CAJUNS, CROCS AND CRAYFISH

The Cajuns who inhabit the French-accented southeast Louisiana feast on crayfish and gambas, hunt for alligators, dance exuberantly and revel in Mardi Gras. But there's another side to the rich heritage of Cajun: homegrown oil barons, vast cattle ranches, grand plantations, and a laid-back local aristocracy.

By Nan Tillman Birmingham / Photographs by John Lewis Stape

Alligator expert! Experts in Cajun cooking, like Chefs de Cuisine d’Acadiane (clockwise, starting with a tray of water specialties in Edgardo’s Cuisine Lake on the University of Southeastern Louisiana campus. From left to right: Riverside Bar’s Naba Bazzi, Pet World of Charles, The Louisiana’s Shoe Johnson, Bub Poiteau of Ooh Pukka. Edgardo O’Shea’s ruling octopus for Nestlé Home, Alton Brown’s Executive Chef/ Michael Chesney, and chef on Brown’s Island.)

May, 1998
Renaud-deille, Merle; Cousin, Elyse, "Vermilion, more than a sportsman's paradise, is an evocative reminder of the uniquely French spirit of Louisiana," The New York Times, October 10, 1954. The story was published in the New Orleans Times Picayune. It spoke of the "Vermilion" as everyone's hometown. "The bayou has been an armory of French culture in a region once dominated by the Spanish, and it remains today a symbol of the diversity of Louisiana's cultural heritage."

The article continues, "In the Vermilion area, the bayou..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou is..."..."...the bayou 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The daughter of Dr. and Mrs. B. Coen du Bouvier (top), daughter of Ann C. Paul, was president of McDaniel College in 1976 when she was named the Outstanding Woman of the Year. University." After attending the University of the Sacred Heart, she went to France to study art history at the Sorbonne. After receiving her degree, she returned to the United States and began her career in the arts. She is currently the director of the New Orleans Museum of Fine Arts.

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The daughter of Dr. and Mrs. B. Coen du Bouvier (top), daughter of Ann C. Paul, was president of McDaniel College in 1976 when she was named the Outstanding Woman of the Year. University." After attending the University of the Sacred Heart, she went to France to study art history at the Sorbonne. After receiving her degree, she returned to the United States and began her career in the arts. She is currently the director of the New Orleans Museum of Fine Arts.

In addition to her work at the museum, Dr. Coen du Bouvier is also a gifted painter. She has exhibited her work in numerous galleries and museums throughout the United States. Her paintings have been featured in several prominent magazines, including Art in America and Modern Painters. In 1978, she received the prestigious award for Outstanding Woman in the Arts from the American Association of University Women.

Through her tireless efforts, Dr. Coen du Bouvier has made significant contributions to the arts in New Orleans. Her dedication to promoting and preserving the cultural heritage of the city has earned her the respect and admiration of her peers. She continues to inspire others with her passion for the arts and her commitment to making art accessible to all.
The image contains a page from a magazine article titled "Louisiana Life," featuring several photographs and text. The text discusses various aspects of Louisiana life, including culture, cuisine, and local traditions. The page includes a title at the top, "JOUE DE LOUISIANA," and features images of people engaged in traditional activities. One image shows a person fishing, another shows a group of women cooking, and others depict different facets of Louisiana's heritage and lifestyle. The layout includes both photographs and text blocks, typical of a magazine format. The content is interspersed with captions and descriptive text, providing a vivid portrayal of the subject matter.
In the dining room, a hearty continental breakfast is served. Breakfast bars of fresh-baked bread, croissants, bagels, muffins and a selection of jams and preserves are served daily. There is also a choice of coffee, tea, and juice. Fresh fruit is available throughout the day.

In the living room, a fireplace provides a cozy atmosphere. Books and magazines are available for guests to enjoy. The room is also equipped with a television and a selection of board games.

The guest rooms are comfortably furnished with queen-size beds and modern amenities. Each room has a private bathroom with a shower or bathtub.

The hotel is located in the heart of the city, just a short walk from the main shopping district and public transportation. It is also a convenient base for exploring the many cultural and historical attractions of the city.

For those who enjoy outdoor activities, the hotel can arrange a variety of services, including guided tours of the city's main attractions, bicycle rentals, and private car tours.

The hotel's staff is dedicated to ensuring that guests have a memorable stay. They are always available to provide assistance and answer any questions guests may have.

"The hotel is a perfect blend of comfort and convenience. The staff is friendly and the location is ideal." - John D. from New York City
of Jackson, Louisiana, in East Indians." The river was not in a hurry; the boys in the park had plenty of time to play. They were, in fact, engaged in a long, drawn-out game of the sort where one's social and professional standing is also earned by community service. As the town grew and the river became a major waterway, the town's name was changed to "East Indian" in honor of its early residents.

Some old-timers remember the days when the river was a source of conflict between the town's white and black residents. The river was a dividing line, a boundary that could not be crossed. But as the years went by, the river became a symbol of the town's resilience and the community's determination to overcome adversity.

Despite the challenges, the town has thrived. Its residents have worked hard to preserve their heritage and to ensure that the river continues to be a vital part of the town's identity. Today, the river is a source of pride for the town, and its residents are determined to keep it that way for generations to come.

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M 4005, and the town's oldest church, St. John's Episcopal, is located in the heart of the town. The church is a landmark, a symbol of the town's history and its commitment to the community. The church is open to the public, and visitors are welcome to explore its beautiful architecture and its rich history.

The town's oldest residents, the McElhans, have been a part of the town's history for generations. They have witnessed the town's growth and its challenges, and they have been a part of the town's resilience. The McElhans are proud of their heritage and of the town they call home. They are determined to keep the town's traditions alive for generations to come.
have been situated. The Academy was founded in 1828 by two pairs of elder called the Religious of the Sacred Heart who traveled the Mississippi and bayous by steamboat and jargon. Since the school opened with eight students, it has functioned through epidemics, fire, flood and the Civil War. Karen McGlasson is currently involved in restoring the formal French gardens that once flourished in front of the gracious old brick buildings. Her friend Melissa Evans Boudinot, who serves on the Alumnae Board, was also graduated from Sacred Heart—as were Melanie’s mother and daughter.

“Cajun family ties are part of the way of life here,” says Melanie, who lives in Jennings and devotes hours to the Eighty Museum, with its important art collection and museum of Louisiana wildlife. “Religion and isolation originally kept people close. Now it’s the automobile and interstate I-10. It seems that few people ever move far away, so one has friends and family in all the little towns or in Lafayette and Lake Charles. We don’t think a thing about driving long distances for a visit or a meal.”

One place people don’t mind driving to for a meal is Prudhomme’s Cajun Cafè in Caremoro, the creation of Euphia Prudhomme—whose brother is that ambassador of Cajun cuisine, Paul Prudhomme. “When you’re brought up in a house with twelve kids to be fed at every meal,” says Euphia, “it’s just a short step to running a restaurant.”

“People around here could cook a suck and make it taste good,” says Virginia Kyle Himes, Lafayette’s expert on regional food and folklore. “Produce that’s indigenous to the region, varied and plentiful seafood and game, and the mixture of French, Spanish, German, Native American, West Indian and African influences on food preparations have brought about styles of cooking that are unique to southwest Louisiana. Right now it’s a national craze that’s becoming international. We never called it Creole or Cajun cuisine. We never called it anything. It was what we ate for dinner.”

Almost every town boasting Lafayette has at least one good restaurant. Beyond that, the communities differ from each other in architecture and atmosphere. New Iberia has its Spanish origins. Crowley could be located in the Midwest but for the Spanish moss beading its trees. Franklin, south on the road toward Morgan City and the Gulf, is an Anglo-Irish, Episcopalian stronghold in this Catholic, Cajun wilderness. Noted for its restoration of great plantation houses, Franklin boasts such estates as Oaklawn, Euson, Armand and Shadowen. The great houses reflect the genteel, elegant life on the sugar and rice plantations that once flourished along the Bayou Teche.

Leading a dash of spice to the coastal marshes west of Franklin and south of New Iberia is Avery Island, the home of Tabasco. Avery Island, a descendant of a Scot-Irish family, McIlhenney’s father-in-law, Judge Daniel Dudley Avery, whose family owned the island, became interested in Tabasco sauce in 1865 as a treat of land consisting of 1,500 acres of hills rolling over a salt dome and 19,000 acres of surrounding marshland. The dome is said to be eight miles deep and two miles wide.

After the Civil War, the family returned to find little had survived the devastation except a field of peppers. Edmund McIlhenney, Avery Island, his family’s patriarch, set about creating a fiery sauce. By 1866, he had developed a satisfactory formula for mixing, fermenting and aging a pepper mash, and the Tabasco factory was founded. Since then, Tabasco has found its way into soups, sauces, entrées, drinks and dips throughout the world.

If the original McIlhenney fortunes grew down by Tabasco sauce deep, it flowered in 1914 when oil was discovered on Avery Island. At one point, there were more than 100 oil wells pumping oil from below the salt and pepper. The McIlhenney Company is still controlled by McIlhenney’s Vice-President Paul C.P. McIlhenney, company President and CEO Ed McIlhenney Simons and Vice-President Edmund McIlhenney Jr., who were all raised in New Orleans, moved onto Avery Island with their families when they came to work at company headquarters. There are several houses that are used for company functions. Avery Island is a 36,000-acre jungle garden and forest nursery that was created at the end of the nineteenth century by Edward Avery McIlhenney, an explorer and bush pilot who wanted to guarantee that the great va-sary of birds and plants growing in this marshland would not disappear.

Today, with the invasion of tourists and highways, constant vigilance is needed in southwest Louisiana against changes that will strip Acadiana of its uniqueness—the distinction in the United States. But its substance remains. With the language and culture prevalent with their French roots, the French families who wandered in search of one another centuries ago.