

Louisiana Estuary Cuisine



with Chef Brandon LeBlanc

A CULINARY GUIDE TO COOKING WITH
PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN LOUISIANA

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program





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Special thanks to Bennie Cenac, Owner, Golden Ranch Plantation.

This publication was partially funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the State of Louisiana—Louisiana University Marine Consortium (LUMCON) through grants CE-006660-04 and CE-006660-06. The contents of this document do not necessarily represent views of the USEPA or LUMCON. The mention of trade names or commercial products does not in any way constitute an endorsement or recommendation for use.

This public document was published at a total cost of \$8,000.00. 1,000 copies of this published in this first printing at a cost of \$8,000.00. The total cost of all printings of this document, including reprints is \$8,000.00. This document was published by the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Nicholls State University Campus, P.O. Box 2663, Thibodaux, LA 70310, to provide the public with environmental information under the authority of LA. R.S. 30:2011. This material was printed in accordance with standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to LA. R.S. 43:31.

From the Director

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program is always looking for ways to engage its stakeholders. This cookbook will provide you with some very unique ideas for combining the abundant food resources that you grow and pick from your gardens and harvest or hunt right here in Louisiana's finest estuary. We encourage you to use your own produce or to buy local products to keep our community economy healthy.

In this cookbook, Chef Brandon LeBlanc takes a notably artistic approach to cooking that encourages readers to create outstanding dishes that will be delicious and unconventional. These recipes are distinctive enough that they are sure to be conversation starters among guests and families.

Writing and publishing a cookbook in Louisiana is risky business to be sure, but this culinary guide takes you to the heart of the people of the Barataria-Terrebonne basins: diverse, entertaining, treasured and mostly appreciative of the vast the resources of our homeland. Chef LeBlanc has truly done an exceptional job.

Let me encourage you to be bold, as our ancestors were, and to try these new and exciting recipes in your homes. Enjoy the abundant food resources of the estuary with these extraordinary recipes.

Kenny M. St. Pierre



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Foreword

Louisiana has the lucky distinction of possessing a wide variety of natural resources coupled with a richly diverse culture of inhabitants. In other words, we are a people blessed with abundant agriculture and aquaculture, who love to eat the many different styles of cooking that have been introduced here from the many places throughout the world from which we came. This is a winning combination that has led to the creation of some of the best recipes on the planet. There are countless Cajun and Creole cookbooks that have been written over the years, and they are good. The beauty in all of this is that it does not stop there. It is a work in progress that continues, and that is what this cookbook is about.

The Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Program is a non-profit organization that, in part, promotes a sense of environmental stewardship for the natural resources of the estuary complex. Buying locally is one way to promote the development of the resources we possess. And, in addition to economically supporting our neighbors, buying “fresh” is a healthier way to eat. In providing this cookbook, BTNEP hopes to raise awareness of the importance of supporting our local farmers and fishermen as well as the importance of being connected to our environment.

Chef Brandon LeBlanc is a native Louisianian who believes in using local resources to create a new style of Louisiana cuisine using dishes from many different cultures. In the world of cooking, evolution is fun. Our hope is that you will enjoy using these recipes to enhance what you already know about cooking and to allow Chef LeBlanc to take you to a new level and style of entertainment.

Marcia Martiney

A Word from Chef LeBlanc

I've always been a fan of using local products. I grew up eating and cooking with them. However, it frustrates me when people insist that there are only certain ways these things can be cooked. Keep in mind that many of these ingredients were originally brought here from other countries. Also, some of the foods which are indigenous to Louisiana can be found in other parts of the world as well. One example is frog legs. Many people associate these with Cajun cuisine but do not realize that France, China, and several other countries have been cooking and eating them for centuries.

We have one of the greatest and most diverse cultures in the world. What makes it so special and unique is the fact that it was created by the influences of at least seven different nations. The traditional techniques and ingredients from those countries combined with innovations from local cooks has sparked the creation of a cuisine like no other. When I cook, I do my best to respect the flavors and traditions from these countries as I take liberties on some of their recipes, thus creating a new generation of Louisiana cuisine.

The main focus of this book is the ingredients. With all of the wonderful produce, seafood, and meats at our disposal, it would be a shame to think about getting them from anywhere else. Buying local is not only a great way to stimulate our economy, but it also helps the "little guys" to make a living. So, next time you are on your way to a superstore, stop by the roadside produce stand and get what you can from them first.



Brandon LeBlanc

Garden



Boiled New Potatoes with Shallot-Mustard and Paprika-Almond Dipping Sauces

I can remember as a child helping my father dig potatoes in his garden. After the work was done, we would pick out the smallest ones, boil them, and eat them simply with salt and melted butter. Today, when I come across these baby (new) potatoes, I still enjoy them the same way or maybe with one of these simple sauces.

The first is a rustic French-style dressing with shallots, mustard, and wine. The second is a traditional Spanish dish which has been found in tapas bars for hundreds of years. It is a bit more robust than the first containing almonds, hot paprika and garlic.

Shallot-Mustard Sauce

1 tablespoon butter
6 shallots, finely chopped
½ cup dry white wine
1 cup chicken stock
½ cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
1 tablespoon whole grain mustard
Salt and pepper to taste

Saute' the shallots in the butter over medium heat until soft and translucent. Add the wine and simmer until completely evaporated. Add chicken stock and cream and reduce by half. Pour into a blender, puree, and return to pan to reheat gently. Stir in parsley and mustard and season with salt and pepper. Pour over hot, boiled potatoes and serve.

Hot Paprika and Almond Dressing

4 cloves garlic, chopped
⅓ cup blanched almonds
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
½ teaspoon hot paprika
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
½ cup olive oil
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
1 tablespoon chopped oregano
Salt

Puree all ingredients in a blender to a smooth paste. Adjust salt as necessary and pour over hot, boiled potatoes and serve.

Chef's Note

Paprika usually comes in either hot or sweet varieties and can vary greatly by brand. Choose either a good quality Spanish or Hungarian variety. Avoid the mass produced brands at all costs. They have little or no flavor and are only good for adding color to dishes.

Tapas Bars appetizer bars originating in Spain. The original tapas were the slices of bread which sherry drinkers in Andalusian taverns used to cover their glasses between sips. This was to prevent fruit flies from hovering over the sweet sherry. Enterprising bartenders began putting small snacks on the bread, and the lowly tapa (from tapa derived the verb tapar, "to cover") became as important as the sherry.

Shallot a relative of the onion, with a sweeter, milder flavor.



Corn and Zucchini Timbales

1 tablespoon butter
2 ½ cups fresh roasted corn kernels
½ cup water
5 eggs
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon flour
1 tablespoon heavy cream
3 small zucchini, ends removed
Salt and black pepper

Sauce

½ red onion, quartered
4 medium sized tomatillos, husks removed
6 cloves garlic, peeled
4 poblano chiles, roasted and peeled
½ cup heavy cream
4 tablespoons butter, softened

In a blender, puree the corn and water for one minute. Add the eggs, the flour, the sugar, and the salt and pepper, and puree the mixture for one minute. Strain the puree through a fine sieve into a bowl, pressing hard on the solids. On the large holes of a box grater, grate enough of the zucchini to measure one cup. Squeeze the grated zucchini dry in a kitchen towel and stir it into the corn mixture.

Corn has always been a staple in Louisiana cuisine, and I am always looking for new ways to utilize it. When I was living in Napa Valley, a lady from Oaxaca, Mexico, showed me how to make this corn timbale. It captures the true essence of the corn and while it is good all by itself, the poblano puree really sets it off.

Rub six 6-ounce molds with butter. Divide the corn mixture among the molds. Arrange the molds in a baking dish, adding enough hot water into the baking dish to come halfway up the sides of the molds. Bake the timbales in the middle of a preheated 350°F oven for 35 to 40 minutes, or until they are firm. Transfer the molds to a work surface and let them stand for three minutes. Run a thin knife around the edge of each mold and invert the timbales onto platters. (The timbales may be made one day in advance and kept covered and chilled. Reheat the timbales in a baking dish covered tightly with foil in a preheated 350°F oven for 15 minutes.)

to prepare sauce

Toss onions, tomatillos, and garlic with a little oil and roast in a 450°F oven for about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and put in blender along with poblanos, cream, and butter. Puree until smooth and season to taste with salt and pepper. Spoon sauce onto plate and top with a timbale. Garnish with chopped cilantro and crumbled queso fresco if desired.

Timbale a creamy mixture baked in a mold.

Tomatillo a small, spherical green or green-purple fruit that is used primarily in Latin American green sauces.

Beverage Pairing
Malbec



Curried Black-Eyed Pea and Butternut Squash Soup

- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups dried black-eyed peas, soaked overnight in cold water
- 1 small butternut squash, peeled and diced
- 5 bacon slices, chopped
- 1 medium red onion, chopped
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon curry powder (preferably Madras)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried hot red pepper flakes
- 8 cups chicken stock
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh mint leaves

In a medium stock pot, sauté the bacon over medium-high heat until crispy. Remove bacon, set aside and add onion, celery and garlic. Sauté about five minutes, then add squash, curry powder, and cumin. Cook about five more minutes, then add peas, cayenne, pepper flakes and chicken stock. Bring to a boil, reduce to simmer, and cook for one to one and a half hours

A lot of people hear the word curry and run the other way. However, if used properly and in moderation, curry can be quite good. The most important thing to consider is the quality of the curry powder itself. Stay away from the regular big "name brand" spices. These are mass-produced and may have sat on a shelf for months or even years before you buy them. Try to find a smaller specialty brand, preferably made in the country where the spice is grown. Curry is actually a blend of several spices and comes in many different combinations. I like to use Madras curry for this recipe, but you may substitute another kind if you wish.

or until peas are tender. Season to taste with salt and add chopped cilantro and mint. Garnish with crumbled bacon.

Beverage Pairing
Pinot Gris or
Pinot Noir

Curry Powder a powdered preparation of spices and other ingredients, usually including turmeric and coriander, used for making curry or for seasoning food.

Cumin a small plant of the parsley family, bearing aromatic, seedlike fruit.

Cilantro an aromatic annual Eurasian herb in the parsley family, having parsley-like leaves and clusters of tiny white to pinkish flowers, used as a flavoring or garnish.



Garlic and Saffron Soup

½ cup extra virgin olive oil
 10 large cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
 2 tablespoons dry white wine
 ½ tablespoon Spanish sweet paprika
 3 ounces crusty white bread cut into ½ inch pieces
 1 quart chicken stock
 2 generous pinches saffron threads
 1 blade society garlic (optional)
 4 large eggs
 Salt and black pepper
 ½ cup grated Manchego cheese

Heat 4 tablespoons oil in a heavy sauce pot over medium-high heat. Add bread cubes and garlic and sauté until bread is light golden, about four minutes. Add wine, then broth and saffron. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 25 minutes. Puree soup in blender. Return soup to sauce pan. Season with salt and pepper. Heat soup until barely simmering and crack eggs into soup one at a time. Leave for about 2 to 3 minutes, or until barely set. Gently place one egg into each soup bowl. Ladle soup over egg and garnish with parsley and grated Manchego cheese.

There is no flavoring used more abundantly around the world, and in more cuisines, than garlic. This is just as true in Louisiana. Garlic grows very well here as well as the often unknown and underutilized "society garlic," which looks like a long blade of dark green grass but packs a garlic punch like you have never had.

This dish is a twist on a traditional Castilian dish called Sopa de Ajo or simply "garlic soup." Originally a peasant soup, in the past, peasants would have never used the extremely expensive saffron, but I think we can get away with it. It is further enriched by the barely cooked egg whose yolk flows into the soup. Note that this soup is for garlic lovers only and may lead to spending the rest of the night alone.



Beverage Pairing

Chardonnay

Saffron the deep orange aromatic part of a crocus flower. There is no substitute for saffron in flavoring.

Manchego Cheese the best known and most widely available Spanish cheese. It comes from La Mancha, the land of Don Quixote, and was originally made only from the milk of Manchego sheep. Manchego is aged for three months or longer and is a semi-firm cheese with a rich golden color. It comes in a ten-inch diameter wheel, five inches thick with a herringbone design on the rind. It ranges from mild to sharp, depending on how long it is aged.

Glazed Turnips with Granny Smith Apples, Walnuts, and Mint

1/2 stick (1/4 cup) unsalted butter
3 pounds turnips, peeled and diced into one-inch cubes
2 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
2 teaspoons sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 scallions, finely chopped
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 Granny Smith apple, cored and large diced
1 cup walnuts, roughly chopped
2 tablespoons fresh mint, roughly chopped
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
Juice of 1 lemon
Salt and red pepper flakes

Melt butter in a wide 5-quart heavy pot over moderate heat, then add turnips, stirring until well coated. Add broth, sugar, and salt, and bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, covered, until turnips are just tender, 25 to 30 minutes. Continue to boil turnips, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until liquid is reduced enough to just glaze the turnips, about 15 minutes. Sprinkle with scallions

Many people frown on turnips because they can be astringent and bitter. I had no interest in them until I moved to Napa Valley. While there, I had baby turnips that were simply blanched and sautéed with shallots and butter and were instantly transformed. If cooked properly, they become sweet and delicious. Also, remember that the larger they grow, the more bitter they become, so try to pick the smallest ones you can find when cooking them. When I grow them, I pick them small so I know they will be at their best.

In this recipe, I slowly cook the turnips in chicken stock with a bit of sugar until they are tender and glazed. They are then tossed with crisp apples, walnuts, and mint to provide a delicious side for duck, goose, pork, or chicken, or to be tossed with some mixed greens for an interesting salad.

and parsley. Let cool completely, and toss gently with remaining ingredients to coat well. Season with salt and red pepper flakes.



Food Pairing

Duck
Goose
Pork
Chicken

Beverage Pairing

Pinot Noir

Scallions commonly known as green onions or spring onions, scallions are milder tasting than other onions.



Grilled Eggplant, Goat Cheese, and Mint Bruschetta

8 slices day old ciabatta or country-style bread,
1/2 inch thick
1 medium eggplant, cut crosswise into 1/4 inch
thick slices
2 roma tomatoes seeded and diced
1/2 cup olive oil

Dressing

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh mint
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Toast bread slices on medium-hot grill until crisp, about two minutes per side. Brush eggplant slices on both sides with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill until lightly charred, cooked through, and tender. Toss eggplant gently with mint, vinegar, and oil. Spread toasted bread with goat cheese, dividing it equally among all pieces. Top with eggplant, some freshly chopped mint, and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Serve at room temperature.

Eggplant grows abundantly in Louisiana and is a staple of Cajun and Creole cuisine, but like many other things, its uses have been limited to things such as frying or in stuffings. It is a versatile ingredient and is used in many other countries in a variety of ways such as dips, stir fries, or grilled vegetable platters.

In this case, we grill the eggplant and use it for a quick and easy antipasto, or Italian appetizer, with toasted bread, goat cheese and mint. Mint is usually associated with dessert, but I love to use it in savory dishes because of its freshness and almost citrus-like qualities.



Beverage Pairing
Malbec

Chef's Note

Eggplant is a member of the nightshade family, and like tomatoes, was considered to be inedible until the 1800's.

Ciabatta bread literally, carpet slipper because of its shape, it is an Italian white bread made with wheat flour and yeast. There are many variations of it depending upon where it is made.

Balsamic vinegar a traditional flavored vinegar originating from Modena, Italy; it is a dark, thick well-aged vinegar with a sweet taste.

Bruschetta grilled bread topped with a variety of seasonings, vegetables, and herbs.

Grilled Fig, Bread, and Arugula Salad

8 figs, halved
 4 slices rustic country bread (such as ciabatta), about 1 inch thick
 8 slices prosciutto, torn into large pieces
 8 ounces fresh arugula
 ½ cup toasted pine nuts

Toss figs gently with olive oil and grill over medium-high heat until warm but still somewhat firm. Drizzle bread with oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill until toasted. Remove and cut into 1 inch cubes. Gently toss figs with bread, prosciutto, arugula, and pine nuts. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with balsamic dressing.

Dressing

½ cup balsamic vinegar
 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
 1 medium shallot
 1 teaspoon whole grain mustard
 Salt and red pepper flakes to taste

Combine all ingredients in blender and puree until smooth.

For a short time in the summer, local trees are abundant with beautiful, ripe figs. Because this window is so short and the figs are so plentiful, people usually have to make preserves out of them before they go bad. These can then be used for a variety of things, but I also like to use them fresh when I can. When at school in Italy, I had the most wonderful appetizer of figs wrapped in prosciutto. Though there were only two ingredients, the perfectly ripe figs balanced against the salty Prosciutto di Parma made for an unforgettable experience. The Italians showed me simplicity and perfection at its finest.

This salad is a twist on that experience which adds a few more ingredients to make what could be hearty enough for a light lunch. It is also a great balance between sweet, salty, and peppery.



Beverage Pairing
 Pinot Noir, Champagne,
 or Viognier

Arugula a strongly-flavoured dark, leafy green with a rich, peppery taste originating from the Mediterranean region.

Ciabatta bread literally “carpet slipper” because of its shape. It is an Italian white bread made with wheat flour and yeast. There are many variations of it depending upon where it is made.

Pine nuts edible seeds of pine cones, also called pignoli.

Prosciutto a seasoned dry-cured unsmoked Italian ham, dense and reddish-brown in color, also called Parma ham.

Shallots a relative of the onion. It has a sweeter, milder flavor.



Green Bean, Roasted Pepper, and Pine Nut Prosciutto Wraps with Honey Mustard Dipping Sauce

6 thin slices prosciutto
½ pound fresh, baby green beans (about 24)
1 handful mixed baby lettuce
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
Juice of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons toasted pine nuts
1 each red and yellow bell peppers—
roasted, peeled, seeded, and cut into strips
2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan
cheese
Freshly ground black pepper

In a large pot of boiling, salted water, blanch the green beans for about two minutes and place in a bowl of ice water. Drain. Place the beans, lettuce, and peppers in a bowl, and drizzle with the oil and lemon juice. Add the pine nuts and parmesan cheese, toss well, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Lay the prosciutto slices on a board and top each with four beans and equal amounts of the mixture. Roll up to form a cigar shape and serve with the honey mustard sauce.

Through all my years growing up in the South, I ate fresh green beans quite often, yet I can only think of two ways they were ever prepared—smothered with bacon and potatoes (which I still love) and in that dreadful casserole topped with canned fried onions. Green beans are often referred to as “snap beans” because of their crispness and the way they snap when you bend them. So why not preserve that wonderful crispness instead of cooking the life out of them?

Green beans can be quickly blanched and tossed into salads, used in stir fries, or turned into wonderful crunchy appetizers as I do here. This is just one version that can be modified with other vegetables or dipping sauces. There are many varieties of beans available, but I find that any will work well here as long as they are the young, smaller ones. Be careful with the purple and red varieties. They usually cost more and look great, but most of them turn green when you cook them.

Honey Mustard Sauce

1 garlic clove, crushed
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

1 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons sour cream

Whisk all together until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.



Beverage Pairing
Pinot Grigio or
Beaujolais

Pine nuts edible seeds of pine cones, also called pignoli.

Prosciutto a seasoned dry-cured unsmoked Italian ham, dense and reddish-brown in color, also called Parma ham.

Mirliton and Sweet Potato Pecan Rice Pilaf

½ cup extra virgin olive oil
 2 mirlitons, peeled and diced
 1 large sweet potato, peeled and diced
 1 red onion, diced
 4 cloves garlic, crushed
 Zest of 1 lemon, lime, and orange
 2 cups Louisiana pecan rice
 4 cups chicken or vegetable stock
 ½ cup chopped flat leaf parsley
 Salt and red pepper flakes

Sauté mirliton, sweet potato, onion, and garlic in oil over medium heat for about five minutes. Add citrus zest and rice and sauté for about five more minutes, stirring constantly. Add stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer. Cover and cook for 20 minutes without stirring or removing lid. Turn off heat, uncover, stir in parsley, salt and pepper. Let stand for five minutes and adjust seasoning, if necessary.

Mirliton, known in other countries as chayote squash, can be used in stuffings, breads, soups, or casseroles. Mirliton does not need to be peeled and can also be eaten raw, in salads, or pickled. Here I combine it with sweet potatoes, pecan rice, and citrus to make a flavorful rice pilaf. Pecan rice is actually a variety of long grain rice grown in Louisiana and is so named for its nutty flavor.



Food Pairing

Serve with Jamaican Jerk Rabbit or any other roasted meat dish.

Beverage Pairing

Pinot Blanc

Mirliton green, edible squash plant also known as a chayote, grown in Louisiana.

Pilaf a rice or grain, generally browned in oil then cooked in a seasoned broth.



Okra and Corn Stew with Shrimp and Polenta

- 4 ears corn
- 6 cups shrimp or chicken broth
- 1/2 pound large shrimp
- 3 large garlic cloves, mashed
- 4 medium onions, diced
- 1 fresh poblano chile, diced
- 2 tablespoons corn or other vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 3/4 pound andouille sausage, sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 1 pound okra, trimmed and sliced 1/2 inch thick
- 4 plum tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced

Roast the corn in the husks in a 400°F oven for 15 minutes. Let cool, remove husks, and cut off kernels. Scrape cob with back of knife to remove any liquid left in the cob. Sauté onion, garlic, and poblanos in oil until softened. Add

A few years ago, I had the pleasure of working with two ladies from Barbados who were here to learn about Cajun food. While teaching them, I took this as a great opportunity for me to learn about their cuisine as well. This is one of the dishes they showed me, and besides tasting good, it was a great example of their influence on our cuisine. The dish is called "cou cou" which contains okra, corn, shrimp, and polenta and it makes for a hearty meal.



andouille, okra, and tomatoes and cook an additional five minutes. Add broth and bring to a simmer. Add corn and cornmeal and cook, stirring constantly until cornmeal is cooked, about 20 minutes. Add shrimp and cook until barely done, two to three minutes. Stir in scallions and season with salt and pepper. Serve warm.

Beverage Pairing
Gewürztraminer

Polenta a dish made from boiled cornmeal, similar to grits.

Poblano chile a dark-green, mild or slightly pungent chili pepper.

Scallions green onions.

Oyster Mushroom, Leek, and Fontina Quiche

crust

- 1 ½ cups all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ cup (1 stick) chilled unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon cold water

filling

- 1 ½ tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ cup sliced leeks
- ½ pound oyster mushrooms—very roughly chopped
- 5 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme, divided
- ¾ cup whipping cream
- 2 large eggs
- Pinch of salt
- Pinch of ground black pepper
- 2 green onions (white and pale green parts only), thinly sliced
- ½ cup shredded Fontina cheese

Blend flour, salt, and sugar in food processor; add butter. Pulsate until coarse meal forms. Whisk one egg and one teaspoon cold water in small bowl; add to flour mixture. Pulsate just until moist

One doesn't often associate mushrooms with being indigenous to the area, but they do grow wild here. One of my favorite varieties, the oyster mushroom, grows wild at the base of willow trees. However, only very experienced people should pick wild mushrooms because some types are highly poisonous! On a safer note, there are some local farmers who are cultivating them and are producing beautiful oyster mushrooms. Quiche, a wonderful French egg-based tart, can be flavored with an endless combination of ingredients. In this case, I use local oyster mushrooms, leeks, and fontina cheese to produce what could be a great appetizer or even a light lunch.

Fontina Cheese mild, somewhat nutty flavored, while rich, herbaceous and fruity. It melts well. It can be substituted with: Gruyère, Emmental, Beaufort, Taleggio, Edam, or Gouda.

Leek a bulb plant similar to the onion.

clumps form. Transfer to work surface and knead gently until dough comes together, about four turns. Form into ball; flatten into disk. Wrap in plastic and chill one hour. Butter 9 ½-inch round fluted tart pan with removable bottom. Roll out dough on lightly floured surface to 12-inch round. Transfer dough to pan, pressing onto bottom and up sides of pan; trim any excess dough. Chill one hour. Preheat oven to 400°F. Butter a large square of foil and press, butter side down, onto crust. Fill with pie weights or dried beans. Bake 20 minutes. Remove foil and weights. Using a fork, pierce bottom of crust all over (about ten times). Bake until golden, about ten minutes. Let stand at room temperature.

to prepare filling

Melt butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add leeks and sauté until soft, about two minutes. Add mushrooms; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Increase heat to high and sauté until liquid is absorbed and mushrooms are tender, about eight minutes. Sprinkle with 2 ½ teaspoons thyme and cook one minute. Transfer mixture to plate. Cool mushrooms completely. Preheat oven to 350°F. Place cooled crust in pan on baking sheet. Sprinkle with remaining 2 ½ teaspoons thyme. Drain mushrooms, if needed. Scatter mushrooms over thyme. Whisk cream, eggs, salt, and pepper in medium bowl. Pour egg mixture over mushrooms. Sprinkle with green onions and cheese. Bake quiche until custard is set, about 25 minutes. Cool 15 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.



Panzanella Salad

6 tomatoes, cut into bite-sized chunks
1 red or sweet onion, thinly sliced
2 cucumbers, halved lengthwise and sliced
A generous handful of fresh basil leaves, torn into pieces
1 pound of 2 or 3-day-old coarse country bread
About $\frac{2}{3}$ cup extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
4 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, diced
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Cut bread into one-inch chunks; toss with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of olive oil, salt and pepper. Place on greased pan and bake at 400°F, or until crunchy and slightly dry. Set aside to cool.

Combine bread and all other ingredients in a large bowl and toss well. Adjust seasoning with more oil, vinegar, salt and pepper, if necessary. There should be enough olive oil to moisten the bread and coat the other items. Serve at room temperature.

Nothing exemplifies the value of growing your own vegetables better than home grown tomatoes. Sure, supermarkets carry “hydroponic” or “vine-ripened” varieties, but these still cannot beat the home grown versions. When perfectly ripe, they need little or no adornment except maybe a little good olive oil and salt. Sure, they may make a great sauce, but I just can’t bring myself to cook them. I’ll either eat them plain (sometimes right off the vine) or in this simple salad I had when I was in Italy. The other fresh ingredients complement the natural flavor of the tomatoes without masking it.

In Louisiana, the Creole tomato reigns supreme, but the Louisiana soil and climate provide great growing conditions for almost all varieties. In our restaurant gardens, we grow over a dozen varieties including White Wonder, Black Krim, Caspian Pink, Tangerine, Fuzzy Peach, and Green Zebra. Though different in size, color, and shape, they all basically taste like “tomatoes” except for subtle differences in flavor and acidity. Try some of these in your garden and see which ones you like best.

Beverage Pairing
Pinot Gris

Panzanella a salad made with bread that originates in Italy. It is traditionally eaten in the summer months.



Papaya Scallion Salsa

There is often a bit of confusion when referring to green onions in South Louisiana. I grew up thinking that the word shallot meant green onion (which it is most often called). But in fact, shallots are small, purplish, onion-shaped vegetables often used in French cooking (and mine as well). The long, pencil-sized green onions so often used in Cajun cooking are actually scallions. Nevertheless, they are wonderful and have many uses in all cuisines. In the South, the white parts are usually added at the beginning of cooking and the green at the very end. In this case, I thinly slice the entire onion and use it raw in a salsa that is great on grilled fish, shrimp, pork, chicken, or anywhere else you see fit.

1 bunch scallions sliced as thinly as possible on a bias
 1 cup ripe papaya – cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice
 1 avocado, diced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup toasted almonds
 Juice of 1 lime
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup canola oil
 Salt and red pepper flakes

Mix all ingredients well in bowl, taking care not to smash the avocado. Season to taste with salt and red pepper flakes.



Chef's Note

Only a **very ripe** papaya will work for this, as under-ripe ones have almost no flavor. I greatly prefer the larger, orange fleshed varieties. They should be slightly soft, and the skin almost completely yellow. Also, as with almost all fruits, when in doubt, trust your nose.

Beverage Pairing Gewürztraminer

Scallion Commonly known as green onions or spring onions, scallions are milder tasting than other onions.



Peach Ice Cream

1½ pounds ripe peaches (about 4 large peaches)
½ cup water
¾ cup sugar
½ cup sour cream
1 cup heavy cream
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
A few drops freshly squeezed lemon juice

Peel the peaches. A sharp, swivel blade peeler is helpful if you like to use one. Slice peaches in half, and remove the pits. Cut the peaches into chunks and cook with the water over medium heat until barely soft, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in the sugar, and cool to room temperature. Puree the cooked peaches and any liquid in a food processor with the sour cream, heavy cream, vanilla, and lemon juice until almost smooth but slightly chunky. Chill the mixture thoroughly in the refrigerator or in an ice bath; freeze in your ice cream maker according to manufacturer's instructions. Make sure the mixture is completely cold before churning, or it might not freeze. Makes about one quart.

The Fourth of July celebrates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, proclaiming our independence from Great Britain. The primary author, Thomas Jefferson, was also a noted gourmand and responsible for introducing many new foods to America. He encouraged people to try new vegetables, spices, and seafood and was also one of the first to serve one of today's most popular confections — ice cream.

One of my earliest food memories is sitting on my grandmother's porch in the summertime hand cranking vanilla ice cream. My brother and I would take turns churning the handle eagerly awaiting the finished product, often eating it right out of the machine when it was done. Fortunately, it's now much faster and easier to make ice cream at home due to improved technology and a variety of machines. The type I most recommend has a canister with a liquid coolant in the walls of the cylinder. You simply freeze the canister for the specified time (this can vary according to the model), fill with chilled ice cream base, and turn on the machine. Approximately 20-30 minutes later, you're done!

The possible flavor combinations for ice cream are endless, with some "avant garde" chefs using herbs, vegetables, and even bacon in their bases. As a chef, I am all about trying new ideas, but when it comes to certain things, I am a bit of a purist and believe that a line should be drawn and some things just shouldn't be tampered with. I mean, bacon ice cream, really! I'll stick to chocolate, vanilla, nuts or some fresh fruit. During peach season, there is nothing I would rather put in my homemade ice cream than Louisiana Ruston peaches. We are fortunate to have access to this sweet, delicious fruit and should take full advantage of it.

Chef's Note

You can purchase a canister ice cream machine at any store that carries household appliances for about \$50 to \$60.

It is very important to use fruit that is completely ripe. Cooking may soften fruit, but it will not improve sweetness or overall flavor.



Pecan and Banana Egg Rolls

4 egg roll wrappers
 3 bananas sliced
 ½ cup bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
 ½ cup pecans, finely chopped

Sautéed Bananas

3 bananas
 ½ cup pecans, roughly chopped
 ½ cup granulated sugar
 1 ounce butter
 1 ounce heavy cream
 1 tablespoon dark rum

Cut the bananas into ¼ inch thick slices. Heat the sugar and ¼ cup water over medium-high heat, stirring until caramel in color. Add the butter, cream, rum, pecans, and three bananas and cook for two minutes. Transfer to a cool container and allow to cool.

Arrange alternating fresh and sautéed banana slices along middle of egg roll wrapper, being sure to evenly distribute the caramel and pecans. Evenly distribute the chopped chocolate on top of this. Roll up egg roll by first folding sides in then rolling up the whole thing away from you. Seal with a paste made from flour and water and brush

These pecan and banana egg rolls will beat the pineapple delights at the Chinese buffet any day of the week!



Beverage Pairing
 Sparkling Wine

Egg roll wrapper a thin, wheat-based wrapper, usually about 6" x 6" square, similar to a spring roll wrapper, which is usually rice-based.

paste all over egg roll. Roll in finely chopped pecans and fry at 350°F until golden brown. Serve with ice cream of your choice.



Quick Greens with Merguez or Andouille Sausage and Cous-Cous

2 pounds greens of your choice, stemmed and washed thoroughly
 1½ pounds merguez sausage or andouille links
 ½ cup water
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 cup chopped onion
 ¼ teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
 6 garlic cloves, minced
 ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
 ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
 ½ cup dried currants
 ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
 ½ cup chopped fresh mint
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
 10 ounces plain couscous, cooked according to package directions.

Bring a large pot of salted water to boil, add collard greens and boil until soft, about two minutes. Drain, reserving one cup cooking liquid. Cool greens slightly and cut into 1-inch strips. Place sausage and ½ cup water in heavy large

Greens are the quintessential poor man's food, first used in America by African slaves who had little else to eat. We're all familiar with the basics—mustards, collards, turnips, but there are many other types of greens which can be eaten. Some of these include beet tops, carrot tops, kale, and dandelion greens. In this recipe, you may use any or a combination of greens in which they are cooked quickly with Merguez (a North African Sausage) or andouille and cous-cous (a small pasta-like grain).

skillet. Cook over medium heat until water evaporates and sausage starts to brown, about 12 minutes. Continue cooking until sausage is cooked through, 12 to 15 minutes longer, depending on size of links. Meanwhile, heat oil in another heavy large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until translucent, about five minutes. Add dried crushed red pepper and next three ingredients. Stir for one minute. Add greens and cook five minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in currants. Add reserved one cup cooking liquid to skillet; bring to a simmer. Partially cover pan and cook until liquid has reduced slightly, about five minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir cilantro and butter into hot cous-cous; divide among plates. Top with greens and sausages.

Chef's Note

Andouille can be used as a local substitute for Merguez sausage.

Cilantro an aromatic annual Eurasian herb in the parsley family, having parsley-like leaves and clusters of tiny white to pinkish flowers, used as a flavoring or garnish.

Cous-cous spherical granules made by rolling and shaping moistened semolina wheat then coating them with finely ground wheat flour. The finished grains are about one millimeter in diameter before cooking.

Currants a small seedless raisin of the Mediterranean region.

Cumin a small plant of the parsley family, bearing aromatic, seedlike fruit, used ground as a spice.

Merguez a North African sausage available at specialty markets.

Roasted Red Bell Pepper and Fennel Salad with Chimichurri Dressing

2 large red bell peppers
2 large yellow bell peppers
1 medium fennel bulb, trimmed, thinly sliced, fronds chopped and reserved
6 cups mixed baby greens
¼ cup halved, pitted Kalamata olives
Parmesan cheese shavings

Char bell peppers over open flame or in broiler until blackened on all sides. Enclose peppers in paper bag 10 minutes. Peel and seed peppers, then cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ inch-wide strips. Toss sliced fennel bulb with half of dressing in medium bowl. Toss peppers with remaining dressing in another medium bowl. Divide greens among four plates. Arrange fennel and red peppers on the greens and sprinkle with reserved fennel fronds, olives, and Parmesan shavings. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and serve.

Chimichurri is an Argentinian sauce, often served with grilled meat. It is told that the unusual name comes from "Jimmy McCurry", an Irishman who is said to have first prepared the sauce. He was marching with the troops of General Belgrano in the 19th Century, sympathetic to the cause of Argentine independence. The sauce was popular and the recipe was passed on. However, "Jimmy McCurry" was difficult for the native people to say. Some sources claim Jimmy's sauces' name was corrupted to "chimichurri", while others say it was changed in his honor.

Chimichurri Sauce

1 cup (packed) fresh Italian parsley
1 cup (packed) fresh cilantro
3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
2 garlic cloves, peeled
½ teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
⅔ cup plus ¼ cup olive oil

Combine all in blender and puree until smooth.



Cilantro an aromatic annual Eurasian herb in the parsley family, having parsley-like leaves and clusters of tiny white to pinkish flowers, used as a flavoring or garnish.

Fennel a highly aromatic herb from the Mediterranean region. The bulb, foliage, and seeds of the fennel plant are all used in culinary practices worldwide.

Kalamata olive an edible variety of olive from Southern Greece with a meaty texture and fruity flavor.



Shrimp Stuffed Tomatoes

6 large tomatoes
 2 pounds shrimp, peeled
 ¼ cup red onion, minced
 6 cloves garlic, minced
 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, minced
 1 tablespoon flat-leaf parsley, minced
 ¼ cup zucchini, cut in ¼ inch cubes
 ½ cup grated parmesan cheese
 ¼ cup olive oil
 Juice of one lemon
 Salt and red pepper flakes

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut a ¼ inch slice from the smooth end of each tomato, saving the slices, and use a spoon to scoop out all of the insides, leaving a wall about ¼ inch thick. With the stem end up, the tomatoes should sit flat in the pan. If any do not, shave off a small piece of the tomato to make it level. Discard the woody core and seeds, and chop the remaining pulp and the shrimp together until they are approximately in ¼ inch pieces. Toss this mixture with the remaining ingredients and season to taste with salt and pepper. Season inside of tomatoes with salt and pepper and stuff with shrimp mixture. Cover with reserved tomato slices. This will help to keep the stuffing moist during baking. Lightly oil a shallow roasting pan that can fit all the tomatoes without touching each other. Place tomatoes in pan, drizzle with

Stuffed bell peppers, eggplant, and zucchini are very common, but most people don't think about tomatoes. The combination of the flavorful roasted tomato, the filling, and the pan juices produced when cooling makes a delicious appetizer, lunch, or even a light dinner. Obviously you can stuff them with whatever you like, but this combination of shrimp, herbs, and summer squash is light, flavorful, healthy, and not "breadly" like many other stuffings.



olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Place pan in oven and roast for 30-40 minutes, until tomatoes are slightly shriveled and stuffing is hot. Serve hot, room temperature, or chilled.

Beverage Pairing
Malbec

Chef's Note

You can use any size shrimp because they will be chopped.

A meat thermometer would be the easiest way to tell when the tomatoes are done. Because you are using shrimp, the stuffing should reach 165°F.

Thyme an herb often used to flavor meats, soups and stews. It has a particular affinity to and is often used as a primary flavor with lamb, tomatoes and eggs and is a good iron source.

Stuffed Zucchini Blossoms

2 cups small cherry tomatoes (1 pound, preferably Sungold), halved lengthwise
 2 teaspoons olive oil
 3 ounces mild fresh goat cheese (6 tablespoons) at room temperature
 1 tablespoon heavy cream
 ¼ cup chopped fresh basil (preferably Thai)
 ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
 ⅛ teaspoon black pepper
 12 male squash blossoms with stems (not with baby zucchini), stems trimmed to one inch

tempura batter and frying

6 cups vegetable oil (preferably canola or grapeseed)
 1 cup all-purpose flour
 ½ teaspoon kosher salt
 1 cup chilled sparkling water

Preheat oven to 350°F. Toss tomatoes with oil and arrange, cut sides up, in one layer in a shallow (one-inch deep) baking pan. Bake in middle of oven until slightly shriveled but not completely dried or browned, about 1¼ hours. Transfer pan to a rack to cool. Stir together goat cheese, cream, basil, salt, and pepper in a bowl and fold in half of

Many people grow zucchini and yellow squash in this area, but they don't realize that the flowers are also edible. You see, the female flowers get pollinated, and go on to form the actual squash that we eat. The male flowers only provide their "seed," and they eventually shrivel up and die (no jokes please!). Instead of just wasting these delicious male flowers, many cultures steam them or stuff them and fry them or both.

oven-dried tomatoes. Spoon one rounded tablespoon of this filling into each blossom and twist ends of petals gently to close. Chill, covered, until ready to fry.

to prepare tempura batter and fry blossoms

Heat two inches of oil in a 3-quart saucepan to 350°F on a thermometer. Set a bowl in a larger bowl of ice and cold water, then whisk together flour and salt in smaller bowl. Then whisk in sparkling water until combined well. Working in batches of three, coat blossoms in batter, lifting each out by its stem and letting excess drip off, then fry, turning, until batter is crisp (it will not brown), 1 to 1½ minutes. Transfer blossoms when fried with a slotted spoon to paper towels, drain, then season with salt.

photo by Marian Martinez

Beverage Pairing Pinot Grigio

How to tell the zucchini male flower from a female flower?

The female flower is a golden blossom on the end of each baby zucchini. The male flower grows directly on the stem of the zucchini plant in the leaf axils (where leaf petiole meets stem) on a long stalk and is slightly smaller than the female. Both flowers are edible.



Sweet Potato and Chipotle Chile Bisque with Queso Fresco

2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
2 tablespoons sweet butter
1 medium red onion, diced
1 carrot, peeled and diced
1 celery stalk, diced
6 cloves garlic, minced
2 fresh sage leaves, minced
2 canned chipotles in adobo, minced
1 quart well-seasoned chicken stock
Freshly grated nutmeg
½ cup heavy cream
Salt and freshly cracked black pepper
to taste
Queso Fresco for crumbling

Melt the butter in a pot over medium heat and add the onion, carrot, celery, garlic, and sage. Cook for five minutes, or until softened. Add the sweet potatoes and chiles, cover, and sweat for five minutes. Pour in the chicken stock and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 40 to 45 minutes, until the vegetables are falling apart. Puree with a handheld blender until smooth. (You may also use a regular blender but be very careful

Sweet potatoes can be found in farmers' markets and roadside stands year round. They are most often used in sweet applications, such as pies, cakes, or in casseroles topped with marshmallows and nuts. However, they are just as versatile as regular potatoes and can be used interchangeably in almost any case. Also, because people are becoming more health conscious, the sweet potato is beginning to be the preferred choice. They contain fiber, complex carbohydrates, protein, vitamins A and C, iron, and calcium.

This easy soup showcases the sweet potato at its best, highlighting it with sweet, spicy, and savory flavors. Chipotles are smoked jalapenos and can be found canned in adobo sauce in Latin sections of supermarkets. Queso fresco, meaning "fresh cheese" is a soft, tangy, crumbly cheese also found in Latin markets.

when pureeing hot liquids! Only fill the blender about half at a time and remove the center of the lid to let steam escape!) Season to taste with nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Pour into serving bowls and garnish with crumbled cheese and fresh sage leaves.

Beverage Pairing
Chardonnay
or Riesling

Chef's Note

Sweet potatoes are commonly called "yams" but chances are most of us have never seen a true yam in person. Yams grow in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania and are commonly between six and twelve pounds, sometimes getting as large as 2.5 meters long and up to 150 pounds!

Adobo a Philippine spicy marinade.

Chipotles smoked, dried jalapenos.

Queso Fresco a soft, tangy, crumbly cheese found in Latin markets and some large supermarkets.

Thistle and Cucumber-Yogurt Raita

- 1 unpeeled cucumber, seeded and grated**
- 1 young thistle (about 2 feet long)**
- 2 scallions, finely chopped**
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed**
- ½ tablespoon grated fresh ginger root**
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh mint**
- 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice**
- 2 cups Greek style whole milk yogurt**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon tahini**
- Salt and black pepper**

Wash the thistle stem well and remove any stringy fibers with a vegetable peeler. Grate through the large holes on a box grater. Combine with other ingredients and season with salt and pepper. Serve with warm pita bread.

photo by Marian Martinez

Thistles grow wild in fields and along roadsides all over Louisiana. Like most things, they have a small window of ripeness before they grow too large and get tough and stringy. So I try to eat them as much as I can while they are available. Most people eat them only with vinegar and salt, but here I incorporate them into a classic Greek dip that makes a great appetizer served with pita bread.



Chef's Note

Greek yogurt is tangier than the American version, but if not available, you may substitute one cup yogurt and one cup sour cream.

Beverage Pairing

Pinot Gris or
Pinot Noir

Cumin a critical ingredient in chili powder, a small plant of the parsley family, bearing aromatic, seedlike fruit.

Ginger root edible stem, or rhizome of a ginger plant.

Raita a condiment, sauce, or dip based on yogurt.

Scallions green onions.

Tahini sesame paste made from ground sesame seeds. It can be found in specialty markets as well as some large supermarkets.



Watermelon, Cucumber, and Jicama Salsa

- 1 cup watermelon, seeded and diced
- 1/2 cup cucumber, seeded and diced
- 1/2 cup jicama, peeled and diced
- 1/4 cup red onion, minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh mint, finely chopped
- Juice of 1/2 lime

Toss all ingredients together in bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper.



There's no better refreshment in the summertime than juicy, sweet watermelon. While it seems like a shame to do anything with it but eat it plain, I sometimes make this quick and easy salsa, which goes especially well with shrimp, scallops, and fish. Jicama is a root from Mexico and Central America with a crisp texture and flavor reminiscent of potatoes, apples, and pears.



Beverage Pairing
Gewürztraminer

Food Pairing

Serve with shrimp, scallops, or fish.

Jicama a large, edible, tuberous root of a tropical American plant of the legume family, eaten as a vegetable either raw or boiled.

White Bean and Chorizo Soup

1 pound dried white beans (generous 2 cups)
8 cups water
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
3 garlic cloves—1 smashed, 2 chopped
1 large fresh rosemary sprig
1 bay leaf
1 large onion, coarsely chopped (about 2 cups)
1 large carrot, coarsely chopped (about 1 cup)
1 large celery stalk, coarsely chopped (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons finely chopped fresh thyme, divided
4 cups (or more) low-salt chicken broth
1 pound fresh chorizo link sausages, casings removed
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup whipping cream

Place beans in heavy large saucepan. Add enough water to pan to cover beans by 4 inches. Let beans soak overnight at room temperature. Drain and rinse beans. Return to same saucepan. Add 8 cups water, 1 tablespoon oil, smashed garlic clove, rosemary, and bay leaf. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, partially cover, and simmer until beans are just tender, 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Season to taste with salt. (Can be prepared 2 days

On a cold night, a hot bowl of this soup will serve you well with a hunk of crusty French bread.

ahead. Cool slightly, cover, and chill.) Drain beans, reserving cooking liquid. Discard rosemary sprig and bay leaf. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in heavy large pot over medium heat. Add onion, carrot, and celery. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Sauté until vegetables are beginning to soften, about ten minutes. Add chopped garlic and one teaspoon thyme. Sauté for two minutes. Add 2 cups reserved bean cooking liquid, 4 cups chicken broth, and beans. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium and simmer uncovered until vegetables are tender, about 25 minutes. Cool soup for ten minutes. Meanwhile, sauté chorizo in heavy large skillet over medium-high heat until cooked through, breaking up lumps with back of spoon, about five minutes. Transfer sausage to paper towels to drain. Using slotted spoon, remove $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups bean mixture from soup; reserve. Working in batches, puree remaining soup in blender until smooth. Return puree to pot. Stir in reserved whole-bean mixture, remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons thyme, chorizo, and cream. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Chill uncovered until cold. Cover and keep chilled.) Rewarm soup over medium heat, thinning with more broth, if desired. Season with salt and pepper. Divide soup among bowls and serve.

Beverage Pairing
Malbec

Chorizo a term encompassing several types of pork sausage originating from the Iberian Peninsula. Spanish chorizo is made from coarsely chopped fatty pork and usually seasoned with chili, paprika, and garlic. The mild Spanish paprika used gives this sausage its characteristic flavour. The Chorizo itself can be found as either picante (hot) or dulce (sweet). Only the spicy variety incorporates chiles guindillas secas (small dried hot chiles).



Sea



Bowfin (Choupic) Caviar with Potato, Carrot, and Scallion Pancakes and Crème Fraiche

4 ounces bowfin (choupic) caviar
 1 pound starchy potatoes (preferably Yukon Gold), peeled and shredded
 2 large carrots, peeled and shredded
 4 scallions, sliced thin
 4 cloves garlic, minced
 juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon
 1 egg, beaten
 Salt and red pepper flakes to taste
 Olive oil
 4 ounces crème fraiche or sour cream

Combine the potatoes, carrots, garlic, lemon juice, and egg in a bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper. In a large skillet, heat the oil until almost smoking. Form the potato mixture into pancakes about $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches in diameter, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. Cook the cakes for about two minutes per side, or until golden brown. Top each cake with about one teaspoon of crème fraiche and a dollop of caviar.

No one thinks of choupic, or bowfin, as being a very good fish (even though when ultra-fresh, it is great fried). However, in recent years, the eggs, or roe, has become highly prized as caviar. Though not as highly esteemed as Beluga or Osetra, it is still quite good and costs a mere fraction of the price. These little "pancakes" topped with crème fraiche and bowfin caviar make a very elegant appetizer and are easy to make.

Beverage Pairing
Sparkling Wine

Crème fraiche a heavy cream slightly soured with bacterial culture, but not as sour or as thick as sour cream. It can be made at home by adding a small amount of cultured buttermilk or sour cream to normal heavy cream and allowing to stand for several hours at room temperature until the bacterial cultures act on the cream.



Chickpea Beer Battered Shrimp

36 (16-20 count) head-on shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails on
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup red onion, diced
1 tablespoon garlic, minced
2 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon tahini (sesame seed paste)
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons black pepper
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
2 eggs
2 ounces olive oil
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups beer (preferably Abita Amber)
2 cups all-purpose flour
Hot Sauce to taste

the batter Place the chickpeas, onion, garlic, cumin, tahini, salt, pepper, eggs, and olive oil in a food processor and puree until smooth. Add the beer and process to combine. Add the flour gradually until a batter is formed with about the consistency of cake batter (you may need more or less flour depending on the circumstances). Season to taste with salt, pepper and hot sauce. Keep in mind that the batter is still “raw” and will not taste the same as when you cook it, so you may want to “test fry” one or two shrimp to make sure it is to your liking.

In a pot or fryer, heat vegetable oil to about 360 degrees. Holding the shrimp by the tail, dip into the batter and carefully drop into the fryer one at a

Even though I love to find new ways to cook things, I can still appreciate good old fried shrimp. However, this doesn't mean you still can't take it to another level.

When Dr. Robert Harrington was the Dean of the Culinary Institute at Nicholl's State University, he gave me a recipe for black-eyed pea battered shrimp. It may sound strange, but the batter provided an interesting texture and flavor not often found in fried food. Here, I've modified it even more to create a Greek-style dish that goes great with the thistle and cucumber raita found in the garden section.



time. Be sure not to overcrowd the fryer because the shrimp may stick together. Also it is very important to move the shrimp around during the first couple of minutes to avoid sticking. Fry until golden brown and serve with the raita.

Food Pairing

Thistle and Cucumber Raita

Beverage Pairing

Cold Louisiana Beer or Sparkling Wine



Coconut-Curry Crabcakes

1 pound backfin crabmeat, picked through for shells
1 pound claw crabmeat, picked through for shells
½ medium red onion, diced
4 scallions, sliced thin
6 cloves garlic, minced
One inch piece fresh ginger root, minced
½ cup canola oil
1 tablespoon red curry paste
6 ounces unsweetened coconut milk
2 tablespoons oyster sauce
2 tablespoons Thai chile sauce
Dry unflavored bread crumbs
Salt and black pepper to taste

Melon Puree

1 honeydew melon, peeled and seeded
juice of ½ lime
2 tablespoons fresh mint

Sauté the onion, scallions, garlic and ginger in the canola oil over medium-high heat for about five minutes, or until translucent. Add the curry powder and cook for another minute. Add the coconut milk and remove from the heat. Allow to

I have eaten the famous Dungeness crabs from the West coast, Alaskan king crabs, snow crabs, and several other types, but none compare to our Louisiana blue crabs. I find their sweetness and flavor to be unparalleled, and I am always looking for new ways to use them.

Perhaps the most popular way to use crabmeat is in crabcakes. They appear on most menus in our area, but are all prepared in relatively the same way. When I decided to put them on my menu, I wanted to give them a different twist while still preserving the natural crab flavor. Thai food is becoming increasingly popular for its bold flavors and spiciness, much like our own cuisine, so I thought it would make a great crabcake. The honeydew melon puree adds a touch of sweetness and helps to balance out the heat.

cool. Add the crabmeat along with the oyster sauce, chile sauce, and eggs. Mix well. Add the breadcrumbs, a little at a time, until the mixture just holds together (If you add too much the cakes will be dry and “breadly.”) Season to taste with salt and pepper and form into 3-inch by one-inch patties. Dip first in flour, then in beaten egg, then in bread crumbs. From this point they may either be deep fried or sautéed, which is how I prefer them.

For the honeydew puree, place all ingredients in blender or food processor and puree until smooth. Spoon a little of the puree onto a plate and top with a crabcake, or serve the puree on the side for dipping.

Beverage Pairing
Gewürztraminer or
Pinot Gris



photo by Marian Martinez



Crab and Goat Cheese “Beggar’s Purse” with Tomato-Caper Chutney

Chutney

6 roma tomatoes, diced
2 shallots, peeled and minced
1 tablespoon capers
½ cup light brown sugar
½ cup red wine vinegar
¼ cup whole butter
Salt and red pepper flakes to taste

Beggar’s Purse

1 pack phyllo dough, thawed
½ pound butter, melted
½ pound backfin crabmeat, picked
through for shells
One 11-ounce log goat cheese
2 ounces canned artichoke hearts, drained
and roughly chopped
1 cup fresh spinach, thinly sliced
Zest of one lemon
¼ cup olive oil
Salt and red pepper flakes to taste

This dish is referred to as a “beggar’s purse” because of its shape, which resembles a hobo pack. Phyllo dough filled with crab, goat cheese, spinach, and artichokes makes a “pouch” that is packed with flavor. Chutneys can be made with a variety of ingredients, but usually always contain sweet and sour elements, and this one is a perfect contrast to the rich filling in the beggar’s purse. Phyllo dough is a paper thin dough which can be found in the frozen section of most grocery stores (usually by the pie crusts). When using it, cover the portion not being used with a clean, slightly damp kitchen towel because it can dry out easily.



photo by Marian Martinez

to prepare the chutney

Place all ingredients in a saucepot over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 15 minutes or until tomatoes are broken down and mixture is thick. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

to prepare the beggar’s purse

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Place the goat cheese in the bowl of a mixer equipped with a paddle attachment along with the artichokes, spinach, lemon zest, and olive oil. Mix until thoroughly combined. Carefully fold in the crab so as not to break it up too much. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Unroll the phyllo dough and cut the entire pack into four equal sized squares. Take one of the squares and brush with melted butter. Top with another piece and continue until you have four layers of dough with butter between each one and butter on the top piece. Place about ½ cup of the crab mixture in the center of the dough and bring the four corners up together, forming a “hobo pack.” Press the dough together near the top of the filling to seal. Place the beggar’s purses on a well-greased baking pan and bake for about 12 to 15 minutes or until golden brown. Serve with the chutney.



Crawfish Pad Thai

Sauce 1

3 tablespoons lime juice
 3 tablespoons tamarind paste
 ½ teaspoon paprika
 ½ cup sugar
 1 teaspoon salt

to prepare Sauce 1

In a small saucepan, combine all the ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce slightly and set aside to cool. Reserve.

Sauce 2

3 tablespoons fish sauce
 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
 1 tablespoon water
 1 tablespoon sugar
 2 teaspoons minced garlic
 2 teaspoons minced Thai green chiles
 1 teaspoon minced cilantro leaves

to prepare Sauce 2

In a small non-reactive bowl, combine all the ingredients and stir until well blended. Reserve.

There are almost 600 species of crawfish worldwide, with more than half occurring in North America, mostly in Louisiana and Kentucky. They are also being farm-raised in Louisiana, California, and China. Most of us don't think that crawfish are used very much in other areas, but the number one consumer of crawfish in the world is actually Sweden. Recently, there has been a variety of sources to buy it from, including China and Spain, but nothing can compare in quality to our local Louisiana crawfish. Here the red swamp crawfish reigns supreme, and we have a large variety of ways to prepare it.

Thai food is becoming increasingly popular in this country, so why not add some local flair and include crawfish in this most common of Thai dishes!

4 ounces rice noodles, linguini size
 1 quart cold water
 Oil, for deep-frying
 2 ounces firm tofu, cut into ½ inch dice
 2 tablespoons chopped roasted peanuts
 1 tablespoon butter
 1 ounce peanut oil
 ½ teaspoon minced lemongrass
 1 teaspoon chopped shallots
 1 teaspoon minced green chiles
 Juice of 1 lime
 1 teaspoon minced ginger
 1 pound crawfish tails
 ½ cup bean sprouts
 1 wedge lime
 Julienne green onions
 1 egg, beaten with 1 teaspoon milk plus salt to taste
 1 tablespoon chopped cilantro leaves, plus sprigs for garnish

Pad Thai a Thai dish of stir-fried rice noodles made with a variety of spices, meats, and vegetables.

Tamarind paste The fruit pulp of the tamarind tree. It is used as a tart spice in Thai cooking.

Soak the rice noodles in cold water until softened. (This can be done several hours ahead of time.) Strain and reserve until needed.

Heat oil in a medium saucepan. Deep-fry the diced tofu until crisp and golden. Drain on a paper towel and set aside to cool. Reserve. Add the peanuts and fry for 30 seconds. Remove and set aside with the tofu.

In a small skillet, heat 1 tablespoon butter. Cook the scrambled egg and milk mixture to a medium consistency. Season with salt. Place in a plate and allow to cool. Chop coarsely and set aside until needed.

In a wok, over high heat, add the peanut oil. When almost smoking, stir-fry the lemongrass, green chiles, shallots, ginger, cilantro, and crawfish for one minute. Add the softened noodles, half of the bean sprouts, fried tofu, scrambled eggs, Sauce 1, Sauce 2, and lime juice. Continue to stir-fry until noodles have flattened and blended with the sauce. Transfer Pad Thai to serving plate. Top with the remaining bean sprouts, cilantro, green onions, and chopped peanuts. Serve a wedge of lime on the side.



Crawfish Chiles Rellenos

6 poblano chiles
1 pound crawfish tails
½ medium red onion, diced
2 stalks celery, diced
1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
8 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup olive oil
½ cup heavy cream
Salt and red pepper flakes
3 ounces each queso fresco, mozzarella and Monterey Jack

Batter

1½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dredging
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon fine salt, plus more for sprinkling
1 12 oz. bottle or can beer (preferably Abita Amber)
Vegetable oil for deep frying

to prepare the chiles

Position a rack on the uppermost shelf of the broiler element and preheat. Put the chiles on a foil-lined broiler pan and broil, turning occasionally with tongs, until the skin is charred, about ten minutes. Transfer the chiles to a bowl, cover, and cool for ten minutes. Carefully rub the charred skin off the chiles.

Mexican food is one the most popular ethnic cuisines served in America, second only to Italian. One of the most popular dishes is chiles rellenos which means simply “stuffed chiles” and is commonly made with poblanos. This happens to be one of my favorite peppers because it has great flavor and just the right amount of heat. Here I’ve taken this dish and added crawfish to take it to the next level. The poblano puree from the corn timbale recipe is a perfect accompaniment.

Using a small knife, make a lengthwise slit along the side of each chile to form a pocket. Carefully cut out and discard the seeds.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, celery, bell pepper and garlic, and sauté for about five minutes. Add the crawfish and cook for about two more minutes. Add the heavy cream and cook until reduced, about two more minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper, allow to cool fully, and mix with the three cheeses. Stuff the chiles with the crawfish mixture, being careful not to over stuff. “Sew” each chile shut with a wooden skewer or long toothpick. (The skewers should be longer than the chiles, so they can be easily pulled out after frying.) Whisk the flour, baking powder, cumin, and salt in a large bowl. Stir in the beer to make a smooth batter.

In a large pot or fryer, heat the oil to about 360 degrees. Put the flour for dredging on a plate. Working in two batches, dredge the chiles in the flour (the dampness of the chiles creates a light paste with the flour that seals over any tears), dip in the batter, and carefully add to the oil. Fry, turning the chiles once, until golden brown and crispy, about four minutes per batch. Using tongs, transfer the chiles rellenos to a dry paper towel-lined baking sheet to drain. Sprinkle with salt, to taste. Gently pull out and discard the skewers. Serve with the poblano puree.

Food Pairing

poblano puree

Beverage Pairing
 Cold Louisiana Beer or Shiraz/Syrah

Poblano a mild chile pepper, just slightly spicier than a bell pepper.



Roasted Whole Flounder with Spicy Tomato Sauce, Fennel, and Capers

2 whole flounders, about 1 pound each,
gutted and rinsed and dried thoroughly
1 large yellow onion, sliced very thin
½ cup olive oil
8 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups canned imported Italian plum
tomatoes, cut up, with the juice
2 tablespoons capers
1 head fresh fennel bulb, sliced very thin
2 teaspoons fresh oregano, chopped finely
Salt and red pepper flakes to taste

In a large sauté pan, heat the oil and cook the onion, garlic and fennel for about five minutes. Add the tomatoes and their juice with a few pinches of salt and pepper, and stir to coat well. Cook over low heat for about 15 minutes. Add the capers and oregano and remove from heat. In a “cook and serve” dish large enough to hold the fish in one layer, spread about ½ cup of the sauce (or enough to coat the bottom). Season the fish all over with salt and pepper and place in the dish. Pour the remaining sauce over the fish, cover with foil, and bake in a 400°F oven for about 30 minutes, or until fish is cooked

Flounder is a great fish, but because it is so delicate, it must be cooked with great care. It does not lend itself to grilling, and it takes a very experienced cook to sauté it without the flesh breaking up. This is a relatively quick and easy way to prepare it by roasting it whole in a spicy tomato sauce. This method leaves very little butchering of the fish itself and also minimizes the chance of overcooking it. I love to cook fish whole because I feel the bones lend flavor to the finished dish. Just look out for the bones when eating it!

through. Remove the fish to a plate. Some liquid from the fish will have thinned out the sauce, so put it in a large skillet and reduce back to a proper consistency. Check for seasoning, pour back over fish, and serve.

Beverage Pairing
Pinot Gris or
Pinot Noir

Fennel a highly aromatic and flavorful herb with culinary and medicinal uses and is one of the primary ingredients of absinthe.

Caper The salted and pickled caper bud is often used as a seasoning or garnish. Capers are a distinctive ingredient in Sicilian and southern Italian cooking, used in salads, pasta salads, pizzas, meat dishes and pasta sauces.



Fried Frog Legs with Garlic, Red Pepper, and Oregano

2 dozen frog legs, trimmed and rinsed
Salt and black pepper to taste
2 cups all purpose flour
½ cup cornstarch
1 tablespoon salt
2 eggs, beaten
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
¼ cup fresh oregano, finely chopped
Canola or vegetable oil for frying

In a large pot or fryer, heat oil to about 360°F. Mix together the flour, cornstarch and salt. Season the frog legs with salt and black pepper. Dredge the legs in flour, egg, and then flour again, shaking off the excess. Fry in batches for about 4 to 5 minutes, or until golden brown. In a large bowl, sprinkle the hot frog legs with the garlic, pepper flakes, olive oil, oregano, and salt, and toss well to coat evenly. Serve immediately.

Most people don't think about tossing fried foods with anything because they are scared it will make the food soggy. However, if you toss and serve it immediately, it can still retain its crispness (think about buffalo wings). I love doing this because it adds another dimension of flavor and eliminates the need for any other sauces or accompaniments. The combinations for this process can include butter-based sauces, Asian style, or your favorite hot sauce. I like to do it simply with olive oil, chile flakes, and fresh herbs. Just make sure your guests are ready to eat right away, or you could end up with a soggy mess. This is not a dish that will hold well, so make sure you have enough people to eat all of it!



Beverage Pairing
 Cold Louisiana Beer or
 Champagne



Frog Legs, Fricasseed

2 dozen frog legs, trimmed and rinsed
 1 cup all-purpose flour
 Salt and black pepper to taste
 ½ cup olive oil
 1 medium red onion, diced
 6 cloves garlic, minced
 1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
 4 Roma tomatoes, diced
 ½ cup sunchokes (or potatoes), peeled and
 diced ¼ inch
 ¼ cup pitted olives of your choice (I like
 kalamatas.)
 2 tablespoons capers
 ¼ cup toasted pine nuts
 ½ cup dry white wine
 1 cup chicken broth
 Salt and pepper to taste

Season frog legs with salt and pepper. Dredge in flour, shaking off the excess. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil until almost smoking. Sauté the frog legs in batches on both sides until golden brown and set aside. Add all of the remaining ingredients except wine and broth and sauté for 5 to 7 minutes. Deglaze with wine, add legs and stock, cover and turn the heat down to low.

Although frog legs are eaten widely in our area, many people don't realize how versatile they can be. They can often be cooked in the same fashion as other things, such as chicken, rabbit, or other game, but in a fraction of the time. This is a rustic Italian-style fricassee in which the ingredients can be interchanged according to your specific taste.

Cook for 5 to 7 more minutes, until the frog legs are cooked and the meat is starting to separate from the bone. Season to taste and serve as is with crusty bread or over rice or pasta.

Food Pairing

Serve with crusty French bread. Can be served over rice or pasta, if desired.

Beverage Pairing

Merlot, Shiraz/Syrah, or Chianti

Fricassee A fricassee typically uses poultry, but other types of white meat can be substituted. The meat is cut into pieces and stewed in a white gravy. Contemporarily, it often includes other ingredients (such as mushrooms, vegetables, etc.) sautéed and served in a dry vermouth cream sauce. A *Cajun* fricassee is any type of meat or seafood stewed in a gravy made with a dark cajun roux, usually the color of milk chocolate. As in most cajun dishes, it also contains onions, bell peppers, celery and garlic and is served over rice.



Fritto Misto di Frutta di Mare

“Mixed Fry of Fruits of the Sea”

1 pound fresh shrimp, peeled and deveined
1 dozen oysters
1 dozen frog legs
1 pound crawfish tails
1 pound stone crab claws, cooked and top section of shell removed
1 pound redfish fillets, cut into one inch wide strips
2 soft shell crabs
3 cups all purpose flour
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup olive oil
2 large egg whites
Salt and black pepper to taste

Sift the flour into a bowl and stir in 1 tablespoon salt and one teaspoon black pepper. Mix in the oil with a wooden spoon, then gradually add $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups tepid water, changing to a whisk when it begins to thin out. Continue whisking until the batter is smooth and thick. Whisk the egg whites until soft peaks form and carefully fold into the batter. In a large pot or fryer, heat vegetable or canola oil to about 360°F. Working a little at a time, dip the seafood in the batter and fry until golden brown. Serve with the lemon-poppy mayo.

We South Louisianans love our seafood platters, and this is my homage to that tradition. Fritto Misto di Frutta di Mare, which translates to “mixed fry of fruits of the sea” is dedicated to Louisiana because we definitely have many “fruits of the sea.” When traveling in Venice, Italy, I had a plethora of seafood, all fried in a light, crispy delicious batter served simply with fresh lemon, some of the things I had never seen or even heard of. I’ve adapted the recipe to include some of the precious things that our waters have to offer and added a fresh lemon-poppy mayonnaise to go with it.

Mayo

2 egg yolks
2 cups canola oil
Juice of 2 lemons
2 tablespoons poppy seeds
Salt and black pepper to taste

Place the egg yolks in a bowl and whisk until smooth. Add the oil in a steady stream, whisking constantly, adding lemon juice as needed to thin it out. Add remaining lemon juice, poppy seeds, and salt and pepper to taste.

Beverage Pairing
 Louisiana Beer, Chardonnay,
 Sauvignon Blanc



Lemonfish Ceviche

**1 lb fresh lemonfish loin, cut into
 ½ inch cubes**
1 cup freshly squeezed lime juice
½ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice
1 medium red onion, diced
2 medium ripe tomatoes, diced
2 to 3 serrano chiles, minced
⅓ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
2 tablespoons olive oil
¼ cup V-8 juice
1 large ripe avocado, diced
Salt and red pepper flakes to taste

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl, cover and refrigerate for two to four hours, tossing about every 30 minutes. I like to leave my ceviche sit for a little less time than most to preserve the texture of the fish. Serve cold in a martini glass with tortilla chips or crackers.

Lemonfish, also known as Cobia, is a wonderful, mild firm fish that is very versatile for grilling, sautéing, and other applications. It is in the same family as mahi-mahi but is much harder to come by due to the fact that they don't often travel in schools like mahi, and the fishing regulations are stricter. Ceviche is a classic dish in which seafood is "cooked" in a manner of speaking by the acids inherent in citrus fruits. Many people have their own opinions of the best fish to use for ceviche, some using snapper, drum, or even sheephead, but I like to use lemonfish because of its firm texture and great flavor. Try this recipe with the fish of your choice.



Beverage Pairing
Louisiana Beer

Ceviche an ancient and rather quintessential Pacific Islander food. Some food historians have theorized that ceviche may have originated in the Philippines and was brought to Mexico and Latin America some time during the historic 250-year Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade (from 1565 to 1815). Style varies from country to country, but all are citrus-based and include local spices.



Sesame Crusted Oysters with Spicy Thai Dipping Sauce

12 Louisiana oysters (preshucked or in the shell)
 2 tablespoons flour
 1 egg, beaten
 2 cups Panko
 ¼ cup white sesame seeds
 ¼ cup black sesame seeds
 Salt and pepper to taste

Thai sauce

3 tablespoons sugar
 3 tablespoons rice vinegar
 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
 1½ tablespoon fish sauce
 1½ tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
 ¼ medium red onion, diced
 1 tablespoon minced Serrano chile
 Pinch red pepper flakes
 ½ cup canola oil

In a large pot or fryer, heat vegetable or canola oil to about 360°F. Sprinkle the oysters with the flour and mix around. Add the egg and toss thoroughly. Mix the panko and sesame seeds together and coat the oysters one at a time. Fry the oysters until golden brown, about 2-3 minutes.

I have eaten oysters from all over the world and have had many excellent varieties, but I firmly believe that South Louisiana oysters can equal and even transcend any other type out there. My first choice is usually to eat them raw, but a good broiled or fried oyster is also hard to beat. Panko are Japanese bread crumbs that are dried and have a larger surface area than traditional bread crumbs. This results in an extra crispy texture when used to fry, and lets face it, crispiness is what good fried food is all about. Here the combination of the sesame and panko fried oysters and spicy sauce makes a great appetizer, or it can be incorporated into a salad to make a nice light lunch.

to prepare the sauce

Combine all ingredients in a food processor and puree until smooth. Let sit for at least 30 minutes to allow flavors to marry.



Beverage Pairing
 Sake, Sauvignon Blanc

Panko a variety of bread crumb from Japanese cuisine and French cuisine used to create a crunchy coating for fried foods such as tonkatsu. Panko is made from bread without crusts, thus it has a crisper, airier texture than most types of breading found in Western cuisine.

Sake a spirit made from rice, often referred to as "rice wine".



Oysters with Satsuma-Serrano Chile Citronette



1 cup satsuma juice
¼ cup lemon juice
4 cloves garlic
¼ cup red onion
1 serrano chile (or jalapeno) seeded
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper

Combine all ingredients in blender or food processor. Blend until smooth. Spoon over freshly shucked oysters.

The old wife's tale about oysters has been that you should only eat them during months that have the letter "r" in them or September through April. This may have been because during the spring and summer months, fresh water from the north comes down the Mississippi River into the estuaries, which decreases the saltiness of the oysters. Oysters, however, can be eaten year-round. Pasturized oysters are also now available, such as the "Gold Band" oysters from Motivatit Seafood.

In my opinion, a good salty oyster needs little or no adornment at all, except maybe some fresh squeezed lemon or hot sauce. This idea is to enhance the natural flavor of the oyster, not to mask it. This satsuma lemon recipe does just that.

Satsumas peak in the fall, and their acidity and sweetness are a perfect compliment to the oysters. A citronette is simply a vinaigrette in which the oil/acid ratio is different. This simple variation is an interesting twist on the usual lemon and hot sauce.



Chef's Note

Oysters produce pearls by covering foreign particles that make their way inside the shells with layers of "mother of pearl," the smooth, shiny, nacreous material that lines the inside of the shell. Most pearls come from tropical Pacific *Pinctada* oysters, not the edible U.S. species.

Beverage Pairing
 Sauvignon Blanc
 or Pinot Gris

Citronette: a vinaigrette with an unusual oil to acid ratio.

Serrano: a type of chili pepper that originated in the mountainous regions of the Mexican states of Puebla and Hidalgo. Unripe serranos are green, but the color at maturity varies. Common colors are red, brown, orange, or yellow. They are very hot.



Grilled Redfish with Orange-Basil Butter and Butternut Squash “Hash”

2 whole sides of redfish, skin and scales attached, about 1½ pounds each
 Salt and red pepper flakes to taste
 1 pound whole butter, softened
 Juice and zest of 2 oranges
 Juice and zest of 2 lemons
 ½ cup fresh basil, finely chopped
 1 whole orange, sliced thin
 1 whole lemon, sliced thin

Butternut Hash

1 medium butternut squash, peeled and cut into ¼ inch x 2-inch sticks
 1 medium red onion, sliced thin
 6 cloves garlic, minced
 Salt and red pepper flakes to taste

Using a stand or hand-held mixer, beat the butter with the juice and zest of the oranges and lemons and the ½ cup of chopped basil until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Using plastic wrap, roll the butter into logs about one half to two inches in diameter. Any butter not used can be frozen and saved for a later date.

Place each filet on a piece of aluminum foil more

In the early 1980’s, because of the popularity of blackened redfish, commercial catches of red drum increased by more than ten million pounds in three years, straining the fishery. Since then, through strict regulations and farm raising, the supply has been stabilized. This shows how quickly a species can be depleted by overfishing. The Sustainable Seafood Movement emphasizes using seafood that is fished and farmed in an ecologically sound manner, and educating people about how they can help to prevent such a shortage from happening.

Louisiana residents love redfish. Aside from blackening, another very popular way of preparing redfish is to cook it “on the scales” which means a whole filet with the skin and scales still attached is cooked on a grill or barbeque pit. This helps to prevent the meat from drying out, and when it is done, it can simply be scraped from the skin in sections and served. Here, I use the same technique but flavor the fish with a compound butter and serve it with a butternut squash and red onion hash to provide a complete meal in a relatively short amount of time.

than twice the size of the fish. Season liberally with salt and pepper and cover with slices of the orange butter. On top of this, alternate slices of lemon and orange to cover the filets. Fold the foil over and roll the three edges together a couple of times to seal the “package.” Grill over medium heat for about 12-15 minutes, or until fish is cooked through. Remove sections of meat from the skin with a spatula and serve on top of the hash.

Butternut Squash has a sweet, nutty taste that is similar to pumpkin or sweet potato. It has yellow skin and orange fleshy pulp. As it ripens on the vine, it turns increasingly deep orange, and becomes sweeter and richer. It can be roasted and toasted and also be pureed or mashed into soups, casseroles, breads, and muffins.

to prepare the hash

Toss the butternut squash, onions, and garlic with about ½ cup olive oil, salt, and red pepper. Spread on a pan and roast in a 400 degree oven until lightly browned and cooked through, but still al dente.



Vietnamese Rice Noodle Bowl with Shrimp, Lemongrass, and Chiles

Shrimp Broth

1 tablespoon peanut oil
 2 cups sliced yellow onions
 2 tablespoons chopped lemongrass
 2 teaspoons chopped cilantro leaves
 2 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed
 2 pounds shrimp shells
 1 star anise pod
 8 cups water
 2 carrots, thinly sliced
 1 ½ tablespoons chopped fresh ginger root
 2 small green chiles, sliced
 2 small red chiles, sliced
 1 cinnamon stick, broken in half
 2 tablespoons whole black peppercorns

to assemble

12 ounces rice vermicelli noodles
 3 tablespoons fish sauce
 ¾ pound cooked shrimp, 26/30 count size
 1 cup thinly sliced green onion, white and green parts
 2 cups bean sprouts
 ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves

Everyone thinks of chicken soup as a way to clear the sinuses but try this spicy Vietnamese noodle bowl (or pho), and you'll be instantly converted.

Red and green chiles, thinly sliced
 Lime wedges, for garnish
 Mint, for garnish
 1 cup bean sprouts, for garnish

In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the sliced onions and cook until just beginning to color, about six minutes. Add the lemongrass, cilantro, chiles, and garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add the shrimp shells, star anise, water, carrots, ginger, cinnamon, and peppercorns and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 15 minutes, skimming the top to remove any foam that forms on the surface. Remove stock from the stove and strain through a fine strainer. Place in a new stockpot and bring to a simmer. Meanwhile, bring a pot of water to a boil. Add the noodles to the water and boil until just tender, then drain in a colander.

To assemble, bring the soup to a simmer, as needed, and add the fish sauce. Drain the boiled noodles in a colander and divide among four soup bowls. Divide the remaining ingredients among the bowls and ladle the broth over each portion at the table. Garnish with lime wedges, mint, and bean sprouts and serve immediately.

Star anise Star anise is an ingredient of the traditional five-spice powder of Chinese cooking. It is also used in Vietnamese, Indian, and Indonesian cuisine.



photo by Marian Martinez



Seared Red Snapper with Green Beans, Yellow Bell Peppers, Ginger, and Champagne-Pomegranate Beurre Blanc

4 red snapper filets, skin on
 Salt and black pepper
 ½ lb small green beans, ends removed
 1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and cut into
 ⅛ inch strips
 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 1 cup champagne or dry white wine
 ½ cup heavy cream
 1 shallot, minced
 ½ pound cold butter, cut into one inch cubes
 Salt and white pepper to taste
 ½ cup fresh pomegranate seeds

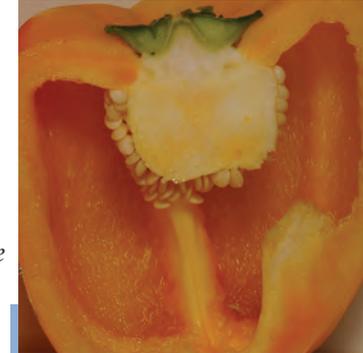
Blanch the green beans in a large pot of salted water for about one minute. Immediately shock in ice water, drain, and set aside.

In a small saucepot over medium heat, reduce the champagne, cream, and shallots until almost all the liquid is gone. Turn the heat down as low as possible and swirl in the butter, one piece at a time, while stirring constantly. Season to taste with salt and pepper and add pomegranate seeds. Keep slightly warm. In a large, heavy skillet, heat

Because of sustainable fishing regulations and its overall quality, red snapper is one of the most coveted fish we have in Louisiana. It's one of the fish that when prepared properly, the skin is not only edible, but crispy and delicious. The most important thing is to expel as much moisture from the skin as possible. To do this, scrape the skin "against the grain" with the back of a knife, wiping frequently with paper towels. When it is thoroughly dry, make incisions in the skin about ½ inch apart with a sharp knife. You should try to just cut the skin and not the flesh itself. Also, try to cut completely across the skin to prevent the fish from curling up when cooked. The level of difficulty of this dish is a bit higher because of the beurre blanc, but if you watch the temperature carefully, you will be successful and very pleased with the result. Save the rest of the champagne to drink with the fish, and if you don't have any, a dry white wine will do. This is not only a great tasting dish, but the different colors make for a beautiful presentation.

about two tablespoons olive oil until just smoking. Sear the fish skin side down for about three minutes, lightly pressing to help keep from curling. Flip fish and cook for about three more minutes, or until cooked through.

In another skillet, heat olive oil and sauté green beans, peppers and ginger until heated through. Season to taste with salt and pepper. To serve, place a mound of vegetables on a plate, top with the fish, and drizzle the sauce around.



Beverage Pairing
 Champagne or
 Chardonnay

Beurre blanc originating from the Loire Valley, literally translated from French as "white butter"—is a rich, hot butter sauce made with a reduction of vinegar or white wine and shallots into which cold, whole butter is blended off the heat to prevent separation. (Lemon juice is sometimes used in place of vinegar and stock can be added as well).



Blue Cornmeal Crusted Soft Shell Crab with Saffron-Corn Coulis

4 soft-shelled crabs, cleaned and dried
2 eggs, beaten
2 cups blue cornmeal (regular is fine)
Vegetable or canola oil for frying

Saffron-Corn Coulis

4 ears corn (husks intact)
2 tablespoons butter
1 shallot, minced
½ cup dry white wine
1 small pinch saffron threads
1 cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons butter, softened
Salt and pepper to taste

to prepare the sauce

Roast the corn in a 400°F oven for about 15 minutes. Allow to cool slightly and remove husks and silk. With a sharp knife, remove all kernels from cob. In a medium saucepot, heat the butter over medium heat until it begins to foam. Add the shallots and corn and sauté for about three minutes. Add white wine and saffron and cook for about two more minutes. Add cream and allow to reduce slightly for about two minutes. Transfer to a blender and carefully puree until smooth. Put through a strainer, pressing out as

To me, there is perhaps no greater culinary treasure than soft-shell crabs. You see, crabs don't increase in size by simply growing; they molt. The old shell actually cracks, and the soft animal backs out of it. During this "molting" process, there is only about a six hour or less window that the crab can be removed during its "soft" state, which is why they tend to be so rare (and expensive).

I have tried these prepared in different ways such as grilled or sautéed, but this is perhaps the only case in which I feel that only frying produces superior results. To clean them, first pull or cut off the apron located underneath the crab. Then with a pair of kitchen shears, cut off the "face," just below the eyes. Fold over the shell from the points and remove the gills and rinse under cold running water. Dry thoroughly with paper towels, and you're ready to cook! This is one of my favorite sauces to make, and the corn and crab complement each other perfectly—a perfect blue crab BTNEP delight.



Beverage Pairing
Chardonnay or
Sparkling Wine

much liquid as possible. Return to pot and whisk in the softened butter and season to taste with salt and pepper. In a large pot or fryer, heat the oil to about 360 degrees. Dredge the crabs first in flour, then in egg, then in cornmeal. Fry until golden brown and serve with the corn coulis.



Brazil Nut Crusted Speckled Trout with Spaghetti Squash and Gingered Carrot Essence

8 speckled trout filets, about 4 ounces each
 1 cup shelled Brazil nuts
 ½ cup all purpose flour
 Salt and black pepper
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 spaghetti squash, halved and seeded
 ¼ cup shallots, minced
 2 tablespoons whole butter
 ½ pound carrots, peeled and sliced ½ inch thick
 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, peeled
 Vegetable or light chicken broth
 4 tablespoons whole butter, softened
 Salt and red pepper flakes

Season the squash with salt and black pepper and drizzle with olive oil. Place on a baking sheet with the flesh side down and bake for about 30 minutes, or until a knife goes in and out relatively easily. Allow to cool slightly and pull out the flesh with a spoon or fork to produce thin strands. Heat the butter in a skillet over medium heat until it begins to foam. Add the shallots and cook for about two minutes. Add the squash and cook until heated through and season to taste with salt and red pepper flakes.

Around the world, the drum family includes more than 250 species, one of which is the spotted sea trout, or speckled trout. This is not to be confused with freshwater trout, which is actually in the salmon family. Drums are so called because they produce a drumming sound using muscles to vibrate the swim bladder, an internal pocket of air otherwise used for buoyancy. Nevertheless, the speckled trout is a highly sought after fish for its mild, flaky meat and delicate texture. This is a variation on the commonly prepared pecan crusted trout and adds spaghetti squash and a simple but delicious carrot puree that really complements the flavor.

Many supermarkets now carry a variety of winter squashes, but many people don't know the best ways to use them. The spaghetti squash is one of my favorites and is so called because when it is cooked, the flesh pulls out in strands, like "spaghetti."

to prepare the carrot sauce

Boil the carrots in salted water until completely tender. Drain and transfer to a blender or food processor with the ginger. Puree, adding the broth a little at a time until a sauce-like consistency is achieved. Add butter and season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep warm.

Place Brazil nuts and flour in a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Season to taste with salt and black pepper. Season the fish on both sides with salt and pepper. Dip the fish in eggwash and coat on one side with the nut mixture. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat and sauté the filets crust side down for about 3 to 4 minutes, or until nicely browned. Flip the filets over and cook for about 3 to 4 more minutes, or until cooked through.

To serve, mound some of the squash in the middle of a plate, top with the fish, and drizzle the carrot puree around the plate. Garnish with some chopped, fresh flat leaf parsley.



Beverage Pairing
 Chardonnay



Stone Crab Claws with Romesco Sauce

2 pounds stone crab claws, rinsed well
 2 large onions, cut into quarters
 1 handful whole garlic cloves
 2 stalks celery, cut into 2-inch pieces
 2 carrots cut into 2-inch pieces
 4 lemons, cut in half and juiced
 Kosher Salt
 Liquid Crab Boil (optional)

Romesco Sauce

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup toasted almonds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ fresh bread crumbs
 3 tablespoons olive oil
 8 ounces piquillo peppers or fire-roasted red bell peppers or pimentos
 1 tablespoon capers, drained
 Kosher salt
 Fresh ground pepper

to prepare the sauce

In a food processor fitted with a metal blade, grind the almonds until they form a thick paste. Add the bread crumbs, olive oil, peppers, and capers and process until smooth. Taste for salt and pepper. Transfer to a serving bowl.

Fill a large stockpot $\frac{2}{3}$ full with water. Add the onions, garlic, celery, carrots, lemons with juice, salt, and crab boil. Taste the water for

The most fascinating thing about stone crabs is that the claws are the only part that is ever used. By law, when the crabs are caught in traps, one claw is removed, and the crabs are released back into the water. Amazingly, the claws will regenerate in about a year and can be harvested again. This, combined with the fact that the meat is so sweet and succulent, puts a pretty heavy price tag on these crab claws. However, here in Louisiana, they are mostly caught as a bycatch of other things, so if you know the right sources, you can find them at a great price. If you ever get the opportunity to get some, I highly recommend it. They are usually simply boiled or steamed and served with some type of dipping sauce. I often make some type of butter sauce, but this traditional Spanish sauce based on roasted peppers and bread is delicious as well.

seasoning. It should be relatively salty because the claws will only absorb a small amount of the salt and other seasoning. Bring to a rolling boil over high heat and add the claws. Boil for 12 to 15 minutes or until the claws are cooked through. (There is no shame in cracking one open to make sure it is done.) You may crack the claws ahead of time or let your guests do it themselves. Serve warm with the romesco sauce on the side.

Beverage Pairing
 Chardonnay



Szechuan Stir-Fried Alligator

- 1 pound alligator tail meat, sliced as thinly as possible
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- 2 carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 small can bamboo shoots, drained and rinsed
- 4 ounces fresh oyster mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 1 small can water chestnuts, drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup bean sprouts
- 1 head baby bok choy, thinly sliced
- *You may use any vegetables of your choice.*

Marinade

- ¼ cup sesame oil
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger

Szechuan Sauce

- 6 tablespoons (3 ounces) unsalted butter
- 2 garlic cloves, blanched and chopped finely (about 1 tablespoon)
- 1 green onion, chopped finely
- 4 tablespoons hoisin sauce
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon Thai chiles (or pepper of your choice), finely chopped

A lot of people think of alligator as big, ugly, scary creatures and won't even think about eating them, but if prepared properly, the meat can be clean and delicious. Just let me tell you a few "fun facts" about chickens, and I guarantee you'll eat just about anything! The key is to try and use only the tail meat from medium sized gators because the older they get, the tougher the meat can be. Don't get me wrong—the leg meat is edible, and so are the bigger ones, but these are better suited to applications like stews or sauce piquantes. The best choice for this dish is clean tail meat that you can slice thinly. Once all the ingredients are assembled, this easy stir fry can be cooked in about ten minutes. Szechuan is a region in China whose cuisine is a blend of influences from India, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea. It is best known for its use of fiery chiles and well balanced flavors.

to prepare the sauce

In a small skillet, melt two tablespoons butter. Add the garlic and green onion and sauté over medium-high heat until soft, about two minutes. Pour in the hoisin sauce, soy sauce and chili pepper flakes and cook one or two minutes longer. Whisk in the remaining four tablespoons butter. Keep warm.

Combine alligator with marinade and allow to sit at room temperature for at least 20 minutes. Coat the gator with cornstarch, shaking off excess. Heat ½ cup of canola oil in a large wok or skillet (which I prefer for its more even heat distribution) until smoking. Add the alligator and stir fry until browned. Add the vegetables and cook for about five more minutes. Add the sauce and toss to coat. Serve hot over steamed jasmine rice or noodles.



Szechuan a style of Chinese cuisine originating in the Sichuan Province of southwestern China which has an international reputation for being hot and numbing because of the common ingredient Sichuan peppercorn .



Five-Spice Crusted Tuna Steaks with Mango-Avocado Salsa

Mango-Avocado Salsa

2 ripe mangos, peeled and diced
 2 avocados, diced
 ¼ medium red onion, minced
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 Juice of ½ lime
 Salt and red pepper flakes to taste

4 tuna steaks
 Kosher salt
 Five spice powder
 2 tablespoons olive oil

to prepare the salsa

Place all ingredients in a bowl and mix well to combine. You want the avocado to break down just a little bit to bind the salsa together. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Until I went to culinary school, I didn't know you could buy tuna that didn't come in a can. I was amazed to learn that this wonderful fish could be cooked rare (or not at all) and be so delicious, and I have encountered some great tuna dishes since then. I fully understand that I am not the first or only chef to serve tuna in this particular way, but it is still one of my favorites, and I encourage you to try it. There's just something about the combination of sweet mango and rich, smooth avocado that matches perfectly with the seared tuna. This is a prime example of how the quality and ripeness of the ingredients will determine the success of the dish. Five spice powder is just as it sounds—a blend of five spices usually including cinnamon, Szechuan peppercorns, cloves, fennel, and anise. This dish would work equally well with the papaya-scallion salsa or watermelon salsa.

Season the tuna on both sides with salt. Coat the tuna completely on one side with the five spice. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat until almost smoking. Sear the tuna, spice side down for about three minutes. Flip the steaks and continue to cook for about three more minutes or until desired doneness is achieved (anything past medium and you might as well go back to the can). Serve with the salsa on top.

Beverage Pairing
 Chardonnay or
 Gewürztraminer



Olive Oil Packed Fresh Tuna

2 pounds fresh tuna loin, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch steaks
2 cups extra virgin olive oil
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh garlic—minced
4 whole lemons—sliced thin
Whole sprigs fresh herbs of your choice
 (parsely, thyme, basil, etc.)

In a large pot, heat the olive oil to about 180 degrees. Season the tuna on both sides with salt and black pepper. Poach the tuna in the olive oil until completely cooked through, remove, and let the tuna and oil cool completely. Using your hands break the tuna into “flakes.” In a non-reactive dish, place about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the tuna and top with lemon slices, garlic, and herbs. Pour in about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the oil. Continue layering until all ingredients are used. Store tightly covered in refrigerator and use as needed.

As much of an advocate as I am about eating fresh tuna raw or seared rare, I do realize that when someone catches tuna, it is often too much to eat in this way before it spoils, and it doesn't freeze very well. In this case, I refer to the classic Italian way of preserving tuna before that stuff in the can came along, by packing it in extra virgin olive oil with fresh herbs, lemon, and garlic. While this method will not preserve it indefinitely, it will keep refrigerated for 2 to 3 weeks and can be great to use in sandwiches, salads, and pasta dishes.

Chef's Note

Use in sandwiches, salads, and pasta dishes.



Seared Tuna Spring Rolls with Papaya-Scallion Salsa and Spicy Peanut Sauce

4 sheets rice paper
 2 8-ounce tuna steaks
 Salt and black pepper
 ½ cup papaya-scallion salsa
 8 spears asparagus, blanched
 ½ pint alfalfa sprouts
 ¼ cup sunflower seeds

Peanut Sauce

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 3 scallions, chopped fine
 1 garlic clove, chopped fine
 1 tablespoon finely grated peeled fresh gingerroot
 1 cup water
 ½ cup creamy or chunky peanut butter
 ¼ cup soy sauce
 ¼ cup distilled white vinegar
 3 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
 ¼ teaspoon dried hot red pepper flakes

In a medium saucepot, heat oil over medium heat and cook scallions, garlic and ginger, stirring, until fragrant, about one minute. Stir in remaining ingredients and bring to a simmer, stirring. Simmer sauce, stirring, until smooth and cool to

These spring rolls are light, healthy, and make a great snack, hors d'oeuvre, or lunch. They are a great way to use any leftover papaya salsa you may have. Some spring rolls are made with wonton skins and fried, but these are made with rice paper, which can be found in most high-end grocery stores or Asian markets. They can also be rolled ahead of time for a party or otherwise. The spicy peanut sauce is one of my favorites and can be used in a variety of ways.

room temperature. Sauce may be made up to three days ahead and chilled, covered. If sauce is too thick after chilling, stir in one to two tablespoons hot water until sauce reaches desired consistency.

Season tuna with salt and pepper. Sear in a skillet with about one tablespoon olive oil over high heat for about one minute per side. Set aside to cool. Fill a shallow dish about halfway with very hot water. One at a time, soak the rice paper in the water for about 30 seconds, or until completely pliable. Cut the tuna into 4 equal pieces, making the pieces as long as possible. Place one piece of tuna just below halfway in the center of the rice paper. Top with ¼ each of the papaya salsa, sprouts, and sunflower seeds. Place one spear of asparagus on each side of the tuna. Fold in the two sides first, then roll from the bottom up to form a tight eggroll-like log. You may leave them whole or cut them in half on a bias for a better presentation. Serve with the peanut sauce on the side.

Chef's Note

Papaya-Scallion Salsa recipe is on page 22.

Notes Originally an invention of the Chinese, Spring Rolls "chun juan" were made from the early spring vegetable crop, wrapped in thin crepe-like sheets and fried. This basic dish has been since adapted by other Asian and Western cultures including Thailand, Japan, and Vietnam.



Turtle Pot Pie

In a stockpot, place:

3 pounds fresh turtle meat
20 cloves fresh garlic

To make the filling:

½ cup vegetable oil
½ cup all purpose flour
1 medium red onion, diced
1 stalk celery, diced
1 red bell pepper, diced
6 cloves garlic, minced
6 cups reserved turtle stock
1 teaspoon allspice
1 teaspoon cumin
2 tablespoons sweet pickle relish
½ cup orange juice
Salt, black pepper and hot sauce to taste
2 carrots, peeled and diced ½ inch
2 parsnips, peeled and diced ½ inch
½ cup frozen peas
4 ounces assorted wild mushrooms
1 medium potato, peeled and diced one inch
1 sprig fresh rosemary, finely chopped
½ bunch flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
2 packs frozen puff pastry, thawed

Of all the recipes in this book, this one may be the most time consuming, but I assure you it will be well worth it. I've essentially taken my turtle soup recipe and reduced the amount of liquid then added vegetables and a crust to make a unique and delicious pot pie.

In a large stockpot, place the turtle, garlic, and enough water to cover the meat. Bring to a boil, reduce to simmer, and cook for two and a half to three hours, or until meat is almost falling apart, skimming off any "scum" that rises to the top. Strain, reserving turtle "stock." When cool enough to handle, chop turtle and garlic together into small pieces.

In large dutch oven, heat oil just until a pinch of flour sizzles when thrown in. Add the flour and cook, stirring constantly, over medium heat until dark brown roux is formed. Add the vegetables and cook for 8 to 10 minutes. Add turtle stock, allspice, cumin, relish, and orange juice, and simmer for about 30 minutes, or until "roux" taste is gone. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and hot sauce. Allow to cool and mix in vegetables and herbs. Line the bottom of a casserole dish with puff pastry. Spoon in filling and top with remaining pastry. Bake in a 350°F oven for about one hour, or until mixture is bubbling and pastry is golden brown.

Chef's Note

The common snapping turtle, not the alligator snapping turtle, is recommended for this recipe. I do not recommend the alligator snapping turtle as there is concern about overharvesting, and the species population appears to be on the decline.

It should be noted that alligator snapping turtles can live to be near 100 years old. These turtles have been found with both stone arrowheads and musket balls in their shells.

Also, remember **ALL** marine sea turtles are illegal to harvest and are protected under the Endangered Species Act.



Venetian Style Grilled Shrimp

4 pounds large shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails on
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
4 tablespoons vegetable oil
½ cup dry, unflavored bread crumbs
1 tablespoon garlic, chopped very fine
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped very fine
Juice and zest of one lemon
1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes
Salt and black pepper to taste

Place the shrimp in a bowl with all other ingredients and toss to coat well. Allow to sit at room temperature for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours. Grill the shrimp over a medium-hot fire until just cooked through, about 2-3 minutes per side, until tightly curled with a golden crust. Serve while still hot.

When I was traveling in Venice, Italy, I had the most juicy, flavorful grilled shrimp ever. They were simply prepared with garlic, lemon, and herbs, but the unusual thing was that they were coated with bread crumbs. The olive oil soaked crumbs helped to hold in the moisture but also provided a great crunchy texture. When making these, the key is for there to be enough oil to coat the shrimp, but not so much to drown them, and enough breading to absorb the oil, but not enough to make a thick crust.



Food Pairing

Serve with garlic bread and a favorite salad.

Chef's Note

The area from the mainland to Venice, Italy, shares a similar look and feel with Venice, Louisiana. Both are surrounded by a flat expanse of marshland dotted with occasional oil industry platforms or refineries. Upon seeing this, it's no wonder how Venice, Louisiana, got its name.



Wahoo Sashimi with Tomato-Cucumber Salsa and Ponzu

1 pound fresh wahoo, sliced thin
1 ripe tomato, seeded and cut into 1/8 inch dice
1/2 cucumber, seeded and cut into 1/8 inch dice
1/4 medium red onion, cut into 1/8 inch dice
1/2 ripe avocado, cut into 1/8 inch dice
juice of 1/2 lemon
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Salt and red pepper flakes to taste
Ponzu sauce

Salsa

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Arrange wahoo slices on a plate (a cold plate is preferable). Top each piece of fish with a small amount of salsa. Add a couple of drops of ponzu and enjoy!

Wahoo, so named after the Hawaiian island of Oahu where this fish is found in abundance, do live in the Gulf of Mexico and are a spectacular looking and tasting fish. These fish have been known to swim nearly 50 miles per hour, and having caught them myself, I can attest to the fact that they put up a good fight. Wahoo, along with tuna, are members of the mackerel family, but they have a much milder flavor than we usually relate to mackerel. Although delicious when cooked, I prefer to eat wahoo raw, sashimi style, with just enough to accentuate their natural flavor. Ponzu is a citrus-infused soy sauce often made with the Japanese citrus fruit, yuzu, which is like a lemon but stronger. It can be found premade at most Asian markets.

Ponzu a citrus-infused soy sauce.

Sashimi a Japanese delicacy primarily consisting of very fresh raw seafoods, sliced into thin pieces. Dimensions vary depending on the type of item and chef, and are served with only a dipping sauce (soy sauce with wasabi paste and thin-sliced ginger root or ponzu) and a simple garnish such as shiso and shredded daikon radish. The word sashimi means "pierced body" and the definition may derive from the culinary practice of sticking the fish's tail and fin to the edible slices to identify the fish.



Earth



Chicken Braised in Oaxacan Yellow Mole

- 4 chicken leg quarters, drumsticks and thighs separated
- 2 medium chayote squash, peeled and diced into ½ inch cubes
- 10 dried guajillo chiles, washed
- ½ teaspoon annatto seeds (achiote)
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon dry Mexican oregano
- 1 teaspoon saffron
- 4 tablespoons corn oil
- 10 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 white onion, peeled and quartered
- 8 tomatillos, ripe and yellow, husked and diced
- 1 small ripe tomato, diced
- 6 cups Chicken Stock
- ½ cup masa harina
- ½ cup fresh cilantro, roughly chopped

Wash chiles and remove stems and seeds. Heat a cast-iron skillet and toast chiles lightly on all sides. Remove skillet from heat, add annatto and 2 cups of very hot water, and soften for 20 minutes. In a heavy non-stick pan, heat one tablespoon of the oil over medium-high heat and sauté garlic and onions until golden and tender. Add tomatillos

Most people know “mole” as the dark, complex Mexican sauce containing over 20 ingredients, including chocolate. However, there are many different types of mole (seven in Oaxaca), including this yellow, much simpler version. It uses less ingredients and can be made in a fraction of the time but is still quite hearty and flavorful. Much like our gumbo, there are countless variations of mole, but this is the one I was taught by my Oaxacan friend in California.

and tomato and continue to cook until browned and soft. Combine chiles (reserve soaking water), annatto, spices, garlic, onion, tomatillos, and tomato in a blender and process into a thick, smooth paste using the chiles' soaking water to thin.

Heat remaining one tablespoon oil in a non-stick pan and fry paste over medium heat until fragrant, slightly golden on all surfaces, and very thick, about 30 minutes—longer if necessary for consistency. You should have a toasty-looking smooth paste. Combine mole paste with chicken stock and simmer uncovered for one hour. Add masa harina dissolved in a little water to add a silky thickening. Season to taste with salt.

In a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven, heat two tablespoons corn oil over medium-high heat. Brown the chicken well on all sides, add mole sauce and chayote, and reduce to a simmer. Cover tightly and cook for about 40 minutes, or until chicken is fully cooked and tender. Season to taste with salt, black pepper, and cilantro. Serve with rice and beans of your choice.

Beverage Pairing
Cold Louisiana Beer

Annatto sometimes called Roucou, is a derivative of the achiote trees of tropical regions of the Americas, used to produce a red food coloring and also as a flavoring. Its scent is described as "slightly peppery with a hint of nutmeg" and flavor as "slightly sweet and peppery."

Guajillo chiles a variety of chili pepper which is widely used in the cuisine of Mexico. They are large and mild in flavor, with only a small amount of heat (rating 2,500 to 5,000 on the Scoville scale).



Egyptian Grilled Chicken with Feta and Mint

6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 cup plain yogurt
2 tablespoons Madras curry powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
6 cloves garlic, minced
Juice and zest of 1 lime
2 tablespoons fresh mint, chopped
2 tablespoons olive oil
½ cup feta cheese
fresh mint for garnish

In a large, non-reactive bowl, mix yogurt, curry, cumin, garlic, lime, mint, and olive oil. Add chicken and toss to coat well. Cover with plastic wrap and marinate, refrigerated, for at least two hours or overnight. Cook on a medium-hot grill for approximately 7 to 8 minutes per side or until fully cooked (about 160 degrees internal temperature). Serve with rice or cous-cous and sprinkle with crumbled feta and torn mint leaves.

Chicken is perhaps the most versatile of meats and one of my favorites. I prefer to use chickens from free range or organic farms. These farm facilities are being started around the country, including here in Louisiana. These birds have a much better flavor and texture and are well worth seeking out. They are also now readily available in most grocery stores.

Egyptian cuisine has more in common with Greece, Turkey, and the Middle East than with its North African neighbors, and these influences are evident in this recipe. I love to use yogurt in marinades because the acids and cultures are great for tenderizing and flavoring meats. There are many types of curry powder, which is a blend of several different spices. In this case, I prefer to use Madras curry, but you may substitute another kind if you prefer.

Food Pairing

Serve with rice
or
cous-cous.

Beverage Pairing

Beaujolais or
Riesling

Curry Powder a powdered preparation of spices and other ingredients, usually including turmeric and coriander, used for making curry or for seasoning food.



Tuscan-Style Fried Chicken

2 1 to 1½ pound chickens, each cut into 8 pieces
10 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
Juice and zest of 2 lemons
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
Salt, black pepper, and cayenne
4 large eggs
1½ cups all-purpose flour
6 cups vegetable or canola oil

Put chicken in a large, non-reactive mixing bowl with garlic, lemon, olive oil, salt, black pepper, and a pinch of cayenne. Toss to coat well, cover, and marinate, refrigerated, for at least six hours or overnight.

Break the eggs into a large bowl, beat well, and season with salt and black pepper. Remove the chicken from the marinade, shaking off excess, and add to the bowl with the eggs. Mix well and let sit at room temperature for one hour. Remove chicken from egg and dredge each piece in flour, shaking off excess.

In a dutch oven, on medium heat, or in a fryer, heat oil to about 360°F. Fry chicken a few pieces at a time for about 8 to 10 minutes, or until

Crispy fried chicken may be one of the ultimate Southern staples, but that doesn't mean we're the only culture that does this. In fact, many other countries have their own version of this dish that can be just as good. This version comes from Italy and first marinates the chicken in garlic, lemon juice, and olive oil before coating it with the flour. I first had it when traveling in Florence, and honestly, I wasn't expecting much. After just one bite, I was convinced. Not only was the crust perfectly crisp and delicious, but the meat itself had much more flavor than what I was normally accustomed to. It was served with artichokes, asparagus, and mushrooms that were fried in the same batter and was one of the best meals I had while in Italy.

Frying, in general, has gotten a bad reputation over the years because it is deemed to be unhealthy. Now, I realize that it's not the best thing you can eat, but if you use one of the "healthier" oils such as vegetable or canola, and fry at a high enough temperature, the food doesn't absorb excess grease, so it's not as bad as you may think. Also, remember, the most important rule is "everything in moderation". As long as you don't eat it every single day or eat enough at one sitting to feed a giant, you'll be just fine.

golden brown and cooked through.
 Remove from oil, drain well, and serve.

Food Pairing

Serve with vegetables such as artichokes, asparagus, and mushrooms fried in the same batter.

Beverage Pairing

Cold Louisiana Beer



Wasabi-Soy Chicken Wings with Creamy Avocado Sauce

**3 pounds chicken wings, tips removed,
drumette separated**

Marinade

1 cup soy sauce (preferably Japanese)
Juice of 1 lime
1 tablespoon brown sugar
½ cup sake (optional)
1 tablespoon wasabi paste (or more)
6 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup toasted sesame seeds
½ cup canola oil
Flour or cornstarch for dredging
Canola oil for frying

In a large, non-reactive bowl combine all marinade ingredients, add chicken, cover and refrigerate for at least two hours or overnight. Remove chicken from marinade but do not dry off. Pass chicken through flour or cornstarch, shaking off excess. Deep fry in 360°F oil until golden brown and cooked through. Serve hot with avocado sauce.

Whether grilled, fried, barbecued, or done “Buffalo” style, everybody loves chicken wings. They cook fast, are easy to eat (though messy but who cares), and can be flavored in countless ways. Here is my twist on “hot wings” with an Asian flair. The avocado sauce helps to cool down the punch of the wasabi. These may be grilled, but I like to fry them for the extra crunch.

Avocado Sauce

2 avocados, halved and pitted
6 scallions, chopped
½ cup fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh mint
1 cup sour cream
Salt and black pepper to taste

Puree all ingredients in food processor. Allow to sit for at least 30 minutes in refrigerator to allow flavors to marry. Serve chilled.

Wasabi or “Japanese horseradish” has an extremely strong flavor. Its hotness is more akin to that of a hot mustard than the capsaicin in a chili pepper, producing vapors that irritate the nasal passages more than the tongue. The paste should remain covered until served to protect the flavor from evaporation. For this reason, sushi chefs usually put wasabi between the fish and the rice.

Soy Soy sauce was invented in China, where it has been used as a condiment for close to 2,500 years. Authentic soy sauces are made by mixing the grain and/or soybeans with yeast or “kōji” and other related microorganisms. Soy sauce should be stored away from direct sunlight.



Jamaican Jerk Dove Kebabs with Jalapeno and Pineapple

40 small dove breasts, or 20 large cut in half
1 fresh pineapple, cut into 1 inch chunks
10 fresh jalapenos, split, seeded, and cut in
half crossways to make 4 pieces
20 bamboo skewers, soaked in water for at
least 1 hour (to prevent burning)

Jerk Rub

2 bunches green onions
2 habanero or 6 jalapeno peppers*
1 two-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled
10 cloves of garlic
1 small red onion, peeled
1 tablespoon of ground allspice
¼ teaspoon of cinnamon
¼ teaspoon of grated nutmeg
2 tablespoons of kosher salt
1 tablespoon of black pepper
¼ cup of canola oil
¼ cup of orange juice
¼ cup of brown sugar

Dove is another popular game bird, but because it is so small, many people only use the best part—the breast. Either whole or cut in half (depending on their size), I think the best way to use dove breast is on skewers. They can be marinated and quickly grilled over high heat.

Jamaican jerk has many different variations, but they all share one common trait—the fiery habanero (or scotch bonnet) chili—regarded as the hottest pepper in the world. However, do not let its reputation intimidate you. If used properly, the extreme heat of the habanero can be well balanced, like in this jerk marinade.

Jerk was originally used as a flavoring for pig or goat, which was slow-cooked over allspice wood. It has since been adapted to use on chicken, fish, and other items. I have used it successfully on duck, frog legs, rabbit, shrimp, and lobster, and here it makes a great flavoring for dove.

Place all jerk rub ingredients in a food processor and puree until smooth. Mix well with dove and marinate, refrigerated, for at least 2 hours or overnight. Remove from marinade and skewer, alternating with pieces of jalapeno and pineapple. Grill over a medium-hot fire for about 3 minutes per side, or until dove is cooked about medium-well.

Food Pairing

Serve with red beans and rice and fried plantains to make this an authentic Jamaican meal.

Chef's Note

***When handling hot peppers, be very careful or wear gloves, and wash your hands very thoroughly after.**
If you accidentally touch your eyes (or anything else for that matter), you will not have a good day!



Prosciutto-Wrapped Duck Breast with Orange-Balsamic Glaze

4 large or 8 small duck breasts, skin removed
8 tablespoons butter
8 cloves garlic, peeled
1 small handful fresh parsley
1 sprig fresh rosemary
8 slices prosciutto
Salt and black pepper

Place butter, garlic, and herbs in a food processor and pulse until a finely-chopped paste forms. Season duck on both sides with salt and pepper and spread an even amount of paste on both sides of each breast. Wrap with prosciutto and secure with toothpicks. *Grill on a medium-hot fire for about three minutes on each side then baste with balsamic glaze and cook for about three more minutes or until just medium. Remove and serve with remaining glaze.

Duck hunting is very popular in South Louisiana with several different species available. However, the problem many people have is figuring a way to cook them without the meat drying out. Because these birds fly so much, the meat is much leaner and more full-flavored than the domestic ducks used in most restaurants. These farm-raised ducks have a very thick layer of fat under the skin which bastes the meat as it cooks, helping to keep the meat moist. In order to produce the same effect with wild ducks, we must provide the fat in a different form. Most people typically use bacon, but here I add an Italian twist, using prosciutto instead. Also, I first rub the meat with a battuto, which is a paste of butter, garlic, and herbs before wrapping the breast with the ham. This not only adds moisture, but flavoring as well. Another tip is to cook the meat just over medium because when cooked well done, it dries out and has a flavor and texture reminiscent of liver. You may use any type of duck for this — Mallard, teal, wood duck, or the domestic variety.

Glaze

2 cups balsamic vinegar
½ cup orange juice
½ cup sugar

Reduce all ingredients over medium heat until slightly thickened and large bubbles start to form.

Chef's Note

*Be very careful. The butter melts; it can cause flare ups to occur. The sugar in the glaze can burn very easily.

Beverage Pairing
 Malbec



Roasted Goose with Fig and Chestnut Stuffing

1 10-12 pound goose
8 quarts water
1 cup kosher salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
6 tablespoons butter
2 cups dry white wine
Salt and black pepper

Stuffing

3 tablespoons unsalted butter
4 medium red onions, coarsely chopped
6 cloves garlic, minced
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup port wine
6 ounces dried figs (about 15), chopped
(you may use fresh if available)
2 tablespoons fresh thyme, minced
2 tablespoons fresh sage, minced
1 pound French, or country-style, bread, dried
3 cups turkey or chicken stock
2 eggs, beaten
2 16-ounce cans chestnuts, drained and
coarsely chopped
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh parsley, chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

When you think about a classic holiday gathering, the first thing that probably comes to mind is roasted turkey with dressing. However, even more classical and perhaps more elegant is the noble roasted goose. Before the establishment of supermarkets made turkeys readily available, they were very hard to come by because they are one of the most elusive birds to hunters. Geese were easier to find and kill and were, therefore, more common on the table.

One common problem with stuffing is it is often very dry after cooked, usually because people do not include enough broth or stock. There should be enough liquid for the bread to absorb, plus some extra. Also, bread absorbs the most liquid and flavor after it has been thoroughly dried. To do this, cut the bread into half-inch cubes, spread it in a single layer over several baking sheets and dry uncovered at room temperature for two to three days (or in a 225° F oven for 30–40 minutes).

Combine water, salt, and sugar in a large container and stir until completely dissolved. Place goose in brine and refrigerate, covered, overnight.

For the stuffing

Heat the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onions, celery, and garlic until softened, about seven to eight minutes. Add the port, figs, thyme, and sage. Boil until the port is almost evaporated, about one to two minutes. Mix with all the remaining ingredients, including salt and pepper to taste. Remove goose from brine and rinse very well under cold running water. Dry bird thoroughly and season inside and out with salt and black pepper. Loosely pack stuffing in cavity and truss goose with butcher's twine. Place on a v-rack in a roasting pan and rub butter all over skin of goose. Roast in a 375°F oven until goose starts to brown, about 30 minutes. Pour wine over goose, lower heat to °F, cover loosely with foil, and roast for about two more hours or until temperature in thickest part of thigh registers at 165°F.

Chef's Note

If all the stuffing doesn't fit in the goose, you can bake it in a casserole dish for about 30 to 40 minutes.

Beverage Pairing

Pinot Noir



Quail with Bacon and Lentil Stew

4 ounces smoked bacon, diced
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 small red onion, finely chopped
 10 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
 1 carrot, peeled and finely diced
 1 stalk celery, finely diced
 8 ounces dried lentils
 1½ quarts chicken stock
 1 bay leaf
 2 sprigs fresh thyme
 Salt and red pepper flakes

4 quail, split in half
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 ½ cup dry sherry
 Salt and black pepper

In a medium pot over medium heat, render the bacon in the olive oil until slightly brown and crisp, about 3-4 minutes. Add the onion, garlic, carrot, and celery and cook until translucent, about 4 more minutes. Add lentils and stock and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and add the bay leaf and thyme. Simmer until the lentils are fully cooked, about 20 to 30 minutes. Season to taste with salt and red pepper flakes.

Lentil stew is a very popular dish in Spain, typically served with chorizo or simple roasted meats. Here I use quail and add bacon for extra flavor and moisture. I also like the sherry in this dish because it adds a bit of sweetness and another dimension of flavor. You should also try drizzling a bit of sherry vinegar on each plate just before serving. Take care not to overcook the quail because, like other game birds, they can dry out very easily. Ideally, they should be cooked just over medium.



for the quail

Heat the oil over medium-high heat in a sauté pan until smoking. Season the quail with salt and black pepper and sear skin side down until they are well browned, about three minutes. Flip them over and cook for one more minute and remove from pan. Add the sherry to the sauté pan to deglaze, scraping the browned bits from the bottom (the best part). Pour this into the lentils and mix well. Serve the quail pieces on top of the lentils. Drizzle with sherry vinegar and extra virgin olive oil.

Beverage Pairing
 Pinot Noir

Lentils One of the first crops domesticated in the Near East, with 26% protein, the lentil is the vegetable with the highest level of protein other than soybeans, and because of this it is a very important part of the diet in many parts of the world, especially in India, which has a large vegetarian population.



Greek Stuffed Hamburgers

1 pound ground beef chuck
¼ cup red onion, finely chopped
Salt and black pepper to taste
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

¼ cup sun dried tomatoes, packed in oil
¼ cup fresh spinach, roughly chopped
2 tablespoons capers, drained
¼ cup feta cheese crumbles

In a large bowl, combine the meat, onions, Worcestershire sauce, salt, and pepper and mix well. You may want to pan fry a small piece to check the seasoning. Form the meat into 8 patties about ¾ inch thick. Combine remaining ingredients in a small bowl. Place equal amounts of the stuffing on half of the patties and cover with remaining patties, sealing the edges by pressing them together with your fingers. Sauté, grill, or broil to your desired degree of doneness.



There aren't many things that are more satisfying than a big, juicy hamburger. Now let's get one thing straight, I'm not talking about the gray, cardboard-like excuses for burgers that fast food chains are dishing out. I'm talking about pure ground beef (preferably chuck), well seasoned, and served on good fresh bread with condiments of your choice. That's a burger.

The hamburger can also be brought to a completely different level by stuffing the toppings between two thin patties as opposed to putting them on top. This not only helps to keep them from falling off while eating the burger, but provides an interesting surprise when your guests bite into them. You can stuff them with just about anything, but here I'm using a Greek theme with sun-dried tomatoes, spinach, capers, and feta cheese. You may also want to try bacon, cheddar, blue cheese, shallots, mushrooms, caramelized onion, pesto, or whatever else you can think of.



Beverage Pairing Cold Louisiana Beer

Caper the pickled bud of a perennial spiny shrub that bears rounded, fleshy leaves and big white to pinkish-white flowers. It grows wild in the Mediterranean region.

Feta Cheese A Greek brined curd cheese traditionally made with ewe's and goat's milk. It is aged, produced in blocks, and has a slightly grainy texture. It is used as a table cheese, as well as in salads, pastries and in baking, notably in the popular phyllo-based dishes spanakopita ("spinach pie") and tyropita ("cheese pie").



Veal Stew with Carrots, Artichokes, Asparagus, and Lemon

2 pounds boneless veal shoulder, cut into 2-inch cubes
½ cup olive oil
6 leeks (white part only), diced
½ cup carrots, finely chopped
½ cup celery, finely chopped
½ pound whole button mushrooms
8 cloves garlic, peeled and lightly smashed
1 sprig fresh tarragon, finely chopped
3 sprigs fresh thyme, finely chopped
Juice and zest of 2 lemons
4 cups chicken or veal stock
1 cup dry white wine
3 carrots, peeled and diced
3 fresh artichokes, tough outer leaves removed and bottoms thinly sliced
1 pound asparagus, cut into 2-inch pieces
24 pearl onions, peeled
2 tablespoons butter
2 large egg yolks

In a large, heavy pot or Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium-high heat until smoking. Season the veal with salt and pepper and add to pot, a few pieces at a time and cook until well browned.

One of my favorite dishes as a child was beef stew with carrots and potatoes. It had a rich brown gravy and was usually served with rice. This is a lighter take on that dish, somewhere in between that and the French blanquette de veau. The meat is browned, which will add some color to the white wine and lemon sauce, and there are more vegetables than the original. I like to serve this over egg noodles, or if you want to be more adventurous, you can make dumplings of your choice and cook them in the stew.



Add leeks, carrots, celery, mushrooms herbs, lemon zest, and garlic and sauté for about five minutes. Deglaze with wine, add stock, and simmer, covered, for about one hour. Add diced carrots, artichokes and pearl onions and cook for about 30 more minutes or until veal is very tender. Blanch the asparagus in boiling salted water for about one minute and shock in ice water. In a small bowl, whisk egg yolks with lemon juice. Add a little of the hot stew liquid at a time, while constantly whisking to temper the egg yolks. Add this back to the stew with the asparagus and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.

Lentils From the legume family, lentils are grown for their lens-shaped seeds, which have an earthy taste and a relatively short preparation time. With 26% protein, lentils have one of the highest levels of protein in any plant.

Beverage Pairing
Pinot Noir



Moroccan Lamb Tagine

2 pounds boneless lamb shoulder
 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
 1 teaspoon ground ginger
 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 2 tablespoon vegetable oil
 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups diced onions
 1 large eggplant, peeled and diced
 1 medium butternut squash, peeled and diced
 10 large garlic cloves, minced
 1 cup chicken broth
 1 small pinch Spanish saffron, crushed
 16 fresh cilantro sprigs, tied together with a cotton string
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup golden raisins
 1 onion, halved and thinly sliced
 2 tablespoons honey
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
 Cilantro sprigs, for garnish

Cut lamb into $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes and place in a medium-sized bowl. Season the lamb with turmeric, ginger and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt. Heat a tagine or Dutch oven over high heat. Add one tablespoon of the vegetable oil and half of the seasoned lamb. Cook the lamb until browned on all sides, 2 to 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon,

In Louisiana, lamb may not often be associated with Louisiana cuisine, but there are some farms here where lamb and sheep are raised not only for the milk and wool, but for the meat as well. Many people are reluctant to try lamb because they think it will have a strong flavor, but most of those same people probably eat deer and other wild game, which I can guarantee you is much stronger.

Tagines, which are highly aromatic stews traditionally cooked in earthenware pots of the same name, are great easy ways to cook for a family. The ingredients can vary greatly from region to region, and this is just one combination. You may serve this over cous-cous, but I think the butternut squash provides enough starch and body to let the dish stand on its own.

remove the lamb from the pan and set aside. Repeat with remaining oil and lamb. Return the seared lamb to the pan and add the diced onions. Cook, stirring to get the browned bits off the bottom of the pan, for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the eggplant, squash, and garlic and cook for one minute. Add the chicken broth, saffron, and cilantro bundle and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, covered, for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, or until the meat is tender. Pour one cup of boiling water over the raisins and let sit for 20 minutes. Strain and set the fruit aside. Using a slotted spoon, remove the meat, place it on a clean plate, and keep warm. Bring the remaining liquid in the pan to a simmer. Add the sliced onions, raisins, honey, cinnamon, ground pepper, and $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt. Return the liquid to a simmer and cook for 6 to 8 minutes, or until mixture is slightly thickened. Add the cooked lamb back into the sauce and cook to heat through, about 2 minutes. Garnish with fresh cilantro sprigs.

Food Pairing:

Serve with cous-cous, if desired.

Tumeric A member of the ginger family, it is widely used as a spice in South Asian and Middle Eastern cooking.

Spanish Saffron Characterized by a bitter taste and a hay-like fragrance, saffron also contains a dye that gives food a rich golden-yellow hue. These traits make saffron a much-sought ingredient in many foods worldwide.

Cilantro Coriander leaves, or cilantro, the Spanish name, have a very different taste from the seeds, similar to parsley but "juicier" and with citrus-like overtones.



Barbequed Ribs

2 racks pork baby back ribs
 2 yellow onions, sliced
 12 cloves garlic, lightly crushed
 1 12-ounce beer*
 Mustard sauce
 Spice rub

Mustard Sauce

1 cup prepared yellow mustard
 1 teaspoon Louisiana Hot Sauce
 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
 ½ teaspoon liquid smoke
 Mix well

Spice Rub

⅓ cup salt
 ¼ cup paprika
 3 tablespoons chili powder
 2 tablespoons black pepper
 1 tablespoon ground cumin
 1 tablespoon garlic powder
 1 tablespoon cayenne

Preheat oven to 400°F. Find a pan at least 1½ inches deep and large enough to hold ribs in a single layer. Place sliced onions, garlic and beer on bottom of pan. Mix all ingredients for mustard sauce and rub evenly on both

May marks the beginning of new life, soaring temperatures, outdoor gatherings, and the smell of barbecue permeating the air. The first introduction to the coming summer months falls on Memorial day, a day to pay tribute to the brave men and women who leave their families and friends behind and risk their lives to protect our freedom and way of life.

A large section of the American populous spends Memorial Day around the barbecue pit, and with as much as they love to eat ribs, there is often some argument about the best way to cook them. Aficionados might call the following method "cheating," but the average person does not have the eight to ten hours it takes to slow smoke their ribs. This recipe will produce fall-off-the-bone, tender ribs without the loss of flavor that results from other methods, such as boiling. Try it out on Memorial Day, and before the pit is lit or the first beer is opened, take a moment to think about our troops and salute our heroes.

sides of the ribs. Sprinkle spice rub liberally on both sides of ribs and place on top of onions. Cover pan tightly with aluminum foil and bake for approximately two hours or until about one inch of bone is exposed and meat is fork-tender. Remove ribs from pan and allow to cool slightly. Coat both sides with your favorite barbecue sauce and place on medium-hot grill until sauce is seared well onto meat, flipping and adding more sauce as desired. Be careful, as the inherent sugars in most barbecue sauces will burn if the heat is too high. The ribs are fully cooked when removed from the oven, so they should spend no more than five to ten minutes on the grill and are ready to serve.

Chef's Note

*It would be preferable to use a full-flavored beer, such as Abita Amber, but a light beer would be acceptable.

Beverage Pairing

Cold Louisiana Beer



Slow-Cooked Achiote Pork

½ cup achiote paste
 10 garlic cloves, chopped
 1½ cups freshly squeezed orange juice
 2 limes, juiced
 8 bay leaves, crumbled
 2 teaspoons cumin seeds
 ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
 2 teaspoons dried thyme
 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 1 teaspoon sea salt
 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
 4 pounds pork butt, cut into 3-inch cubes
 1 pound banana leaves, softened over low flame, OR aluminum foil
 2 white onions, sliced ½-inch thick
 5 roma tomatoes, sliced ½-inch thick
 4 poblano chiles, roasted, peeled, and sliced into strips

In a medium bowl, mash together the achiote paste, garlic, orange juice, lime juice, bay leaves, cumin, cinnamon, thyme, oregano, salt, and pepper with a fork. Add the pork and toss to evenly coat. Marinate, covered and refrigerated, at least four hours. Preheat the oven to 300 ° F. Heat a dry cast-iron skillet over high heat. Char the onions until blackened on both sides. Then char the tomatoes on both sides. Reserve.

On the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, there's a celebration much like our "cochon du lait" when they pit-cook a whole pig rubbed with achiote paste and serve it with its savory juices and a huge spread of tortillas, beans, salsas, and other condiments. This is a scaled-down version of that Mexican classic, which can be prepared easily at home. Achiote is a paste made from annatto seeds, garlic, salt, and other spices and is readily available at most markets. Traditionally, this dish calls for wrapping the pork in banana leaves. You can buy frozen banana leaves in most Mexican or Asian markets, but if you decide to pick them yourself off of a tree, make sure you clean them properly to eliminate any pesticides or other harmful things.

Line a large baking dish with one layer of banana leaves or foil. Arrange the pork in an even layer and top with the onions, tomatoes, chiles, and all the marinade. Cover with more banana leaves and wrap the dish tightly in foil. Bake 2 ½ to 3 hours or until the pork is tender and moist. Remove from the oven and let sit 10 minutes.

Beverage Pairing
Malbec or
Pinot Noir

Achiote a paste made from annatto seeds, garlic, salt, and other spices.



Cacciatora-Style Nutria with Wild Mushrooms and Rosemary

3-4 pounds nutria, cut into pieces
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 ½ cup flour
 Salt and black pepper
 ½ cup yellow onion, sliced thin
 1 red or yellow bell pepper, sliced thin
 1 carrot, peeled and diced
 1 stalk celery, diced
 10 cloves garlic, minced
 ½ pound mushrooms (oyster, crimini, shitake, etc.), chopped
 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, finely chopped
 1 cup dry white wine
 1 cup canned chopped tomatoes, with their juice
 Salt and red pepper flakes

Season the nutria with salt and black pepper and dust with flour, shaking off the excess. Heat the oil in a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the nutria pieces and brown well on both sides. Remove nutria and add onion, bell pepper, carrot, celery, garlic, rosemary and mushrooms. Sauté for about five minutes then deglaze with white wine. Add tomatoes and return the nutria pieces to the pot. Adjust heat to simmer and cover tightly. Cook for approximately 45 minutes, or until meat is fork tender. Serve with rice, pasta, or polenta.

Nutria were first brought into Louisiana from South America in the 1930's for the fur farming industry and were later released, either accidentally or intentionally (no one knows for sure), into the coastal marshes. They soon became pests, destroying aquatic vegetation and irrigation systems, eroding riverbanks, and displacing native animals. In 2005, a "bounty" program, called the Coastwide Nutria Control Program, was created to reduce the population. This program, funded by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act, offered a bounty of \$5 per tail, encouraging the harvest of up to 400,000 nutria annually. By 2007, this program helped reduce the amount of wetlands impacted. However, the program only accepted the tails, leaving the hunters to dispose of the bodies on their own. Many attempts were made to market the meat, but it never quite caught on.

Now, I know what you're going to say, "There's no way I'm eating a rat!" but nutria are herbivores, meaning they only eat plants, and they're probably cleaner than some of the other animals you're eating. Don't make me bring up chickens! Nutria are also very low in fat and cholesterol. The meat is light and mild, greatly resembling rabbit, and can be cooked in the same fashion.

Cacciatora is Italian for hunter's style and is usually a fricassee of chicken or rabbit with tomato, onion, and other vegetables. Wild mushrooms and rosemary would be very typical additions, and you can also add any other vegetables you like.

Oyster Mushrooms an oyster-shaped mushroom with a mild taste that often has a mild scent of anise.

Crimini Mushrooms The common mushroom that is sold in most grocery stores. Most people describe the mushroom as "plain," but other people say that the common mushroom tastes slightly sweet or "meaty."

Shitake Mushrooms Native to East Asia, called Chinese black mushroom and black forest mushroom in America, these mushrooms, sensed by specialized receptor cells present on the human tongue, are superior in flavor.



Pan-Roasted Rabbit with Walnuts, Olives, and Fresh Herbs

1 3-4 pound rabbit, cut into 8 pieces
½ cup red wine vinegar
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 large yellow onion, cut into thin slices
1 stalk celery, diced
1 carrot, peeled and diced
10 cloves garlic, peeled and lightly smashed
4 roma tomatoes, diced
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary leaves
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
1½ cups dry red wine
⅓ cup shelled walnuts, finely ground
Salt and black pepper
Liver from rabbit or 3 fresh chicken livers
25 Italian or Nicoise olives

Place the rabbit in a bowl with enough water to cover and add the red wine vinegar. Cover and refrigerate overnight. In a small pot, bring two cups of salted water to a boil and add the liver, cooking for only about three minutes. Transfer water and liver to a food processor and puree. Set aside. Remove rabbit from marinade, rinse well, and pat dry with paper towels. Season on both sides with salt and black pepper. Heat the oil on medium-high in a skillet (or pot large enough to hold all the pieces in a single layer) until smoking. Brown the rabbit well on both sides and transfer to

Growing up, I always had rabbit prepared pretty much the same way, smothered with onions and garlic and served over rice. While there's nothing wrong with this, I often wondered what other possibilities there could be for cooking it. Throughout the years, I have tried many variations, but this one from Liguria, in the Italian Riviera, is one of my favorites. Don't let the liver in this recipe turn you off, it gets pureed before adding to the pot and contributes a great depth of flavor to the dish (think rice dressing). Also, marinating the rabbit overnight helps to cut some of the gamy flavor.



a plate. Add the onion, celery, and carrot to the pan and cook until lightly colored, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, tomato, rosemary, and thyme and cook for about two more minutes, then deglaze with the wine, scraping the bottom to remove the browned bits. Return the rabbit to the pan with the walnuts, liver puree, and some salt and pepper. Mix well, and turn heat down to low. Cover the pan and cook at a slow, gentle pace for about an hour and a half, or until rabbit is very tender. When the rabbit is done, add the olives, adjust the seasoning, and serve while still hot over polenta, pasta, rice, or as is with some crusty bread.

Roma tomato A meaty, egg- or pear-shaped tomato that is available in red and yellow. It has few seeds and is a good canning and sauce tomato.

Nicoise olive Pronounced nee-SWAHZ, these small purplish-black olives have a distinctive sour flavor. Substitutes: Kalamata

Cilantro Coriander leaves, or cilantro, the Spanish name, have a very different taste from the seeds, similar to parsley but "juicier" and with citrus-like overtones.



Grilled Venison Filet Topped with Blue Cheese, Apples, and Walnuts

4 8-ounce venison tenderloin steaks

Salt, black pepper, and granulated garlic

8 ounces blue cheese

½ cup diced apple w/ skin on (granny smith, braeburn, macintosh, etc)

½ cup chopped walnuts

½ cup flat leaf parsley, chopped

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

Salt and red pepper flakes to taste

Season meat on all sides with salt, black pepper, and granulated garlic. In a small bowl mix all remaining ingredients and season to taste with salt and red pepper flakes. Grill the steaks over medium-high heat to just over rare. Top each steak with an equal amount of the cheese mixture and place under the broiler for about 3 to 4 minutes or until slightly melted. This would go well with the port reduction from the venison sausage recipe.

For all deer hunters, the most prized piece of meat is the tenderloin, or backstrap. This is probably the only cut on the entire animal that can be cooked successfully using dry-heat cooking methods. All the other muscles must be cooked long and slow with moist heat to yield any desirable results. However, it frustrates me when people insist that the only good way to cook a backstrap is to fry it. Now, I won't say that it's not good fried, but hello?, so is everything else. Anyone can fry something and make it taste good. Why not cut the loin into steaks (filet mignon) and grill them? Why not take it a step further and top that filet with a savory cheese mixture and broil it? Now we're cooking with gas! The blue cheese, apples, and walnuts make a perfect compliment to the gaminess of the meat. I like to use Maytag blue cheese because it's on the milder side, but you may substitute another kind if you like. Also, I'm warning you ahead of time, grilled venison should never be cooked anywhere past medium, or it will dry out terribly! If you insist on eating it cooked more, you may as well fry it or just eat something else.



Blue Cheese sharp and a bit salty, the smell is widely considered to be pungent, even compared to other cheeses. Blue cheeses come in a range of mild to strong flavors.

Granny Smith Apples crisp, juicy, tart apples which are excellent for both cooking and eating out of the hand.

Braeburn Apples sweet with a hint of tart, and a firmness that stores well.

Macintosh Apples soft flesh can be described as "creamy" or "mealy," which makes this variety a good candidate for eating raw or for apple sauce or apple butter, but not necessarily for baking.



Venison, Apricot, and Pecan Sausage with Port Reduction and Parmagiano

1 pound ground venison
1 pound ground pork
1 cup red onion, minced
16 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
**8 ounces dried apricots, diced into
 ¼-inch cubes**
**¼ cup flat leaf parsley,
 roughly chopped**
¼ cup pecans, roughly chopped
**Salt, black pepper, and cayenne
 to taste**

Place all ingredients into a bowl and mix well. Season to taste, test frying a small piece to adjust. Form into patties of desired size and grill, broil, or pan fry until cooked through. Serve topped with drizzled port reduction and shaved Parmagiano Reggiano.

Port reduction

2 cups port wine (preferably a ruby port)
¼ cup granulated sugar

In a small saucepan, reduce wine and sugar until slightly syrupy and large bubbles start to form.

There are a lot of deer hunters in South Louisiana, and because these animals are so large, killing one can yield a lot of meat. Because they are so lean, it seems the more popular butchering practice is to make sausage, mixing in ground pork for fat and flavor. Some also just get the meat ground to make burgers, meatloaf, or maybe even to make their own sausage.

Sausage making can be intimidating to some, but there are just a couple of key aspects to remember. First and most importantly, there has to be enough fat to keep the sausage moist, ideally a 80/20 meat/fat ratio. This can be accomplished by grinding fat into the mix or just adding ground pork which has a good amount of fat already as we do here. The other key is the seasoning, which can be anything to suit your taste: spices, dried fruit, chiles, nuts, herbs, etc.

This sausage is easy to make because it is done in “breakfast patty” style and therefore doesn’t have to be put into a casing. The port wine reduction adds sweetness, almost like a syrup and the salty parmesan provides balance. For an extra twist, try adding rosemary to your favorite biscuit recipe and serving this dish as a sandwich or open-faced for an elegant breakfast.



Food Pairing

Serve on a biscuit as a breakfast sandwich or open-faced for an elegant breakfast.

Beverage Pairing

Pinot Noir



Pastel de Cuatro Leches

Cake with “Four Milks”

2 teaspoons butter
1 tablespoon plus 2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1½ teaspoon fine salt
6 eggs, at room temperature, separated
1¼ cups sugar
½ cup whole milk
1½ tablespoons dark rum
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
1 12-ounce can evaporated milk
1 cup heavy cream
1 16-ounce jar dulce de leche (milk caramel)

Heat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 9" x 13" baking pan with the butter and dust with one tablespoon of the flour. Invert the dish, tap out the excess flour, and set aside. Sift the remaining flour, baking powder, and salt into a bowl and set aside. Put the egg whites into a large bowl and beat with a hand-held electric mixer on medium speed until soft peaks form, about two minutes. While the mixer is still running, add the sugar in a gradual stream and continue beating again to soft peaks. Add the egg yolks one at a time, beating well after each addition. Alternately add the reserved flour mixture and the whole milk in three parts, beating until smooth after each addition. Add the rum and vanilla and beat again briefly until smooth.

I've talked about the animals that we benefit from but let's not forget about the by-products that are also an integral part of our diets, such as eggs and milk. You may already be familiar with the famous dessert called tres leches, which is a rich cake doused with three “milks”: condensed, evaporated, and heavy cream. Perhaps more popular is dulce de leche, which is a caramel made by slowly cooking milk and sugar together. Here, the two are combined to make a cuatro (or four) milk dessert. Get it?

Pour batter into reserved baking pan and bake until golden brown, about 30 minutes. Set the cake aside and let cool slightly for 30 minutes. Whisk together the sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk, and heavy cream in a bowl. Using a knife, poke the cake with holes all over, penetrating to the bottom of the pan. Pour the milk mixture over the warm cake and set aside to let cool completely. Cover the cake with plastic wrap and refrigerate until well chilled and liquid is absorbed, at least four hours. Spread the dulce de leche across the top of the cake and serve.

Dulce de leche

4 cups milk
1 teaspoon baking soda

2 cups sugar
Vanilla extract

Scald milk in heavy bottom sauce pan. Add all other ingredients, cook on medium low until it turns into caramel, about one hour.

Dulce de Leche A milk-based syrup found as both a sauce and a caramel candy. It is popular across Latin America. It is prepared by slowly heating sweetened milk to create a product that is similar in taste to caramel.

There are many stories about the origin. One story involves the 19th century Argentinian caudillo Juan Manuel de Rosas. The story goes that in a winter afternoon at the Rosas house, the maid was making some lechada—a drink made with milk and sugar boiled until it starts to caramelize—and she heard someone knocking at the door. She left the lechada on the stove and went to answer the door; and when she came back, the lechada was burnt and had turned into a brown jam: dulce de leche.





