

Library focuses on health

It's that most wonderful time of the year ... flu vaccine season. The flu is not bad in Texas yet but cases are high right next door in Louisiana, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's FluView, the weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report.

The CDC website notes that while vaccine effectiveness varies — it is tricky predicting exactly which strains of virus to include from year to year — studies show flu vaccination reduces the risk of flu by 40 to 60 percent among the overall population, so if your neighbor tells you the vaccine doesn't work, don't believe it.

The Texas Department of State Health Services recommends everyone age six months and older get the vaccine. The agency has a Flu Vaccine Finder online that lists eight locations in Georgetown to get the shot other than a doctor's office.

If you do get the flu or other contagious illness, we in the library hope you will take very good care of yourself, stay home and read e-books — which you can check out without even coming in to the library — until you are no longer contagious. When you are well and out and about, you'll see the library staff does a number of things year-in and year-out to keep our patrons and staff safe and comfortable. Here is some of what we offer:

- Hand sanitizer are near the 30 public-use computer stations on the first floor for your hands as well as wet wipes intended to

BIBLIOFILES

Dana Hendrix

use on the keyboards to stop the spread of germs.

- You can ask for tissues and hand sanitizer at the Circulation, Kids' and Reference desks.

- Wet wipes are next to the kids' computers for cleaning the keyboards. Staff and volunteers routinely clean the toys in the kids' area, but if you observe a little one gumming, licking or sneezing on a toy, please just look for the container we call the "toy bath" in the Kids' play area — also called the "yucky bucket" — which is a place to deposit any library toy that needs a little germ remediation before it goes back into circulation. We'll make sure it gets a good cleaning before the next little one picks it up.

Speaking of yucky: if your child has a stinky diaper that you need to dispose of in the library, just ask a staff member for a plastic bag to place it in before putting it in a restroom trash can. And if you or a child has an accident of any kind in the library, let the staff know right away. It happens. We will call appropriate medical help if needed, provide you with basic first aid supplies, then we or our custodial staff will take care of any cleanup.

- Those who use prescription injectable medications will be glad to know we have sharps disposal containers in both of the first-floor restrooms where you

can safely dispose of your used insulin vials, sharps, pen needles or lancets.

- In all of the restrooms, note the time-honored and very effective soap and warm water option for thorough hand washing. Each stall also has paper toilet seat covers. And in the men's and women's restrooms you'll find courtesy boxes containing a few children's diapers, adult disposable undergarments and menstrual products for those who need them and forgot to carry them along.

- At the second-floor Reference desk, you'll find tissues and hand sanitizer, and if your well-being hinges on a little peace and quiet, just ask us for some disposable earplugs or the use of a white noise machine.

As you might imagine, keeping all of those supplies stocked in our heavily used public building is a bit of a challenge for our busy staff, so please notify one of us right away anytime you see something amiss so we can take care of it.

In addition to supplies, we have lots of information in the library's collection to help you stay healthy and happy: cookbooks, fitness DVDs, psychology books, books about aging well and about specific medical conditions, addiction recovery resources, and more. Just ask for help locating information at the library's second floor reference desk.

Stay informed and keep well this fall, and ... we'll see you in the library!

Dana Hendrix is the Fine Arts Librarian at the Georgetown Public Library.



Betty Schleder slides a rattlesnake into a bottle to make wine as Sun City herpetologist Jim Christiansen surveys the situation.

Be careful what you drink

It's almost Halloween: time to eat, drink and be scary. My fearless friend, Betty Schleder, is always up to something wacky, weird and wonderful! When she concocted a "boo-zy" rattlesnake drink, I decided to make her adventure my Halloween theme.

Starting with some background, snake wine is made from venomous snakes. Chinese snake wine has been a "cure all" for centuries. According to traditional Chinese medicine, snakes have powers that increase virility, reverse hair loss and combat back pain and arthritis. Snake venom is the most valuable snake ingredient.

A snake is nestled inside a glass bottle of alcohol, sometimes with the company of tiny lizards or scorpions. On occasion, herbs and spices such as ginseng are added. The belief is that while alcohol breaks down the venom, it preserves its medicinal value. After fermenting for several months, the wine is consumed in small amounts as needed. Some bottlers remove the snake but others prefer the shock value of a coiled serpent.

Betty was visiting a bar in Colorado when she spotted a large snake in a



TASTES OF THE TOWN

Linda Dwyer

bottle of tequila. This set in motion her brew brain-storm. Finding a rattlesnake was tricky and road kill wasn't the solution! Luckily she knew a snake expert in Georgetown who was willing to help out.

Jim Christiansen is an accomplished herpetologist who has published a number of papers on reptiles. "I am particularly interested in the conservation of reptiles," he explained. In retirement, he continues to do research and also maps out snake habitats. Christiansen has respect for all animals and worried my Halloween column might condone fear or hatred of snakes. It is estimated about a third of adults have a snake phobia but I liked

catching garter snakes when I was young and find them fascinating.

Christiansen donated a dead juvenile rattlesnake to the peculiar project. We watched him inject alcohol along its spine to preserve the snake and then he gave it a sudsy bath. Betty dropped the little guy into her bottle of tequila where it stayed suspended in the clear liquid. Betty was all smiles as she carried her bizarre bottle to the car. I left hoping that Betty calls me for whatever she brews up next!

Now for a bit of Halloween creepiness. Certain snakes appear dead while very much alive but dormant. In 2013, a woman who had bottled her own snake wine was rushed to the hospital after a run-in with a hibernating viper. The woman had bottled the viper months before but when she opened the lid the viper jumped out. I know this story is true because I read it on the internet. Happy Halloween!

I am including a *Washington Post* recipe that doesn't require a rattlesnake. According to the *Post* this drink "will either cure rattlesnake bite, or kill rattlesnakes, or make you see them."

Rattlesnake

2 ounces rye whiskey
1 ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice
3/4 ounce simple syrup (see notes)
1 large egg white (see notes)

Combine the rye, lemon juice, simple syrup and egg white in a cocktail shaker; dry-shake for 30 seconds, then add ice and shake for 30 seconds. Strain into a chilled martini glass.

Notes: To make simple syrup, combine 1/2 cup of sugar and 1/2 cup of

water in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring until sugar dissolves.

Bring to a slow, rolling boil, then reduce to medium-low and cook for 5 minutes. Cool completely before using.

Raw eggs carry a risk of salmonella. Use a pasteurized egg white if you are concerned about eating uncooked eggs.

Select library events

- October 29-December 7, Gary Nowlin: Gary Nowlin: *Texas Landscapes — No Cows No Bluebonnets* exhibit

- October 29-November 25 Williamson County Art Guild: *We Love Art!* exhibit. Reception 4-5:30 p.m. Friday, November 1

- October 30, 10-11 a.m. Family Place Playshop (for ages 12-36 months and their parents and caregivers; space is limited and registration is required)

- October 30, 10 a.m. Fall Fun Storytime (ages 0-5)

- October 31, 10 a.m. Fall Fun Storytime (ages 0-5)

- November 9, 1-2:30 p.m. Tween

Nailed It! (ages 9-12)

- November 9, 3-4:30 p.m. Teen Musical Mayhem (ages 12-18)

- November 13, 10-11 a.m. Family Place Playshop (for ages 12-36 months and their parents and caregivers; space is limited and registration is required)

- November 15, 3-5 p.m. ACCChaos! (ages 6 and older)

- November 15, 7 p.m. Adultish Holiday Cheers (ages 21 and up, limited capacity, registration required)

- November 17, 2 p.m. Kiyoshi Tamagawa and Friends (Live Music at the Library)

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Fall flavors warm up crisp evenings

Continued from 1B

Remove garlic and discard. Stir in chicken broth, salt, nutmeg, allspice, coriander and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes.

Combine cream and pumpkin, mixing until smooth. When broth has simmered 15 minutes, stir in pumpkin mixture along with the tomatoes. Heat gently until very hot, but do not boil. Serve hot. Serves 6.

Finally, this is one of those incredibly easy dump cake recipes that is ready for the oven in less than 10 minutes. It comes out part warm cake and part pudding, with pecans throughout. Yum! Perfect for a cool, crisp evening.

Pumpkin Crisp with Nutmeg Whipped Cream Crisp:

1 (15 oz.) can pumpkin
1 cup evaporated milk
1 cup sugar
1 t. vanilla
1/2 t. ground cinnamon
1 box butter-flavored yellow cake mix
1 cup chopped pecans
1 cup butter, melted

Whipped Cream:

1 cup whipping cream, chilled
2 T. powdered sugar, or more to taste
Dash of ground nutmeg

To prepare crisp, heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9x13-inch baking dish. Stir together pumpkin, milk, sugar, vanilla and cin-

namon in large bowl until smooth. Pour into prepared pan. Sprinkle cake mix evenly over pumpkin mixture. Sprinkle pecans evenly over cake mix. Drizzle butter evenly over pecans.

Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour or until golden brown. Cool 10 minutes before serving.

For whipped cream, beat cream in bowl with electric mixer until foamy. Increase speed to high and gradually add powdered sugar and nutmeg, beating until soft peaks form. Serve cake warm or at room temperature topped with whipped cream. Serves 12.

Good, fall flavors are perfect for cool and crisp evenings. Enjoy!