



America's Heartland
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A woman went into labor at the lake and the baby was coming fast. Her husband began yelling frantically for a doctor. There just happened to be one fishing from a boat nearby. He motored to shore

Doctor interrupts day of fishing to deliver 29-pound baby

and delivered the baby boy. "Oh, wouldn't it be nice if we could weigh and measure him," the new mom said. "I have just what we need in my tackle box," the doctor said, retrieving his fish scale and measuring tape. "Let's see here; looks like he weighs 29 pounds and is 37 inches long."

I sure laughed when Jack Sellards, a former Marine and Korean War veteran, told me that joke here while back. Jack, now 88 years old and retired, ran a television shop for many years in the town of Barbourville in southeastern Kentucky where he was known for his honesty and integrity.

Jack, who serves with the Christian organization Gide-

ons International, knows that anglers have been known to exaggerate a bit about the fish they catch. Maybe that's because their scales are off a bit?

The Bible gives us a stark warning about making sure our scales are accurate in a verse aimed at those who sell merchandise by weight, saying "a false balance is an abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight" (Proverbs 11:1).

I preached a sermon not long ago about King Belshazzar, a prideful, self-indulgent fellow who considered himself a big, big man. He felt large and in charge. And then he was weighed on God's scales and found out the truth about

himself. You may remember from Daniel 5 that God wrote his conclusion on the wall. "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." In other words, Belshazzar didn't measure up.

The truth is, none of us, in and of ourselves, can ever measure up on God's scales. In fact, the Bible tells us "our righteousness is as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). That's why it's vital that we have Jesus in our hearts. When we step onto God's scales with Jesus, we will always measure up.

Even here in the Bible belt, I am always running into people who are trying to balance their good deeds against the bad they've done in their lives to determine their standing

with God. Sometimes they even measure themselves against the fellow down the road, saying "I'm as good as he is." Well, that's simply not the way it works.

The Bible tells us, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

That's what's so amazing about grace. We're not worthy of that grace and don't deserve it. But, when we belong to Jesus, God measures us the way the fishing doctor measured that baby. With Jesus in our hearts, we'll always measure up.

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Kitchen Diva by Angela Shelf Medearis Cactus Is a Prickly Pear

I was shopping in an ethnic grocery store when I saw a huge pile of fresh Prickly Pear cactus pads in the produce section. Prickly Pear cactus is thought to be native to Mexico and is eaten as a vegetable. The cactus is called "nopal" in Spanish, and the pads or stems are called "nopales." Mexico exports 40,000 pounds of nopales pads to Texas every day. They're also grown as an export crop in Central America and Israel.

The pear-shaped fruit on the ends of the nopal pads are called "tunas," and range in color from a greenish-white to purple. If the tuna fruit are sweet, they're eaten raw or

and served during the Mexican celebration of Lent, used as a taco filling, as a vegetable in soups, or breaded and eaten like French fries.

I used breaded nopalitos as a crunchy topping for this unusual Fried Cactus Salad. Enjoy this taste of Mexico, and try nopalitos in your recipes to give your dinner a South-of-the-Border flair!

FRIED CACTUS SALAD

- 1 cup fresh nopalitos, rinsed, drained and patted dry
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup cornmeal
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
- 1 cup vegetable oil

1. To make the fried cactus, place flour, cornmeal, 1 teaspoon salt, black pepper and cayenne pepper in a small bag. Shake the bag to mix the ingredients. Drop the rinsed and drained nopalitos into the bag. Shake until the strips are well-coated.

2. Heat oil in a medium-sized skillet, about 2 to 3 minutes. Fry the strips until they are golden brown. Place strips on a paper towel to drain, sprinkle with the remaining salt, and set aside.



used to make wine or as a sweet syrup. If sour, they're cooked and incorporated into a variety of recipes. I've always wondered about the first adventurous cook to take this prickly crop and turn it into a delightful dish!

Preparing the fresh cactus pads takes time and care, as all of the prickly spines and thorns must be carefully removed. After the pads have been prepped, they're grilled or boiled until tender. When sliced thinly, the nopales are called "nopalitos." They look like French-cut green beans and have a similar texture.

You can buy nopalitos in a can or jar, and both the fresh nopales and the canned variety are widely available in ethnic supermarkets. I prefer the ease and convenience of using the canned nopalitos because it's difficult to prepare them properly the first few times. Be sure to rinse the canned nopales well before using them.

Nopalitos are a popular ingredient in Mexican dishes. They're scrambled with eggs

Salad:
3 tablespoons chopped white or sweet onion
1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano or 2 teaspoons fresh
Romaine Lettuce, torn into bite-sized pieces
1/4 cup prepared Italian Dressing
Topping:
3 tomatoes, sliced
1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro
1/3 cup crumbled queso fresco or anejo or Monterey jack cheese
1/3 cup purple onion rings
1 avocado, peeled and sliced (optional)
Place the onion, cilantro, oregano and lettuce into a large bowl. Drizzle with the salad dressing. Toss to combine. Top with the tomato slices, cilantro, cheese, onion rings and avocado. Sprinkle the fried nopalitos over and around the salad. Makes about 4 servings.

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He Is Always There

CHORUS

Through out the day
In every way
Standing by my side
Helping me abide
In HIS love --- because HE is always there

Adam was the first to know
Of the love that HE would show
By being with HIM every day
In a very special way

Near a burning bush, Moses did stand
Being told to go, to an enemy land
And in Egypt later he would see
Just how close our GOD can be

Abraham's faith was put to the test
But he believed that GOD knew best
And when the angel did interfere
He saw then, that God was near

Paul did not know
The best way to go
Until a great light he did see
Then he heard just how close
JESUS can be

NOTE: Lyrics written by Price J. Rawlins on May 25, 2003

God Sent Me An Angel

God sent to me an angel,
Was on Thanksgiving Day.
While I was doing my chores,
In a very simple way.
When the phone rang, a small voice said,
"I have good news for you
Tell this to no one," the small voice said,
"What God has told me to do."
God works in a very special way,
He knows exactly what I need.
He will always be there
When the way seems so dark;
So, He sent an angel to comfort me.
I said, "Thank you, Lord,"
For this special day.
Though my car is broken down
And falling apart,
My children are all well
And serving you now.
And I praise you, Lord, with all my heart.
What have I got to complain about?
For this morning you helped me
To open my eyes.
Some people are living in a blinded world,
Unable to see the beautiful sunrise.
And you have sent an angel to me again.
Though unexpected, I must admit.
It came in a very special way.
And I know for sure it was Heaven sent.
So, again, I want to say, "Thank you, Lord."
Not only for Thanksgiving Day,
But for every blessing you have given me,
And every angel you sent my way.

Madelene Wasson

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE

