Crawfish Is State 'Folk-Hero''

Jambalaya, crawfish pie and file gumbo were tops on the hit parade in South Louisiana long before Hank Williams put the words to music and came up with the popular song "Jambalaya on the Bayou."

The list of crawfish dishes doesn't stop with jambalaya, pie and gumbo. Its repertoire also includes stew, bisque, salad and etouffee. And it gets considerable attention just plain boiled.

Although found on every continent except Africa, the crawfish is most numerous and most appreciated in Louisiana. It has become embedded in the lore of Acadian life and is now elevated to the status of a "folk-hero."

A crawfish festival has been held annually at Breaux Bridge, about eight miles east of Lafayette, but the overwhelming popularity of the event and the small city's inability to handle the growing crowds forced its cancellation this year.

City fathers, however, hope to use this year's respite to rethink the festival and try to provide bigger facilities so that the festival can be continued, perhaps, next year.

The "poor man's lobster" offers the most inexpensive form of fishing imaginable and even a rank amateur has a good chance of catching enough to keep all the youngsters in the party thoroughly delighted.

You don't need a boat and motor — or even a Louisiana fishing license. And you don't have to get far from the beaten path to find a productive crawdad hole. Almost any ditch, canal or bayou will do.

The rice fields of the state are cultivated in the off-rice season to produce a bonanza of the crustaceans but most of these are commercially-oriented.

It's not unusual to see dozens of families crawfishing the waters running adjacent to U.S. Highways 190 and 61 between Opelousas and New Orleans allowing the youngsters will have checking them and trying to remove the crawfish without suffering the slight pinch from the claws.

One thing to remember is the muddier the water the better your chances of catching crawfish. If you can see them, they can see you too. And they're master escape artists, even if they do swim backwards.

It's unlikely that an afternoon at a roadside canal or ditch will produce enough crawfish for a family dinner, although it's not impossible.

After the youngsters have had their fun catching, head for a restaurant which serves one of the more than 20 varieties of Louisiana crawfish.

That way you and the kids can have their crawfish and eat them too.