Here's What Cajun Food Is All About

By ALTON BROUSSARD

The plight of newly-arrived oil service personnel and other Yankees (without the adjective) who have a hard time adjusting to Cajun cookery has been recognized by one of Lafayette's lesser-known ethnic organizations, the Society for the Observation of St. Patrick's Day by the French Because St. Patrick Was a Frenchman, Inc. (The society is a splinter group which defected from the Lafayette Irish Club when that organization failed to adopt the name "Leprecoons.")

In a city known for its hospitality, the SFO&PDFBSPWF contends that nothing has been done to acquaint newcomers to the city, especially those from culinary deprived areas, with Cajun foods.

Pocket Reference

As a consequence, the local organization has compiled a glossary of Cajun foods which the uninitiated may clip out and carry in their wallets for ready reference.

A portion of the glossary follows:

**BOUDIN** — ( Pronounced boo-dan. Don't pronounce the "n", instead, make it go up your nose.) This has been made of pigs' casings which have been stuffed with pork bits, odds and ends of the animal that couldn't possibly be served any other way, condiments and, (don't retch) in the case of red boudin, the blood of the pig. Unless you are a surgeon or a scrub nurse, order the white boudin.

For a four- to six-week period preceding a first attempt to eat boudin, one should condition his system to the red pepper in the sausage by daily nibbling small bits of Tabasco pepper, gradually increasing the daily portions. When he can light a cigarette with his exhaled breath, he is ready for boudin, or any other Cajun food.

**Caution Advised**

Uleer patients should not attempt to eat boudin. In fact, they should not even be permitted to watch someone eat boudin unless the consumer is a Teche Hog. (A Teche Hog is a resident of Lafayette, St. Martin or Vermilion parishes, who regularly drank Opelousas moonshine during prohibition. Those who survived have cast iron stomachs and their eyes never water no matter what they eat.)

**COURTOUILLON** — (Get a second generation or older Cajun to pronounce this one for you. There are no serviceable English phonetics for it. Until then, just point to it on the menu.) Courtouillons is a savory, rich liquid loaded with tomatoes, tomato sauce, celery, onion, onion tops, parsley and fish — fish — fish. Also, if it was cooked in Lafayette, St. Landry, Vermilion, St. Martin, Iberia or Acadia parishes, it is hot hell — pepper hot.

Before sampling, have on hand a quart of homogenized milk, a six-pack of beer, or a fire extinguisher. If you suffer from diarrhea, irregularity, or hemorrhoids, don't even enter the restaurant.

**It's Craw, Not Cray**

**CRAWFISH BISQUE** — (Pronounced craw — fish bisk. Never say cray — fish unless you are from California or have a master's degree in speech.) This is a sophisticated crawfish delicacy that's too complex to explain. Just think of crawfish as succulent shellfish and not mudbugs and you'll probably enjoy it the first time you try it.

Bisque is a stew-like liquid with crawfish meat and stuffed crawfish shells. Don't attempt to ring the rim of your soup plate with the empty shells. This must be done with a soup spoon and requires years of practice or must be inherited from an ambidextrous ancestor with webbed toes.

**GRATON** — ( Pronounced gra-ton, but the "n" is not sounded in the last syllable. Try to nasalize the "n" and make the syllable sound like a grunt.) Commercial packing of graton under the names "cracklin" and "pig skins" has made these two shrimp returning terms reluctantly acceptable.

**PETRIFIED SKIN**

Call it what you like, graton are cubes of the pig skin cut deep through layers of fat and sometimes thin layers of meat. The graton is fried in hot grease, causing the outer skin to petrify. When eating graton, one should use his two front teeth to separate the hard skin from the remainder of the cube. The hard skin, unless you have exceptionally durable teeth, should be gracefully blown out of the mouth.

In some social circles one may use a pocketknife to slice off the hard skin, but gourmets claim this is like walking barefoot with shoes on. If the experimenter has cholesterol difficulties, he should consult a physician of Polish extraction before eating graton. (A Cajun physician would be biased in favor of the graton.) If the consumer has a queezy gall bladder, he should ask for a transfer back to Tulsa.

**GUMBO** — ( Pronounced just like the swamp mud of the same name.) This is a soup-like dish with many variations. Practically all gumbos are started with a roux, a basic ingredient of many Cajun dishes. The roux serves as a basic stock to which water is added and other major ingredients, according to the type of gumbo being made. For example, there is duck gumbo, okra gumbo, chicken gumbo, seafood gumbo, shrimp gumbo, and combinations, such as chicken — sausage gumbo, shrimp — okra gumbo, and on and on.

**Suit Yourself**

Rice is served with gumbo as a side dish but this is academic. The diner spoons the rice into his gumbo to suit his taste.

Some Cajun liberals will permit a gumbo — eater to substitute French bread for rice; however, the bread must be fresh and must have been produced by a bakery which has a revolving or flashing red light that is actuated as long as the bread is still oven-warm. In addition, the bread must be served with garlic — butter sauce to ward off the spirit of Toussaint L'Ouverture.

Gumbo eaters who profane the dish by refusing to eat either rice or French bread,
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may be subject to reprisals from vigilante committees, which kidnap their victims, smear them with la cuite and shower them with the downy feathers of mallard ducks.

JAMBALAYA — (Pronounced jum-bah-li-ya.) You might enjoy this dish the first time you try it. Ordinarily no conditioning is required. Essentially it is boiled rice which has been glamorized by the addition of pork, pork sausages, green peppers, chopped ham, beef stock, seasoning and herbs.

Creative Cajun cooks some times prepare a crab jambalaya or some other variation.

Curl Thin Ears
LES OREILLES DU COCHON

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