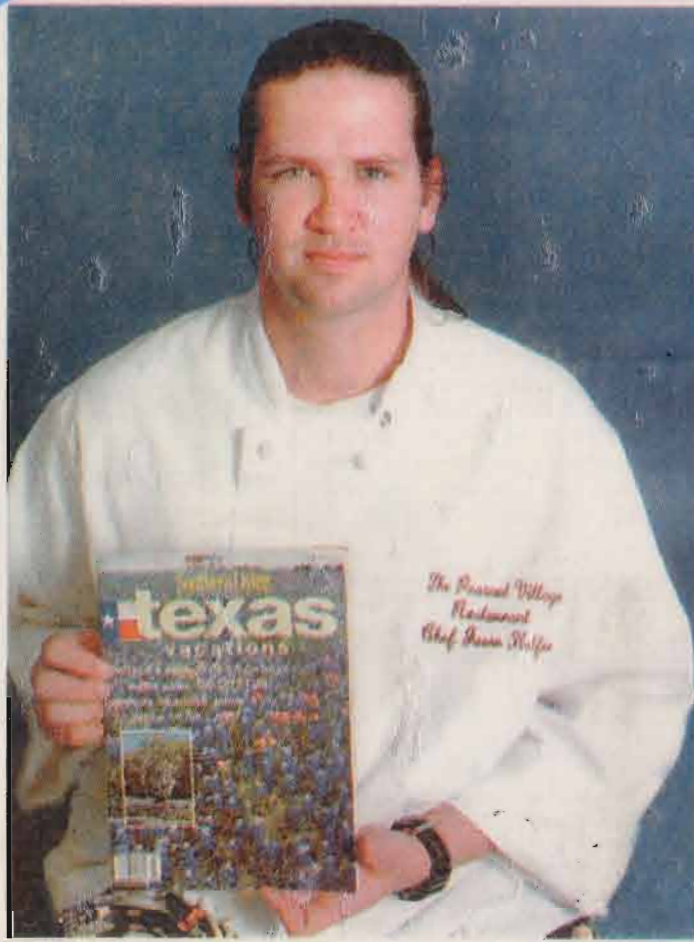




# SA restaurant on 'best' list

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S-T Photo by Steve Combs

Chef Jason Helfer holds a copy of 'Texas Vacations' which lists his restaurant Peasant Village among the 12 best restaurants in Texas.

When Peasant Village chef Jason Helfer found out his place had been selected one of the 12 best restaurants in Texas, he didn't care that only food stops in rural Texas were considered.

"That's what makes up Texas - rural cities," Helfer said as he discussed Peasant Village's mention in the spring-summer issue of "Texas Vacations," a 128-page presentation by Southern Living magazine.

Peasant Village, which will celebrate its third anniversary next month, receives extended mention in an article about small cities that offer some of the state's finest cooking.

"Don't expect elegant surroundings; the food stars here," the article says of the San Angelo restaurant at 23 S. Park St. in a restored 1926 house.

Gary Ford, a senior editor for Southern Living and editor of Southern Living Vacations, already had been to Helfer's restaurant a couple of times, but Helfer said he was pleased when he heard from Ford again several months ago.

"He said that as he traveled throughout the rural cities, my place stuck out in his head for the duration of his time in Texas," Helfer said. "I'm just so happy that somebody recognizes us as having that unique type of food that's acceptable to his palette. And I'm just glad San Angelo has accepted me the way it has."

When Helfer opened Peasant Village with his dad, Art, he billed it as a small eatery with an "Old World" flare. Originally, Helfer served pastas, sandwiches and daily specials, but he has turned the restaurant into a popular place for seafood and chicken.

"People here like their food plain and simple," said Helfer, who has been cooking since age 5 and



received a degree in culinary arts from Johnson and Wales in Charleston, S.C.

"Flavor is number one. And how it looks is next. It has to be pretty. But I'm learning that people here just want flavorful food and a different variety of choices."

Helfer isn't the only San Angeloan who received mention in the vacationing magazine, which takes readers from a popcorn business in Amarillo to citrus groves in South Texas.

Writer Carly Price took a llama trek into San Angelo State Park as part of the Texas Passport Adventure Tours. Teamed with Ruth Jordan's llamas, Price plodded along the park's multipurpose trail system and checked out the dinosaur tracks before returning to town to spend the night.

Also mentioned in the "rural city, great food" article is Zucchi's of Odessa. The restaurant features Italian cuisine.

"Texas Vacations" (\$3.99) is available on local newsstands until late May.

