By: Susan Boudreaux

Tucked away among the giant rice mills in Crowley lies one of the town’s best kept secrets, Old Tyme Café’. As you’re approaching the restaurant from West Oak St., don’t let the façade of the metal building that houses this Acadiana jewel fool you. Once you step into the café’ you’ll be over taken by the warmth of the décor and the tantalizing smells wafting from the kitchen. The feel of the interior is a little reminiscent of what you would imagine the “Whistle Stop Café” from the movie Fried Green Tomatoes might be like and the breakfast and lunch only menu of the café is one of the best around.

Owner Laura Benoit and her open-arm welcoming staff have been delighting locals since 2000 with authentic, Cajun, home-cooking. As I listen to Laura, I begin to understand not only her passion, but one of the secrets to her success. “I grew up on a rice farm and, of course, cooking was a huge part of growing up; preparing meals with my Mom and packing them up to take to the fields to the workers during planting and harvest time was just a way of life... just such a big part of our culture... so, owning a café’ just felt natural to me.” And, if you’re familiar with meals that get “sent out to the fields” in Acadiana, you know they just don’t consist of a cold-cut sandwich! Yes, Laura’s authentic cooking expertise is grounded in her true understanding of Cajun heritage and it is apparent in the café’s irresistible offerings, especially the weekday plate lunches. Plate lunch specials can range from sumptuous shrimp stew over rice topped with fried catfish to baked brisket with all the fresh sides like black eye peas, green beans and rice dressing. The portions of these daily home-cooked meals are enough to satisfy the biggest of appetites!

You’ll also delight in the regular menu items at Old Tyme Café’. Breakfast is served the entire time the restaurant is open (Monday – Friday 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.) and includes everything from hot, healthy oatmeal to the famous “Meat Lover’s Omelet” that is brimming with ham, bacon, sausage and cheese. Don’t forget to try the homemade hash browns! Lunch items, along with the daily lunch specials include “to die for” sandwiches, burgers, salads, soups, and regular entrées like a pork chop dinner for $9.50 that can be ordered grilled or fried. When asked about one of the café’s most popular items Laura paused and...
said, “That’s really hard to say because they all seem popular...but, three things come to mind ---Our “Smoky Mountain Melt” sandwich that is made with roasted turkey, bacon, jalapenos, melted cheese, and grilled onions, all on a warm, homemade bun, our “made fresh” onion rings, and our grilled chicken pasta salad. Yum!

When asked about the most rewarding part of owning the café’ Laura says humbly, “You know, I lived in this area all my life and owning the café’ has made me feel so connected to not only our community, but my extended family across Acadiana.” She elaborated, “You see, we’re located right in the heart of the rice industry and we have seasonal customers (rice farmers) who stop in to get our home cooking during different parts of the season...So, I always have something to look forward to knowing that during the season I’ll see not only my local friends and customers, but at some point, I’ll get to see my friends from Iota, Mamou, Gueydan, Ville Platte...It’s wonderful! “

Old Tyme Café is located in Crowley at 305 West Oak St. and is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. They can be reached at 337-783-8963 or you can view their website at www.oldtyme.net.