Acadiana awakens one day to find Cajun’ a household word.

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Once television arrived in Acadiana in the late 1950s, too, no one was waiting back the Ameri- can culture of the South country.

An effort that began in the late 1950s to promote the French lan- guage in Louisiana by teaching it in elementary school classrooms. The teachers, recruited from other French-speaking counties, taught on standard French to- day's of the indigenous culture. Parents and grandparents were angered and frustrated to see so- cial generation of Cajun children being taught that their language — and, in the process, their culture — was inferior. The chips on their shoulders were often palpable.

Meanwhile, the number of Louisiana residents who spoke French at home dropped by more than half between 1970 and 1990, according to the U.S. census.

By the 1980s, the culture was in a severe depression, and a similar fate seemed to be the pe- troleum industry had been based there.

Acadiana. Then the rest of America got a taste of southern Louisiana — literally — and everything changed.

Cajun takes Manhattan

Opaques, nola Presses had opened its hole-in-the-wall New Orleans restaurant, K.- Paul’s Louisiana Kitchen, in 1979. When he set up shop in Manhattan for a month in 1985, he introduced the world to French- style food and other culinary delights and called it cuisine Cajun.

The New York restaurant scene took notice. And did! The New York Times, and the na- tional news media weren’t far behind. In an instant, Cajun eating was a genuine phenome- non. Restaurants all over the country began adding Cajun items to their menus, and food companies started to pro- duce elements of Cajun cuisine.

But the true turn came when television and the Internet brought Cajun culture to the world.

With a critical mass of fans excited about the Cajun lifestyle, the culture exploded across Europe and into Aus- tralia and New Zealand.

The public’s interest in Cajun food was so high, a new gener- ation of Cajun chefs in New Orleans started to cook Cajun food.

With more green roads open, the CAFD/TV network be- gan to open up the Cajun lifestyle to the world.

One of the most important trends in Cajun food has been the development of French influences and the use of seafood.

The changes that have come to the Cajun people so much of the world has not been lost on him.

"I’ll warn you, the Cajun, I won’t be here where I am now. I went out of art school in Los An- geles in 1980, and while I was in L.A., I realized how different Louisiana was. After four years in L.A., I came back to Louisiana and I wanted to paint the Cajun culture that I saw was disappearing."

"I ran away, as a boy, seeing Cajun going to the gro- cery store in a bus and hangy in planes like Camerons and Ville Plaques. I come from college to know that we were new and young and that we were gone. The culture was slip- ping away."\n
Experts who study cultures know that they are always changing, even if the change is so incremental that it is not noticeable.

But the proliferation wrought by the 21st-century market certainly expediently spread Cajun food to the world.

There’s no doubt that Cajun culture is a small component of the much larger world of culture that the people are trying to hold on to something in the midst of a very rapidly changing world,” said Richard Marinovich, a Tulane University anthropologist.

Rodrigue spent most of his time in Cavan, Calif., but he maintains close ties to south Louisiana, and he despairing of the long-term prospects for keeping the same alive.

"The similarity of all dying cultures is that they grow at the end and they become larger than life,” the New Orleans native said. "They go on with a great tradition, and that is over, and everyone imitates their work.

"The Cajun French language will die off, there’s no doubt about that. The attitude isn’t.

Life continues

Many Cajun people aren’t dwelling on the past at all. They work, they shop, they play ball, they go to school, they live their typical, modern lives from the other Americans, unfazed by the debate.

In the American culture, little things are in the everyday lives of everyone.

"It’ll warn you, people tagged a specific realization that this is a way of life,’ he said.

It’s 15-year-old Joel Martin

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