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Breaux Bridge sources claim the first commercially served crawfish bisque was dished out at the Hebert Hotel in Breaux Bridge.

"Then they spread out with the other delicacies...the patties, etouffee, etc."

To the devil-may-care Cajun, who eats, drinks, gambles and laughs in huge quantities, the crawfish is a "natural."

The Acadians are descendants of those French Catholic settlers of Nova Scotia who were dispersed by the British 200 years ago when they refused to swear allegiance to Great Britain and to renounce their religion.

Their food has deservedly received praise in high places and from the mouths of renowned gourmets.

For example: The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, Information and Education Division, through their Cajun country researcher, Percy Visouca Jr., came up with these month waterers:

### CRAWFISH BISQUE
- 20 lbs. live crawfish
- 2 large onions
- 1 large bell pepper
- ½ cup cooking oil
- 1 cup flour
- 4½ cups boiling water
- 3 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons red pepper
- ½ cup onion tops, cut fine
- ½ cup parsley, cut fine

Baked Stuffed Crawfish Heads
- Pick crawfish and wash. Be sure that all crawfish are alive when picking them for cooking. Drop live crawfish in boiling water for 10 minutes or until crawfish are red. Separate heads from tails and save heads to fill with stuffing. Pour fat from heads into a dish. Clean tails and place in a separate dish. Divide tails and fat equally for bisque and stuffing.
- Grind onions and bell pepper. Make a golden brown roux with oil and flour. Add onions and bell pepper and cook until soft, stirring frequently. Add half the crawfish tails and fat and cook over low fire for about 20 minutes. Gradually add boiling water, salt and pepper and cook for about 20 minutes. Add onion tops and parsley just before serving.
- Serve with rice and crackers.

### Baked Stuffed Crawfish Heads
- 2 medium onions
- 1 large bell pepper
- ½ cup cooking oil
- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup water, about 2 cups
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1½ teaspoons red pepper
- ½ cup bread crumbs
- ½ cup parsley, cut fine
- ½ cup onion tops, cut fine
- ¼ stick butter (optional)

Remove eyes and wash heads of crawfish well. Grind onions and bell pepper; grind the other half of the tails. Make a golden brown roux with cooking oil and flour. Add onions and bell pepper and cook until soft. Add ground crawfish tails and the other half of the fat and let simmer for 15 minutes. Add water and salt and pepper. Then add bread crumbs, parsley and onion tops, and ¼ stick butter if desired. Fill each head with stuffing, roll in flour and bake 15 minutes in moderate oven.

### CRAWFISH JAMBALAYA
- 3 lbs. crawfish tails
- 2 sticks butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 6 onions, shredded
- 1 cup chopped onion tops
- 1 cup salt, black pepper and red pepper, to taste
- 3 cups cooked rice

Melt butter and add flour. Brown a little bit. Add onions and simmer until soft; add fat from crawfish. Simmer a few more minutes and then add tails, parsley and onion tops and seasonings. Cook 15 minutes. When ready to serve, add cooked rice.

### CRAWFISH STEW
- 6 lbs. live crawfish
- 1 large onion
- 4 stalk celery
- 1 cup flour
- 1 pint water
- salt, red pepper and black pepper, to taste

Wash, scald and clean crawfish. Chop onions, garlic and celery. Heat lard, add flour, stir until brown. Add onions, garlic and celery, then crawfish. Stir until the stew cooks a little greasy. Add water and simmer about 20 minutes. Season to taste.

### CRAWFISH ETOUFFE
- 8 lbs. fresh crawfish
- 1 stick margarine or 1 cup cooking oil
- 6 onions, chopped fine
- ¼ cup chopped celery
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- 2½ teaspoons tomato paste
- ½ teaspoon cornstarch
- ½ cup cold water
- salt, black pepper and red pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup onion tops and parsley, minced

Parboil and peel crawfish. Set tails aside. Mix margarine or cooking oil with onions, celery and tomato paste in heavy pot. Cook, uncovered, over medium heat until onions are wilted. Add crawfish tails. Dissolve cornstarch in cold water. Add to crawfish, stirring constantly. Season to taste with salt, black pepper and red pepper. Bring to boil over medium heat and cook, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Add onion tops and parsley. Mix well. Serve with cooked rice. Serves four.

### PEA AND STUFFED CRAWFISH
- 12-16 lbs. crawfish
- 4 cups water
- 3 cups peas
- 4 cups cooked rice
- salt, black pepper and red pepper, to taste

Wash crawfish and put into large pot. Add water. Bring to boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Add peas. Add rice and seasonings. Cover and cook until rice is tender. Serve hot.
Also, Timmons claims, the U.S. balance of payments would improve at least $42 million if 300,000 more tons were allocated to U.S. mainland growers—instead of to foreign exporting countries.

Perhaps the quota squeeze is felt most strongly by medium-size farmers such as Nicholas Paul of St. Mary Parish. He started planting cane in the early '30s with a pair of mules—plus an iron determination to make good. By 1945, he had won the state’s high-yield award, almost doubling the state’s average tons-per-acre production.

Paul said he’s capable of planting approximately 200 acres—but successive quota cutbacks permit him no more than 124.

“The quota leaves me with all the expenses and damned little of the profit,” said Paul. He explained: “I could grow 150 acres for just about the same investment required by 100 acres—and that additional 50 would yield a good return for a lot of hard work.”

Paul also opined that many small farmers will be out of business if their acreage is cut back further. “You can’t take the profit out of a man’s business and expect him to keep going.”

In the late '30s, reports the sugar league, there were more than 10,000 sugarcane farms in Louisiana, and they averaged 25-30 acres of cane. But in 1967, there were only 1,912. These averaged 185 acres of cane.

According to sugar economist Timmons, small farmers are being squeezed out of business by spiraling costs and reduced quotas. “But,” added Timmons, “the number of farms with 500 acres or more in cane has remained fairly constant.”

Many farmers, such as Pete deGravelle Jr. of St. Mary Parish, lease as many acres as they feel they can plant under the quota. “I rent on six different tracts,” said deGravelle. “Last year, I harvested just about 398 acres; and next year—because of the USDA cutback of 17 percent—I’ll harvest only 335 acres.”

He said emphatically, “If I had planned to buy any new equipment before the quota cut, I certainly would not buy it now.”

“We’re in deep trouble,” complained C. A. Duplantis Jr., part owner of Sunrise Planting Corporation near Franklin. “We’re not just hollering wolf! That Sugar Act has got to be amended again, if we’re going to stay in business.”

Another empathic claim to justify higher sugar quotas for Louisiana and Florida growers was made by Richard C. Plater of Acadia Plantation near Thibodaux, La.

“Those sugar-exporting neighbors of ours don’t pay U.S. taxes,” he said, and added, “The Louisiana-Florida sugar-cane industry produces less than a tenth of the sugar consumed in the U.S.”


But, says economist Timmons, this may not be likely until the act expires in 1971.
From December to May "the finest food in the world" is harvested in Louisiana. These men tend crawfish nets in rice field.

Commissioner of state welfare and former senator, Garland Bonin of Lafayette, has suggested that the crawfish replace the pelican as Louisiana's symbol. Secretary of State Wade O. Martin, Jr., not to be outdone, has called the little fellows "the finest food in the world."

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boon. For some years, enterprising restaurants and canneries have "put up" crawfish bisque in cans. Now that the delicious meat of the tail can be frozen in handy packs for the housewife, the packers are freezing the bisque, the etouffee and other goodies.

Several years ago, the friends and neighbors of Breaux Bridge (Pont Breaux), where Little Narcisse was bit-ten to start the chain of events, banded together and launched the first of what has become an annual event of great jollity, eating, drinking and merrymaking, the Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival, complete with parade, pretty girls, crawfish queen and princesses and even its own song, written by C. Landry and E. Migues and arranged by G. Martin, which starts off, "Crawfish are where crawfish go and that's in craw-fish hole; Breaux Bridge people catch 'em all, and have big crawfish boil . . . ."

The secret of the crawfish boil is plenty, plenty of salt—two full boxes to a sack (40 pounds) of crawfish. And pepper, red pepper and black. You can add an onion or two, some herbs if you want; many people steam 'em in a mess of beer. But always much salt and pepper.

The little mudbugs turn a fiery red in about 20 minutes; then you let them cool enough to touch them, you twist off the heads "and suck the head and eat the tail" . . . because the head is full of rich fat and succulent juices and the tail is packed with solid, flavorful meat. Just peel off the shell and pop it into your mouth. Little Narcisse did it that way.

The little crawfish, who brings an estimated $3 million annually into the area now, may escalate into a $40 million annual operation, producers, processors and area educators believe.