Native Louisianans' lives revolve around food. We go to sleep thinking about breakfast, wake up wondering what’s for lunch and go through the day planning our supper. It is definitely a luxury to live in a state with such a wide variety of culinary attractions.

Even if you don’t believe that Louisiana has the best cuisine, just wait — as soon as you step out of the state, you’re sure to realize how good we really have it. You may find yourself thinking, “Where’s the salt, and what’s with all these potatoes?”

To remind locals about the treasures in their own backyard and inform the rest of country of our scrumptious goods, the Louisiana Office of Tourism and the Louisiana Travel Promotion Association teamed up with Tabasco and Compass Marketing to

Story by Kera Simon | timesedit@timesofacadiana.com

All photos submitted unless otherwise noted
The Statue of Liberty may be in New York, but it is our Acadian home that truly reflects the words on your teeming shore; Send these, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, to a new land and the two items here lift my lamp beside the golden door!

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broken down into seven regions, grouping the same tastes and areas together so travelers could take two or three days to experience it all. The regions are grouped to incorporate both rural and metropolitan areas, all within a reasonable driving distance.

Lauren Roach, the LTPA communications manager, said third-party trail writers were already familiar with the areas. The writers were given a map and were assigned one or two trails to cover seven regions and complete their research, write and cover the writing, to complete their week deadline, two weeks of traveling and two weeks of writing, to complete their report. The writers were to cover seven regions and each were assigned one or two trails that they were already familiar with. The writers were given a map and the

"Bayou Bounty" includes Cajun dishes in Houma and boudin on the Cajun influence, the guide. Some of Louisiana's most famous foods come from this area, including gumbo, bisque, stews, jambalaya, and crawfish. Of course, you can remember your mom or grandmother cooking and eating.

Benjy's Bistro is a web-based program. Susan Reeks covered the Northern Louisiana regions of "Red River Riches" and "Delta Delights," being from Monroe and now residing in Shreveport. Reeks was very familiar with the assigned areas. Before doing any online research, like Macchione, she asked her friends who travel a lot to suggest some eateries of interest. Reeks tried to be as objective as possible keeping in mind that her readers have different tastes. But being from Louisiana, Reeks said she could definitely tell the good food from the bad. She was looking for something really unique and interesting.

"The thing that I love about Louisiana is how some of the little bit places sometimes have the most excellent food," Reeks said.

Sandra Day acted as an editor in chief for the Louisiana Culinary Trails guide. She has lived all over the state of Louisiana and is familiar with the different cultures and cuisine of the regions. Day wanted to make sure that the guide could highlight all of Louisiana's dining experience, finding the true gems of local flavor. It was definitely a team effort, incorporating all the writers and managing editor, Allison Hatfield, to boil the writing down to small nuggets in each region to include as many restaurants and businesses as possible. All the trail writers' words came together to form the digital guide to Louisiana's Culinary Trails, which can be found online at foodiecramer.com/destinations/ms/louisiana. The guide simply offers suggestions for those interested in discovering the state by taste. It can be used to help discover your own trail, by adding and subtracting destinations to your trip.

The guide is a great tool for those residents within the state looking to discover new culinary communities and travel writers were hired to go into the communities and talk to people about their favorite places to dine. It was important to have separate writers convey the information so as not to seem like LTPA was directly suggesting one restaurant over another. The writers had about 90 days to complete their research, write and turn in their final project. The writers were to cover seven regions and each were assigned one or two trails that they were already familiar with. The writers were given a map and the

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experiences around them. If you’re tired of going to the same places, this online resource: you’ve never heard can help you find new restaurants, or just ones.

The Web site is hosted by FoodTrekker.com, which is a growing database of dining destinations. You can explore the state in regions or look at all of the restaurant listings. Registered members of the site can post their own recipes or write reviews and publish comments about the listed restaurants or communities they’ve visited. Not all of the listings are specifically defined as “Cajun” or “Creole,” but they are all Louisiana-based.

A press conference and the official launch of “Red River Riches” took place this summer to enhance your appearance with the latest in beauty and fashion. Stop by and see the latest fashions and accessories. We have a variety of styles and sizes for women and girls. We also carry name brands, petite sizes, and plus sizes. So come on in and stay a while at the new salon looking spectacularly fabulous.

Delta Delights” represents the cuisine of Monroe all the way to Vidalia. This area is dominated by rich farm land, recreational waterways, and scenic highways while the dining experience causes you to slow down, relax, and stop.

The Conrad Rice Mill in New Iberia is a member of LPTA and as soon as officials there heard of an opportunity to be involved in the Culinary Trails, they decided it would be a good thing for them. The mill can offer Louisiana taste-cravers vital education about the state’s cuisine and its history.

“Prairie Home Cooking” includes Alexandria and southern areas that have cooking styles as varying as the terrain — Cajun practices turn into hardwood forests and Cajun cooking meets Southern styles.

If you’re tired of meat pies, as well as Shreveport’s metropolitan ambiance with its Southern kick.

Experience the vitality and ingredients to back up their reputation, no matter how big or small.

For the Lafayette foodies who are interested in seeing what the rest of the state has to offer their pallets. travel written from New Orleans and Shreveport have a few suggestions that would make for great weekend trips.

Susan Reeks grew up in Monroe and now lives in Shreveport. She’s discovered a few outstanding favorites along the way.

Waterfront Grill (3201 DeSmet St., Monroe, 318-345-0004) offers picturesque views of Bayou DeSard and is a great place to host an event. The food is of high quality and is sure to kick your taste buds.

Ernest’s Orleans Restaurant

Ask for it at your local grocer.

Benoit’s Best
A Healthy Choice!
Manufactured Locally

Developed by a Pharmacist
Benoit’s Best is especially useful for persons with health conditions requiring limited salt intake such as (kidney or heart disease, high blood pressure, etc.)

All Natural Ingredients
Garlic, Red Pepper, Turmeric, Parsley, Oregano, Black Pepper, Red Bell Pepper

NO Sodium • NO Salt • NO MSG

Disney going Cajun

The Culinary Trails have already helped to highlight Louisiana as a Table table-barring destination, even before its full web site was up. Representatives from Disney Food and Wine Festival, which usually shows up exactly in the middle of different countries, began investigating places to possibly include during the second long festival. They found a description about the Culinary Trails on the LPTA web site, and contacted state tourism officials about getting involved. The Tourism Office of Louisiana is now organizing similar events, in the festival, planning not only to show the rest of the world, but also to include Louisiana artists, entertainers and chefs to help bring shrimp and rice culture closer to Disney. The festival will last from Sept. 26, 2006, and Louisiana will be one of the state present.
(1601 Spring St., Shreveport; 318-226-1325) brings the down-south flavor of New Orleans to North Louisiana. Reeks was surprised at how real to New Orleans flavor the food actually was, and is the closest thing to the original found north of I-10.

Chianti Restaurant (6535 Line Ave., Shreveport; 318-868-8866) has really good Italian entrees with a good atmosphere. A wine bistro is also attached to it offering an impressive glass list.

Counter Culture (203 E. Kings Hwy., Shreveport; 318-869-3612) is perfect for those interested in good quality food. Try their special yogurt, loaded with honey, fruit and granola — it’s practically a meal on its own.

Jacquelyn’s Café (1324 Louisiana Ave., Shreveport; 318-227-8598) is a great lunch spot that offers unique jambalaya so dark in color, it looks blackened. It also has a healthy menu and the best seafood gumbo in town.

Mikko Macchione covered the Baton Rouge and New Orleans areas to discover a wide variety of dining options you might want to try.

Try Chelsea’s Cafe (2857 Perkins Rd., Baton Rouge; 225-387-3679) for some high quality food. You can wear your blue jeans to this place and watch some live music.

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Tsunami (100 Lafayette St., Baton Rouge; 225-346-5100) is one of the best sushi bars in the state. It’s on top of the LSU Museum of Art and is considered the ideal date-place if you’re looking to get yourself out of the dog house. It’s high-end atmosphere is where Louisiana meets the east coast LA.

La Provence (25020 Hwy. 190, Lacombe; 985-626-7662) is impressive because it grows mostly everything on-site. Hunters and fishermen go to the restaurant to sell their freshest catch for customers to enjoy. This high-class dining experience is second to none.

Crabby Jack’s (428 Jefferson Hwy., Jefferson; 504-833-2722) is attached to a seafood warehouse and has incredible, well-prepared food at a reasonable price.

Mimi’s in the Marigny (2601 Royal Street, New Orleans; 504-872-9868) is open until 3 a.m. and is the place to go after hitting the French Quarter. It’s located on top of a bar, but it’s food definitely stands out on it’s own. Macchione suggested for travelers to try the manchego toasts with mild Spanish cheese and caramelized mushrooms — possibly the best bar food on the planet. It sure beats the usual bar nuts.

Casey’s Sno-Balls (4608 W. Esplanade Ave., Metairie, 504-888-3920) has been around for almost 40 years and specialize in making their own syrups and flavoring.