

State

Christmas cooks saying 'shucks' to tamale loss

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Although most Texans will have no trouble finding a turkey for their Christmas feast this year, many Mexican-Americans are facing a serious shortage that threatens their traditional holiday menu.

Corn shucks, used to wrap spicy, meat-filled tamales, are in extremely short supply this year. That's bad news for members of the state's large Hispanic population, accustomed to sitting down with neighbors over steaming plates of tamales during the Christmas holidays.

A spokesman for the Mexican Cultural Center in San Antonio said that without tamales, Christmas would not be the same to many Mexican-American families.

"We always make tamales at Christmas," the spokesman said. "It's like you have turkey at Thanksgiving. I think families will be disappointed (if there are no tamales) because it's very special. It's not just a meal."

David Guerra, a wholesale produce buyer in San Antonio, said there was no way he could keep up with the huge demand for corn shucks this year.

"Everybody sure does go for tamales during Christmas," Guerra said. "This is the only month when they can really sell, but this year there's a really bad shortage."

The vast majority of corn shucks used in Texas are imported from Mexico. Guerra said he was unsure why that country was unable to keep up its usual supply this season.

"On top of the shortage, what we are getting across (the border) is not good quality," he said. "There's a requirement that they've got to be clean... and a lot of them don't make the grade. Once you sell them to the consumer, you get in trouble because there may be a lot of black mold on them."

He said corn shucks are difficult to harvest and process, so most Texas corn growers refuse to

bother with the crop. The one Texas producer who sells in the San Antonio area was asking exorbitant prices — \$45 per bale instead of Mexican dealers' usual \$30 per bale — so Guerra said he refused to buy.

To keep from disappointing their families and neighbors by abandoning the tamale tradition, some resourceful cooks may be planning to use some peculiar, non-traditional tamale wrappers.

"I heard a lot of people were going to wrap tamales in a banana

peel," Guerra said. "I heard people say they do cook all right like that. Some old people say they used to make them years back with cabbage leaves too."

Fortunately, another special Mexican-American holiday treat won't be affected by the lack of corn shucks. Bunuelos — large flour tortillas, deep fried and sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar — are as staple a holiday fare in Mexican households as candy canes and mince pies are in Anglo homes.

Finder returns 50 cents plus

'Loan' draws high interest

United Press International
DALLAS — Officials are looking for someone with a guilty conscience, a long memory and lousy arithmetic skills, who picked up a 50-cent piece from the floor of the Oak Cliff Bank and Trust in 1925.

Early Monday, Republic Bank Oak Cliff employee Dorthy Foster opened an envelope addressed to the bank under its old name. Out fell

\$232.50 in cash and a note.

"Gentlemen," it began, "in the summer of 1925, I picked up off your floor a 50-cent piece. I put the coin in my pocket, and it has troubled me ever since."

The unidentified penitent said he wanted to return the money with interest — which he miscalculated by a factor of 100, and based on 58 years, rather than the 56 years that had

actually passed since his transgression. So instead of paying \$2.32 in interest, he paid 100 times that amount.

He ended his confession saying: "I have asked for God's forgiveness, and I now ask yours. You have built a great bank. Thanks."

The letter, postmarked Shreveport, La., and bearing no name, puzzled bank presi-

dent Joe Don Denton.

"First of all, even if it originally our 50 cents — not dropped by a customer which seems more likely — misfigured the interest," Denton said. "We would return to the man, if we knew who was."

The money will go to the National Guard if no one claims it in the next few days, Denton said.

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Bensten challenged to a debate

United Press International
AUSTIN — Sen. Walter Mengden, R-Houston, has challenged Sen. LLOYD Bentsen, D-Texas, to debate the issues in the 1982 U. S. Senate campaign.

Mengden is opposing Rep. Jim Collins, R-Texas, for the GOP nomination to the seat Bentsen now holds.

He said a talk show host has offered to moderate the debate.

"We have the medium available for the public to hear both candidates give their views. This radio station is willing to let us discuss the issues on the talk show, and I think the public deserves the chance to compare the two candidates," Mengden said Monday.

Kick-backs, bribes taken by officials

United Press International
TYLER — Three northeast Texas county commissioners have pleaded guilty in a federal investigation of bribery and kick-backs between county officials and construction companies in a three-state area.

Waving grand jury indictment, current Van Zandt County Commissioner Eldred Eugene Wycough and former Van Zandt County Commissioner Jimmy Ray Grace appeared before federal Judge William Wayne Justice Monday and pleaded guilty to accepting a bribe from an employee of a Tyler firm in 1977.

Both men agreed to pay the county \$1,000 in restitution and to assist federal authorities in their investigation. Wycough also agreed to resign.

No date was set for sentencing. Gregg County Commissioner Bill Owens appeared before federal Judge William Steger Monday and pleaded innocent. Owens, accused of accepting a \$1,000 kick-back in 1976, was released under a \$1,000 personal recognizance bond. His trial is scheduled for Feb. 1.

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Flour Scotch Buy 5 Lb. Bag .79 Cake Mixes Mrs. Wright's 18.5 Oz. Box .69 Shortening Scotch Buy, 42 Oz. Pre-Creamed Can \$1.29 Coconut Town House, Shredded 16 Oz. Pkg. \$1.09 Chocolate Town House, Semi-Sweet Chips 12 Oz. Pkg. \$1.49 Cream Cheese 3 Oz. Pkg. \$1	Foil Safeway 12 Inch, Aluminum, Special 25 Ft. Roll .49 Paper Plates Scotch Buy, 100 Ct. White, 9 Inch Pkg. .89 Paper Napkins Scotch Buy, 140 Ct. Pkg. .69 Paper Towels Scotch Buy, 119 Ct. Roll .49 Tissue Scotch Buy, 4 Roll Pkg. .79 \$1 Bags Scotch Buy, Tall Kitchen 30 Ct. Box \$1.65	Dinners Scotch Buy 10.25 Oz. Pkg. .75 Meat Pies Scotch Buy, Frozen 4 6 Oz. Pkg. \$1 Waffles Bel-air, 6 Ct., Frozen 3 5 Oz. Pkg. \$1 Donuts Bel-air, Jelly Filled, Frozen 11 Oz. Pkg. .79 Topping Party Pride, Whipped 8 Oz. Ctn. .69 Orange Juice Scotch Buy, 6 Oz. Can .45	S & F BEVERAGE CO. EL PASO, TEXAS Riunite Lambrusco 750 ML. \$2.89 Red, White, Rosé Btl. Almaden Wines 1.5 Liter \$4.29 Btl. Generic Wines 3 Liter \$5.89 Btl. Gallo Brand Btl. Liebfraumilch 750 ML. \$3.99 Btl. Blue Nun Wine Btl.
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