True Louisiana Yule Cuisine Sumptuous

By JOYCE YELDELL LEBLANC

In contrast to the quick-frozen, instantly ready-to-coat, cook-on-the-job food philosophies of contemporary times, there is a sumptuous old-fashioned way reflected in true Louisiana cuisine, especially at Christmas.

During the opulent Golden Age of antebellum Louisiana, Yuletide groaning boards were a wondrous sight to behold. Entrees, side dishes, desserts, beverages, they all present in tantalizing amounts and varieties. At dinner time, no one could possibly hope to sample it all, and decisions of what to choose were deliberately excruciating.

Even the menu for the "revelillon," a breakfast which followed the Messe de Minuit (Midnight Mass), would be considered fancy by today's standards. But by old Creole standards, it was only a small meal.

Among savory dishes of the "revelillon" would be one or two styles of eggs, homemade raisin bread and other sweet breads, and long crispy leaves of that scrumptious French bread which is still baked commercially by secret recipes in New Orleans. Don't forget, too, that the heritage was, after all, predominantly French, so there was always an assortment of wines to accentuate the positive and melow the richness of the flavors.

But the specialty, the pièce de résistance, of all the dishes set out was the daube glace, a jellied meat concoction enhanced with skillfully blended herbs and spices. It has been aptly described by one epicurean Louisianian who declared that the daube must have been "taken on a trip to heaven."

CAFE BRULOT

The after-Mass meal was topped with rich cakes, followed by the finis - café, served "noire" or "au lait," or possibly (everybody hoped), it would be café brulot, a special brew baked commercial-constant stream of Christmas calls.

Among the sweet dishes which surrounded the silver bowl of heavy egg mold were countless varieties of cookies and candies, "spirited" (vegetable crisper or other large enamel pan suggested), for hot stock and gelatine over meat. Skim off grease as it rises to top. Mold in refrigerator until congealed. Serve cold, unmooring in lake warm water. Place on platter and garnish with parsley, lemon wedges, green pepper rings, etc. Serves at least 20. (Editor's note: You may wish to garnish the recipe, using a 5 lb. roast. It is interesting that the old recipes for daube called for a couple of tins and several carrot, cut into chunk pieces, to be cooked with the meat.)

OYSTER RICE DRESSING

(Riverside Rice Festival Rice and Creole Souvenir Cookbook, Crowley Daily Signal) 1/4 cup minced onions 1/4 cup minced celery 1/4 cup butter or margarine 1 pint oysters, well drained 2 1/2 cups cooked rice (cooked in chicken broth) 1 1/2 cups toasted bread crumbs 1/2 tsp. poultry seasoning salt and pepper to taste 1 egg, well beaten

Cook onions, celery and par and light. Add coffee. Stir-for-slowly in butter until tender. Add seasonings. Ladle into demipots and cook until the edges break. Mix all with the spicyin the bowl. Work briskly. Mix the spices in the bowl. Pour boiling water into the brulot bowl to heat bowl. Pour water out and place sugar, cloves, lemon peel and cinnamon in the brulot bowl. Work briskly, or, whenever you like. Mix with the spices in the bowl.

6 large onions pinch thyme 3 or 4 bay leaves 2 or 3 cloves garlic salt, pepper, cayenne pepper to taste 4 oz. sherry madeira wine 1 pkg. gelatine to each pint liquid Rub meat with salt and pepper, and brown in fat. Place meat in large pot. Add water and gelatine to cover (less liquid if pressure cooked). Add onions, thyme, bay leaves, garlic, salt, pepper. Simmer 5-7 hours, or until meat is tender. Remove meat; strain stock. Add sherry, or madeira, to stock. Bring to boil and remove from fire. To stock add gelatin, already softened in small quantity of water. Place meat in mold (vegetable crisper or other large enamel pan suggested). Pour hot stock and gelatine over meat. Skim off grease as it rises to top. Mold in refrigerator until congealed. Serve cold, unmooring in lake warm water. Place on platter and garnish with parsley, lemon wedges, green pepper rings, etc. Serves at least 20. (Editor's note: You may wish to garnish the recipe, using a 5 lb. roast. It is interesting that the old recipes for daube called for a couple of tins and several carrot, cut into chunk pieces, to be cooked with the meat.)

CAFE BRULOT

(River Road Recipes, Baton Rouge Junior League) 6 lumps sugar 12 cloves 6 slices lemon peel 3 cups pecans Combine sugar, cream and water in a saucepan and cook to silt stage (228 degrees). Remove from heat and beat until creamy. Add nuts and drop by spoonfuls onto buttered sheet.

WINE SAUCE FOR WILD DUCKS

(Newelton Garden Club Cookbook) 2 duck livers (cooked) 3 tspps. finely chopped parsley 2 tspps. grated lemon peel 3 tspps. chopped shallots salt and pepper to taste 1/2 cup good red wine 2 tspps. prepared mustard 2 tspps. lemon juice Mash livers to paste and mix with parsley, lemon peel and shallots. Take juice from roasting pan in which ducks are roasting, and add wine, salt, pepper, mustard and lemon juice. Mix all together and pour over ducks; baste often. This sauce does not have to be added to ducks until about 30 minutes before the ducks are done. This amount of sauce is enough to use with two ducks.

OLD FASHIONED PECAN PRALINES

(River Road Recipes, Baton Rouge Junior League) 6 lumps sugar 12 cloves 6 slices lemon peel 3 sticks cinnamon (broken up) 8 whole cloves 3 or 4 bay leaves 5 cups hot, black coffee Pour boiling water into the brulot bowl to heat bowl. Pour water out and place sugar, cloves, lemon peel and cinnamon in the brulot bowl. Work briskly, or, whenever you like. Mix with the spices in the bowl.