“MELT” reads the lettering on the store front on W, Landry St., undoubtedly puzzling hundreds of hurried tourists daily who may stop at the signal light at that corner. These days, “Melt” is advertised in poster paint on small stores throughout this area.

East bound tourists on U.S. 190 will also see it advertised on E, Vine St., at the small store near the Paul D, Pavy School. And just about everywhere else, too.

The appearance of “Melt” signs on the stores is the sure sign that the crawfishing season is upon us. Nowhere else but in South Louisiana is this the case. “Melt” in the stores is as sure a sign of the crawfish season in South Louisiana as buds on pecan trees are a sure sign of spring.

“Melt” is, of course, a corruption of the perfectly proper word “Milt,” which means the spleen. The spleen is a spongy organ in the stomach cavity of animals, including mankind, and the “Melt” on sale at the small stores is from beef animals. The dictionary says it is made up of “adenoidal tissue.” It is generally sold whole in the spring in this region -- a big slab of spongy tissue with a strong, transparent skin.

Melt is excellent crawfish bait. It is strong enough to hang together when you tie a bag of it in the bottom of a crawfish drop net, or on a string for line fishing. Yet it is soft enough to be highly attractive to crawfish, which bury their claws in it and munch away blissfully until you pull up the drop net or make a scoop under the line with a dip net.

And so “Melt” on the store fronts means crawfish teeming in the bayous and creeks and ponds and swamps -- but only in South Louisiana. And “melt” plus crawfish waters plus energy and know-how means, eventually, boiled crawfish and etouffee and bisque and crawfish stew and even -- yes, even -- “crawfish pie.” For when Hank Williams wrote that song about

“Jambalaya, crawfish pie, Creole gumbo,
Son of a gun we’re having fun on the bayou ....”

the restaurants in the Breaux Bridge area took him up. They merely put crawfish stew in pie crust, satisfied the tourists, and corrected Hank Williams' inaccuracy for him.

Deliciously, too.