Dud Breaux and Savoy boudin may be the best things that ever happened to a caterer's silver platter.

New York eats Boudin

"I want the kind of boudin," Calvin Trillin told me over the phone, "that you stand up and eat in the parking lot. The kind that Barry Jean Ancelet took you to that place he took me,” he explained, "but certainly not the boudin. Why don’t you bring us up some boudin? The kind that you eat in the parking lot.” We talked a little more about the book and the party and I told him I’d think about it.

As much as I love a good food party, I admit that I was a little shy and reticent about ever going to the Trillin's house again, since my last visit to New York I had lost a $500 billion winner-take-all Pac-man match with his daughter—my reserve not stemming from the prospect of an encounter with my youthful creditor, as Sarah treated me with great dignity before, but I have to say that I would observe the annual conference of the society of water-treatment-plant engineers, if I had reason to believe that it was interrupted every so often so that the participants could drink beer and eat boudin. And so on. Noble sentiments, these, and deserved. Yes, I would proudly to New York, go proudly bearing the precious boudin links. I could stand proudly with the most famous and accomplished and rich, for I had boudin.

Because Trillin has written three food books, I decided to take his excellent advice and do some thorough research before deciding which boudin to take north. "Get Barry Ancelet to take you to that place he took me,” he said. "We ate the boudin standing up in the parking lot.” Barry Ancelet is the Cajun folklorist at USL’s Center for Louisiana Studies, and I seemed to vaguely recall that Trillin had sought him out for details of Cajun food customs and their meeting had quickly elevated into a tour of gumbo and boudin hot spots.

As we drove back to my office, Ancelet—now acting as official New York literary party boudin consultant—discussed the boudin situation with me. Dud Breaux’s boudin, we decided, had to go to New York. It was in Breaux’s parking lot, Ancelet told me, that the author had first encountered boudin. Breaux’s rice-spice boudin style—a mix favored by other great boudin masters like Waldo Bonin in New Iberia—could be offset by Savoy’s links, representing that other great school of boudin that emphasizes meat. Limiting my boudin importation to the airline luggage allowance was a tragedy in itself, for it meant that the New Yorkers wouldn’t get a taste of the boudin made by the lady from Cecilia who uses chunks rather than threads of meat, or Bodin’s boudin, which is promoted by the world’s cleverest boudin radio spots, but at least with Dud Breaux and Savoy boudin, they would taste top examples of the two major threads of boudin thought, and be able to experience the great debate of the boudin meat/rice dialectic. Besides, I was going to this party, and I’d get to eat some, to.

A few days later, I repeated the boudin tour with my wife, Susan. We would both be at the party, and we...
needed to be of one mind. She relived every step of the research with me and arrived at the same conclusions that Barry Ancelet and I had. Boudin Pride began to well up within us.

Soon the appointed day came. I picked up the boudin from Savoy's and fought my way through a pack of realty agents to pick up the boudin at Dud Breaux's (Dud Breaux's N. Pierce St. store apparently will be demolished to make way for road improvements, and realty agents have been hanging out in impressive numbers at the store, presumably because they foresee Breaux needing another place to build, and a place with a roomy parking lot at that). Then we packed and headed for the airport.

We touched down at JFK airport about 4:30 on the day of the party. The party was at 6 p.m. As quickly as we could drag our duct-tape-sealed boudin-laden ice chest out of the baggage bin, we grabbed a cab and headed for Trillin's house in Greenwich Village. We got there almost at six and tossed the still-frozen links into a pot of water on the Trillin's range even as the earliest guests were arriving.

The first few folks there were mostly people who worked with the publisher. Trillin's wife Alice and the cateress Barbara Gorin looked on anxiously as the links slowly warmed up, and the Ticknor & Fields people, no doubt inspired by what they'd read in the back room or wherever they sample the company's wares, kept eagerly asking, "Is the boudin ready?"

The boudin, we told them, wouldn't be ready until 7 p.m. Susan, in a fit of social responsibility, had decided that we'd have to be careful not to poison a sizable portion of the Manhattan literary set so had consulted with several home economists about how to transport and cook the precious links. Freeze it, she was told, put it in cold water, and let it come to a boil for a while. As we waited for the boudin to reach readiness, we circulated amongst the partygoers—and ate.

We ate Buffalo Chicken Wings, spicy tidbits that warmed our hearts and lips. They were good—but as we snacked our way through this piquant poultry, Susan's and my eyes met, and a silent message passed: boudin can stand up to this any day. We ate spicy bits of pork that are served as part of Chinese dim-sum (tea lunch). Delicious! But our hearts pounded louder—boudin could stand proudly beside this fellow pork dish. We sampled the catfish fingers. Incredible golden fried bits of spicy catfish—but certainly they had nothing on boudin. We gobbled up tiny tomatoes stuffed with freshly made mozzarella. Scintillating, yes, but no threat to the status of our almost-ready boudin links.

As the steam finally began to rise from the boudin pot, I realized with sudden clarity one more advantage we of south Louisiana carry in the journey of life. We've got the food. If someone

Do New Yorkers eat behind the wheel?

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