

Breaking up doesn't have to be hard to do

count books among my oldest and dearest friends.

We moved a lot during my childhood, making it difficult to make or maintain friendships. Being the poor kid and the chubby kid only compounded the problem.

Books didn't judge or make fun of my garage sale castoffs or my knock-off Converse All Star high tops from Kmart. Books fed my natural curiosity and offered a hiding place from the chaos at home.

I was the student who generally read the entire book, not just the assigned chapters, in two days or less.

I wept for Old Dan and Little Ann. I followed Huck and Jim down the Mississippi faster than Mrs. Hopper could say, "Pop quiz." While some classmates moaned, I gladly joined Odysseus on his perilous quest home.

Then came *Beowulf*, that tortuous Old English epic poem, which threatened my love of English class. You are What You Love.

I'm sure there were other assigned readings during my school years that I found onerous, but that one towers in my memory like Grendel.



BIBLIOFILES

JOYCE MAY

For my son, Luke, now a middle schooler, it was Ryan Graudin's *Wolf by Wolf* that stood in his way this past year.

He signed on for his school's Battle of the Books competition, a voluntary reading incentive program that brings teams of students together to test their knowledge of the selections they've read.

He started with Ryan Graudin's *Wolf by Wolf*, an imagining of a world where the Third Reich and Imperial Japan emerged victorious from World War II.

It's not as difficult a read as *Beowulf*, but he struggled to get into the story.

"It wasn't interesting to me," Luke said. "I just wasn't hooked by it."

I encouraged him to just go on to the next book on the Battle list, but he insisted on finishing it, no matter how long it took. To my dismay, he dropped out of the competition.

After recounting this story to Sally Miculek, Georgetown Public Library's assistant director, she offered Luke these terrific words of wisdom: "It's OK to break up with a book."

"There are too many books out there to waste your time with one you don't like."

Sally Miculek

Georgetown Public Library's assistant director

"There are too many books out there to waste your time with one you don't like," Ms. Miculek said.

This got me to thinking about summer reading lists and my grand scheme last year

to force one on Luke.

I want him to read and love all the classics that I did growing up, but I realize now pushing something on him is not the right approach.

A junior graphic novel was his introduction to Mark Twain, and that's OK. Hopefully, something will click in him one day and he will want to read the original.

Frost Elementary librarian Denise Mozingo, who works part-time at Georgetown Public Library, agrees with not forcing a summer reading list on young people.

"I think it's all about kid's choice," Mozingo said.

"If we want kids to enjoy reading, they need to read what they want to read, make their own choices."

For parents of reluctant readers, Mozingo advises enticing them through characters or topics they like.

Kids who are crazy about playing the video game *Minecraft*, for example, might enjoy exploring the plethora of related reading material available, ranging from player guides to fictionalized chapter books.

"I would find subjects that they are interested in and find

Kids (ages 0-12)

Space is limited, so pick up tickets beginning an hour before each show on a first-come, first-served basis.

Safari Greg, 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. Tuesday, June 19
Ventriloquist Nancy and Friends, 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, June 26

Tweens (ages 9-12)

Be sure to register in advance at the kid's desk.
Safety Pin Bracelets, 1 p.m. Wednesday, June 13
Circle of Creation Drum Circle with Mark Shelton, 1 p.m. Friday, June 15
Austin Geology Society, 1 p.m. Friday, June 22
Super Smash Bros. Tournament and Game Day, 1 p.m. Wednesday, June 27
Mystery on Bluebeard's Pirate Ship, 1 p.m. Friday, June 29

Teens (ages 12-18)

Cupcake Wars, 3 p.m. Wednesday, June 13
Drum Circle with Mark Shelton, 3 p.m. Friday, June 15
Improv Workshop with Excused Absence Comedy, 3 p.m. Wednesday, June 20
Life-Size Clue, 3 p.m. Friday, June 22
Super Smash Bros. Tournament and Game Day, 3 p.m. Wednesday, June 27
Nerdy Trivia, 3 p.m. Friday, June 29

books that are in that subject, be it fiction or nonfiction or graphic novels," Ms. Mozingo said.

It's a good approach for those participating in our summer reading program, which is in full swing, offering incentives for kids, teens (and adults) to

put down their devices and game controllers and delve into literature.

Who knows, like me, you might find lifelong friends among the worn pages of a beloved book. But, if there is no spark there, remember, breaking up isn't that hard to do.

Springtime is busy season for tastings, travels, festivals, cooking

My calendar was quite busy this spring, and it started in early March with the Georgetown Main Street Ninth Annual Swirl.

I started the evening off as the wine server in the VIP section upstairs at Gumbos.

This year, I served three wines from Becker Vineyards — a Chardonnay, the Iconoclast Cabernet Sauvignon, and my favorite, their Provençal Grenache Rose.

I've been a fan of the Becker Rose for several years and I was happy to suggest it to everyone I met at the wine table. I think most of those who took my recommendation were happy they did.

This year's event was completely sold out and from my viewpoint behind the wine bottles, I think everyone in the VIP section had a really good time. Consider buying a ticket next year for the 10th anniversary of this signature Georgetown event.

Next on the itinerary was a trip to Santa Fe, New Mexico, with my wife.

We did all of the usual things



WINE UNCORKED

Michael Walton

people do when visiting Santa Fe, but one of the cool things in that beautiful city is the Gruet Tasting Room located just a block and a half from the plaza inside the Hotel St. Francis.

Gilbert Gruet, pronounced Groo-ay, was born in France in 1931 and started making Champagne in 1952 in the village of Bethon.

Fast forward to 1984, Mr. Gruet's children moved to

New Mexico to start making wine and released their first sparkling bottles in 1989. Since then, the Gruet Winery has grown tremendously and won many awards for its wines.

The Santa Fe tasting room is a quaint but lively place where you can try just about everything they produce. You have probably seen a few of their sparkling wines on the shelf, but they also make several limited editions plus a few still wines that are only available at the tasting room.

If you make your way to Santa Fe or Albuquerque, be sure to visit one of their tasting rooms. We loved it so much, we went twice and even joined one of their wine clubs.

After Santa Fe, the next event on my list was the Preservation Georgetown Historic Home Tour. Specifically, I was responsible for choosing the wine and cocktail selections for an evening cocktail event.

Preservation Georgetown has organized the home tour for many years in December, but moved the tour to April this year.

In order to take advantage

of the beautiful weather, a ticketed evening cocktail party was added to the weekend.

Wine selections included Columbia Crest Horse Heaven Hills (H3) Cabernet Sauvignon and the affordable La Vieille Ferme Rose.

In addition, I added a simple cocktail we dubbed "Preservation Punch."

You may have had something similar or even made it yourself — 1 part Deep Eddy Grapefruit Vodka, 2 parts Topo-Chico and a splash of lime juice with a small lime wedge over ice. This simple combination provides a refreshing, citrus spark to any outdoor event.

Based on what was left over after the event, I think "Preservation Punch" was quite popular.

The last thing I want to tell you about is my Red Poppy Festival experience.

I've been attending the festival for years and it's always such a great weekend. I look forward to it every year because I know my friends and I will have such a wonderful time.

This year, however, was even

more exciting for me because of something totally unexpected and new. I won first place in the savory category of the Red Poppy Taste Awards!

A few years ago, the city added this competition to the festival. Each year I think I should enter something just for fun. Why not?

I entered a dish that always gets compliments — smoked pork tenderloin.

The contest requires the recipe to incorporate poppies in some way. This may be poppy seeds, flowers or any sort of poppy inspiration, so I knew what I typically do wouldn't be enough.

So I rubbed the tenderloins with poppy seeds and my wife suggested I include a sauce that also incorporated poppy seeds.

Here's the recipe:

2 pork tenderloins

salt

pepper

poppy seeds

Sprinkle some salt and pepper all over each tenderloin and cover with poppy seeds. Smoke over pecan wood for approximately 1 hour or until

internal temperature is slightly less than 150. Remove from smoker and let rest under a foil tent for about 15 minutes. Slice and serve with the sauce.

Sauce

1/4 cup Evan Williams bourbon

1/4 cup brown sugar

1/2 cup water

1 jar of cherry preserves
cayenne pepper to taste
poppy seeds

Put all ingredients into a medium saucepan and bring to a rolling boil. Simmer for 10 minutes to reduce.

I think you could use any other cut of pork, but I prefer the tenderloin.

As for a wine pairing, since the tenderloin is leaner, you don't need anything with heavy tannins to cut through the fat. Given the cherry and bourbon components of the sauce, I think a nice Oregon Pinot Noir would be perfect.

It has been a busy past few months, but as we begin to settle into summer, things will calm down and I can get back to trying more wines and filling you in on what I find.

Cheers!

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