Making Boudin May Be
A One-Time Adventure

By Mercedes Vidrine

Eunice — Among the treasured items in the home of the Vincent Riehls is a China cabinet of antique design with curved glass that Mary Alice inherited from her late mother, Mrs. V. Barras. Handsomely displayed is a collection of miniature figurines, a crawfish designed of ceramics by John (himself) Thistlethwaite ... and right "smack" in the center of all that grandeur is the tip end of a cow horn known to us Cajuns as a "boudinierre".

This item was used by my mother, the late Ella Fruge LeDoux, on more than one occasion to stuff boudin during a boucherie. It had been passed on to the eldest daughter, Mrs. Elton Frey and after Mary Alice did an article on an attempt at boudin-making ... my sister sacrificed this treasure to our friend. Sometimes the “boudinierre” is taken from the display case and taken as a traveling exhibit when Mary Alice speaks on Cajun culture.

If you will permit me, I’d like to share with you the column, “En Passant”, Mary Alice wrote some years ago while serving as area editor for the Daily World. It is subtitled “Pill Bottle. Cow Horn”.

"Me, I made boudin for Easter, and it was good ... even a ‘hard shell’ Texan ate some and asked for more.

"Right in the midst of grandchildren, dyeing Easter eggs, me making crawfish etouffee and getting a turkey ready for the oven, I decided to make boudin ... to show off to my daughters, who had the misfortune of being born in an era when boudin, when one gets it, comes from a meat market.

"Happily I boiled the two pounds of choice pork and one pound of pork liver in Cajun-seasoned water until it was ready to fall apart. I hauled out the food chopper and ground the cooked meat, put the stock back on the stove to simmer with more Cajun seasoning, mixed the meat and stock with fresh-cooked rice, and I was in business. Nothing to it ... nothing at all.

"While the mixture cooled, I opened the package labeled 'hog casings' and found what looked like some bleached fishing string coiled up in heavy salt.

"I didn’t know what to do with the casings. There were no directions on the carton ... the packers, no doubt, being pretty sure that no one would buy the things unless they knew what they were doing. Me, I had only a vague memory of seeing boudin made at a boucherie, watching while someone else stuffed the tasty dressing mixture into fresh hog casings, then put the finished product in a large pot to boil.

"My pride wouldn’t let me admit defeat, I called Mr. Fontenot at Meche’s Meat Market, ‘Soak ‘em in warm water for a while,’ he said, ‘Then run warm water from the faucet through them.’

"I took courage. It didn’t sound hard; anyone could do a thing like that.

"After 10 minutes of soaking, the casings still looked like fishing twine. I let the water from the faucet run through one; it did fine for about six inches of casing, then the thing sprang a leak. Finally I succeeded in opening up one about 18 inches long. I got ready to stuff my one boudin.

"Only a person who has tried to stuff a bunch of rice dressing into a tissue-thin, slippery membrane about an inch in diameter can fully appreciate my problem.

"An old memory revived; I remembered how the stuffing was done ... with a smooth piece of cow horn. I remembered how the length of hollow horn, about three or four inches, smaller at one end than the other, served as a funnel to stuff the casings. The casing was brought up over the small end and held firmly with the left hand, while the right hand attended to the business of feeding the dressing into the larger end, and as the dressing filled the casing, one stripped it down to fill the entire length of casing.

"BUT I DIDN’T have a cow horn. I alternately cursed the packers, no doubt, heing cow horn. I alternately cursed and right looked like some bleached dressing into the larger end, and as the dressing filled the casing, one stripped it down to fill the entire length of casing.

"Still I didn’t give up. A plastic pill bottle, sawed off at one end with a sharp knife, made a reasonable facsimile. After about 20 minutes I had one stuffed boudin, 4 1/2 pounds of dressing mixture left in the pot, and about 80 feet of unstuffed casings.

"Figuring I had made my point, I sent the unused casings and dressing to the market, and Mr. Fontenot finished the stuffing job for me in something like three minutes with his mechanical stuffer.

"He also tasted a piece of my one boudin, raised his eyebrows, said ‘Uh huh!’ and offered me a job when his regular boudin-maker retires.”