



# CAJUN ~ CREOLE COOKING

The French Cajuns fled British rule in the 18th century because of religious persecution and settled in bayous. They lived and cooked off the land, creating one-pot dishes such as gumbo, jambalaya and é'touffé'e. New Orleanians of European heritage, adapted classic French cooking with creations like baked fish in papillot (paper) and oysters Rockefeller. A Cajun gumbo is thickened with a dark roux and file' powder whereas a Creole gumbo is thickened with okra and tomatoes. This is just one of the differences that Acadians argue over when it comes to traditional foods. The next few pages will describe traditional Cajun cuisine.

**Ándouille** (ahn-do-ee) is a smoked sausage stuffed with cubed lean pork and flavored with vinegar, garlic red pepper and salt. This spicy sausage is usually used in gumbo.

**Beignet** (ben-yea) are delicious sweet donuts that are square-shaped and minus the hole. They are lavishly sprinkled with powder sugar.

**Boudin** (boo-dan) is the name for blood sausage. It is a hot, spicy pork mixture with onions, cooked rice and herbs.

**Chickory** (chick-ory) is an herb. The roots are dried, roasted and ground and then added to flavor coffee.

**Corn flour** is yellow or white corn, milled to the texture of wheat flour. It is used to coat seafood and vegetables for deep frying.

**Courtbouillon** (coo-boo-yon) is a spicy soup or stew made with fish fillets, tomatoes, onions and sometimes mixed with vegetables.

**Crawfish** (craw-fish) resemble tiny lobsters. Sometimes referred to as crayfish or mudbugs, these freshwater crustaceans live in the mud of bayous. They are served in a variety of ways.

**Dirty rice** is left-over rice that is pan-fried and sauteed with green peppers, onion, celery, stock, liver, giblets and other ingredients.

**É'touffée** (ay-too-fay) is a tangy tomato-based sauce which usually smothers shrimp or crawfish.

**Filé powder** (fee-lay) is ground dried sassafras leaves and was first used by Native Americans. It is most popular for flavoring or thickening gumbo. File' becomes stringy when boiled so should be added after the gumbo is finished cooking.

**Grillades** (gree-yads) are squares of broiled beef or veal. Grillades and grits are popular at breakfast time.

**Gumbo** is a delicacy of South Louisiana. It has many variations but is usually composed of fish or shellfish, poultry, game, meats and vegetables. Gumbo is thickened with either okra or filé powder and is served over rice.

**Jambalaya** (jum-bo-lie-yah) is a highly seasoned stew chock full of tomatoes, rice, ham, shrimp, chicken, celery, onions and other vegetables. If broken rice is used, it produces a

stickier jambalaya. Broken rice is short-grained rice that may be pounded to make it even starchier. Long-grain rice can be put through a food grinder if short-grained rice is not available.

**King cake** is a ring-shaped oval pastry that is decorated with colored sugar in the traditional Mardi Gras colors of purple, green and gold which represent justice, faith and power. A small plastic baby is hidden inside the cake. Tradition requires that the person with the baby in their slice must bake the next King cake.

**Mirliton squash** (mel-e-taun) refer to tropical squash that are round or pear-shaped (vegetable pear, mango squash, chayote, chocho, or *christophene*). The firm flesh surrounds a single seed and tastes more delicate than summer squash. It is cooked like squash and stuffed with either ham or shrimp and a spicy dressing.

**Muffuletta** (muff-a-lotta) is a huge sandwich made with thick layers of several types of Italian meats, cheeses, and a layer of olive salad. It is usually served on special seeded Muffuletta bread.

**Red beans & rice** consists of kidney beans cooked in seasonings with chunks of sausage and ham served over a bed of rice. It is traditionally eaten on Monday.

**Redfish** is a copper- or bronze-colored salt-water fish with a distinctive black spot at the base of the tail. It is sometimes referred to as a red drum or channel bass.

**Roux** is a mixture of flour and fat that is used as a thickening agent for sauces, soups and gravies. The brown roux used in Creole and Acadian cuisines is cooked very slowly until the mixture is brown and has a nutlike aroma and taste. Soups generally require 1 tablespoon each of butter and flour to thicken 1 cup of liquid while sauces require 2 tablespoons each of butter and flour.

**Sauterne** is a white domestic table wine. Don't use the French Sauternes in Cajun cooking.

**Scallions** apply to several members of the onion family including a distinct variety called scallion, immature onion (marketed as green or spring onions), young leeks and sometimes the tops of young shallots.

**Shallots** are also a member of the onion family and grows in clusters like garlic bulbs on a large root. If left in the field to grow and dry, they become brown or reddish and are used in classic French cooking.

**Speckled trout** is the Louisiana name for the spotted sea trout. It is a blue-gray salt-water fish that has numerous round black spots or speckles on the upper parts of its sides.

**Yams** are often confused with sweet potatoes but actually belong to a different plant species. Yams contain more natural sugar and have a higher moisture content than sweet potatoes. Yams have a thick, somewhat hairy skin with a white, yellow or red sweet-tasting flesh.

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