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MAY/JUNE 2016

## CHEF NATHAN RICHARD EARNS HIS CHOPS

by PABLEAUX JOHNSON

## PIG TALES

by MARCELLE BIENVENU

## LOCAL LINKS

## MAKIN' WITH BACON

# THE PORK ISSUE

*Put some pork on your fork*



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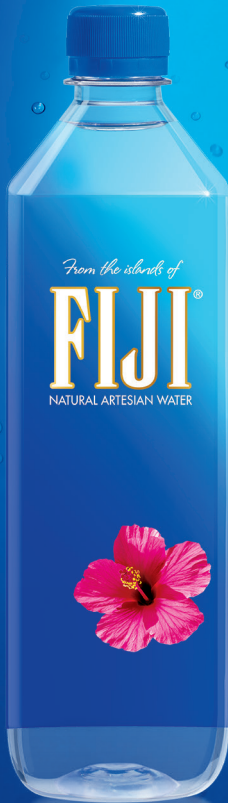


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# table of contents

MAY | JUNE 2016



## PORK

- 8 Earning His Chops  
*by Pableaux Johnson*
- 10 This Little Piggy Went To Market
- 13 Going Whole Hog: The Boucherie Tradition
- 16 Pig Tales  
*by Marcelle Bienvenu*
- 20 In a Pickle
- 21 Wine & Swine
- 24 Grease is the Word  
*by Sara Roahen*
- 28 Praise the Lard  
*by Chef Nathan Richard*
- 30 Local Links
- 46 From Rouses Test Kitchen: Put Some Pork on Your Fork
- 50 Makin' with Bacon  
*by Chef Lisa Barbato*
- 52 Oreilles de Cochon  
*by Kit Wohl*

## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 36 Louisiana Creole Tomatoes
  - 38 Bloody Good  
*by Bobby Childs*
  - 44 Kitchen Traditions  
*by Liz Williams*
- ## RECIPES
- 18 "Wet" Potato Salad
  - 19 Mean Beans
  - 19 Buttermilk Slaw
  - 19 Watermelon Rind Pickles
  - 20 Hwy. 1 Meaty Lima Beans
  - 27 Killed Lettuce
  - 37 Creole Tomato Jam  
*by Chef Tory McPhail*
  - 37 Creole Tomato Ketchup
  - 37 Creole Tomato Salsa
  - 45 Stuffed Pork Chops

- 46 Grits with Shrimp & Pork
- 47 Pork Meatballs & Spaghetti
- 51 Bacon & Chocolate Chip Cookies
- 51 Caramel Popcorn with Spiced Nuts & Bacon
- 52 Oreilles de Cochon

## IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 Letters, Posts & Tweets
- 39 Eat Right with Rouses
- 40 At Season's Peak

### On the Cover

*Praise the Lard on page 28 cover photo by **Romney Caruso***



### > Louisiana Creole Tomatoes

*Knobby, orange-to-red Creole tomatoes are a sure sign of warmer weather. They're great eaten out of hand, sprinkled with salt, on salads and sandwiches, and in sauces.*

“If people know nothing else about how Southerners supposedly eat, they know that bacon, barbecue, lard and ham are considered essential ingredients in the South’s culinary repertoire. Some even know a smattering of the history — Spanish and other European colonists bring hairy, spiky pigs — they get loose — they spread — and with their robust strength, tusks, teeth and boar-like behavior thrust and parry their way through a wilderness of cougars, bears and wolves. Even with predators aplenty — through brute strength and human intervention the pigs came out on top — leaving the South thick with a feral hog population to this day. Proto-Southern cuisine amplified Old World pork eating habits until the pig was in everything — from start to finish. Even today, from chopped bacon in salad to piecrust made with lard, it somehow makes an appearance. It comes with red-eye gravy in the morning and perhaps even with ice cream in the evening.”

—Michael Twitty, *Culinary Historian*





## IN MEMORIAM

### Howard Lee "Hokie" Gajan 1959-2016

Hokie was one-of-a-kind, a true original, a great player, great broadcaster and great friend of Rouses. He was our voice on Saints Radio for nearly a decade and made dozens of appearances at Rouses all over the Gulf Coast. He will be missed.

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# "The best grocery store in America is Rouses in New Orleans" —*Epicurious*

## WE'RE PONCHATOULA PROUD!

I'm so excited we have a Rouse's in Ponchatoula!!! The best grocery store!  
—*S. Fridge*

This place is awesome and I am so glad you have joined our great city Ponchatoula!  
—*C. Deare*

I love Rouses! Best supermarket!  
—*T. Nguyen*

Holy merchandising Batman. That produce section is amazing. Can I move in?!

This grocery store chain just got best in the United States...their produce dept is crackn'  
—*C. Moncrease*

## WELCOME TO ROUSES

I have shopped at Store #22 in Slidell for the past 2 weekends. I wanted to let you know how special your staff is. Every employee greeted me and I mean every one. From the parking lot through the store, I was greeted and thanked for shopping at your store. The cashier was absolutely a joy to talk to. You put the customers first and that is so refreshing. I can honestly say no other grocery store in this area treats customers the way your store does. Thank you! I will be back! —*D. Wheeler*

Going to Rouses #50 in Theodore with its great selection makes for a fun adventure rather than a dreaded chore to mark off the to do list. Best shopping around! Customers are treated like they are valued here. Highly recommend the experience. —*S. Moire*

Love my Rouses on St. Charles in Houma. Only place I shop. —*N. Espenan*

Love my Rouse on West Park in Houma !!!!!!! Everyone on staff is the best. —*T. Dugas*

I have been shopping at the Congress store in Lafayette for 5 years. Mitzi, Mike Kindal, Steven, the Flower Girls (as I call them), Kara, EVERYBODY treats

me like family! I will continue to shop there and continue to tell friends, family and neighbors also ... this is what Cajun Country is all about!!! —*M. La Vergne*

Hi, I wanted to let you know I visited your store in Morgan City this past Saturday for the first time and was so very impressed. —*T. Turner*

## CHEF NINO

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for the Chef Nino cooking classes that you so graciously put on at your Gulf Shores store. Chef Nino is humorous, intelligent, a skilled and articulate chef, and offers great tips about the various recipes and ingredients. He sprinkles his cooking with both wit and a positive philosophy of life. We are returning to our "northern home" in Minnesota shortly, but will return next winter again. —*George and Bonnie*

## WE LIVE TO EAT

The smoked Boston Butts I bought from my Kenner Rouses were simply the best we have ever had. I brought two of them to my brother's house for our Easter BBQ and everyone went "nuts" over the butts. Now my family has designated me the "Smoked Butt." Ha, ha! Our new Easter tradition! My sincere thanks to all of your beautiful Rouse team members. Everyone at this store has been friendly. It's a beautiful store. —*L. Fagot*

I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Charlotte at your Youngsville store and thanking her for making one of the most delicious Doberge cakes I have ever tasted. —*M. Taylor*

Breakfast time with one of our favorite NOLA markets @RousesMarkets. This is How#ILIVENOLA! —*@ilivenola*

When ya nowhere near NOLA but you're cravin' some fixins' #Rouses to the rescue #OceanSpringsMS —*@orange\_is\_happy*

#Rouses stuffed artichoke soup is so damn good!! I can't get enough. —*@NarcisseBreed*



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# Earning His Chops

by Pableaux Johnson + photo by Pableaux Johnson

King

When chef Nathan Richard scans the meat case at Rouses in Thibodaux where he teaches at the John Folse Culinary School, or in New Orleans, where he lives and works, he sees the bigger picture. Pork chops are part of a loin roast on the upper back of a grain-fed pig. He can imagine the rib structure that holds them in place and the fatback a bit higher on the hog. He can look at Rouses pork section and knows the best way to cook any part of a pig.

After talking with Chef Nathan for a while about pigs, pork and possibilities, you start to see his well-developed superpower. While most cooks see the world of pork from a pan perspective, Richard sees the same pig with Cajun-influenced butcher-vision.

The common cuts — what are known as the “primals” in meat-cutting circles — are just the beginning.

Richard’s special way of seeing things becomes obvious as the Thibodaux native talks about his cooking, his approach and the way that he learned about food.

Years before he took his first kitchen job peeling potatoes and shrimp at Commander’s Palace to get through college, Richard learned about Louisiana cooking traditions in more practical ways. “My dad was the chef of the family, and I learned a lot from him,” he said. “I was young and wanted to hunt, but my parents didn’t, and they weren’t going to pay to get the deer processed. It was expensive, so I bought myself a meat grinder and learned how to break deer down myself.”

Richard’s full-animal education continued thanks to a penchant for whole-hog cookery he learned from his grandfather in nearby Raceland.

“Cooking whole hogs was a celebration in my family,” he said. “So when I was about 18, we decided to try one out at Lake Verret. We went and got a pig from the stockyard and tried it out. We *thought* we had a clue, but not really,” he laughed. “We had some beer and a fire. We figured we could make something happen.”

Before hitting restaurant kitchens as his life’s work, he embarked on an early career as a firefighter and paramedic — studying Fire Science Technology at Delgado Community College. After being trained as a first responder and arson investigator — no, really — Richard became a captain of the Thibodaux Fire Department at age 21. Over time, his professional interests shifted to restaurant work.

His 5-year stint at Commander’s under Executive Chef Tory McPhail led to a tour of renowned kitchens across the South, most notably in South Carolina. In Charleston, Richard worked with renowned chefs Sean Brock, Mike Lata, and Frank Lee (at McCrady’s, FIG and High Cotton, respectively). He also studied charcuterie in France and Italy. Returning home to Louisiana, he opened the Lafayette location of Donald Link and Steven Stryjewski’s Cochon and did stints at White Oak Plantation and John Folse’s Revolution as a full-time butcher.

But take one look at the menu board at Richard’s latest gig — Kingfish — and you’ll see the dedication to making the most of the

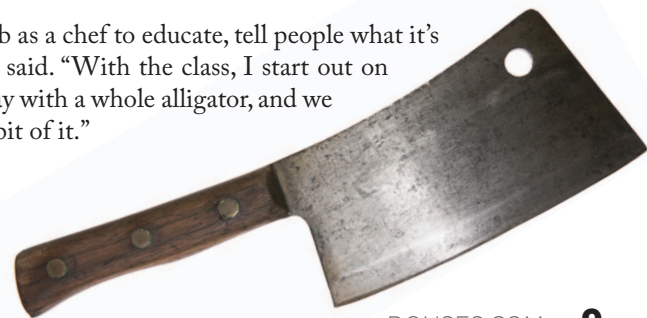


whole animal, whether it’s from the barnyard or the bayou.

“We buy whole animals and work our way through it with hourly specials. We’ll get a pig and make head cheese and offer it as ‘Offal of the Hour.’ When it’s gone, it’s gone. Then we’ll make pork backbone stew and offer *that* as a special. And when it’s gone, it’s gone. We do the same thing with seafood. Catfish head stew, grouper heads and collars. It’s a sign of respect to use the whole animal.”

He also teaches what he preaches to culinary students at Thibodaux’s Nicholls State University, where he leads whole-animal butchery classes at the Culinary Institute. The next generation of restaurant chefs get to learn the craft of breaking down and appreciating the whole animal.

“It’s my job as a chef to educate, tell people what it’s about,” he said. “With the class, I start out on the first day with a whole alligator, and we use every bit of it.”



# *This Little Piggy* **WENT TO MARKET**

by Pableaux Johnson





To better learn our way around the meat counter, we asked Chef Richard to show us what he likes to do with the more popular primals in the Rouses pork section. Here are a few of his “go to” dishes when it comes to the pig.

### Chops & Loins

In many ways, chops are the most approachable of the pork primals and our gateway to home-cooked piggy goodness. And what’s not to love? These lean, steak-like slices of the pork loin are easy to cook — they can be pan fried, seared, stuffed, broiled or smothered — making them a flexible centerpiece for weeknight suppers.

The Rouses meat cases are filled with different varieties of the venerable chop, all of which come from the pork loin — the broad back muscle that connects the pig’s shoulder to its hip. (A whole loin technically fits in the “roast” category, as does its smaller, leaner neighboring muscle, the tenderloin.)

Center Cut (or rib chops) come from atop the rib cage below the shoulder and often have recognizable “baby back” bones attached. (A boneless version of this is called a loin filet.) Shoulder or blade chops come from closer to the head and — thanks to a complex muscle structure — tend to favor slow cooking methods. Same goes for the sirloin chop and shoulder steaks (slices of the shoulder), which reward a cook’s braising patience with deep, porky flavor.

**Chef’s Call:** While many chefs opt for the fashionably thick cuts of the loin (double-cut pork chops can be 1.5-2 inches thick), Richard prefers to cut his chops on the thinner side. “You take a nice thin chops and pané (shallow pan-fry) them nice and crisp. Then you use that to make a pork chop sandwich.” This popular Jazzfest specialty can be improved with a simple ingredient substitution: instead of vegetable oil, use melted leaf lard (rendered pork fat) for frying and a flavorful all-pork punch.

### Ribs

Though many folks prefer smaller baby backs (smaller ribs close to the loin), Richard has a penchant for the larger, meatier spare ribs and St. Louis-style ribs that run closer to the belly. Whether you’re smoking these meaty wonders outdoors or stovetop-braising them until they’re fall-apart tender, long slow cooking renders out a lot of the extra fat, leaving you with a chunkier, more flavorful finger food. Country-style ribs — cut from the shoulder — don’t actually contain rib bones but have plenty of meaty goodness for stew-style preparations.

**Chef’s Call:** “I like to take St. Louis ribs and cook them with onion and bell pepper — maybe a little Creole mustard — and braise them for a long time. I’ll serve them with pork and beans on the side. When I cook baby back ribs, I’ll baste them with a nice coffee barbecue sauce and serve them with a side of coleslaw.”

### Roasts & Shoulders

Two popular choices for “large format” pork dishes come from the pig’s front leg area: the shoulder (or picnic shoulder) adjacent to the belly and the Boston Butt near the backbone. Both require longer, slower cooking than a fast-cooking chop, but in this case, patience yields delicious (and affordable) dividends. Roast cuts have a lot of connective tissue (it holds the meaty muscles together), which melts down to velvety collagen when braised (cooked slow with

liquid in a closed pot) in the oven or smoked in the backyard. Your grandmother's pork roast with rice and gravy likely started out with one of these cuts.

**Chef's Call:** Given that Chef Nathan is never too far away from a charcoal fire, smoking is a favorite here.

## Hams

The muscles of a hog's hind legs give us another ever-present pork product — the ham. A traditional centerpiece for weekly post-church celebrations, ham is the go-to meat for sandwiches, omelets and breakfast biscuits. If you've never slow-roasted a ham — or smoked one if you're so equipped — the slow-cooked goodness of



a proper ham might bring back a Sunday tradition that anybody's grandparents would recognize. Added bonus: leftovers provide plenty of the best sandwich meat you can imagine.

The most popular hams — whether spiral cut, smoked, bone-in or boneless — are preserved with a wet-cure method and smoked until fully cooked. This makes for heat-and-eat simplicity or a range of customized flavor possibilities (additional smoke, the glaze of your choice).

**Chef's Call:** Home-cooked ham calls for a proper sandwich to show off the flavorful final product. "When I have good ham, I like to do a fancy *croque-monsieur*." This traditional French sandwich is a notch above your typical ham-and-cheese affair — layer your favorite melty cheese between layers of buttered bread, then crisp the bread in a hot skillet. If you're feeling doubly fancy, you can dip the bread in an egg wash a la French toast before frying." Not content to leave well enough alone, Chef Nathan adds another decadent layer. "I like to top mine with a pimienta-cheese béchamel sauce. And when you're done time for a nap..."

## Ham Hocks

This humble cut (essentially a hog's "knee" section) doesn't get a whole lot of love on restaurant menus but is a popular flavoring meat in family recipes for beans, greens and other home-style favorites, and a big seller at Rouses. Though it lacks the easy-cooking flair of a chop or tenderloin, hocks are a sleeper hit with cooks who know how to unlock hidden flavors through a long cooking session (stewing, braising or simmered in a bean pot).

**Chef's Call:** In Richard's kitchen, the humble hock takes a starring role. "I'll take a smoked hock, cook it down for a long time until it's tender, then serve it on top of a bed of braised cabbage. There's so much good meat there."

## Pork Belly

The magical cut that gives us the insanely delicious members of the bacon family (cured breakfast bacon, Italian *pancetta*) is fashionable, versatile and rich in flavor. With tender meat surrounded by thick streaks of fat, the belly lends itself to a million different preparations and is a favorite across cooking traditions. Before the cut became fashionable on restaurant menus, most people would immediately recognize pork belly in its dry-cured, highly smoked form — the crispy, addictive pan-fried bacon that makes breakfast and burgers that much better.

**Chef's Call:** A fancier take from his days in Italy, Chef Nathan turns the belly into a riff on *porchetta* (a deboned pig, spiced, rolled and roasted whole). The fatty belly is scored and flavored with green garlic and green onions. It can be rolled and roasted on its own, or for additional meaty goodness, wrapped around a pork loin before cooking. (Some recipes call for a butterflied pork shoulder for an alternate approach). One last touch makes it perfect: "After you roast it, you can run that skin under a torch and it browns so pretty. It puffs up like a *graton*." (Pro Tip: The "cracklin' effect" can also be achieved with careful use of your oven's broiler element. Same effect but a wee bit less control.)

# Going Whole Hog: THE BOUCHERIE TRADITION

by Pableaux Johnson + photos by Romney Caruso

In Cajun country before the days of standard refrigeration, the farmers' cold-weather boucherie tradition didn't allow for any part of the pig to go unappreciated. These dishes are woven into the flavors of our food culture. Here is a partial list of South Louisiana meat market classics. Rouses has been making their own since 1960 (*cracklins are exclusive to the North Canal St. market in Thibodaux*), but if you're keen to experiment or to revive your own family's heirloom recipes, have a conversation with your Rouses butcher. Rouses stocks classics like pig's tails, pig's feet and pork liver (for making your own boudin). They can even special order whole pigs for your own home boucherie.



## Andouille

This meaty, coarser-textured pork sausage is used in everything from slow-cooked gumbos to Monday night red beans. It's made with chunks of pork shoulder (often called the "Boston butt" cut of the hog) and simply spiced with garlic, curing salts and various peppers (usually black and cayenne).

## Tasso

The potent smoked meat known as tasso is basically spicy Cajun pork jerky and is a workhorse in local kitchens. Brined for preservation and smoked until flavors are highly concentrated, this amazing product is used sparingly, mostly as a flavoring agent in just about any slow-cooked stew or vegetable dish (greens or beans). A little goes a long way, but a good long way.

## Hogshead Cheese

For the uninitiated, this common (and tasty) specialty can be a hard sell. It's sausage-like, kind of gelatinous, and similar to a classic countrified French terrine, but pretty it ain't. Tender meat from a long-boiled pig's head (hence the name) is ground and cooled into a jellified loaf and served cold. If you haven't tried it, give it a solid shot. And if you'd like to appreciate it in a different form, melt a block of hogshead cheese in a stovetop pot and eat it like a bowl of pig-based chili.



## Boudin

This spicy, rice-based pork sausage is perfect with a bottle of cold beer. The various styles include the liver-heavy varieties (with an earthy flavor) or those with more recognizable pork pieces. Or as a tasty variation, squeeze the tasty boudin filling from the casing, form it into spheres and pan-fry them for another snack treat: crispy boudin balls.

## Gratons (Cracklins)

The Cajun version of the venerable pork rinds, these tasty chunks of crispy pork skin, meat and fat are rendered down in flavorful lard are about as healthy as you'd expect, and about five times as tasty and addictive. Grab a paper bag filled with these crunchy treat whenever you can and munch away. Best when fresh.



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## Spinach & Artichoke Pasta Salad



### Ingredients:

- 2 14oz boxes DaVinci® Cheese Tortellini
- 3 cups baby spinach
- 2 cans Reese® Artichoke Heart Quarters, drained
- 2 Tbsp Reese® Red Wine Vinegar
- 1/4 cup DaVinci® Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme, minced
- 1 small red onion, small dice
- 1 can Reese® Baby Carrots, sliced
- 1 jar Reese® Roasted Bell Peppers, drained and diced
- 1 clove fresh garlic minced, or 1 Tbsp Reese® Garlic Juice
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

### Directions:

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and cook the pasta al dente, for 10 to 12 minutes. Drain, do not rinse. Place in a single layer on a baking sheet to cool. In a large bowl, lightly toss the remaining ingredients. Add the cooked pasta and toss to incorporate. Taste for seasoning and add salt and pepper as needed. Serve in a large bowl or in lettuce leaves on individual salad plates. Serves 8.



# Michaels of Brooklyn

It's not so uncommon to walk into a supermarket or specialty food store and find a landmark Italian restaurant has started to "jar" their sauce and sell it to the public. **What sets Michaels of Brooklyn apart from the rest? It's not "jar" sauce ... it's "Sauce" in a jar!**



# PIG Tales

by Marcelle Bienvenu + photo by Romney Caruso

He doesn't know this, but Chef John Currence captured my heart over 10 years ago at a Southern Foodways Alliance symposium in Oxford, Mississippi. Pableaux Johnson, a fellow contributor to this magazine who was also in attendance at the event, told me that the chef at City Grocery was going to knock my socks off.

Although I had heard about the chef, I had never met him.

"Is he that good looking?" I asked.

"Not HIM Marcelle. HIS COOKING," Pableaux shot back.

And indeed Pableaux was right. When I gobbled up a chunk of butter-tender batter-fried pork ribs, I moaned in pleasure. A few years later, again in Oxford with the SFA, I found my way to Big Bad Breakfast, another of Currence's eateries. Nursing a hang-around from way too much Jack Daniels the night before, I staggered into the retro-chic diner and before I uttered a word, a mug of coffee was plunked down in front of me along with a menu.

Bleary-eyed, I pointed to items on the menu — house-cured Tabasco/brown sugar bacon, a couple of eggs over easy, biscuits and grits. Before I could finish my first cup of coffee, another arrived along with a loaded plate. A small dish of peach jam, which I was told was made by Currence's wife, accompanied my order. In no time, my head felt ever so much better. My tummy settled down and I was feeling wide-eyed and bushy-tailed. Ah, my secret love had astounded my taste buds once again.

When my husband gifted me at Christmas with John Currence's book *Pickles, Pigs & Whiskey*, it appeared that John and I shared not only the love of all things pork, but also the respect and reverence for all things southern, like canning, preserving and pickling locally-grown items.

My fondness for the pig began at an early age.

When I was a youngster, I was often dropped off at my grandfather Pop-Pete's farm in rural St. Martin Parish to spend a weekend. Early in the mornings, hand-in-hand, we made the rounds checking on the animals in the barnyard. There were eggs to be picked,

chickens and ducks to be fed, and cows to be milked. Our last stop was always the pig pen.

"Come on Ti-Black. Sit here on the fence while I check the hogs. They should be about ready for our boucherie." (I am named after my father Marcel. His nickname was Blackie so Pop-Pete called me little (petit) Black — shortened to Ti-Black.)

The annual boucherie (pig slaughter) was usually held the first weekend in December and it was a dawn-to-dusk event. Aunts, uncles, cousins, friends and farm workers gathered early in the morning to set up worktables under the live oaks while a Cajun fiddler tuned his instrument.

Once the pig was killed, the men worked quickly butchering the meat into hams, loins, shoulders and chops. Chunks of pork covered in a thick layer of salt were stored in large crocks to cure during the winter months to be used later in seasoning beans and soups. Generously seasoned slabs of bacon and pieces of pork (think tasso) were destined for the small smoke house on the farm. The pig feet (hocks) and yes, even sometimes the lips, were pickled for snacks. Smoked hocks were added to pots of braising cabbage or greens. (We never did pickle ears, but we did have a pastry treat called les oreilles du cochon. More about that in this issue.)

The women cut up the pigskin to make cracklins (gratons) in the large cast-iron kettles arranged over roaring wood fires. The trimmings were used for making sausage, boudin, hogshead cheese and a delicious backbone stew. Thinly sliced sweet potatoes were



fried in the rendered lard. Ground pork caramelized with onions was the base of the ubiquitous rice dressing. Every part of the pig except for the squeal was used.

Thus, pork showed up regularly on our dinner table.

From late spring through early fall Sunday was all about our backyard barbecue featuring pork ribs, chops and sometimes chicken. Papa and my brothers Henri Clay and Baby Brother Bruce tended the wood fire in the 50-gallon barbecue pit fashioned by Uncle Pomp, an incredible welder. I must mention that Uncle Pomp had also created a spit to fit over the pit that operated by a small electric motor. For Easter, Memorial Day, 4th of July and Labor Day, a small pig was fattened and injected with a homemade marinade before being trussed on the spit. (Back then, before Cajun Injectors, Papa and Pomp borrowed large injectors from the local veterinary to “stick” the pig.)

I must also give a nod to Mama’s famous pork roast studded with cloves of garlic, slivers of onions and bell peppers seasoned with salt and cayenne that was the star of many a holiday menu.

Whatever the occasion, Mama’s potato salad made with homemade mayonnaise, and rice dressing were the invariable sides. And yes, like most areas of the South, coleslaw and beans were usually included on the barbecue menu. We favored Aunt Eva’s chilled creamy slaw perked up with lots of freshly ground black pepper. Canned pork and beans were tinkered and toyed with, and my friend Jet (from Meridian, Mississippi, who died much too young) showed us how to make what he called “mean beans.”

Also like other areas of the South, there was always what we called a relish tray that was passed around the table at barbecues and other family gatherings. Our tray included pickled mirlitons, pickled okra, pickled watermelon rinds along with corn relish and chow-chows that were stored in a small closet off the kitchen that Mama called her Pickle Palace.

I must add, that besides pickling, my mother with Tante May and Tante Belle spent hours in a small, hotter-than-hell kitchen off our garage canning and preserving fruit (figs and pears), and vegetables (beets, green beans and tomatoes) from our large home garden throughout the year. Nothing went to waste.



## ➤ Pickles, Pigs & Whiskey

*Pickles, Pigs & Whiskey is an irreverent yet serious look at Southern food today. It includes personal stories and history, and 130 one-of-a-kind recipes. It is available online and at local bookstores.*

*“I make no excuses for the occasional use of standard grocery store products. They exist for a reason. If you eat anything other than yellow mustard on a fried bologna sandwich, well, you’re just a chump.”*

—Chef John Currence, *Pickles, Pigs & Whiskey*

**“The pig feet (hocks) and yes, even sometimes the lips, were pickled for snacks. Smoked hocks were added to pots of braising cabbage or greens. (We never did pickle ears, but we did have a pastry treat called les oreilles du cochon. More about that on page 52.)”**

—Marcelle Bienvenu

Currence points out in his book, “pickling and fermenting have been practiced quite literally, for thousands of years. Earthen jars that were used for pickling have been excavated from Pharaohs’ tombs in Egypt.”

Currence also is quick to remind us that “pickles are as Southern as cast iron, sweet tea, caramel cake, and Coca-Cola.”

A quick check of menus of cutting-edge chefs in New Orleans reveals that “pickling” is definitely “in.” For example, Donald Link peppers his menu with items such as watermelon pickles, pickled peppers and cucumbers and herbs in vinegar. At MoPho, Michael Gulotta (a graduate of the Chef John Folse Culinary Institute at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux who was just voted Food & Wine Magazine’s Best New Chef), serves pickled blue cheese with his crispy fried oysters. Also on the menu is preserved citrus paired with his glazed pork belly bowl.

Chef J. P. Daigle, a colleague of mine at the aforementioned culinary institute at Nicholls, and who has worked with the finest of the finest (Chef Tory McPhail at Commander’s and Chef Frank Brigsten) also offered me insight as to why pickles and pork go hand-in-hand.

“The acidity of pickled items balances off the fat of the pork and cuts the richness. Anything containing acid (wine, pickles or coleslaw) continues to cleanse the mouth during eating, so you can continue enjoy eating. There is a balance of acid and fat.”

Currence is quick to point out that “...pickles are one of the healthier snacks you can consume. Though they can be high in sodium, vegetable pickles are remarkably low in calories and carbohydrates, and have zero fat.” That’s good to know because pork has all that fat goodness that we love.



*Pig Tales* by Marcelle Bienvenu continued ...

**M**y mother was the queen of potato salad. It was always on the menu for barbecues, fish fries, and Sunday family gatherings. As children, we called it “wet” potato salad because it was so moist with mayonnaise. Mama always told us that it was very important to cut the potatoes in chunks because she didn’t care for “mashed” potato salad.

For many years, she made the homemade mayonnaise by hand. I remember sitting on my stool in the kitchen (or at the camp) watching her mash a hard-boiled egg yolk with a raw egg yolk in a shallow bowl, and adding drips of vegetable oil, a little at a time, and blending it with a fork until it was just the right consistency. She added just enough fresh lemon juice or white distilled vinegar, salt, black pepper, and a pinch of sugar to satisfy her taste buds. In later

years, she used what she called her “mayonnaise jar.” The quart-size jar had a lid that was inverted and had a small hole. A metal “plunger” fit through the hole. Then you could add a little oil to the lid. The oil dribbled into the egg yolks, and the plunger was moved up and down to mix the components. Wow! Even when we presented Mama with an electric mixer and a food processor, she chose to make her mayonnaise by hand!

Before she mixed the mayonnaise with the boiled potatoes and chopped hard-boiled eggs, she always made a survey: Should we add chopped onions, celery, green olives, parsley, or sweet pickle relish? We would all yell “only a bit of parsley!” We didn’t want anything marring the taste of the salad!



## Mama’s “Wet” Potato Salad

*Makes about 8 servings*

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 5 pounds red potatoes, scrubbed
- Rouses salt
- 8 hard-boiled eggs,  
peeled and coarsely chopped
- Rouses freshly ground black pepper
- Hot sauce

### OPTIONAL:

- ¼ cup minced celery
- ¼ cup finely chopped green onions
- 2 tablespoons sweet pickle relish
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

### HOW TO PREP

Boil the potatoes in salted water until fork tender. Remove from the heat and drain. Set aside to cool. When cool enough to handle, peel the potatoes and chop coarsely.

Put the chopped potatoes and eggs in a large serving bowl. Mama put them in layers, i.e., a layer of potatoes, a layer of eggs, sprinkles of salt and pepper, a dash of hot sauce, then continued the layering until all was used. Then add the mayonnaise and whatever condiments you wish and toss gently (so as not to break up the potatoes) to mix.

### ➤ Mama’s “Wet” Potato Salad

*Mama NEVER chilled the salad. The potatoes and eggs were at room temperature. The mayonnaise was chilled for about an hour or so, then immediately added to the salad right before serving.*

*photo by Eugenia Uhl*

## Quick Mayonnaise

Makes about 1¼ cups

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 cup Rouses vegetable oil
- Rouses salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of sugar
- Hot sauce

### HOW TO PREP

Blend the egg and the lemon juice in a food processor or electric blender for 15 seconds. With the processor or blender running, slowly pour in the oil through the feed tube. The mixture will thicken. Add the salt, pepper and hot sauce and pulse to blend. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour before using.

*Since the mayonnaise is made with a raw egg, it's best to use within 24 hours.*

## Mama's Homemade Mayonnaise

Mama made her mayonnaise by hand

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 hard-boiled egg yolk
- 1 raw egg yolk
- 1 cup Rouses vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon vinegar or fresh lemon juice
- Pinch of sugar
- Rouses salt and freshly ground black pepper

### HOW TO PREP

Blend the egg yolks together in a bowl. Slowly add the oil, about a tablespoon at a time, and best well with a fork or wire whisk. Add the vinegar or lemon juice, sugar, and salt and pepper to taste. Chill for 1 hour before using.

## Jet's Mean Beans

Makes about 10 servings

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 pound sliced bacon, coarsely chopped
- 2 large yellow onions, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 5 (16-ounce) cans pork and beans
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- ½ cup barbecue sauce
- Rouses salt and black pepper to taste

### HOW TO PREP

In a large, heavy pot (preferably cast iron), fry



the bacon until slightly crisp. Add the onions and garlic and cook, stirring often, until soft and golden, five to six minutes. Add the lemon juice and stir for one minute. Add the pork and beans, brown sugar and barbecue sauce. Season with salt and pepper. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for about one hour. Or you can bake them in a 250-degree oven for about one hour.

## Buttermilk Slaw

Makes 4 to 6 servings

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon sour cream
- ¼ cup buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ teaspoon hot sauce
- Pinch or two of sugar
- ¼ teaspoon celery salt
- Rouses salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 small head cabbage, finely chopped or grated
- ⅓ cup finely chopped red onions
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley leaves
- 1 tablespoon chopped green onions (green part only)

### HOW TO PREP

In a small bowl, whisk together the sour cream, buttermilk, vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, hot sauce, sugar, celery salt, salt and pepper.

In a large salad bowl, toss the cabbage, onions, parsley and green onions. Add the dressing mixture and toss to coat evenly. Cover and refrigerate for about one hour before serving.

## Watermelon Rind Pickles

Makes 4 pints

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 4 quarts watermelon rinds (the rind of one large watermelon)
- 2 tablespoons Rouses salt
- 1 quart white distilled vinegar
- 8 cups sugar
- ¼ cup crumbled cinnamon sticks
- 1 tablespoon whole cloves
- 1 small lemon, thinly sliced

### HOW TO PREP

Peel the green skin off the melon rind and trim off any remaining pink flesh.

Cut into one-inch squares and place in a large stockpot. Add the salt and enough boiling water to cover. Simmer over low heat until the rind is tender, about 15 to 20 minutes.

Drain the rind and chill in very cold water for at least two hours or as long as six hours. Combine the vinegar and sugar in a large pot and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar completely. Reduce the heat to low. Tie the cinnamon and cloves in a square of cheesecloth and add to the syrup mixture. Add the lemon slices.

Drain the rind, place in the syrup and simmer over low heat until the rind becomes slightly transparent, about 30 minutes.

Remove and discard the spice bag. Pack the rind and syrup into hot, sterilized canning pint-size jars, leaving a one-fourth inch space at the top of each jar. Wipe the jar rims with a clean, damp cloth, fit them with the hot lids, and tightly screw on the metal rings. Process in a bath of boiling water for 10 minutes (the water should cover the jars by one inch), then cool on a wire rack, and store in a cool, dark place. Refrigerate after opening.



# IN A PICKLE

by Tim Acosta, Rouses Marketing Director + photo by Romney Caruso

**P**ickle meat gives local beans and greens that distinct meaty-ham-meets-salty-sausage flavor. Typically cut from the pork belly or pork picnic (front leg), pickle meat, also referred to as pickled pork or salt meat, is then preserved with a mixture of salt, sugar and potassium nitrites. It's those nitrites that give the seasoning meat its distinctive pink color.

Pickle meat is salt cured, but not actually pickled. In order to pickle anything — cucumbers, okra, beans and various parts of the pig like the lips, feet and hocks — you need acid, usually white vinegar. The acid acts as a tenderizer (think of using a brine on your Thanksgiving turkey).

The pickled lips, feet and hocks sold in jars have been fully cooked then brined in a mixture of vinegar, salt, sugar and spices. (Sometimes red coloring is added). They are not a replacement for pickle meat, texture or taste-wise. Trust me. Pickled lips, hock and feet are meant to be eaten the same way as pickled eggs — straight out of the jar (for you Andrew Zimmern Bizzare Foods fans out there), or with crisp, crunchy potato chips or crackers, which can help balance out their spongy, gelatinous texture.

## Hwy. 1 Meaty Lima Beans

*"I add ham hock (pork knuckle) or hog jowls for meatier beans."* —Tim

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

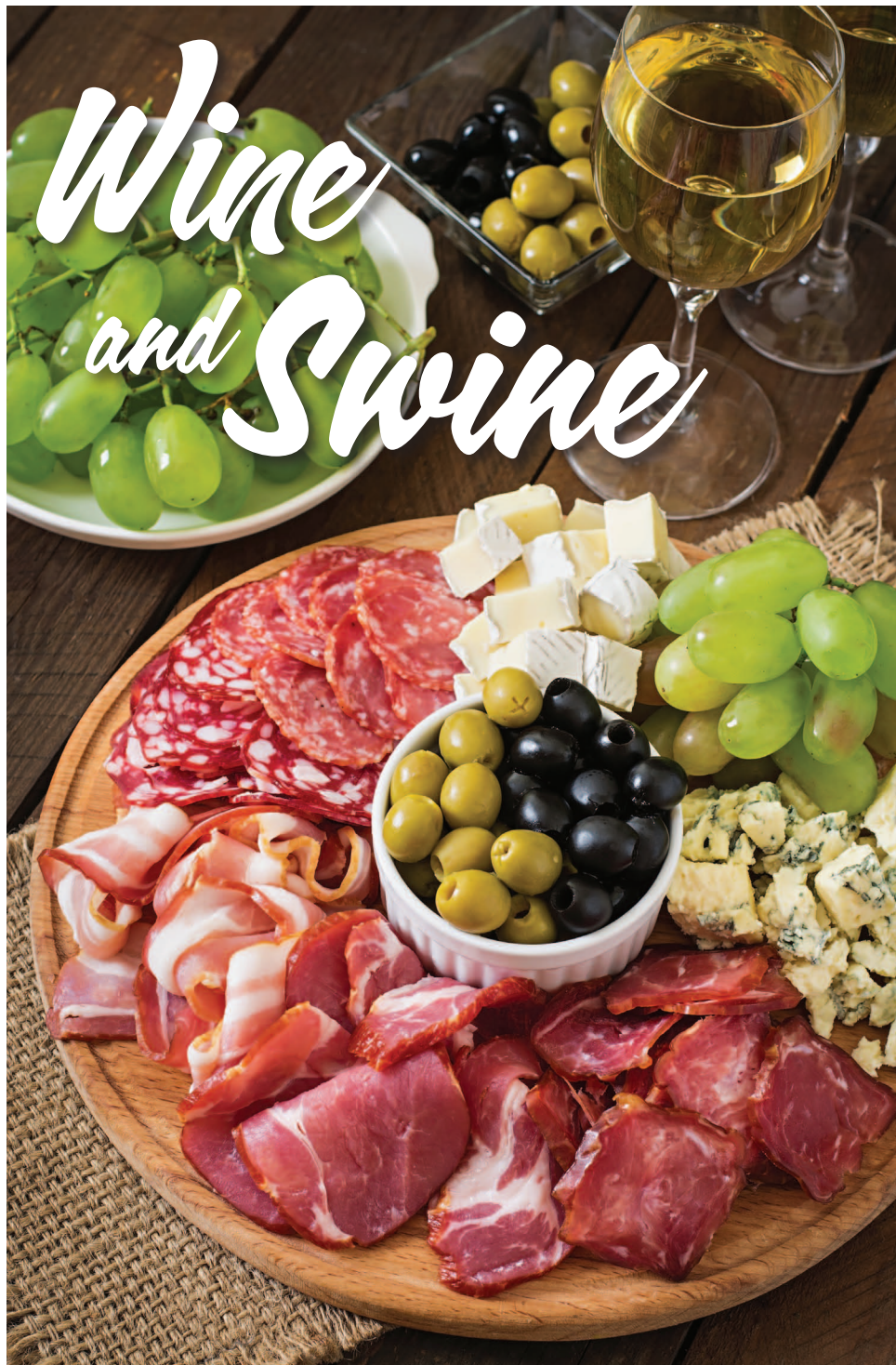
- 1 (1-pound) package large lima beans
- 2 tablespoons Rouses vegetable oil
- 1 pound pickled pork, diced
- 1 ham hock
- 1 large white or yellow onion, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 quarts water
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 tablespoons Tabasco
- 1 teaspoon Rouses salt
- 1 teaspoon Rouses pepper

### HOW TO PREP

Rinse and sort beans. (It is not necessary to soak them overnight).

Heat oil in a large cast iron pot over medium heat. Add pickled pork and ham hocks and cook until browned, about 5 minutes. Sweat the onions, celery and garlic (cook until wilted and fragrant), about 5 minutes. Add water, bay leaves and beans (water should cover beans by at least 2 inches). Bring to a low boil, cover and reduce heat to low. Let simmer until beans are soft and creamy, about 2½ hours, stirring periodically to keep beans from sticking. Stir in the Tabasco, salt and pepper. Remove bay leaves before serving.





**“The salt, fat and smokiness of pork may fight with the big reds like Cabs or the rich whites like Chardonnay, but a crisp glass of Pinot Gris or velvety Pinot Noir pairs perfectly.”**

*—Tim Acosta*

### **Sausage**

First impulse is to crack open an Abita Amber to go with that smoked sausage, boudin or andouille, but if you're looking for wine, there are plenty of pairings. Choose an acidic, dry Alsatian Riesling, a semi-sweet German Riesling or lively, low-to-medium tannin French Beaujolais or higher tannin Spanish Rioja. Stick closer to home with a crisp La Crema Pinot Gris made with California or Oregon grapes or Cambria Bench Break's Pinot Noir.

### **Bacon & Pork Belly**

Think sparkling for crispy, salty bacon, or a Riesling — the fruit and acidity will help balance out the smokiness of the bacon. For beans and greens cooked with bacon or ham hock, look for a dry white Sauvignon Blanc or zingy, fruity Pinot Noir. Pinot Noir also pairs well with pork belly, which I cook low and slow on my Big Green Egg. One of my favorites is pork belly taco paired with good red sangria. If you don't have time to cook it yourself, Johnny Sanchez in New Orleans makes an excellent version.

### **Ribs**

Whether you go for a meaty spare rib or leaner, more tender Baby Back, you want a fruity wine with only moderate tannins so as not to mask the flavor of the meat. Choose a sparkling white, a light and sweet Gewürztraminer or, yes, a Riesling. A juicy rosé or rich and fruity red Syrah or Zinfandel also pairs well, as does Chianti, and Pinot Noir (as long as the ribs aren't too spicy).

### **Ham**

Ideally you want a wine to bring out the sweetness of ham, but one with plenty of acidity. Think acidic, like Riesling or Chenin Blanc, or sweet like Moscato or red Zinfandel (it's one of the sweetest red wines we sell). Glazed hams are perfect with California pinot noir.

### **Pork Tenderloin**

This is a lean, delicate, boneless roast and the wine you choose really depends on how you cook it. You don't want anything too overpowering or you'll make the flavor of the meat. My wife, Cindy, will oven cook a quick and easy pork tenderloin for a weeknight dinner. I will pour a crispy, bright Pinot Gris or even a lighter bodied red like Zinfandel or Pinot Noir.



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# GREASE *is the* WORD

by Sara Roahen



“It’s the one who holds the skillet that knows the cost of the lard.” — from “Gombo Zhebes: Little Dictionary of Creole Proverbs,” by Lafcadio Hearn, 1885.

In 2005, *The New York Times* ran an op-ed piece called “High on the Hog,” in which the writer Corby Kummer calls for the comeback of “the great misunderstood fat”: lard.

In the span of just a few paragraphs, Kummer covers the rise of solid vegetable shortenings like Crisco (“developed by industry to mimic the virtues of lard but relieve housewives of the burden of rendering their own fat”); how America’s war against saturated fats around the 1970s demonized lard and other animal products like butter and cream; how it turns out that vegetable shortening’s trans fats are worse for our health than just about anything else; and how lard’s nutritional profile beats butter’s.

And that’s not to mention how lard can make pastry crusts flakier, fried chicken lighter and crisper, and biscuits more savory. In the article, Kummer takes heart in a visit to the more-than-century-old LeJeune’s Bakery in the Cajun town of Abbeville, Louisiana, where the bakers work lard sourced from a local cracklin’ maker into the dough of their airy French bread loaves and sweet hand pies.

When I visited LeJeune’s in 2005, I watched as fifth-generation baker Matt LeJeune used a tin can to measure some of the opaque liquid fat and then added it to a mixture that would later become fig pies. Pie dough is tricky, he told me. “If I would take four ounces of lard out of a hundred-pound recipe, it would be like night and day.”

Southerners don’t hold the patent on lard, but its use and usefulness are engrained enough in southern cooking culture that the lard-shaming of the latter part of the last century didn’t entirely harm its reputation here. At the New Orleans seafood house Casamento’s, proprietor C. J. Gerdes fries everything — oysters, shrimp, hand-cut potatoes — in lard. Across the Mississippi River in Algiers, the crisp, chestnut-colored fried chicken at Chubbie’s is cooked in a mixture of animal and vegetable fats. In his cookbook “Real Cajun,” Donald Link advises frying catfish in bacon fat. “This preparation

works best in a cast-iron skillet,” he adds, animal fats being to the cast-iron skillet what butter is to the omelet pan. “If you don’t have one, I suggest that you go out immediately and buy one.”

April McGreger, the author of “Sweet Potatoes: A Savor the South Cookbook” and the ebullient owner-operator of Farmers Daughter Brand Pickles & Preserves in North Carolina, has always been a lard devotee. “When you use lard, biscuit-making is much less intimidating,” she says. “The wrong brand of flour or a slightly too-tough hand, and a butter biscuit is tough and unappealing. Because it has less water, and because it is less temperature-sensitive, lard makes more tender biscuits. It also makes crispier bottoms, which I love.” McGreger notes that she makes an exception when baking for vegetarian, Muslim, and Jewish eaters.

**“Stop making such a big deal out of lard. It is no less healthy than other fats, and it is much more delicious. Nothing makes as flaky or as delicious biscuits or piecrusts as ones made with part lard. And there is simply nothing better for frying.”**

—Chef John Currence, *Pickles, Pigs & Whiskey*



The 2003 cookbook “The Gift of Southern Cooking” is one of McGreger’s kitchen bibles. And no wonder: in it, Edna Lewis and Scott Peacock call for making buttermilk biscuits with “good, fresh, very cold lard.” Peacock, who is Lewis’ junior by several decades, tells how the two chefs started exchanging gifts of food early in their friendship. Lewis would give him things like frozen gooseberries, damson plums, and “half-gallon Mason jars of lard, rendered by her sister.”

In parts of the rural South, a Mason jar of self-rendered lard is as personal an offering as a freshly baked pie or Lane cake — because the lard likely came from a hog raised by the gifter or someone in the family. In Louisiana tradition, a family hog killing is a community

event warranting its own name: boucherie. Many traditional Louisiana products and dishes were born of the boucherie: boudin, backbone stew, chaudin or ponce (stuffed pig’s stomach), cracklin’, ti salé (a peppered salt pork), and hogshead cheese. Lard, which has a limitless shelf life when stored at cool temperatures, is used for cooking cracklin’, for making soap, and as a preservative.

Vincent Fontenot, a U.S. National Park Ranger at Prairie Acadian Cultural Center in Eunice, Louisiana, told me that, pre-refrigeration, “You could smoke the meat and preserve it and it eat it year-round. You’d put it in these crocks with lard, and if you wanted sausage in the middle of the winter, you just opened that crock and pulled a piece of sausage out and eat it.”

Evidence of the old-time boucherie exists all across Acadiana, where gallons of fresh lard at fire sale stock the shelves of meat markets and small groceries.

Fresh lard also lurks at urban butcher shops like Cleaver & Co. in New Orleans, which operates on the boucherie model. Cleaver's pig butcher Becky Mumaw suggests several different pork fats: back fat; leaf lard, or kidney fat, which makes for prime baking; belly fat, which Mumaw turns into bacon; and mesh-like caul fat, which surrounds some of the pig's internal organs and can be used as a substitute for sausage casing. So devoted are the folks at Cleaver to a no-waste system that when they cook off bacon in the shop, they save the leftover grease and sell it.

Buying bacon grease would be anathema to the kind of old-school southern cook who lives by the coffee can stored beneath the sink where all the bacon drippings go. Corbin Evans, the chef-proprietor of Oxford Canteen in Oxford, Mississippi has modernized to a "heat-proof 'Tupperware' container on the counter" at his home. Most recently, he used the bacon grease stored therein to make a roux for a smoked turkey gumbo. Sheri Castle, who authored "The New Southern Garden Cookbook," confesses that she stores the grease from differently flavored bacons in separate containers. "My Benton's doesn't taste like my Neuske's or the local bacon I get from the farmers market," she says.

But strong as the tradition of squirreling away bacon drippings might be, there *is* a market for store-bought bacon fat. Just ask Christie Hughes, the Louisiana native who conceived of Hot Belly Bacon Grease (sold at Rouses) a few years ago after noticing that no such product existed. "I just always cooked from recipes from my grandmother, and she always kept bacon grease in a can under her counter," Hughes explains.

The grease for Hot Belly is rendered from hickory-smoked bacon. It contains no sodium, sugar, trans fats, or gluten. Hughes points out that it's also Paleo diet-friendly. "I must get three orders a day from California," Hughes says. "They are way ahead of us health-wise."

A passionate entrepreneur with a background in radio, Hughes regularly demonstrates her product in Rouses stores, touting how it can transform a can of Blue Runner red beans or Bruce's sweet potato pancake mix — "You don't even need syrup." You could use Hot Belly to sear shrimp or chicken, she says, or in the waffle iron instead of butter. You get the feeling while talking with Hughes that she won't quit until *everyone* admits to bacon grease's nutritional and gustatory superiority.

"I've heard of people emptying an entire (eleven-ounce) container into a crawfish pot during the soaking stage," she says. Which is a ditty deserving of its own op-ed.

#### > **Makin' bacon?**

Next time you cook a skillet full, strain leftover grease into an airtight glass container (filter out the cooked bits). Use in salad dressing or as a substitute for butter or oil.

## Killed Lettuce

Makes 4 servings

*Killed lettuce takes best advantage of the first, tender leaves of lettuce that emerge in spring. Dressed — wilted, basically — in a hot bacon grease and vinegar concoction, the greens hold their own.*

*The author of this recipe, Sheri Castle, learned to make killed lettuce from her grandmother, Madge Castle, in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. Sheri says that in her neck of the woods, killed lettuce is traditionally served with something starchy like cornbread and potatoes. Feel free to substitute spinach, arugula, or larger leaf lettuces.*

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 12 cups freshly picked baby leaf lettuce
- 4 spring bulb onions, trimmed and thinly sliced
- 4 slices bacon, cut crosswise into ½-inch-wide pieces

### FOR DRESSING

- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper

### HOW TO PREP

Dry the lettuce thoroughly. Place the lettuce and onions in a large serving bowl and set aside. Fry the bacon in a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat, stirring often, until it renders its fat and is very crispy, about 15 minutes. Transfer with a slotted spoon to drain on paper towels. Add the vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper to the drippings and stir until the sugar dissolves. Cook until the mixture is shimmering hot and carefully pour it over the lettuce and onions, tossing with tongs to coat and wilt the greens. Sprinkle the bacon over the top and serve immediately — this won't keep.

Recipe from *The Southern Foodways Alliance Community Cookbook*.





# Praise the Lard

by Chef Nathan Richard + photo by Romney Caruso

**W**e're making cracklin's here, gratons to be exact, so you're going to need about two pounds of boneless pork belly with the fat and meat and skin on, cut into cubes.

Let me be clear, you need to do this **OUTSIDE**, preferably in the yard away from anything that could catch fire. There is a great risk of fire and grease burns with this process, so get out your deep and large black-iron pot.

I start with two pounds of lard. Not Crisco, not peanut oil ... lard. This amount is good for my pot; it may not be for yours, so adjust as needed.

Here we go ...

Light the fire to medium heat. Put the lard and one cup of water in the pot. When the grease gets to about 200 degrees add the pork belly. Get the lard up to about 250 degrees and try to keep it there. This will be hot enough to render the fat but not burn the oil. (I found that the lower temperature also keeps sticking to a minimum.) Stir every five minutes or so.

The water is going to cook off first, but you'll need to keep cooking until the bubbles almost stop; this could take up to

two hours. You'll notice that the more you cook them the hotter the grease will get. Try to keep the grease below 325 degrees until they are done.

When the bubbles are gone, use a slotted metal strainer to transfer the cracklin's from the pot to a piece of newspaper lined with paper towels. Shake them around a little so they don't stick. Place in the refrigerator to cool for at least 3 hours.

Now's the fun part ... you're going to fry the cracklin's again to make the skin pop. The fireman in me feels obliged to remind you need that you need to have a fire extinguisher on hand whenever you're frying outdoors.

Heat the lard back up to about 380 to 400 degrees. (A trick I learned from a good ole Cajun boy like myself is to throw a match in the lard — it will ignite at around 400 degrees). Once the lard is up to temperature, return the cold cracklin's to the pot. The skin is going to pop and blister — this softens it so it chews easier. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring and stirring the whole time.

Transfer the cracklin's to clean newspaper lined with paper towels. You want to move the pan around briskly to absorb the liquid lard. Lightly season with a mix of cayenne pepper, paprika, chili powder, garlic powder and Rouses salt and pepper. Let cool to room temperature before eating.

**“The correct definition of “cracklin” is a source of debate, depending on geography and personal taste. The term sometimes refers to pork rinds, which are simply pieces of skin that puff into curls when dropped into hot lard. Other times — and most of the time in Louisiana — the term cracklin’ applies to gratons, which constitute layers of back fat and meat as well as skin. Gratons, which are usually fried twice, are bigger and meatier than pork rinds. Lardons, which sometimes come from the back fat and sometimes from the belly, are meatier still.”**

—Sara Roahen

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10

minutes prep time

55

minutes total time

12

servings

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 bags (16 oz each) sliced frozen peaches
- 1 cup Sparkling Ice® Peach Nectarine
- 1 box yellow cake mix
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ cup unsalted butter, diced into ½-inch pieces
- Garnish: Whipped topping or ice cream

#### DIRECTIONS

Heat oven to 375°F. Spray bottom of 13x9-inch pan with cooking spray. Add peaches and Sparkling Ice® Peach Nectarine to bottom of pan. In medium bowl, combine cake mix with cinnamon and mix well. Pour mixture over peaches and with hands, press down firmly on mixture. Top with pieces of butter. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes, until golden brown and top is crispy. Serve warm with ice cream or whipped topping.

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# Local Links

photo by Denny Culbert



**O**ur naturally smoked sausage is made with premium pork butts and a Rouse family blend of garlic, onions, Cayenne pepper, salt and spices. It has a meaty, smoky taste, a snappy outside and a smooth texture inside. We've been making it since 1960 (our founder, Mr. Anthony, produced it himself in his backyard smokehouse). We have original, Cajun, hot and green onion varieties, as well as an authentic andouille. Our butchers also craft fresh pork sausages right in our stores.

## DOUBLE D

*Sun, LA*

In 1967, Tillman "Dutch" Stogner, Sr. moved his family from New Orleans to the tiny town of Sun just a few miles from Bogalusa to open a butcher shop custom processing for local farmers. Stogner's smoked sausage started off as a by-product from butchering hogs but quickly became as popular as his old-fashioned sugar-cured hams and bacon. Business expanded and Double D moved to a new location on Highway 21 just south of Bogalusa. Nearly 50 years and two generations later, the company's hickory smoked sausage made with pork, cured ham and fat trimmings is more popular than ever. It's loaded with flavor and only 14 grams of fat.

## RICHARD'S

*Church Point, LA*

Richard's is the first choice of Cajun country and its Acadian roots certainly run deep. It all started at the grocery, as so many good things do.

Lonnie Richard's first job was helping at his grandmother's small store in Church Point on Bayou Plaquemine Brulé. Grandma's homemade smoked sausage, boudin and andouille were a big draw. With his grandmother's blessing in 1981, at the age of 21, Lonnie bought a delivery truck to take his grandmother's Cajun specialties to other stores in Acadia and neighboring parishes.

Thirty-five years later, Richard's offers a complete line of prepared Cajun Favorite entrées including gumbo and etouffee that are Certified Cajun, along with that original line of smoked meats.

Richard's carries two lines of smoked sausage — Richard's Premium and Krazy Cajun. Premium is a denser sausage made



with premium cuts of meat and Cajun seasonings with no added fillers or soy. With only 10-13 grams of fat, it's a great choice if you're looking for a lower fat option. Krazy Cajun is smaller smoked links made with pork and pork hearts. It has 12-15 grams of fat, so there's plenty of juice.

## SAVOIE'S

*Opelousas, LA*

Savoie's, pronounced Sav-wah's, also has a grocery connection. In 1949 Ms. Eula Savoie and her husband Tom purchased a small country grocery store on Highway 742 in Opelousas, Louisiana. Three years later the young couple bought 187-acres of

land to go into the hog farming business to supplement income from the store. In 1955, the price of hogs dropped and the cost of raising hogs became too much of a financial hardship. Ms. Eula's mother suggested slaughtering the unsold hogs to make sausage and other pork-based products they could sell in their store. Using her mother's recipes and a No. 3 home meat grinder, Ms. Eula began making smoked sausage, boudin and hogshead cheese. Word of Ms. Eula's Cajun specialties spread, and a Cajun empire was born. Today Savoie's uses Ms. Eula's original recipes to produce "Certified Cajun" smoked pork sausage, pork-alligator sausage, andouille and tasso.



## MANDA

*Baton Rouge, LA*

Manda makes a natural casing andouille, smoked sausage, and skinless smoked sausage (which means there's no casing) that is particularly good for gumbo or spaghetti sausage. Fresh pork is ground and blended with Manda's signature seasoning formula, then smoked for 24-hours. There are four flavors: mild, hot, garlic and green onion. Like Rouses, Manda is family owned. The business was originally founded as Manda Provision Company by brothers Vincent, John and Bennie Manda in 1947. The three combined their Sicilian background and Cajun influences to create their uniquely flavored smoked sausages. Today Manda Fine Meats is owned and operated by three of Vincent Manda's grandsons: Tommy, Bobby and Steve Yarborough. Manda also makes Mr. T Sausage, boudin, bacon and packaged pork cracklins.

## VERON'S

*Prairieville, LA*

Veron's is a higher end choice. The company uses finely ground boneless shoulder meat, seasonings and a traditional blend of garlic, red pepper and spices to fill their sausage, which is hickory smoked in an old smokehouse and packaged fresh. The recipe and smoking technique are faithful to the originals that founder J.P. Veron used in 1938 to make the smoked sausage he sold via a backyard meat market in Gramercy. Veron's original recipe has 10 grams of fat, making it lower on the fat scale. The company also makes hot sausage, green onion sausage, boudin and andouille, which combines a coarser grind of pork with garlic, curing salts and various peppers.

## BIG EASY

*Lake Charles, LA*

Big Easy Foods of Louisiana is a relative newcomer on the sausage scene. The company introduced their first two products, smoked sausage and boudin, just over a decade ago. They also package a green onion sausage.



## COCHON

*New Orleans, LA*

James Beard Award-winning chefs Donald Link and Stephen Stryjewski, co-owners of Cochon Butcher, worked with Alabama's Fatback Pig Project at a slaughterhouse in Eva, Alabama, to make their andouille, bacon and smoked, Cajun-style sausage. The bacon and sausages are available at select Rouses Markets.

## MARCIANTE'S

*Kenner, LA*

Marciante's makes fresh not smoked sausage, but one taste and you'll know why we couldn't leave them out. The company started in 1983 with an Italian sausage. Now they make multiple versions including a Spanish chorizo with paprika.

## COUNTRY PLEASIN'

*Florence, MS*

In 1976, Henry Cooper bought a small meat packaging in Pelahatchie that supplied meat to about 30 neighborhood stores. In those lean early days, besides meat packaging, Cooper mainly just processed deer and custom slaughters. He also began making sausage. His Country Pleasin' mixes prime cuts of pork with spices and sugar. It has 18 grams of total fat per serving — so it's going to be juicier — and the sausages are encased in hog casing.

In 2005, Cooper's Country Meat Packers

expanded to a new state-of-the-art meat processing plant to accommodate the demand.

## BRYANT'S MEATS

*Taylorsville, MS*

Bryant's has been making natural hickory smoked sausage with pork, beef hearts and chicken since 1968. With 19 grams of fat, expect a lot of smoke when you grill it.

## CONECUH

*Evergreen, AL*

The late Henry Sessions created the original recipe for Conecuh Sausage, naming it after the Alabama county where he lived. Sessions was originally a salesman for a meat packing plant in Montgomery, but he had bigger ideas. In 1947 he opened a hog and cattle slaughter facility with a freezer locker space for local families (this was before most people had home freezers). He quickly hit upon the idea of making his own smoked sausage using pork shoulders and bacon trimmings. He also added more spice than traditional smoked sausage and a higher sugar content, which helps the sausage char and crisp. Breakfasts would never be the same! Today Henry's son, John Crum Sessions, runs the business alongside his own son, John Henry Sessions. Conecuh Sausage has produces 30,000-40,000 pounds of sausage a day. It is stuffed in a natural sheep casing and has 16 grams of fat.

## ➤ Rouses Green Onion Sausage

*Our butchers craft our famous fresh green onion sausage right in our stores. It's a Rouse Family Recipe made with fresh ground pork, green onions, garlic and parsley. We also offer a smoked version.*

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- 8 Mission® Life Balance® Whole Wheat Tortillas
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- 1 lb Skinless Boneless Chicken Breast
- 3 tbsp Cayenne Pepper Hot Sauce
- To Coat, Non-Stick Cooking Spray
- 1 Green Bell Pepper, cut into thin strips
- 1/2 Red Onion, cut into thin strips
- 1/2 cup Cilantro Leaves, hand picked
- 12 Baby Carrots, rinsed
- 12 Celery Sticks
- 1 cup Blue Cheese Dressing, prepared bottle



Pre-heat charcoal or indoor grill to medium-high heat.

Place cleaned chicken breasts into a gallon size zipper storage bag, add hot sauce and toss; close and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

After 30 minutes remove chicken from refrigerator. Spray each side of the marinated chicken with non-stick cooking spray; place on pre-heated grill and cook for 8 minutes per side or until cooked through.

Place cooked chicken onto your work surface and allow to cool for a few minutes. Slice each chicken breast into thin strips cutting across the breast.

Warm Mission® Tortillas. Evenly spread 1 tablespoon of Mission® Guacamole Flavored Dip edge to edge. Lay 5-6 slices of chicken across the middle of each tortilla, top chicken with 5 strips of green bell pepper, red onion and a tablespoon of cilantro leaves.

Starting at the bottom roll tortilla forward to form a cylinder, repeat process for remaining tortillas.

Serve a portion of tacos (two tacos) with 3 baby carrots, 3 celery sticks and a ¼ cup of blue cheese dressing in a small ramekin.

# *Louisiana Creole* **TOMATOES**

*photo by* Romney Caruso





**K**nobby, orange-to-red Creole tomatoes are a sure sign of warmer weather. They're great eaten out of hand, sprinkled with salt, on salads and sandwiches, and in sauces. They were named the official vegetable of Louisiana in 2003, although technically a tomato, even a Creole tomato, is a fruit. Creole aren't one particular cultivar. The name Creole refers to where the tomatoes are grown — typically the fertile fields of the southeastern part of Louisiana, in particular St. Bernard and Plaquemine parishes. The unique river soils and warm climate of these parishes produce sugar-sweet Creoles with an exceptional “tomatoey” flavor.

### Chef Tory Mcphail's Creole Tomato Jam

*Makes 1 pint*

#### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 garlic bulb, peeled and sliced
- 1 sweet onion, julienned
- ½ teaspoon vegetable oil
- 3 large Creole tomatoes, peeled, cored, and rough-chopped
- 2½ teaspoons kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 2 teaspoon Crystal hot sauce
- 2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- Juice of 1 lemon

#### HOW TO PREP

Add garlic and onion to a large pot with oil and sauté over medium heat until garlic is golden brown. Add remaining ingredients and stir to combine. Reduce heat to low and allow mixture to simmer uncovered for 2 to 3 hours or until jam is dark and thick, stirring occasionally. Pour the jam into sterilized jars. Refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

### Creole Tomato Ketchup *Makes about 2 cups*

#### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 8 cups Creole tomatoes, cut in half
- 2 cups red wine vinegar
- ⅔ cup dark brown sugar
- 4 teaspoons Rouses salt
- 2 teaspoons Rouses black pepper
- ¾ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

#### HOW TO PREP

Bring tomatoes, vinegar, sugar, salt and pepper to a boil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Reduce to a simmer and cook until mixture is thick and liquid has evaporated, about 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a blender and purée until smooth. Strain mixture through a fine-mesh sieve. Mix in Worcestershire Sauce. Serve chilled.

### Creole Tomato Salsa *Makes about 2 cups*

#### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 2 large Creole tomatoes, chopped
- ½ large white onion, peeled and minced
- ¼ teaspoon minced raw garlic
- 1 habanero or jalapeño pepper, stemmed, seeded and minced
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro leaves
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- Rouses salt and freshly ground pepper

#### HOW TO PREP

Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl. Place in the refrigerator to marinate for 30 minutes. Stir and serve with chips or as a topping.



a Bloody Mary? Now that's a complicated cocktail. And personally I like complicated drinks. And women. Just ask my wife.

Like many cocktails, the Bloody Mary has a hazy history. A lot of different bars and restaurants claim to have invented it. The truth is nobody really knows when the Bloody Mary was invented, nor by whom. The commonly held belief is it that it was first served in New York City in the early-to-mid twentieth century, possibly as a hangover cure. The hangover part sort of makes sense. Nutrients and electrolytes are replenished by the tomato juice, lemon juice and salt, and the vodka is there because, well, nothing "cures" hangovers like a little hair of the dog.

When it comes to Bloody Marys most people start with the basics: tomato juice, lemon juice (or lime) and vodka swirled together with a splash of Worcestershire sauce, horseradish, a dash of hot sauce (or Sriracha) and a pinch of celery salt. Then they throw in the kitchen sink: cucumbers, jalapeños, garlic, olives, pickled onions, pickled okra, pickled beans, pickled eggs, hard boiled eggs, shrimp, bacon, smoked sausage ... I've even seen them served with a fried chicken wing as garnish (beats a celery stick every time). I'm thinking pickled pigs feet, lips and snouts would also add flavor. I'd rinse them first because, well, gross.

My tip for a bloody good Mary is to use homemade juice. Creole tomatoes are at season's peak, and flavor-wise it really doesn't get any better than the Creole. You'll need about three pounds of Creole tomatoes to make about a quart of juice. Wash, roughly chop and place in a pan with about 2 tablespoons of sugar (the sugar will make the juice taste less acidic). Add a pinch each of Rouses salt and pepper, bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer uncovered until the tomatoes are soupy, about 25 minutes. Run the mixture through a sieve or food mill, and voilà, homemade juice!

**F**or a lot of folks, Sunday brunch is almost as religious an experience as church. Or Saints football. I love a good brunch as much as anybody. Nothing beats a Sunday plate of Eggs Benedict or huge helping of buttermilk pancakes and crispy bacon. But while there are countless dishes for brunch, there are really only two main drinks: mimosas and Bloody Marys. Of the two, there's really only one choice for me: the Bloody Mary.

Now, there's nothing wrong with a mimosa, which is made of equal parts orange juice and champagne, two important Sunday food groups. The mimosa's simplicity is part of its attraction. But

You know me, I like to think outside the bottle. Vodka is the traditional choice for a Bloody Mary, but you're not married to it. Swap bourbon for the vodka and you end up with a Bloody Derby. Use tequila to make a Bloody Maria. Choose gin if you want a Red Snapper. Whatever spirit moves you, there's no need to buy top shelf stuff. The other ingredients mask the flavor too much. I usually stick to Taaka or Smirnoff, Jim Beam, Jose Cuervo and Bombay Sapphire when I make Bloody anythings. The Buffalo Trace is saved for sipping on the rocks.





# Eat Right WITH ROUSES

by Esther, Rouses Dietitian

Science has long touted the benefits of diets rich in fruits and vegetables, such as lower incidence of chronic diseases like heart disease, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and many others. Not only is it important to eat more produce, but it's also important to eat a variety of colors since each color offers a different composition of protective properties. And when it comes to colors, red is never short on its contribution to the mix.

## Lycopene

Red fruits and vegetables get their pigment from lycopene, one of the hundreds of carotenoids found in produce and a potent antioxidant. Research has linked it to reduced cancer risks, particularly prostate cancer, as well as reduced risk of heart attacks because it may lower triglyceride and LDL cholesterol levels. Tomatoes are a well-known source of lycopene, especially cooked tomatoes. This means tomato sauces, tomato juice and canned varieties of tomatoes are better sources than their raw counterparts.

Whereas heat has been known to do damage to some nutrients, like vitamin C, it has the opposite impact on lycopene and makes it more bioavailable in the body, meaning your body can absorb it better. In addition to heat, research has also found that absorption is increased when consumed with fat. One study found that adding avocado (a heart-healthy fat) to salsa increased lycopene absorption by four times. Heart-healthy fats are found in nuts, avocados, olive oils and seafood.

Tomatoes are often praised for lycopene, but they're not the only source. Watermelon is right behind with 4.1 mg. Canned tomato paste contains 6.5 mg, and a fresh tomato contains 2.9 mg. Pink grapefruit, strawberries, cranberries, red bell pepper and most of red fruits and vegetables contain the nutrient.

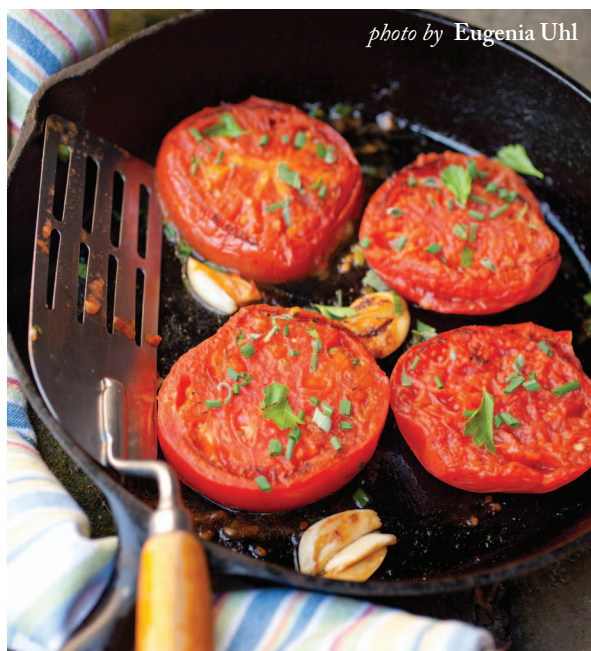


photo by Eugenia Uhl

## Anthocyanins

Anthocyanins also contribute to the red-orange to blue-violet pigment found in fruits and vegetables. The nutrient is found abundantly in red and purple grapes, cherries, eggplants, black plums and red cabbage, and it is produced by the plant as a protective mechanism against environmental stressors such as drought or ultraviolet light. Not only is it protective of the plant, research has shown protective benefits in animals and human studies concerning heart health, cancer prevention and lower rates of cognitive decline.

Several studies have found that an increased intake of anthocyanin rich foods significantly reduced incidence of death from cardiovascular disease and coronary artery disease as well as incidence of hypertension and heart attacks. Studies of the impact of anthocyanins on cancer have shown anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects and have actually seen cases where it kills the cancer cell completely. Research also suggests that flavonoids, including anthocyanins, have the ability to improve memory and aid in the prevention of age-related decline in mental function. While scientists have not yet been able to definitively determine an amount needed for all of these benefits, it's clear that some is better than none.

These are only two of the many reasons that should motivate you to eat red. Science has only just begun to realize how powerful the benefits can be.



## ➤ At Season's Peak

*Strawberries, watermelons and tomatoes, especially Creoles, are essential spring and summer eating.*

# At Season's Peak



## Watermelon

**A Cut Above:** Here's a neat trick to make recipe-friendly watermelon cubes. Slice off the top end of your watermelon, flip it, and place flat side down on a cutting board. Use a knife to shave away the rind (it helps to work top to bottom and follow the shape of the watermelon). Carve peeled watermelon into slices then cubes. Repeat with the other half.

**Storage:** Whole watermelons stored at room temperature will keep for 7 to 10 days; cut watermelon will stay fresh in the fridge for 3 to 4 days.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** One cup of watermelon has only 46 calories and provides about 20% of your recommended dietary allowance of vitamins A and C. Watermelon is also a good source of copper, biotin, potassium, magnesium and vitamins B1, B5 and B6.

## Vidalia Onions

Vidalias are officially grown in only certain areas of Georgia.

**Any Way You Slice It:** Various recipes call for various onion cuts. A chop is a larger cut — anywhere from a third of an inch to the size of a nickel. A dice, the size of about a quarter inch. A mince is even smaller.

**Storage:** Onions stored in a cool, dry place away from light will keep for months.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** Onions are a good source of biotin, manganese, copper, vitamin C, phosphorus, potassium, folate, and vitamins B1 and B6.

## Grape Tomatoes

**Grape Expectations:** Grape tomatoes are similar to cherry tomatoes, but are oblong instead of round, and have thicker skins and meatier flesh, so they're less fragile and last longer.

**Storage:** Keep at room temperature until fully ripe. Store ripe tomatoes in a Ziploc bag in the refrigerator for 10-14 days.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** Tomatoes are chock full of lycopene, and a good source of vitamins A, C, E, K and B6, biotin, copper, potassium, manganese, folate, niacin and phosphorus.

## Peaches

**Eat A Peach:** Late spring, early summer peaches are great for eating out of hand. Look for plump peaches with smooth skin and a strong peach fragrance.

**Storage:** Allow peaches to ripen on your kitchen counter before refrigerating. (Peaches will ripen more quickly if kept in a brown paper bag.) Ripe peaches will keep in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 days.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** Peaches are high in vitamin A, beta-carotene and vitamin C.

## Blueberries

Blueberries range in color from deep purple-blue to blue-black with a silvery sheen called a bloom.

**Storage:** Blueberries are sturdier than their berry cousins and slower to deteriorate. You can store fresh, unwashed blueberries in their packaging on the middle shelf of your refrigerator for 7 to 10 days. Do not wash until you're ready to use. To freeze blueberries to use later, place them in one layer on a cookie sheet in your freezer. When they are frozen, place in a freezer bag and either vacuum seal or press as much air out of the bag as possible and return them to the freezer until you need them.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** A one-cup serving has only 80 calories and provides almost 25% of your daily dose of vitamin C. Blueberries are also an excellent source of manganese, which helps the body process cholesterol and carbohydrates and aids in bone development.

## Sweet Corn

**Storage:** You can store fresh ears of corn uncovered in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. Do not remove husks until you are ready to cook.

**Shuck It:** Remove the outer leaves of the husk. Peel back the remaining layer to reveal the first few rows of kernels. Take the leaves and tassel in one hand and the bottom of the cob in another. Pull the leaves and silk down as far as possible, then break off.

**Kernel of Truth:** If you're having trouble removing the silks, try microwaving the ear of corn for a minute or two before shucking.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** Sweet corn has plenty of lutein and zeaxanthin, phytochemicals that promote healthy vision. A medium size ear provides a 3-gram dose of dietary fiber.





### Red Skinned Potatoes

**No Small Potatoes:** Red-skinned potatoes are good for more than just seafood boils. Their skin is so thin they don't require peeling, which is great for potato salad. They're waxy, which means they hold their shape when they're cooked, so they're perfect for stuffing.

**Storage:** Keep potatoes out of the fridge. Store in a cool, dark, dry place, preferably in an open paper bag.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** Potatoes are loaded with potassium and vitamin B6 and high in fiber. They're a good source of copper, vitamin C, manganese, phosphorus and niacin.

### Snap Beans

**Storage:** Keep unwashed fresh beans in a Ziploc bag or airtight plastic container in the refrigerator crisper for up to 7 days. Do not wash until ready to use. Fresh green beans can also be frozen. Rinse in cool water, then snip ends. Blanch (boil for 3 minutes then plunge into ice water), drain, and pack in an airtight container.

**In a Snap:** You can trim a bunch of beans at one time. Line up a handful of beans against the edge of your knife. Cut off the tips in one fell swoop. Repeat on the flip side.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** Green beans are a good source of the mineral silicon, vitamins C and K, manganese, folate and have a healthy dose of fiber.

### Athena Melons

Jumbo Athena melons from Georgia are sweeter and more flavorful than their cantaloupe cousins.

**Ripe for the Picking:** Gently push your fingers on the round section where the vine was attached. It should be slightly soft and should smell fresh and fragrant with a hint of sweetness.

**Storage:** Keep at room temperature until ripe (keeping it in a closed paper bag will quicken the process), then refrigerate, whole, for up to 5 days.

**Cutting:** You can cut an Athena melon the same way you do a watermelon. To make quick work, instead of working one half at a time, slice off the bottom and top ends of the melon and strip away the rind top to bottom. Halve the fruit, scoop out the seeds, and slice or cube as desired.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** Orange melons are a great source of vitamins A and C. They are high in potassium, copper, folate and vitamins B1, B3 and B6.

### > AT SEASON'S PEAK

Watermelons, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama & Florida

Creole Tomatoes, Louisiana

Blueberries, Mississippi & Louisiana

Grape Tomatoes, Mississippi

Vidalia Onions, Georgia

Peaches, Georgia, Florida & South Carolina

Sunshine Sweet Corn, Florida

Athena Melons, Florida & Georgia

Snap Beans, Florida

Red Potatoes, Florida

Also: Local Cucumbers, Bell Peppers, Okra, Squash



### Northwest Cherries

**Ripe for the Picking:** Our cherries are grown in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah and Montana. Different varieties ripen at different rates throughout the summer. Our farmer partners in the Northwest deliver to us within two days of harvest, so you get the freshest cherries every time you shop. You'll start seeing cherries in our stores late May early June.

**Eat, Drink & Be Cherry:** All varieties of Northwest Cherries are sweet, but the rule of thumb is the darker, the sweeter. Varieties include deep, mahogany-red Bing cherries, which are firm and juicy; large Rainier cherries, which yellow with a red blush; and heart-shaped Sweetheart cherries, which are firm, with a mild sweet flavor.

**Storage:** Unwashed cherries stored in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag will last for about a week. Don't wash until just before eating.

**Eat Right with Rouses:** Tart cherries are a natural source of melatonin, which may make for better sleep. Sweet cherries are a good source of potassium, which is beneficial in maintaining healthy blood pressure levels.

# SWEET KALE PICNIC JARS

There's no better way to eat on-the-go while using leftover chicken and rice!

## Ingredients

- 1 12 oz. bag Sweet Kale salad kit
- 1 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 diced bell peppers, preferably orange or yellow
- 1 cups grape tomatoes, halved
- 2 cups cooked chicken, cooled and cut into cubes
- 2 cups cooked and cooled brown rice or other whole grain such as quinoa, barley or wheat berries



Have four 16 oz. wide-mouth mason jars with lids clean and ready to go.

Empty dressing packet into bowl, add olive oil and lemon juice, whisk to combine. Divide dressing amongst four jars by pouring approximately 1/8 cup into each.

Divide peppers and tomatoes between four jars. Follow with 1/2 cup of each, salad kit greens, chicken, another layer of salad kit greens and rice or similar whole grain. Top jars with cranberry/pumpkin seed mix from kit. Ingredients should be packed tightly in jar.

Screw lids on tightly and pack jars to go in chilled, insulated bag. Don't forget forks! When ready to eat, place jars upside-down and let sit for ten minutes to allow dressing to flow to all layers. When dressing is distributed, turn jars upright, remove lids, and eat directly from the jars, digging in deep for variety in every bite.

Serves 4 • Nutrition Per Serving: • Calories: 330, Fat: 14 g, Cholesterol: 60 mg, Carbohydrate: 41 g, Sodium: 154 mg



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## CREOLE CRAB STUFFED AVOCADOS

- 2 avocados, not overly ripe
- 2 tablespoons rice
- 10 crab sticks, chopped
- 2-3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- 3 drops hot sauce
- 1 tablespoon ketchup
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped herbs (chives, thyme, or basil)

Steam the rice and let it cool. In a small bowl, mix mayonnaise, mustard, salt & pepper, lemon juice, ketchup and hot sauce. Cut the avocados in half and scoop out the inside, leaving a small amount all around the skin to keep it sturdy. Set aside the skins. Dice the avocado. Stir together the crab, mayonnaise mixture and the cooled rice into the avocado. Taste the mixture and add any additional salt/pepper or seasoning that you like. Fill each avocado half with the prepared mixture, sprinkle with chopped herbs and refrigerate until serving.

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# Kitchen Traditions

by Liz Williams, Director of the Southern Food & Beverage Museum

**D**espite our current obsession with chefs, the real basis for a cuisine is the food people cook and serve at home. Even in cities that have many restaurants serving local cuisine, it is still not the restaurants that nurture the flavors, the dishes and the cultural foodways of the city. It is the home cooks, who prepare food to share with their families and friends, who are the guardians of our food traditions and who are the transmitters of those traditions into the future.

Before the coming of the Europeans to settle in the South, the native peoples prepared meals that reflected the great natural bounty of the area. They cultivated and tended to oyster beds, gathered fish, crabs and shrimp, caught crawfish, hunted

duck and turkey and deer, tended corn, pecans, tomatoes, onions, sweet potatoes, peppers, peanuts, pumpkin and beans. Despite its variety this list does not reflect all that was available and exploited by native people. Through trade they had access to such things as chocolate and potatoes. This diverse natural pantry formed the basis of plentiful, generous, and complex foodways.

The Europeans established themselves in the region in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the earliest days the Europeans, whether English, French, German or Spanish, were hard pressed to duplicate their traditional dishes and cultural practices. But there was an abundance of local product and there were also ships bringing supplies. The food that developed was home cooking

and street food. With the addition of enslaved Africans who worked as cooks as well as agricultural workers, the region's home kitchens became the crucible for the development of what has come to be known as Southern cuisine.

So many cultural traditions include food as a central component that food and kitchen have become the standard bearers of our culture. Parents cook with their children as a way to pass down tradition. Families eat together as a way to share their love. Cooking is a respected skill. Good home cooks are honored and recognized, competing with each other to make the best gumbo or the best red beans and rice at festival competitions.



People take their cooking seriously. Everyone at all levels of culinary training, academic accomplishment, financial status and employment has an opinion about food, taste and flavor and eating at home. And everyone feels the impulse to share an opinion. And the opinions of others are considered valid regardless of the status of others, unless someone challenges the authenticity of your grandmother's quintessential ham roast or coconut cake. People know how to make the food of their region because they continue to make it and eat it at home. Even when going out to eat food in restaurants prepared by renowned chefs, the standard set for the best gumbo or the best fried chicken or the best whatever is what you would eat at home. Trying fried

catfish and having someone say, "This isn't as good as Uncle John's," is a feature of conversation that reinforces the prominence and importance of home cooking.

Making cookies for a St. Joseph's Altar, frying a turkey for Thanksgiving, bringing food to someone's home after a funeral, making food for a Mardi Gras celebration, having a crab boil in the back yard or smoking mullet on the beach — these are all special cultural activities that are supported by food. This food culture is made and preserved at home. We frugally keep from wasting food by using stale bread for pain perdu. We turn a big turkey dinner into turkey bone gumbo the next day. Stale cornbread becomes an oyster dressing. Nothing is wasted — Sunday's ham bone flavors Monday's red beans and rice.

All across America the number of people eating out instead of cooking at home is growing, despite the cultural importance of cooking at home. One way that we can preserve our Southern food culture is to continue to eat it. Sure, we can eat other things. But we should not just save our traditional foods for special days of celebration. If we do not eat our foods all of the time, they will only be available like fruitcake ingredients, as seasonal specialties.

And in addition to the actual food and dishes for us to preserve, the family stories and personal traditions are passed down by working together in the kitchen or over a fire. Eating out may create new traditions, which is a wonderful thing, but without also eating in, many old traditions will be lost.

So here is to going to the grocery store and buying actual ingredients and making meals together at home. Do it to connect to family. Do it to preserve traditions. Do it to stay healthy. Do it because it is fun. We long for the comfort of cooking. Why else would we watch so many other people cook on television?

## Kitchen Traditions

from the Southern Food & Beverage Museum

### Stuffed Pork Chops Serves 4

#### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 tablespoon Rouses olive oil
- 1 canned anchovy fillet, or 1 tablespoon anchovy paste
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 ounces fresh baby spinach
- 2 ounces fresh basil leaves
- 1 teaspoon Rouses salt
- 1 teaspoon Rouses ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped capers
- 1 cup dried bread crumbs
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg, beaten
- 4 thick cut pork chops
- Rouses salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon Rouses olive oil

#### HOW TO PREP

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Heat the oil over medium heat in a large ovenproof skillet. Add the anchovy fillet and cook until it melts into the oil (or stir the paste into the oil). Lightly sauté the garlic (about one minute). Add spinach, basil, salt, pepper and capers to wilt the leaves. Transfer to a large bowl and allow to cool. When the spinach/basil mixture is cool, add the breadcrumbs, cheese and beaten egg. Mix well.

On a secure flat surface, cut a slit into each pork chop on a horizontal plane to create a pocket. Do not cut all the way through the pork chop. Salt and pepper the inside and outside of the chop. Stuff a quarter of the mixture into the pocket. Secure with toothpicks.

Place the remaining oil in the skillet over medium heat. Brown both sides of the pork chops about two minutes on each side. Place the pork chops in the skillet into the preheated 375-degree oven. Bake for about 15 minutes. Allow to rest 5 minutes before serving.

**“Even when going out to eat food in restaurants prepared by renowned chefs, the standard set for the best gumbo or the best fried chicken or the best whatever is what you would eat at home.”**



# Put Some Pork ON YOUR FORK!

## Grits with Shrimp & Pork

Serves 6

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

#### FOR THE SHRIMP

- 1½ pounds wild-caught gulf shrimp (21/25 count)
- 5 tablespoons diced butter, divided
- 2 slices of bacon, chopped
- 2 cups diced onion
- 1 cup diced celery
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 1 quart seafood stock
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon Rouses hot sauce
- Rouses salt and pepper to taste

#### FOR THE PORK

- 2-3 pounds pork belly
- ¼ cup Rouses Extra Virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¾ teaspoon ground coriander
- ¾ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

#### FOR THE GRITS

- 1½ cup white or yellow stone ground grits
- 2 pints Rouses whole milk
- 4 teaspoons Rouses salt
- 2 pinches of sugar
- ¾ stick of butter
- ¼ cup green onion tops, for garnish

### HOW TO PREP

#### FOR THE SHRIMP

Season shrimp with salt and pepper.

Heat butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add bacon and cook until crisp, about 10 minutes. Transfer bacon to a paper towel — lined plate. Add shrimp. Cook, turning once, until bright pink, about 2 minutes. Transfer shrimp to a small bowl or plate and lower heat to medium. Add onions, celery and garlic, and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender. Raise heat to high, add seafood stock. Cook until liquid reduces by half, about 3 minutes. Just before serving, return shrimp to the pot and stir in lemon juice, hot sauce, salt and pepper.

#### FOR THE PORK

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Place slab fat-side up on a cutting board. Score with a sharp knife (cut diagonal lines one way, then repeat going the other way). Coat with olive oil. In a small bowl, mix together cumin, coriander, smoked paprika, salt and pepper. Massage into belly. Line a medium to large roasting pan with foil. Place the roasting rack in the pan. Put the belly on top of the rack. Roast until tender, about 2 and half hours. Let it rest for at least 30 minutes, then cut into small pieces.

#### FOR THE GRITS

Soaked grits in cool water just to cover for 15 minutes.

Bring the milk to a simmer in a medium saucepan over high heat. Reduce heat to low. Stir in grits. Cook, whisking frequently, until you reach a creamy porridge-like consistency, about 30 to 40 minutes. Mix in butter and sugar and season with salt and pepper.

### HOW TO SERVE

Divide the grits into 8 equal portions. Ladle shrimp sauce over the grits. Arrange pork belly on top. Garnish with green onions tops and bacon crumbles.





## Pork Meatballs & Spaghetti Serves 6

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

#### FOR THE SAUCE

- 1 tablespoon Rouses Extra Virgin olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, finely diced
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled, crushed tomatoes
- 1 bay leaf
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon Rouses salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon dried or fresh thyme
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon dried or fresh oregano
- Fresh thyme, basil, oregano, or other herbs
- Cooked pasta, to serve

#### FOR THE MEATBALLS

- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups fine breadcrumbs
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cup Rouses whole milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$  pound ground pork
- $\frac{3}{4}$  pound ground beef (80/20)
- 3 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup Parmesan or Pecorino Romano cheese, grated
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fresh parsley, chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup dried oregano
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup pine nuts
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup Rouses Extra Virgin olive oil
- Rouses salt and black pepper to taste

### HOW TO PREP

Heat oil in a large saucepan or high-side skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onions and garlic and sauté until soft and translucent, about 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in the garlic. Add the crushed tomatoes and their juices, the bay leaf, salt and seasonings. Bring the sauce to boil then lower heat to maintain a simmer. Let cook until the sauce is slightly reduced and thickened, about 20 minutes.

While the sauce is cooking, combine breadcrumbs and milk in a small bowl. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until blended. Season with salt and pepper. Whisk in cheese and parsley. Add the pork, beef, oregano, onion, garlic and pine nuts. Pour in the breadcrumb mixture. Use your hands to incorporate. Pinch off a piece of the meat mixture and roll between you hands to form a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2-inch size ball. Repeat the process until all of the meat is used.

Add meatballs to the sauce and return to a simmer. Cook the meatballs over medium-low heat for 30 minutes. Serve with pasta and more grated cheese.



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### Grilled Chicken on Wild Rice

- 6 oz John Soules Foods Grilled Chicken Breast Strips, thawed
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- 6 oz Green Beans, blanched

Preheat an oven to 375°F. Cook your favorite wild rice dish according to the instructions. Place the John Soules Foods Grilled Chicken Breast Strips on a cookie sheet and loosely cover with foil. Place in the oven for 7 to 10 minutes.

In a medium sauté pan heat 1 tablespoon butter and sauté the green beans for 4 to 5 minutes, or until heated through.

Place the rice on a serving plate, top with Grilled chicken and arrange the green beans along side. Serve.

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The National Food & Beverage Foundation is a nonprofit educational and cultural organization dedicated to the discovery, understanding and celebration of food, drink and its related culture and folklife in America and the world.

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# *Makin' with* **BACON**

by Chef Lisa Barbato + photo by Romney Caruso

**S**avory and sweet are a classic flavor combination.

Everyone gets concessions at the movies (“let’s all go to the lobby ...”). Have you ever tried eating your chocolate and popcorn at the same time? I pour my candy right in the bag. I can taste it as I write this — buttery, salty popcorn mixed with the sweet, rich chocolaty taste of the Hershey’s kisses.

I also like pairing something smoky-meaty with something sweet. I’m not the only one. In 2007, Chicago’s Vosges Haut-Chocolat launched Mo’s Bacon Bar (dark milk

chocolate studded with hand-chopped bits of fruitwood-smoked bacon). It was a big hit. Since then, bacon has become a staple on dessert menus around the world and has reached most homes in America. Search “bacon desserts” on Pinterest to find every swine-smoke-salty-sweet treat imaginable. Maple bacon fudge, maple bacon blondies, maple bacon cupcakes, dark chocolate bacon bark, bourbon bacon brittle, even bacon fried Oreos (bacon-wrapped Oreo cookies, fried crisp)!

Even if you haven’t had a bacon dessert, you know this taste. You’ve probably enjoyed it

plenty of times and just never gave it much thought. Have you ever dipped your bacon into the syrup that runs off your pancakes? Or enjoyed a bacon cheeseburger with a milk shake? Well, there you go.

While pork and chocolate have recently become “en vogue,” they have a strong history in Mexico that dates back to the Mayans. Mexican chocolate is often scented with different spices such as chiles, anise seed, allspice and vanilla to add flavor. These ingredients also serve as a key ingredient in several Mexican dishes such as mole, which is a sauce made of dark chocolate and spices.

## Bacon & Chocolate Chip Cookies

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon Rouse salt
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 large whole egg plus 1 large egg white
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1½ cups Rouses cooked bacon, chopped
- 1 cup chilled bacon fat (you can substitute Hot Belly)
- 1½ cups semisweet chocolate chips

### HOW TO PREP

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg; set aside. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the bacon fat with both sugars on medium speed until light and fluffy.

Add the vanilla, whole egg, and egg white. Beat on low speed until well combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed, about one minute. Add the flour mixture in two batches, mix until just combined. Mix in the bacon and the chocolate chips.

Using a spoon or an ice cream scoop, shape 2 heaping tablespoons of dough at a time into balls and place about 1½ inches apart on prepared baking sheets. Bake, rotating sheets halfway through, until cookies are golden brown, about 10 to 15 minutes. Let cookies cool completely.

### > Baker's Tip

*Scoop the cookie dough balls onto a parchment lined cookie sheet. Place uncovered in the freezer. Once the dough balls are frozen solid, transfer to a freezer bag. Stash back in the freezer. Next time you're ready to "pig out" on a cookie or two, all you have to do is bake.*

## Caramel Popcorn with Spiced Nuts & Bacon

### Spiced Nuts

#### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 cup pure maple syrup
- 3 cups unsalted, roasted nuts
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, minced
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 4 ounces thick sliced bacon
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt

#### HOW TO PREP

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees

Place the bacon on a parchment lined sheet pan. Bake until the bacon is crisp - transfer on to paper towels to drain, than finely chop.

In a medium bowl, mix the thyme, salt, cayenne and dry mustard. Add the nuts, maple syrup and bacon and toss until the nuts are evenly coated. Scrape the nuts onto a parchment lined sheet pan. Bake until the maple syrup has thickened, about 30 minutes, stirring once halfway. Let the nuts cool completely, stirring frequently to break up any large clumps. Set aside.

### Caramel Popcorn

#### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 tablespoon Rouses vegetable oil
- ⅓ cup popping corn
- 1 tablespoon butter
- ½ cup Rouses honey
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda

#### HOW TO PREP

Heat oil in a saucepan over medium heat.

Add the popping corn and cover with a lid. Cook lightly, shaking the pan, until all the corn has popped.

Place in a bowl. Place the butter, honey and sugar in a saucepan over low heat. Stir until the butter is melted.

Increase heat to medium and bring to a boil for 3 to 4 minutes or until golden and thick. Remove from heat, add the baking soda and stir to combine.

Pour the caramel over the popcorn and toss to combine. Spoon onto a baking pan to set. Once cooled, break up and place in a large bowl. Add the spiced nuts. Enjoy!



Growing up, mole was a staple in our house. I can't think of anything much better than a grilled pork loin smothered in mole.

Maybe it's my Mexican roots, but I'm always trying to find new ways of incorporating the savory into my baking. And bacon makes everything better. If you're ever in a friendly cooking competition and want to ensure victory, add bacon. I once won a \$50 bar tab in a "dip" contest using baked thick-cut bacon as "chips" to dunk into a creamy, spicy jalapeño popper dip. *Sporktacular!*



# Oreilles de Cochon

by Kit Whohl + photo by Romney Caruso

**W**hile it's called a pig's ear in Cajun country *oreilles de cochon*, is not actually a pig's ear — it's a sweet treat fork-twisted and shaped to resemble one. It was created in Acadiana's delicious tradition of using what's on hand. There, it was pretty much a necessity.

You probably won't readily find one unless you're hanging out with Marcelle Bienvenu, the queen of Cajun cooking. She's an old friend and new contributor to *My Rouses Magazine*. I have her recipe for you.

Marcelle's maternal grandfather, Antoine Broussard, who was called Popete by his grandchildren, was a sugar cane farmer whose cooks La Vielle (or "the Old One"), and her younger helper, Pliene, fed the field hands and the family. La Vielle and Pliene wore red *tignons* (kerchiefs) which petite Marcelle believed were special because she'd only seen white ones on other cooks. "Pliene recently passed away at 100 years old," says Marcelle. "When I was a little girl, I thought she was ancient."

When Popete's grandchildren visited the farm in St. Martinville they helped carry pails of hearty food to workers in the fields. For a sweet treat, the cooks would roll out pig's ears. The goodies were easily prepared, a virtue in busy kitchens.

Oreilles de cochon was, and still is, an easy and inexpensive afternoon snack for family and friends. It is served at community gatherings such as school fairs and boucheries, where it is easy to make in no time when everyone is involved in butchering the hog.

The ingredients in oreilles de cochon are so few: sugar, flour, salt, local pecans like Bergeron's from New Iberia, and cane syrup — Steen's, or even better, homemade from your grandfather's cane crop. Concentrating pure cane juice through long cooking in open kettles makes cane syrup. Refined sugar is not extracted. The result is liquid gold — caramel colored, densely flavored syrup traditionally made in the heart of Acadiana since the turn of the century.

Drizzle a crunchy fried pig's ear with cane syrup and sprinkle with a few chopped pecans. It's all about making do. In that spirit, the pecans can be left out, or if a different nut is available, use that. There are no food police here or there, just your own good taste.

Cane syrup is a great example of the Cajun tradition of making do. It came about when a freeze damaged C.S. Steen's cane fields. In an effort to salvage the crop, cane stalks were crushed and boiled. Steen's Pure Cane Syrup is one of the basic flavors of southern Louisiana. A natural sweetener, cane syrup can be used in a variety of recipes as a sweetener for baked goods, for drizzling on pancakes and biscuits, or as a glaze for roasted meats like pork. It is the Southern answer to maple syrup.

## Oreilles de Cochon

Makes approximately 12 Pig's Ears

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 cup all purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon Rouses salt
- About ½ cup water, as needed, room temperature
- 1 12 oz. can Steen's cane syrup
- ½ cup pecans, finely chopped
- Rouses vegetable oil for frying

### HOW TO PREP

In a medium bowl combine flour and salt. Mix thoroughly. Stir in enough water to make a stiff dough. Divide dough into 12 equal parts, and roll each into a ball. On a lightly floured surface using a rolling pin roll each dough ball out into a thin circle.

Pour about 2 inches of vegetable oil into a heavy, deep-frying pot. Heat the oil to 350°F.

Drop one of the circles into the hot oil. Using a long handled fork, stick the tines of the fork into the center of it and twist quickly. Hold fork in place until dough sets and holds the shape. This will give the appearance of a pig's ear. Cook until golden brown then drain well on paper towels. Repeat this procedure with the remaining small circles of dough.

In a heavy saucepan bring the cane syrup to a boil. Stir until the syrup reaches 240°F, the softball stage. At this temperature a small amount of syrup dropped into cold water will form a soft, loose ball. Remove from heat.

Drizzle each pig's ear with hot syrup, coating well. Sprinkle with chopped pecans and lay on waxed paper. Serve warm or at room temperature. The pig's ears may be stored for one or two days. Separate and place in a tightly sealed container.

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