

HEALTHY EATING



The opening day of the downtown Trader Joe's. ADDIE BROYLES / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Trader Joe's opens, quietly

Seaholm development store didn't have a crush of people – yet.

By Addie Broyles
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The newest Trader Joe's opened in the Seaholm development in downtown Austin last week, and Matthew McConaughey was there.

OK, not really, but a cutout of his character from “Dazed and Confused” greeted customers at the front door with a talking bubble that says, “Trader Joe's in downtown Austin? Alright. Alright. Alright.”

That's what many downtown residents and workers are saying as the third location of this California-based chain opens in Austin, less than a five-minute walk from Whole Foods Market's flagship store.

When the first Trader Joe's opened in Rollingwood, just a few minutes southwest of downtown in September 2013, the store was packed shoulder-to-shoulder with shoppers who were familiar with this funky brand that is especially popular in California.

Trader Joe's continued on D8

Can't decide whether to shop at Trader Joe's or Whole Foods when you need groceries downtown? Take our quiz at food.blog.austin360.com.

PROFILE

Bringing farms to Austin tables



Suzanne Santos, the longtime manager of the Sustainable Food Center farmers markets, shows off one of the finds at the Downtown SFC Farmers' Market. Santos is retiring after 15 years. JAY JANNER PHOTOS / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Retiring farmers market manager Suzanne Santos traces interest in agriculture back to her childhood

By Beth Goulart Monson
For the Austin American-Statesman

The house built on wheels has hookups for a stacked washer-dryer combo. “I'm not going to rough it,” Suzanne Santos says. But this is one tiny house.

Inspired by the “tiny house” movement and helped by friends, Santos is finishing construction on a 253-square-foot home atop a trailer. Next month, after she retires as the farmers market manager for the Sustainable Food Center, Santos will start the ignition on a rented truck and tow her homemade retirement home to the Northwest. She will leave a community of farmers and colleagues disappointed to see her go.

In her 15 years in Austin,



Suzanne Santos (right) greets Margaret Powis at the Downtown SFC Farmers' Market.

she has brought the farm to tables all over the city.

Cas VanWoerden of Animal Farm, which is located between Brenham and Columbus, has been selling organ-

ic vegetables at the SFC farmers markets for more than 10 years, and he's known Santos for just as long.

Santos continued on D7

AUSTIN360COOKS

A loquat lover again spreads message of passion for the fruit

By Addie Broyles
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Every year around this time, loquat lovers unite around the pale yellow fruits that are growing – mostly unnoticed and unappreciated – on trees all over Central Texas.

Some homeowners loathe the loquats because they draw squirrels and birds who know just how sweet and succulent they are. Others are just annoyed because they drop off trees and cause something of a mess in their yards.

But if you've ever stopped to pick one and taste its apricot-colored, kiwi-textured flesh, you might change your tune. I've been on a loquat awareness crusade for years, so my apologies if you've heard this story before: I first discovered loquats while liv-



Loquats and rosemary are often found growing in the same yard, so why not combine them to make a loquat rosemary simple syrup that can be used in cocktails or lemonade. ADDIE BROYLES / @BROYLES

ing in Spain, where they are called nisperos and sold by the kilo at local markets. I'd never seen anything like them before and ate as many of them as I could stomach.

Years later, when I moved to Austin, I nearly cried at the

sight of them growing on a tree near my house. With one bite, I was transported back to my beloved Alicante, and it's a ritual I repeat every spring.

360Cooks continued on D7

FOOD MATTERS

Putting tea to work in your cooking, baking

Author believes teas can add a wonderful subtlety to your meals.

By Addie Broyles
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Annelies Zijderveld fell in love with tea while working at Mighty Leaf, but it wasn't until she was baking cookies one day that she realized that the fragrant leaves we are so used to drinking could easily be used as a spice instead.

Thus began Zijderveld's foray into cooking – and baking – with tea that led her to write “Steepled: Recipes Infused with Tea” (Andrews McMeel, \$21.99), a new cookbook that she'll be talking about at an event from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Monday at BookWoman, 5501 N. Lamar Blvd.

In the introduction to the book, Zijderveld explains that

not all teas are actually derived from the tea plant *Camellia sinensis*, but those herbal blends, also called tisanes, can add a wonderful subtlety to your culinary ef-



Annelies Zijderveld

orts, no matter if you're making blueberry scones with a strawberry chamomile jam or rooibos honey butter. To make rooibos honey butter, pulverize rooibos leaves in a spice grinder and mix about ¾ teaspoon of the rooibos with 2 teaspoons honey and one stick of butter. Using proper tea in cooking can lend a depth of flavor not only to sweet dishes but savory as well.

Tea continued on D3

Santos

continued from D1

He appreciates her focus on the farmers' interests, and in particular her strict insistence on policies that ensure the market stays "a true farmers market."

"She'll do whatever is the right thing, whatever the consequence is," he says.

In 1997, Santos was working on her master's degree in community development at the University of California at Davis. Her thesis would report on community gardens in three cities. Having finished Portland and Sacramento, all that remained was Austin. It was an appealing place to live for Santos, her husband and two sons, then an infant and a toddler, as they had family in San Antonio and Arkansas – considerably closer to Austin than to California. Santos secured permission to defend her thesis via telephone, and the family relocated.

"You don't wait for something to come to you," she says. "You go to it."

Her approach paid off. Two weeks before her defense, Santos got a job as the health program manager with the nonprofit the Austin Project, where she would work for a little more than a year. She was happy to be working in community development, but a return to agriculture would be a natural progression. "My heart was with growing and agriculture and all that stuff," she says.

Santos' background

Santos' grandmother had piqued her interest in agriculture when she was a child. Her grandmother lived on a small farmstead in Arkansas, where Santos would visit in the summer growing up and where she spent a whole year when she was 14. Her grandmother raised chickens, harvested fruit from a small orchard and tended a productive garden of vegetables and herbs.

After college, Santos served in the Peace Corps, where her education in agriculture continued. She worked in Honduras with a group called Hillside Agriculture that had an unusual extended training program – three months of rigorous, hands-on study followed by two years of applying what she learned. Toward the end of Santos' tenure at Hillside, the program's director fell ill and retired unexpectedly. Santos took over his



Suzanne Santos, the longtime manager of the Sustainable Food Center farmers markets in her trademark hat, will retire and leave Austin in mid-June. JAY JANNER / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

post and stayed for an extra five months while a replacement was sought.

In Austin in the year 2000, Santos was working at the Austin Project when she found a job listed through an Austin Community College job bank. Her dual background in agriculture and community development made her an ideal candidate for the position: executive director of the nonprofit Sustainable Food Center.

SFC, founded in 1993, was then doing school and community gardens, as well as running a cooking education program called the Happy Kitchen. It had a staff of two full-time and five part-time employees. (Today that's 24 full-time and 14 part-time employees, plus many volunteers and interns.) As Santos came on board, SFC was preparing to merge with Austin Community Gardens. Santos and Terri Buchanan, who was then Austin Community Gardens' director, decided together that Buchanan would take over as executive director of the enlarged SFC, and Santos became development director.

In 2001, Santos says, some City Council members were starting to talk about needing a downtown farmers market. Markets had come and gone over the years, and at the time there were small ones on Burnet Road and South Congress Avenue, each hosting a small handful of vendors, and another in the parking lot at Westlake High School. In 2002, the City Council funded a Farmers Market Initiative, a nine-month feasibility study. By the end of

that year, it announced that a farmers market would start. The Sustainable Food Center opened its first farmers market at Republic Square Park in May 2003, with Santos in a new role as farmers market manager. Every Saturday morning for five years, Santos donned her signature fruit-covered straw hat and went to market.

Over those two years, from idea conception to ringing the opening market bell for the first time, Santos had consulted with farmers around Central Texas about how their ideal market would work. "They wanted one where they had a say in it," she says.

Ultimately, they helped develop the SFC Farmers' Market Rules and Regulations. This document spells out everything from farm location (vendors must live within 150 miles of downtown Austin) to penalties for failure to properly tie down a tent (\$20 for the first offense) to the proportion of its life that an animal must have been owned by a vendor for its meat to be sold at the market (50 percent for a cow; 100 percent for a rabbit; feral animals excluded). Of key importance, it documents a strict insistence that vendors sell only products they grow or make themselves – no reselling allowed.

Consumers, farmers connect

Over time, Santos worked to enhance the SFC farmers market model, with a special focus on creating direct connections between consumers and farmers. Shoppers can now purchase fruits and vegetables using

a third at the Domain on May 10.

The SFC Farmers' Markets that Santos manages have grown and multiplied as well. Now four markets representing more than 100 vendors operate at different locations throughout the week. After Santos' retirement, SFC's current deputy director, Andrew Smiley, will take over her role as farmers market director, says SFC Executive Director Ronda Rutledge. It's a good fit for Smiley. "Farm-direct is Andrew's passion," says Rutledge. "He's going to move into Suzanne's role in a nice, smooth transition."

That doesn't mean the change will be easy for anyone at SFC on a personal level. "We're all going to be very sad to see Suzanne go," says Rutledge.

Last September, Santos learned that she had a brain tumor the size of a fist and underwent emergency surgery for its removal. Her prognosis is good and her focus even sharper than it was before. "I want to make the best of the rest of my life," says Santos. "Be with family. Somehow be in touch with farmers. Eat good food."

Living purposefully wasn't a new concept to Santos. She had learned that from her grandmother, too. When tough situations would arise, when anger or anxiety threatened to take over, her grandmother would ask, "How do you want to spend your time?"

"She taught me that," says Santos. "Every morning she would get up and say, 'I am so thankful that I'm up and I have another day to live on this Earth.' She was always recognizing it, every day. So let's spend it with care and love and putting value into the day."

"We love our jobs at

Sustainable Food Center," Santos says. "I'm ready to move on, but I'm glad that I was where I was for 15 years."

SFC is expressing its appreciation to Santos with its Changemaker Award, to be presented to Santos and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation at Farm to Plate, SFC's annual fundraiser at the Barr Mansion on May 14 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Santos plans to leave Austin in mid-June. She's aiming for Olympia, Wash., to start. Her son, Miguel, who will graduate from high school this spring, wants to attend the Evergreen State College in that state. She and Miguel plan to live there for a year to establish his residency and qualify him for in-state tuition. After Miguel is settled at school, Santos will drop down to Ashland, Ore., to settle near her sister. The sisters plan to bring their mother from Arkansas to join them.

Eventually, Santos aims to get back to the farmers market scene in some capacity. Food access – that direct connection between consumers and farmers – remains a passion for Santos, so she has thought about working as a consultant in that area. Or, inspired by the abundant fruit produced in the Pacific Northwest, she might make jam.

"I think I might try to become the Confituras of the Northwest," she says, referring to the popular Austin farmers market vendor of small-batch preserves.

She definitely plans to come back and visit. When asked what she'll be eager to eat when she's back in town, she thinks for a long time. "Probably peaches," she says at last. "They have peaches in the Northwest, but they're not going to be as good as the ones here."

SNAP and WIC benefits. An innovative program called DDIP, for Double Dollar Incentive Program, matches SNAP and WIC benefits with money donated by a half-dozen local and national organizations. This effectively doubles the dollar amount participants can spend on produce at the markets, up to \$20 per week, per program.

In 2010, Carla Jenkins was starting a farmers market at Lakeline Mall. Farmers she contacted named Santos in conversation so often that Jenkins decided she needed to meet her.

"At first I was a little intimidated," she says. But Santos' response was collaborative, not competitive. "Her concern is that people have farm-ranch food available to them no matter where they are," says Jenkins.

Santos shared documents and protocols developed for the SFC markets, including a program of visiting farms and ranches to ensure that production guidelines laid out in the markets' policies are upheld. Santos and Jenkins even started traveling together on these trips because they enjoyed each other's company. Plus, Jenkins was learning a lot.

"She has so much knowledge of the farmers and the work they do and the difficulty of what they do," she says. "They all very much respect her, and when she asks them to do something that any of the rest of us might ask, they will do it for Suzanne."

Under the Texas Farmers' Market banner, Jenkins has since started a second market at Mueller and plans to launch

LOQUAT ROSEMARY SIMPLE SYRUP

2 cups halved and seeded loquats
One 4-inch sprig rosemary
Approximately ¾ cups granulated sugar

Place loquats in a saucepan with just enough water to cover. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer for about 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and add the rosemary sprig. Let cool for 3 minutes, remove the rosemary and then mash loquats. Strain out the flesh and discard.

Measure the liquid and add it back to the saucepan with an equal amount of sugar. Bring to a boil and stir until sugar is completely dissolved. Remove from heat and cool completely. Store in the refrigerator and add to lemonade, tea, fizzy water or cocktails.

— Addie Broyles, adapted from a recipe on TheKitchen.com

LOQUAT DREAM CURD

1 whole egg
4 egg yolks
½ cup sugar
1 cup loquat puree (see note)
½ vanilla bean
4 oz. white chocolate, chopped
1 Tbsp. lemon juice

Whisk together the egg, yolks and sugar until light in color. Whisk in loquat puree and vanilla bean. Cook over a double boiler until the mixture thickens. Stir in the chocolate until smooth. Stir in lemon juice. Remove the vanilla bean and refrigerate the curd to help it set.

Note: To make the puree, cut off the ends of the loquat and use a spoon to separate flesh from the skin. Remove the seeds and put flesh in water with lemon to prevent browning. Blend and strain.

— From Sarah Prieto, pastry chef of Counter 3 Five VII

360Cooks

continued from D1

My kids are now loquat fanatics, and we go on neighborhood walks to forage them. Plenty of Austin chefs are taking advantage of the nice little crop that has popped up this year, including Todd Duplechan of Lenoir, who is using loquat juice in a ceviche, and Jesse Griffiths at Dai Due, who is using them in sausage, drinks and pickles.

Sarah Prieto, the pastry chef at Counter 3 Five VII, had never tried loquats before last week, but she loved their peach, citrus and mild mango flavor and used them to make a loquat liqueur and loquat vinegar. She also made a loquat white chocolate curd that she has been serving at her prix fixe restaurant downtown.

Inspired by the "if it grows together, it goes together" mantra, I took an easier route and made a loquat rosemary simple syrup, using loquats and rosemary foraged from one of those neighborhood walks.

I wasn't sure if the rosemary would overpower the loquats, so I asked my kids to rub the rosemary in their hands and then taste the loquat to see if the two went together. They gave it a thumbs up, but to avoid having



Loquats and rosemary are often found growing in the same yard, so why not combine them to make a loquat rosemary simple syrup that can be used in cocktails or lemonade. ADDIE BROYLES/@BROYLESA

too much rosemary in the syrup, I only let the sprig sit in the hot loquats for a few minutes before removing it. I've already used the fragrant syrup in a gin and tonic that is my new favorite spring cocktail, and the boys are in love with a rosemary loquat lemonade I made with the rest of it.

Another great source for loquat ideas and inspiration is the Austin blog Full and Content (fullandcontent.com), whose author, Lisa Rawlinson, is as passionate about loquats as anyone I know.

Contact Addie Broyles at 512-912-2504. Twitter: @broylesa

Sue Patrick

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