Boudin king reigns in South Louisiana Kitchens

By JEAN COCO
Food writer

BOUDIN — pronounced boo-dyn

"I think it's derived from the word boude, which in French means the stuff or stuffing... and boudin is to stuff," explains Ellis Cormier, the "Boudin King.

And he should know.

Since the early '50s Ellis Cormier has prepared boudin at 906 West Division Street in Jennings.

Boudin, best described as rice dressing in a sausage casing, reigns as the top seller at Ellis's Cajun Way Restaurant.

"Sometimes I wonder if I might of just sold it as a Cajun Way dressing it would have been better," he says, "because boudin doesn't have eye appeal and we eat with our eyes."

He's right — for when people see a link of boudin they usually question its contents.

Someone once commented that it looked "utterly unborn.

Yet when people bite into a piece of boudin they're hooked, relates Cormier.

Originally Cormier sold boudin in the meat department of his grocery store.

Shoppers would go to the back of Cormier's grocery to buy a few pounds of boudin. Ellis would hack off a section of boudin, weigh it, wrap it in freezer paper, then scribble the price on the pack with a marker.

MJust a few minutes later someone would come and buy a pound of boudin.

Ellis Cormier

Cajun Way Restaurant

Jennings, La.

"I wonder how many people get their boudin from us," he says.

"I think it's the best boudin in the South."

Part of the reason is the secret touch lies in the rice dressing. Ellis Cormier practices the tradition of serving boudin to customers.

"When the rice is tender it's ready to serve," Cormier explained as he drew a piece of boudin from a steaming pot.

For Ellis Cormier the practice of serving boudin extends beyond Jennings city limits.

Recently he hauled 300 pounds of boudin to Washington, D.C. for the Mardi Gras festivities on Capitol Hill.

Then Cormier paraded with other Louisianians as a member of the Louisiana krewe.

Last summer he braved sweltering temperatures at the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival, where people waited an hour and a half to sample his product.

At the festival's close he had served 2,500 pounds of boudin to 1,500 customers.

With the recent rage of Cajun cuisine those figures are believable.

"I think Cajun is going to be a fad, but it's going to dwindle down because a lot of people are not going to put out the quality," Cormier commented.

But for the Boudin King, Cajun is not fad, but family heritage.

"Whatever you start with is what you're going to end up with. You start with something good, you're going to end up with a good product," Cormier says of his ingredients.

Thirty-five years ago Ellis started out with good goods: quality ingredients, a family recipe, and genuine Cajun hospitality.

Today that tradition thrives at the Cajun Way Restaurant.

To get there head out on I-10 due West for Jennings. Take the Jennings-Elton exit, make a left, and continue on Lake Arthur Avenue. At the fourth stop light turn right onto West Division Street and after two blocks you'll see Cajun Way on the right.

Ellis Cormier