes greets Tracey Rankin every time she pulls into her garage: square cardboard boxes from Home Depot. Red-lidded ones with the Office Depot logo. Plastic totes with sturdy snap tops.

More boxes are stacked at her church and in large climate-controlled storage units from the Lowcountry to the Upstate.

"I do a lot of hauling stuff around," she says.

But these boxes contain more than just stuff. Tucked inside these unassuming storage containers is a little bit of magic. Joy. Hope.

As the executive director of Happy Wheels, a nonprofit that delivers toys and books to patients in South Carolina children's hospitals, Rankin and a team of volunteers share this magic every week with kids and families who need it the most.

"You're basically playing Santa Claus," Rankin says of the position she's held for 15 years. "There's no way to not love it. It's only a couple of minutes with each child, but it's amazing what that does for the families and the patients. It's a joyful release from the worry and stress."

Before Happy Wheels, Rankin spent most of her time on the road as a music tour manager until the 2008 recession made her rethink her career. Soon after moving back to South Carolina, Rankin discovered Happy Wheels through Facebook. After a last-minute volunteer cancellation, she tagged along for a toy delivery.

"Once you witness that, that's all it takes. I immediately left and wanted to do it all the time," Rankin says.

She volunteered with Happy Wheels for several years and helped expand the program from one hospital in Charleston to two others in Columbia and Greenville before becoming executive director.

As the only full-time employee, Rankin keeps the organization running smoothly by leaning on the wisdom she earned while traveling the country with musicians including Faith Hill and Sara Evans. This wisdom helps her coordinate and mobilize a team of 40 volunteers across three cities. It helps her navigate fundraising and relationship building.

And, most importantly, it helps her keep all those boxes and the happiness they contain rolling across the state.

—LINDSEY BECKWORTH | PHOTO BY PETER FRANK EDWARDS

Tracey Rankin

AGE: 48.

HOMETOWN: Lexington.

CLAIM TO FAME: The executive director of Happy Wheels, Rankin was named a "Southerner of the Year" by *Southern Living* in 2024.

BY THE NUMBERS: Happy Wheels delivers toys to 350–400 patients each week in South Carolina children's hospitals.

GET INVOLVED: Visit happywheels.org to donate or learn more about volunteering.



SCLiving.coop/calendar

Our mobile-friendly site lists even more festivals, shows and events. You'll also find instructions on submitting your event. Please confirm information with the hosting event before attending.

Upstate

NOVEMBER

21 Native American Celebration, Hagood Mill Historic Site, Pickens. (864) 898-2936 or visithagoodmill.com.

26–Dec. 25 Anderson Christmas Lights, 150 Rose Valley Blvd., Anderson. (864) 314-8600 or andersonchristmaslights.org.

DECEMBER

1 A Dickens of a Christmas, downtown, Spartanburg. (864) 596-2976 or cityofspartanburg.org.

1 Voctave: It Feels Like Christmas, Peace Center Concert Hall, Greenville. (864) 467-3000 or peacecenter.org.

1–Jan. 4 Ice in the Park, Carolina Wren Park, Anderson. (864) 231-2232.

3–5 Holiday Fair, Greenville Convention Center, Greenville. (864) 233-2563 or meetgcc.com.

3–20 Million Dollar Quartet Christmas, Centre Stage, Greenville. (864) 233-6733 or centrestage.org.

4–6 Holiday at Peace, Peace Center Concert Hall, Greenville. (864) 467-3000 or peacecenter.org.

4–13 Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Clemson Little Theatre, Clemson. (864) 646-8100 or clemsonlittletheatre.org.

4–13 Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*, Greenwood Community Theatre, Greenwood. (864) 229-5704 or greenwoodcommunitytheatre.com.

5 Poinsettia Christmas Parade, downtown, Greenville. (864) 232-2273 or greenvillesc.org.

5 Seneca Classical Academy Christmas Market, 1080 S. Oak St., Seneca. (864) 882-2731 or senecaclassical.com.

6 Greenwood Christmas Parade, downtown, Greenwood. (864) 942-8448 or uptowngreenwood.com.

8 The Doo Wop Project: A Doo Wop Christmas, Brooks Center Theatre for the Performing Arts, Clemson. (864) 656-7787 or brookscenter.vbotickets.com.

11 Music on the Mountain feat. instrumentalist Andy Leftwich, Table Rock State Park, Pickens. (864) 878-9813.

12–13 Greenville Concert Band: A Christmas Festival, Pelham Road Baptist Church, Greenville, or Cannon Centre, Greer. (864) 881-2263 or greenvilleconcertband.org.

19 Ed Harrison Memorial Celtic Christmas, Hagood Mill Historic Site, Pickens. (864) 898-2936 or visithagoodmill.com.

Midlands

NOVEMBER

19 Vista Lights, Vista District, Columbia. (803) 269-5946 or vistacolumbia.com.

19–Dec. 13 *Annie*, Chapin Theatre Company, Chapin. (803) 404-0015 or chapintheatre.org.

20 NEON Joy Holiday Laser Light Show, Five Points, Columbia. (803) 748-7373 or fivepointscolumbia.com.

20–22 Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show, Jamil Shrine Temple, Columbia. cgms.rocks.

20–Dec. 13 *Cult of Love*, Trustus Theatre, Columbia. (803) 2543-9732 or trustus.org.

20–Dec. 23 Wild Lights, Riverbanks Zoo, Columbia. (803) 779-8717 or riverbanks.org.

20–Jan. 3 Fireflies Holiday Lights, Segra Park, Columbia. (803) 726-4487 or fireflies holidaylights.com.

21 Come to the Manger—A Celebration of the True Spirit of Christmas, Beulah United Methodist Church, Gilbert. beulahmethodistgilbert.org.

22 Colonial Cup Races, Springdale Race Course, Camden. (803) 432-6513 or carolinacup.org.

22–Jan 1 Children's Garden Christmas and Kid's Walk, Edisto Memorial Gardens, Orangeburg. (803) 533-6020 or orangeburg.recdesk.com.

25–Dec. 31 Holiday Lights on the River, Saluda Shoals Park, Columbia. (803) 772-1228 or icrc.net.

28 Christmas in the Backcountry, Colonial Times Living History Park, North Augusta. (803) 510-7885 or colonialtimes.us.

31 Aiken Fall Steeplechase, Aiken Steeplechase Racecourse, Aiken. (803) 648-9641 or aikensteeplechase.com.

DECEMBER

1–31 Swan Lake Fantasy of Lights, Swan Lake Iris Gardens, Sumter. (803) 436-2500 or sumtersc.gov.

3–6 Christmasville, Old Town, Rock Hill. christmasvillerockhill.com.

3–6 Junior League of Columbia Holiday Market, South Carolina State Fairgrounds, Columbia. (803) 252-4552 or jlcolumbia.org.

3–13 *Ebenezer Scrooge's Big Sumter Christmas Show!*, Sumter Little Theatre, Sumter. (803) 775-2150 or sumterlittletheatre.org.

5 Carolina Carillon Holiday Parade, downtown, Columbia. carolinacarillon.org.

5 Columbia Children's Theatre presents *A Christmas Carol*, Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College, Columbia. (803) 407-5011 or harbisontheatre.org.

5, 12, 19 North Pole Lights, downtown, Newberry. (803) 321-1015 or newberrychristmas.com.

6 Prosperity Christmas Parade, downtown, Prosperity. (803) 364-2622 or prosperitysc.com.

6 SC Jazz Masterworks Ensemble presents Swinging Holidays: A Big Band Christmas, Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College, Columbia. (803) 407-5011 or harbisontheatre.org.

11–13 *A Nice Family Christmas*, Fort Mill Community Playhouse, Fort Mill. (803) 548-8102 or fortmillplayhouse.org.

12 Candlelight Tour of Homes, Camden Archives & Museum, Camden. (803) 272-8081 or camdenleague.org.

12 Christmas in Hopelands, Hopelands Gardens, Aiken. (803) 642-7631 or visitaikensc.com.

12–15 Arts Center Youth Theatre presents *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, Arts Center of Kershaw County, Camden. (803) 425-7676 or artscenterkc.org.

15 Aiken Singers present "Christmas on the Big Screen," Aiken First Baptist Church, Aiken. aikensingers.org.

Pee Dee & Lowcountry

NOVEMBER

15 Summerville Italian Feast, Hutchinson Square, Summerville. summervilleitalianfeast.org.

15–Dec. 31 Holiday Festival of Lights, James Island County Park, Charleston. (843) 795-4386 or ccprc.com.

20–22 Jingle Bell Market, Florence Center Convention Center, Florence. (843) 679-4525 or conventioncenter.florencecenter.com.

21 Bair-ly Pulling Tractor Pull, 762 Mount Zion Road, Saint George. (843) 563-4114.

23–Dec. 30 The Great Christmas Light Show, North Myrtle Beach Park & Sports Complex, North Myrtle Beach. (843) 280-5570 or parks.nmb.us.

27–Jan. 1 Harbour Town Lights, Harbour Town, Hilton Head Island. (843) 842-1979 or seapines.com.

27–Jan. 3 Nights of a Thousand Candles, Brookgreen Gardens, Murrells Inlet. (843) 235-6000 or brookgreen.org.

28 Intracoastal Christmas Regatta, Little River Inlet to Dock Holidays Marina. christmasregatta.com.

28–Dec. 30 Holiday Lights Driving Tour, 1 Riverwood Drive, Moncks Corner. celebratetheseason.org.

29–Dec. 20 *A Christmas Carol*, The Historic Dock Street Theatre, Charleston. (843) 577-5067 or charlestonstage.com.

DECEMBER

4 Downtown Christmas Magic, downtown, Florence. (843) 665-2047 or florencedowntown.com.

4–6 Hometown Holidays Christmas Festival, Historic Downtown, Lake City. visitlakecitysc.com.

4–6, 11–13 Christkindlmarkt Charleston, 4461 Highway 17 North, Awendaw. christkindlmarktchs.com.

5 Atalaya Holiday Craft Market, Huntington Beach State Park, Murrells Inlet. (843) 237-4440.

5 Holiday Street Festival, Front Beach, Isle of Palms. (854) 837-2330 or isleofpalms.gov.

10 Soups, Stews & Sweets Holiday Event, downtown, Manning. (803) 435-4405 or clarendoncounty.com.

11–12, 19–20 Holiday in the Park Festival, 1 Riverwood Drive, Moncks Corner. celebratetheseason.org.

12 Folly Beach Christmas Parade, Center Street, Folly Beach. (843) 588-2447 or visitfolly.com.

12 Holiday Market & Craft Show, Mount Pleasant Farmers Market Pavilion, Mount Pleasant. (843) 884-8517 or experiencemountpleasant.com.

13 Mount Pleasant Christmas Light Parade, Coleman Boulevard, Mount Pleasant. (843) 884-8517 or experiencemountpleasant.com.

17 Florence Little Theatre Christmas Extravaganza, Florence Little Theatre, Florence. (843) 662-3731 or florencelittletheatre.org.

17–19 Charleston Symphony presents Holiday Pops!, Gaillard Center, Charleston. (843) 723-7528 or charlestonsymphony.org.

31 Conway Alive presents New Year's Eve Fireworks Display, Riverfront District, Conway. (843) 248-6260 or conwayalive.com.

31 Folly Beach New Year's Eve Fireworks Show, Center Street, Folly Beach. (843) 588-2447 or visitfolly.com.

FISH & GAME CHART

The Solunar forecast provides feeding and migration times. Major periods can bracket the peak by more than an hour, minor periods by a half-hour before and after.

	AM		PM	
	Minor	Major	Minor	Major
NOVEMBER				
16	10:41	4:30	11:03	4:52
17	11:26	5:15	11:48	5:37
18	—	5:57	12:08	6:18
19	12:26	6:37	12:47	6:58
20	1:04	7:15	1:27	7:38
21	1:43	7:56	2:08	8:20
22	2:27	8:40	2:53	9:06
23	3:16	9:30	3:45	9:59
24	4:13	10:28	4:44	11:00
25	5:17	11:33	5:50	—
26	6:26	12:10	6:59	12:43
27	7:37	1:22	8:09	1:53
28	8:46	2:31	9:16	3:01
29	9:49	3:35	10:16	4:02
30	10:44	4:32	11:09	4:57
DECEMBER				
01	11:33	5:22	11:56	5:45
02	—	6:05	12:16	6:27
03	12:34	6:45	12:56	7:07
04	1:12	7:24	1:35	7:46
05	1:51	8:03	2:14	8:26
06	2:32	8:44	2:56	9:08
07	3:17	9:29	3:41	9:54
08	4:04	10:17	4:30	10:43
09	4:55	11:08	5:21	11:34
10	5:48	11:32	6:13	12:01
11	6:42	12:30	7:06	12:54
12	7:35	1:23	7:59	1:47
13	8:26	2:15	8:49	2:38
14	9:15	3:05	9:37	3:26
15	10:02	3:51	10:23	4:12
16	10:46	4:36	11:07	4:56
17	11:28	5:18	11:50	5:39
18	—	5:59	12:11	6:22
19	12:30	6:42	12:54	7:07
20	1:14	7:28	1:41	7:55
21	2:03	8:18	2:33	8:48
22	2:58	9:15	3:31	9:47
23	4:00	10:16	4:33	10:50
24	5:06	11:22	5:39	11:55
25	6:14	12:05	6:45	12:29
26	7:20	1:06	7:49	1:35
27	8:23	2:10	8:49	2:36
28	9:20	3:08	9:44	3:32
29	10:12	4:01	10:35	4:23
30	10:59	4:48	11:22	5:10
31	11:43	5:32	—	5:55

DATA BY SOLUNAR SERVICES

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DISCOVER South Carolina

NOVEMBER IN THE GARDEN

- Are your prized hostas, peonies or daylilies beginning to outgrow their allotted garden space? Now is a good time to dig and divide them. One option is to relocate divisions to other parts of the garden. But since the Season of Giving is right around the corner, think about passing along any extras to your gardening buddies.
- Landscape to conserve energy? You bet, especially if you plant evergreen trees and shrubs on the northern and northwestern sides of your house to help deflect the heat-robbing effects of cold winter winds, which usually come from the north.



WAIT BEFORE CLIPPING 'Hana Jiman' is a Sasanqua camellia, so it is best pruned in autumn after the flowers fade.

TIP OF THE MONTH Right after your fall-flowering camellias—typically *Camellia sasanqua* or *C. sinensis* selections—finish blooming, you can break out the pruners to tidy up these evergreen bushes, if needed. However, when it comes to pruning, keep in mind that not all camellias are created equal. Small bloom buds have now formed on the popular Japanese camellia (*C. japonica*) cultivars, many of which usually don't begin flowering until midwinter into the new spring. This means taking the clippers to these pretties now will snuff out what could be gorgeous flower shows early next year.

Critter-resistant bulbs

BY L.A. JACKSON

UNEASINESS IS NOT what gardeners should be feeling now as the fall planting season for spring-flowering bulbs gets into full swing. But it is tough to shake for three reasons: deer, rabbits and squirrels. Although cute, they can be beasts in freshly planted or newly sprouting bulb beds.

Well, I've had minimal trouble with these varmints—not because I sit in a conspicuous garden spot for hours cleaning my trusty double-barrel 12-gauge for all the hungry critters to see, but rather because I usually grow what they don't like to eat.

Many fall-planted, spring-flowering bulbs are resistant to fuzzy garden foragers. Here is my short list:

DAFFODILS. These common springtime cuties rank high on the "yuck" list for any critter that comes nibbling in the flower bed. And for good reason: Not only do they contain calcium oxalate, an irritant, but also lycorine, a toxic alkaloid.

HYACINTHS. Another spring beauty spiked with toxic alkaloids and calcium oxalate, hyacinths also repel wildlife with their heavily perfumed flowers, which we adore but four-legged garden visitors think stink.

GRAPE HYACINTHS. While not as toxic as hyacinths, these pretties have a second line of defense with their flowers' musky scent that furry critters find objectionable.

SNOWDROPS. To offer another dose of stomach-turning alkaloids, plant these petite, white-flowering spring delights.

FRITILLARIAS. These fancy-pants plants are also brimming with toxic alkaloids, so hungry wildlife usually do not bother them.

ALLIUMS. Also called "ornamental onions," they look and taste like, well, onions, which is not what Bambi and Co. prefer while dining in the garden. The source of such pungency is sulfur compounds that reside in all parts of the plants.

Because many of these critter-resistant plants are toxic, do keep this in mind next spring if curious kids or rambunctious pets are romping in the maturing garden—and supervise accordingly.

Finally, "resistant" is a relative term. Even though some of these bulbs are packed with toxins, that doesn't mean a bite here or a nibble there won't happen. If hungry enough, critters will at least try to eat what's in front of them. It's kind of like you having a mega midnight munchies attack and only finding leftover broccoli-liver quiche in the refrigerator. Think about it.



PHOTOS BY L.A. JACKSON

NOT-SO-TASTY TREAT Daffodils are high on hungry critters' "yuck" list.

> "Resistant" is a relative term. Even though some of these bulbs are packed with toxins, that doesn't mean a bite here or a nibble there won't happen.

L.A. JACKSON *is the former editor of* Carolina Gardener *magazine. Contact him at lajackson1@gmail.com.*

It's not rocket voodoo

BY JAN A. IGOE

IN HIGH SCHOOL, SCIENCE wasn't exactly my favorite subject. Especially biology. Not to get too technical here, but it was icky. We were forced—some of us against our will—to disembowel a frog marinated in formaldehyde. Biology teachers do not grant "conscientious objector" status, no matter how many times you faint.

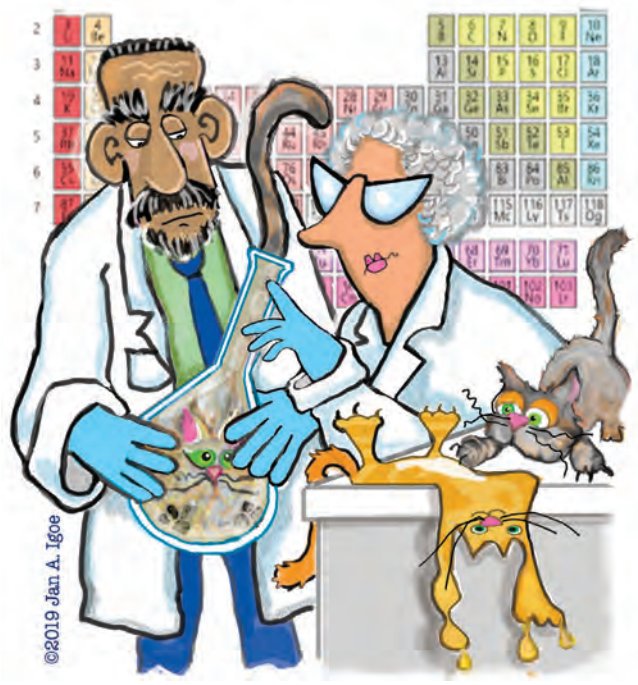
Now that I am a mature, serious person, science fascinates me. I've realized that scientists are behind major breakthroughs that transform our lives every day.

Did you know that women with bountiful bottoms have smarter kids? Facebook says so. Not because we can sit on our kids until they do their homework, but because a mom's gluteofemoral fat starts nourishing future geniuses in the womb! Of course, the usual joy snatchers jumped up to claim the research was wildly misinterpreted, but they're all skinny. Nobody trusts them.

The greatest scientists are the ones who win Ig Nobel Prizes for innovative research. Each year, the Iggies reward "improbable research that makes you laugh, then think." One year, the chemistry prize went to three scientists who studied how well you can clean your kitchen with spit.

Is saliva really a miraculous cleaning agent for germy surfaces? Throughout history, moms have relied on it as a facial cleanser for grimy kids and emergency spot removal when nobody's looking. Spit is a natural, cost-effective resource that's renewable. Once Johnson & Johnson finds out, we'll find it in a lavender-scented spray next to the Windex.

The nutrition prize was another revelation. Did you know that a cheeseburger has more calories than your neighbor? According to scientific calculations—let's not think too hard about how they confirmed this one—cannibals consume fewer calories than those eating normal dead things. Please know that no one is suggesting we dine on our friends, but I wouldn't tell the skinny moms with the dumb kids about it, just to be safe.



Vital research in fluid dynamics investigated a theory that should concern all of us. Are cats actually solid matter, or are they liquid?

Six relentless scientists won the economics prize for their groundbreaking research on voodoo dolls in the workplace. They wondered if voodoo dolls were an effective way to tame a nasty boss. Sometimes HR is busy, so you have to solve management issues on your own. (It's best to store the dolls out of your boss's view, especially if there's a good likeness and more than a few pins.)

Back in 2017, vital research in fluid dynamics came from a French scientist investigating a theory that should concern all of us. Are cats actually solid matter, or are they liquid? Anyone who has ever pulled a 10-pound tabby out of a tuna can milliseconds before the beast launches itself to the ceiling knows the answer is both. They can also vaporize into thin air, so cats might be gas, too.

I've been so inspired by the Ig Nobel winners that my bucket list includes winning one. I plan to specialize in nutrition. My research, which has already begun, will conclude whether Jelly Belly is the most reliable determinant of universal taste appeal. Scholarly summary follows:

When someone asks me to taste something, it's usually an unpleasant vegetable with no friends that will never pass the jelly bean test.

My hypothesis? Nothing tastes good unless Jelly Belly makes that flavor. They offer toasted marshmallow (delicious), buttered popcorn, chocolate pudding and other reliable delights. However, you will not find an anchovy or pickled beet Jelly Belly. There's your proof. This is information we can use in everyday life, so I feel pretty confident about my chances.

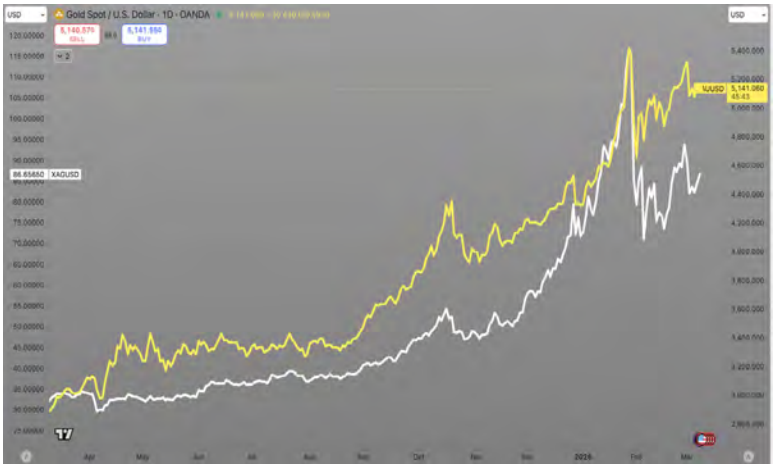
My kids always bring me the latest Jelly Belly collections. You know why? They're smart. And I'll bet you know why they are smart. (Refer to paragraph No. 3 in case you forgot.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: South Carolina Living *is reprinting some of Jan A. Igoe's previous columns. This "Humor Me" originally appeared in the July 2019 issue. Visit* **SCLiving.coop/news/in-memory-of-jan-igoe**.

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