Cookbooks celebrate flavor of Louisiana

By Judy Stanford
Food Editor

Many agree that the food of Acadiana is some of the best in the world. In recent years, a number of cookbooks have sprung up, sharing with cooks everywhere the style of cooking that belongs uniquely to this area.

For 30 years, The Advertiser has celebrated the cuisine of Acadiana with its annual cookbook contest. Each year, between 300 and 600 of the best area cooks have entered the contest. Contest entrants have been amateur home cooks and professional chefs. They have ranged in age from 8 to 87. And their recipes have been published yearly in "The Advertiser Cookbook," a tabloid which has been requested by people from all 50 states.

The Advertiser is not alone in its interest in the cooking lore of Louisiana. Three new cookbooks also reflect the diverse and colorful cuisine of Louisiana:

Pauline Sanders Jamison presents traditional Cajun cooking with a touch of the continent in her cookbook, "Cuisine from Louisiana, Flowers From France." Remy Laterrade draws upon his experience growing up in New Orleans with an Italian mother and a French father, combined with his experience living among the people of South Louisiana to develop recipes for his book, "I Want Dat Cajun Cookbook." And the "Louisiana Festivals Cookbook, Book One" pools the talent of contestants from around the state.

Cookbooks show the diversity of Louisiana cuisine.

French would recognize. I wanted to make sure they could find all the ingredients.

"At the same time, I tried to choose recipes that we consider our typical recipes," she added.

The book contains recipes for Crawfish Creole and Seafood Gumbo, as well as Ambrosia and other South Louisiana favorites.

Jamison said that the people who influenced her life most were her maternal grandmother, Ellena Andrus Stelly and the late Elena Delgado Dur, a friend who first introduced her to the people and culture of France.

The book is written in both French and English.

"I struggled to find the common ground between the cultures," she said. "I tried to use recipes that the people in good Cajun cookbooks," Laterrade said.

Andrus Stelly and the late Elena Laterrade also strove to simplify recipes. "I tried to eliminate exotic ingredients you've never heard of," he said. "I consider it a very user-friendly cookbook."

The book is available in stores and restaurants or by mail from "I Want Dat Cajun Cookbook," P.O. Box 3942, Lafayette, La. 70502

Remy Laterrade began working on his cookbook, "I Want Dat Cajun Cookbook," about six years ago.

"It was like a dream to get a cookbook out," he said. "To be your own man."

Laterrade has been living in Lafayette for several years now, having managed The Depot Restaurant at its former location in Broussard. The restaurant moved to Scott at about the same time Laterrade finished his book in 1991. At that point, he decided to leave the restaurant to promote his book full-time.

A native of the ninth ward in New Orleans, Laterrade learned to cook Cajun-style when he was living in La Rosé.

"For the people down there," he said, "cooking Cajun is a way of life."

The cookbook, now in its third printing since it came out in 1991, is divided into eight categories, from appetizers to desserts. There is even a section called "Idiots!" for miscellaneous items that did not seem to fit any category.

"I tried to find what was lacking in good Cajun cookbooks," Laterrade said.

He includes in his book complete instructions on how to make a roux, always a tricky proposition for a beginner, along with cooking tips, charts and even space for notes, just in case the cook wants to make changes in the recipe.

Most cooks use recipes as guidelines and rarely ever use them verbatim," he said.

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Delta Corner's award-winning Rice and Apricot Delight recipe appears in "Louisiana Festivals Cookbook, Book One."
Cookbooks
Continued from E-1

Book” is the first of a series of cookbooks proposed by Lou Ana Gardens, a division of an Opelousas corporation, perhaps best known for its cooking oils.

The cookbook includes 144 recipes gathered from festivals across the state, from the Cattle Festival in Abbeville to the Catfish Festival in Winnsboro. The recipes come from the kitchens of some of the best cooks in the state.

Cooks such as Delta Corner of Abbeville, who compete and win at these festivals, are featured throughout the pages of this cookbook. Four of Corner’s recipes have found their way into print in this edition.

Corner is the veteran of countless cooking contests all over the country. She entered her first competition in 1961. “Since then, I’ve never stopped,” she said.

Corner’s Rice and Apricot Delight, a sumptuous cheesecake, won First Place at Crowley’s International Rice Festival in 1988, and is one of the desserts featured in the “Louisiana Festivals Cookbook, Book I”.

The book is bright with illustrations by artist Tony O. Champagne, and includes an introduction to each festival from which recipes were taken.

This book will be available in stores later this month, or can be purchased through the mail from Lou Ana Gardens, P.O. Drawer 53247, Lafayette, La. 70505.