

FREE

my ROUSES everyday

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015

***The Best Parties
I've Ever Thrown
— and Been To***
By Chris Rose

***The Always
Entertaining***
**BRYAN
BATT**

***Donny Rouse's
Seafood Gumbo***
And other Holiday recipes

Holiday Entertaining Issue

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, New Year's Eve & Day



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ROUSES**



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Make A Betta Bruschetta!

Roast Beef with Horseradish Cream

INGREDIENTS

- Rouses baguette cut into 24 slices ½-inch thick
- 2 tablespoons Rouses Extra Virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup Columbus Horseradish Sauce
- ½ pound thinly sliced Columbus Roast Beef
- Small bunch Arugula
- 12 cherry tomatoes, halved

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Brush both sides of bread slices with olive oil and place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake for 5 minutes or until crisp.

Spread Horseradish Sauce over one side of each toasted bread slice, top with Columbus Italian Roast Beef, and garnish with Arugula and tomato. Serve cold.

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Feeding Our Community

Help Stop Hunger At Home

The face of hunger isn't always easy to recognize. There are people who never imagined they would find themselves in need who rely on food banks to feed their families, especially at the holidays.

Kids are among those most severely affected by hunger, and long holiday breaks without free school breakfasts and lunches can leave them especially vulnerable.

Every year Rouses renews our commitment to fighting hunger on the Gulf Coast. We encourage you to join us by supporting Feeding America with a donation of non-perishable food or money at any Rouses Markets. We make it easy to give. Just scan a coupon at the Rouses register to add to your bill or purchase one of pre-packed bags of canned goods for \$10 and drop it in our donation barrel. We will deliver it for you.

Feeding America operates a network of food pantries, food banks, meal service programs, and other charitable food programs. They reach people in need in every community we serve. You'll recognize the local food banks they support... Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, and the Bay Area Food Bank in Theodore, Alabama.

Together with our customers, team members and vendor partners, we've raised close to \$200,000 for these local food banks. Together, we can eliminate hunger.



From my family to yours, Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays,

Donny Rouse
3rd Generation

➤ On the Cover

Look for Donny Rouse's Seafood Gumbo recipe on page 46.

cover photo by **Romney Caruso**

• • •

EAT | DRINK | BE MERRY BE GENEROUS

WHAT I'M EATING

It's hunting season so I'm eating a lot of venison. Rice and gravy is my favorite meal so this time of year I make smothered venison.

WHAT I'M DRINKING

Again, it's hunting season. I find a seat on the camp porch and drink Caribou Crossing on the rocks.

WHAT'S ON MY HOLIDAY TABLE

Fried turkey, fried turkey and more fried turkey.

WHAT I'M DOING

We sponsor the Emeril Lagasse Foundation's fundraiser Boudin, Bourbon & Beer, which features 50 of the country's best chefs. The Emeril Lagasse Foundation supports Second Harvest Food Bank and other local charities. For tickets to the November 13th event, visit <http://boudinbourbonandbeer.com>.

◀ Donny Rouse — photo by **Erika Goldring**

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> Santa Paws

Make your list and check it twice. We've got gifts for everyone from family to your furry friends. And you'll never go wrong with a Rouses gift card.



IN MEMORIAM

Chef Paul Prudhomme

by Chris Rose + photo by Frank Aymami

There are many words of praise and superlative accolades one could impart upon the legendary chef Paul Prudhomme — and we've heard a great many over the past several weeks — but I think my favorite aspect of his character was this: He was never photographed without a smile on his face.

Check it out. Look through his press clippings. Search the archives. Google it. I challenge you to find a picture of the boisterous, gregarious restaurateur in which he does not have that huge smile on his face — every bit as much of his trademark as his blackened redfish and his signature white flat cap toque.

It was as if it had been surgically attached to his face, a permanent expression of good cheer and joie de vivre that exuded the very core, essence and soulful style of Louisiana living. His was the face of Cajun hospitality.

It's one thing to be a chef who wows you with his savvy cooking skills, mastery of flavor combinations and artful presentations; it's a whole 'nuther kettle of fish when his personality alone has the power to make your food taste better.

Such was the way with the late, great Paul Prudhomme, a true Louisiana icon and irrepressible cultural ambassador, who passed away at his home in New Orleans in October.

Although it seemed as if he had been around since the dawn of cast iron and cayenne pepper, he was just 75-years-old.

A native of Opelousas, Louisiana, a scion of the Acadian prairie, Chef Paul literally revolutionized the concept of dining in New Orleans, and therefore the world. He was among the vanguard of the American celebrity chef culture — a telegenic, natural born raconteur and entertainer.

To say he was one of a kind is not only a cliché, but obvious. To call him an innovator short sells his profound influence on dining culture not only in Louisiana, but also around the world. When he became the first American-born executive chef to take over the kitchen at Commander's Palace restaurant in New

Orleans in 1975, he changed the way America cooks, eats and generally enjoys life.

His protégés included Emeril Lagasse and Frank Brigtsen, among many others. He also opened what was arguably the first popup restaurant, in New York City, in 1985. City residents lined up for blocks for a taste of this crazy new trend in dining: Cajun food.

The city's health department threatened to close him down and put him in jail. The "Gumbo War" was front-page news in Gotham City. It took the intervention of then-mayor Ed Koch to reach accord between the city and the chef.

After Hurricane Katrina and the federal levee failures, Chef Paul came to town to cook for first responders and locals in need. For this, *Bon Appetit* magazine awarded him their Humanitarian Award in 2006

And lastly, it should be noted, Prudhomme was a great friend of the Rouses family and business. Said Donald Rouse, about

"Chef Paul taught us that laughter is as important an ingredient in a meal as any sauce, spice or condiment."



the passing of his friend: "I first worked with Chef Paul when we opened Rouses #4 in Houma in 1985. Customers lined up to meet him. Chef Paul appeared in our commercials and, of course, we've always sold his products. He was a great chef, a great man, and true innovator who put Cajun food on the international map."

The world mourns the passing of a great chef, a good man and a true legend. Meanwhile, redfish all over the world breath a sigh of relief.

Friday, Nov. 16, 1984 The Houma Daily Courier-Houma, La. 11-A

ROUSES SUPERMARKETS ARE PROUD TO PRESENT

CHEF PAUL PRUDHOMME

Rouses Supermarkets, as a part of continuing community service and involvement, will present the internationally known and celebrated Chef Paul Prudhomme, November 17, 1984, from 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M., at Rouses Supermarket, Village East Shopping Center, Houma, Louisiana.

The most important creative chef in regional American cooking, Chef Prudhomme served as corporate chef for the Brennan family in New Orleans, Dallas, Houston, and Atlanta. He and his wife, Kay Hinricks Prudhomme, opened K-Pauls Louisiana Kitchen in July 1979. But the reputation of K-Pauls spread quickly, and Chef Prudhomme is now featured in every major daily in the nation, and in numerous national and regional food and travel magazines.

Commissioner of Agriculture Bob Odom may also appear with Chef Paul Prudhomme, which will enable you to meet and discuss Louisiana's Agricultural outlook and future.

The Rouse family and employees cordially invite you and your family to join us for a professional and entertaining afternoon at Rouses Supermarket, Village East Shopping Center, Houma, Louisiana.

We will feature in all Rouses Supermarkets, Chef Paul Prudhomme's seasonings that are used extensively in his delightful and delicious meals.

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Please join us for this exciting event, and announcements of many more events for you and your family.

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photo by Frank Aymami

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—Ali Rouse Royster, 3rd Generation

WE THINK GROCERY SHOPPING SHOULD BE FUN

If you're not pregameing the Saints game at @RousesMarkets in the CBD, you're a fool. #bestkeptsecret #WhoDatNation —@preppybartender

Ran to @RousesMarkets for a quick pregame shop, apparently it's the place to be #whodat —@atrumb

Love @RousesMarkets Mandeville. My 16-month-old said “Hi!” to every employee we passed — and every single one stopped to say hi back. —@nolarebelle

I shop mainly at the Gulfport store and love it. You have good quality for a good price. Friendly and courteous employees and good service which is appreciated in this time where everything is hurry, hurry; rush, rush. I use to make a lot of trips to New Iberia area to visit and always checked out ya'll. So good to have ya'll here. — S. Hankins, Gulfport

OUR BAKERS TAKE THE CAKE

I would like to acknowledge an employee, Tina, who works at your Morgan City location. She went the extra mile to make sure my daughter had a birthday cake for her party Saturday after Walmart called and said they could not complete my order. Tina was very polite understanding, and did a wonderful job on my daughter's birthday cake. Thanks. —C. Goodman, Morgan City

This message is to acknowledge the entire Bakery Staff and especially Ms. Tanaka at the Rouses on Tchoupitoulas. I come to Rouses and purchase a cake every month for my job and every month, she goes the extra mile to assist me. It is her attitude that makes me feel so elated to have Rouses be a part of my co-workers' birthday celebrations. Thanks for hiring such great team members. —L. Gibbons Macon, New Orleans

WHERE THE CHEFS SHOP

Met the lovely @ChefMarySonnier in the produce section @RousesMarkets tonight, by the LA satsumas. What a pleasure!

LETTERS, TWEETS & POSTS

Natural foods grocer + everyday grocer = @RousesMarkets - wow —@ColliersATL_GDE

Rouses has always been my favorite grocery store! Everyone is friendly and the stores are beautiful and well stocked! Rouses makes shopping easier and more enjoyable! —D. Perkins

HOME, SWEET, HOME and bacon wrapped sausage stuffed jalapeno peppers... YUM! #rouses —@PerfectlyPinkly

I'm ready to move back just so I can shop at #Rouses —@Loves_AMH

A huge thank you to the lady at @RousesMarkets New Orleans with the amazing pink and blonde hair. I will definitely be going back there! —@ChloRichardson

Way to go @RousesMarkets! From 5 locations in the Mobile area they were able to raise over \$3,500 for more Alabama wishes!! THANK YOU! —@Make-A-WishAL

After a long day I stopped for groceries at #16 with my two kids. My 11-month-old daughter had had enough, and I was scrambling to load the groceries and pay. At that moment, one of your employees walked over and entertained my daughter. Such a small gesture that made a huge difference. Kindness at that end of a long day is exactly what was needed. —K. Reynolds, Thibodaux

I just wanted to tell you about the great experience I had at #32. I was standing in line to check out when one of your employees (Julie) walked up to me and said I'll check you out on 5. It was obvious she was not a cashier, but I was grateful because my 4-year-old daughter was near the end of her time frame for being well behaved. When I exited the store, and as I came out two young boys asked if I could use some help. While I was getting my daughter in her car seat, they loaded all of my groceries in the trunk. What great guys! —C. Collins, Mandeville



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Andrea Reusing

Lantern, Chapel Hill

Maggie Scales

Cochon, New Orleans

Suzanne Goin

Lucques, Los Angeles

Paul Kahan

Publican, Chicago

Frank Stitt

Highlands Bar and Grill, Birmingham

Mike Lata

FIG, Charleston

Richard Reddington

Redd, Yountville

Stephen Stryjewski

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Donald Link

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photos by Romeny Caruso





Unwrapped

with Bryan Batt

I love the holidays. So when Rouses called, I jumped at the chance to write about my favorites. On the Gulf Coast, especially in my home state of Louisiana, we celebrate life with a passion, from christenings to funerals and everything else in between. Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve are the star attractions, and over the years I've come to appreciate more and more the effort, care, and love that is shared on these special days.

The fact that the holidays will be here in no time at all may push your panic button and raise your stress level, but don't get your tinsel in a tangle! There is nothing you can do to stop them — the Grinch tried and look what happened. So take a deep breath, a sip, count to ten, and embrace it. If you are hosting the family meal or party, find ways to make it a little bit easier on yourself, like ordering a prepared dish or two from Rouses. And if you are the invited guest, offer ways to assist your hosts. Plan, organize, and schedule all you can, but once the stage is set and the players arrive, let it go. The best celebrations evolve organically. Always keep in mind the 70's funk hit, "If It Don't Fit, Don't Force It."

Thanksgiving

I think Thanksgiving is my favorite. It's the one true American holiday. There's no pressure to find the perfect gift or deck the halls. The last Thursday in November is all about GRATITUDE and FOOD. No matter what kind of drama is appearing in your life, you can always find something to be grateful for. If you'd like, you may now sing "Count Your Blessings" (if you have never heard of the song, look it up, and start memorizing) The day is for everyone, so involve everyone. Have the little kids create place cards. Extra hands are always needed in the kitchen, and teens can't text or take selfies when they are peeling potatoes. Entice the gents to gather outside and share their personal pointers on the art of grilling or smoking the beef or bird. Positive reinforcement, compliments, and libations will ensure a dedicated work force. The focus is the meal and the table setting.

Like a great party tape or cocktail, I love the good mix. Your Thanksgiving table can reflect that. Mix the high and low, formal and informal. I collect fun salt and pepper shakers, so they are definitely put to use. My mother

Jeanen Rouse's Cheesecake

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

FOR THE CRUST

- ½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ½ cup finely chopped toasted pecans
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 4 tablespoons salted butter, melted

FOR THE FILLING

- 2 8-ounce packages cream cheese, room temperature
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon grated lemon peel
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs, separated

SOUR CREAM TOPPING

- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

HOW TO PREP

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Prepare 9-inch springform pan with butter-flavored cooking spray. In a small bowl, combine graham cracker, pecans, sugar and butter; press mixture into pan. Bake for 10 minutes on center rack. Remove from oven and reduce temperature to 300. Place a pan of water on lowest rack (this will minimize cracks). While crust is cooling, mix cream cheese, sugar, lemon juice, lemon peel and vanilla at medium speed with an electric mixer. Add egg yolks, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. In a separate bowl, beat or whip egg whites until stiff. Gently fold egg whites into cream cheese mixture. Pour filling over crust. Bake on center rack of the oven for 55 minutes or until center is set. In a small bowl, mix sour cream, sugar and vanilla. Remove cake from oven and carefully spread sour cream topping over cheesecake. Return to oven and continue baking for 10 minutes. Turn off oven, open door, and allow cake to rest inside for an additional 10 minutes. Remove cake, and use a knife to loosen edges from the pan. Cool before removing rim of the pan. Serve chilled.



collected Louisiana's famed artist Clementine Hunter's paintings, so when I saw plates and service ware inspired by her work, I had to incorporate them in my turkey day table. Their vibrant and beautifully simple style looks great alongside ornate silverware. And the cornucopia centerpiece of colorful Rouses produce is not just a beautiful display — the bounty has an additional purpose by providing additional meals over the weekend!

As wonderful as the mix can be, sometimes certain family members and friends don't mix so well. This is why God created buffers, those old friends who may not have a place to dine, distant relatives or even clergy that you invite whose mere presence assure that everyone plays nice. Don't forget to spend time on the blessing, maybe go around the table and have your guests chime in on what they are grateful for. Who knows, their comments could spark some lively conversation. Just a little gratitude hint ... never pass up the opportunity to make someone else feel good.

Christmas

Christmas is all about tradition and, of course, food, but as families grow and change, so can our gatherings. Growing up, Santa always visited my grandmother's home on Christmas Eve, where there would be a great casual home cooked meal (however, I'm pretty sure the finger sandwiches were pre-ordered), and aunts, uncles and cousins exchanged gifts. The next day, even more family and friends would convene, this time at our home for dad's famous ham and prime rib with various scrumptious side dishes of the "tried and

"... don't get your tinsel in a tangle!"

true" or "you've gotta try this new recipe" varieties.

After my grandmother passed away, the whole family valiantly tried to continue the tradition, but with so many new additions

and added in-law commitments it grew virtually impossible for everyone to gather on December 24th. So my clever mother and her sister decided to create a new holiday on the night before Christmas Eve, and my brother smartly named it "Christmas Adam" because Adam came before Eve. Now all the generations gather as before with casual fare, just a day earlier. The reigns of Christmas day are now in the hands of my lovely sister-in-law and brother, and they host a big, glamorous, close family breakfast, then an open house. The table is always set to perfection and welcoming to guests bearing goodies.

Everyday white tableware mixes great with holiday china. Jazz up candlesticks with glitter candles and berry bobèche, which can also be used as napkin rings. This is the holiday to pull out the stops on your table ... trees, holly, pine, ornaments, angels, reindeer, elves... anything that goes rooty-toot-toot and rummy-tum-tum, bring it on! Oh, and not that you asked, but here's my philosophy on Christmas trees: If we are going to cut down a perfectly good piece of nature, light and decorate it to the max! Send that baby out in a blaze of glory! You can always find another spot for an ornament (make sure to really twist the wire hanger to hold the ornament on, use floral wire to lift up sagging branches, and if your tree is in a corner or against a wall, use fishing or floral wire to secure it to a nail in the wall. No one is happy if the tree goes down). When in doubt, egg nog and brandy milk punch can't hurt.





New Years Eve & The Batt In A Hat

While living in New York, I quickly grew tired of big New Year's Eve blowouts, and the pressure to have a 'great' time. We would always party hop and end up stuck far away from home after the ball dropped, freezing with not a cab in sight! Years ago, a big snowstorm was en route, so we decided to stay home and have a grown up dinner party. A small group of close friends were invited to dress up and just show up. My husband, Tom, is a great cook, so that part was taken care of. I quickly set the table, and then with the extra time I decided to test the limits of my hot glue gun and make fun hats. The new tradition was a hit, especially the crazy hats made with collected sale ribbons and ornaments. In the passing years there would be various color schemes or concepts (you should have seen the millennium hats, or should I say headdresses). Now, every guest arrives on time in order to get first dibs on their favorite chapeau. Some years the feel is a little more casual, but honestly, everyone prefers the glitz and glamour ... and sometimes the exotic, so the table setting reflects it.

Chef Brian Landry at Borngé came up with a delicious take on turtle soup made with alligator (find it at www.rouses.com). I would accompany his alligator soup with a bedazzled gator napkin ring, and haul out all of the china, crystal, and silver to add to the show. In recent years, I've called Rouses and ordered a deluxe sushi tray. The display is always so colorful and special, and it is usually the first thing to be gobbled up!

A final reminder for all of the holidays, one you can take into King's Day and Carnival ... dismiss all hopes of perfection — it's impossible, the only thing we humans are perfect at is being imperfect, so let go, live, laugh, and love. When all is said and done, remember you are not just decorating your home, setting a table, or preparing a meal. You are doing something that kind of borders on the magical — you are creating memories! Enjoy and celebrate that unique and special gift!



> About The Author

Broadway and *Mad Men* star Bryan Batt and his husband Tom Cianfichi own Hazelnut (www.hazelnutneworleans.com) in New Orleans. The store offers a stylish, eclectic blend of fine gifts and elegant home accessories, some of which are featured on these pages. Bryan is also the author of *Big Easy Style*, *Creating Rooms You'll Love To Live In*, and a memoir, *She Ain't Heavy She's My Mother*.



Holiday Entertaining Made Easy with Better Than Bouillon®



Better entertaining starts with Better Than Bouillon! Our Roasted Beef variety gives this easy-to-prepare appetizer a deliciously savory taste.

French Onion Bruschetta

Serves 6 - 8
4 piece portions

Prep Time 10 minutes
Cook Time 35 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 Baguette (approximately 8 oz.)
- 2 medium Onions, sliced
- 2 tablespoons Butter
- ¼ cup Sherry, Marsala or Madeira Wine
- ½ tablespoon Better Than Bouillon® Roasted Beef Base
- 2 tablespoons Parsley, chopped
- ⅛ teaspoon Black Pepper
- ½ pound shredded Swiss Cheese

Instructions:

1. In a sauté pan melt butter and sauté onions until lightly browned. Approximately 8-10 minutes.
2. Remove pan from heat and add wine.
3. Return to heat and stir onions until wine is cooked out.
4. Add Better Than Bouillon® Beef Base, Parsley and Black Pepper and stir until all blended.
5. Remove from heat and allow to cool.
6. With a serrated bread, knife slice the baguette into ¼ inch thick bias cut pieces and lay them out onto a sheet pan.
7. Divide the cooled onion mixture between the slices of bread and place with a spoon on top of bread.
8. Divide Swiss Cheese evenly between the baguette pieces.
9. Bake in a preheated 425 degree oven for approximately 5 minutes or until cheese is melted and golden brown.



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THE BIRD'S

The Word

by Suzette Norris

It was a holiday panic attack unlike any other. The kind that can bring even the most seasoned cook to the kitchen floor.

Just before Thanksgiving last year my mother Sylvia was adjusting to a new neighborhood, new house in Metairie and a new kitchen after nine years of post-Katrina exile in Baton Rouge. My sister Amy agreed to host Thanksgiving dinner, but my mother always cooks the turkey — no matter where we eat. Sylvia has 40+ years of cooking big birds, and every year you can count on her getting even the white meat just right.

That morning she got up at 5:30 and made her way to the kitchen. She didn't have

her glasses on but didn't really need them. Everything was prepped and ready. She popped the turkey in the oven, set the timer and headed back to bed. She turned around to check and make sure she had covered the whole breast with the butter-soaked cheesecloth (her technique for keeping the meat moist). When she tugged on the oven door it wouldn't open. That's when the panic appeared. Instead of "bake," Sylvia had mistakenly pushed the self-clean button.

I can imagine her squinting through the door window at the 30-pound bird trapped inside an oven set to reach 900 degrees Fahrenheit. Sylvia had no clue what do. If you think about it, a piece of glass starts to

get soft and liquefy at about 900 degrees. What was going to happen to her bird? The classic golden glaze turned crusty charcoal — or worse?

Luckily, Sylvia did not have to find out. She got hold of herself and realized she could change the self-clean timer from six hours to one minute. The door opened after 60 seconds, and the bird was saved. "Oh, nobody ever knew the difference," she said later as if the whole thing was just a nuisance. You know, the typical holiday setback.

And nobody did. The bird was roasted to a perfect golden brown, carved and eaten ... one more reason to be thankful that night.



in the refrigerator. Keep it in the original packaging, and place it on a rimmed baking sheet to catch any juices. Defrosting this way usually takes about five hours per pound.

What size turkey should you buy? The size of the bird matters because the bigger the bird, the more meat there is in proportion to the bone. For birds less than 16 pounds, the experts say, figure on at least 1 pound of turkey per person. If you are cooking a larger turkey you can estimate a little less. If you want substantial leftovers, figure in another ½ pound per person.

Another option is to roast two, smaller turkeys (10-12 pounds) because they fit better in the refrigerator and roasting pan. They also cook more quickly and evenly.

Ever wake up Thanksgiving morning with a frozen turkey? Bet the first question is “can I bake it anyway?” Good news! The U.S. Department of Agriculture says yes. It recommends that you check the label on the turkey and add 50-percent worth of extra cooking time for a frozen bird. For example, if the directions say a thawed turkey should take about five hours to roast then add another 2.5 hours if your turkey is frozen. And don’t even think about injecting the secret marinade or stuffing it with your grandmother’s cornbread recipe. It’s if frozen keep it simple, and get it cooked.

If you want to play it safe, buy a fresh turkey. The USDA suggests purchasing one

no more than two days before you roast it.

How long should a thawed or fresh turkey roast in the oven? A general rule of thumb offered by the USDA: An unstuffed turkey that’s 20-24 pounds will take about five hours at 325 degrees. If the turkey is stuffed, add another 15 minutes to the cooking time. The agency operates a 24-hour meat and poultry hotline if you want more information (1-888-674-6854).

#2 Da’ Meat

Drying out the turkey breast is always a worry. Even if you roast at a steady 325 degrees, the turkey breasts sit at the highest point in the oven, getting the most heat. They often overcook before the rest is done. Aluminum foil can help. My mother soaks cheesecloth in butter and drapes it over the top of the turkey.

Other ideas include cooking the turkey upside down for the first hour, then flipping it (a lot of extra effort) or soaking your bird in brine, a solution of salt, water and seasonings. Brine reduces moisture loss during cooking to as little as 15 percent, experts say. There are many recipes on the Internet for both the wet-brine and dry-brine methods of roasting turkeys.

Cooking for company — especially during the holidays — makes people crazy. It just does. How do you parse out oven time when you have multiple cooks in the kitchen with stacks of sides to warm up or rolls to brown? What to do when guests are running late? Or two show up as vegans?

According to cooking professionals, the secret to a success is all about planning ahead and thinking on your feet.

#1 Da’ Bird

If you are serving turkey, make sure you buy it several days before the big day. A general rule of thumb is to buy a frozen turkey one week early, giving it plenty of time to defrost

When the turkey's finally done (internal temperature registers a steady 155 degrees in the thigh), you may be tempted to dig in right away, but it's important to let the meat sit for a good 15 minutes before you carve. During that time, the meat will continue to cook, reaching the optimum temperature of 165 degrees. And the juices will redistribute through the turkey, making the meat moist.

Instead of carving slices off the top, remove each breast half and slide the knife crosswise on a cutting board — that way each piece has a little skin and stays juicy.

If you somehow end up with dry meat, prepare for a culinary rescue. Have a pot of warm chicken stock on hand and soak cut pieces in the broth. Arrange on a platter and add gravy.

#3 'Da Game Plan

There are lots of scientific studies that show stress affects memory. That's why writing down a holiday menu (instead of keeping it in your head) is one way to reduce tension. When a menu is written down it also makes it easier to put together a master grocery list. Try to think of everything you will need, including any new cooking equipment (how's your can opener working?). Divide your list into perishable and non-perishable items, and buy all non-perishable goods (including wine and beer) a week or so ahead of time. Buy perishable goods a day or two before the meal. Shopping with an organized list — ahead of the holiday crunch — will help you avoid having to run back to the store to pick up an essential ingredient.

Once that's done, organize blocks of time for cooking the various dishes. Many professionals suggest working backwards from when the crowd is scheduled to sit down and eat. If dinner is at 5 p.m., for example, think about the items that need one or two hours to cook, and work backwards from there. Putting a cooking plan in place will help spread out the labor.

Making pie crust is just one of many tasks that can begin a few days before the big meal. Gravy is another one. Freeze it in a container and defrost before the big meal. Some people add juices from the turkey before serving.

Potatoes can be peeled the night before the feast. Just put them in a pot of water in the fridge. Some people save oven space by making the sweet potatoes in a large slow cooker.



photo by Romney Caruso

#4 'Da Rest

When it comes to cooking, remember we've left the pilgrims way behind. These days some of the world's best chefs and holiday entertainers are just a click away (thanks to YouTube), and they're ready to help with even the most nerve-racking dish. A few other tips:

- Sharpen your knives in advance (don't forget the carving knife!) so the chopping, peeling and carving will be faster and safer.
- Clean out the freezer. Do it in October. You'll be glad you did.
- Sort through the refrigerator a week in advance to make space for holiday leftovers.
- Is your oven clean (LOL, let's not even go there!)?
- Set the table a week ahead. If you don't have a separate dining-room table, do it the night before the big day.
- Invite guests to bring a side dish to share. The request can cut down on your cooking time and could help satisfy guests with special diets.
- Organize clean up duty. After all the cooking, the last thing you need is to slave over the dishes. Rotate a team of dishwashers through the kitchen to keep up with washing (and drying!) the pots, pans and other cooking utensils as you go along.
- And last but not least, make sure you factor in a few "time outs" into the game plan. Take 20-minute breaks throughout the prep work and cooking to take a breath, relax and have a laugh. Happy holidays!

Tim Acosta's HWY. 1 Stuffed Mirlitons

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 6 fresh mirlitons
- 1 tablespoon Rouses extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium-sized onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 rib celery, chopped
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- Rouses salt and black pepper, to taste
- Rouses Cajun seasonings, to taste
- ¾ pound shrimp, peeled and deveined
- ¾ pound Louisiana crawfish tails
- ¾ pound lump crabmeat
- Italian Seasoned Breadcrumbs

HOW TO PREP

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a heavy black iron pot, bring about 2 inches of salted water to a boil. Drop whole mirlitons in water, cover pot, and reduce heat. Simmer until mirlitons are tender, about 20 minutes. Remove from pot and set aside to cool.

Cut mirlitons in half, lengthwise, and remove the seeds. Scoop out the flesh, keeping the shell intact. Roughly chop the flesh and set aside.

In a large skillet over medium heat, warm one tablespoon of Rouses extra virgin olive oil. Add onions, mirliton flesh and thyme and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add shrimp, and cook until the shrimp are pink. Remove from heat and fold in crabmeat and crawfish tails. Remove bay leaf and season with salt, pepper and Cajun seasonings.

Place mirliton shells in a roasting pan, flesh side up. Spoon vegetable mixture into shells, and top with a light coating of breadcrumbs. Bake until the breadcrumbs are lightly browned, about 30 minutes.



Eat Right WITH ROUSES

by Esther, Rouses Dietitian ▶

Most people don't care to hear from a dietitian about eating healthy for the holidays — something I'm fully aware of. It's hard enough to get my own family to listen to my advice this time of year, but hear me out before you flip the page.

Tend to go overboard at the holiday party? Try eating a small snack beforehand. Never enter a party as a hungry, ravaging mess. When you enter any situation with extreme hunger, any sort of thoughtfulness about what you eat is gone, not to mention you'll probably reach for the highest calorie treats.

Instead, fill your plate with salad and go back for entrees when you're done. Healthier items like vegetables and salads are higher in fiber which will give you a feeling of fullness, meaning less time for you to fill up on the smothered pork before the buttons pop off your pants.

Slow down and take time to enjoy your food. Typically, it takes about 20 minutes for the brain to receive the signal that your stomach is full. The simple task of being mindful and eating slower will allow you more time to enjoy the flavors. This will also give your body a chance to know how it's really feeling, preventing that miserable fullness later on — and the button popping.

Contribute to the holiday fun and offer to bring a dish. This allows you to take control and create some better choices. Whether you're a first-time cook or a seasoned holiday chef, follow these helpful cooking tips to cut down on the calories.

Cut calories by reducing fat:

- When baking, substitute butter or oil with applesauce. The ratio of applesauce to butter and oil is one to one, so if a recipe calls for one cup of butter, add one cup of applesauce instead. The same applies to oil. One cup of butter is 1628 calories while the same measurement of applesauce is roughly 100 calories. This substitution could mean a savings of nearly 1,500 calories!

- Another option is to substitute half the amount of butter with mashed avocado. This helps incorporate healthy fats and significantly reduces calories. While $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of butter is worth 814 calories, the same amount of pureed avocado is only 192 calories. Do not substitute all of the butter though, because your beautiful baking skills will turn flat.

- Not thrilled with applesauce or avocado? You can also use cooked beans in place of butter and significantly reduce calories. For every one cup of butter substitute with one cup of cooked beans.

- By substituting plain non-fat Greek yogurt in place of sour cream you can save over 100 calories and roughly 20 grams of fat. If you're a fan of Ranch dressing, opt for mixing the dried packets with non-fat Greek yogurt. This will help you save on fat and calories, too.

- Substitute whole eggs with two egg whites. While the yolk of the egg is not bad in moderation, substituting it with two egg whites will save you a generous amount of saturated fat, cholesterol, and at least 50 calories.



Cut calories by reducing sugar:

- Swerve Sweetener is an all-natural, zero-calorie sweetener derived from fruits and vegetables. It measures cup-for-cup to sugar and serves as a great substitution for sugar by completely cutting calories and still providing taste. Best of all, it's locally made right here on the Gulf Coast.

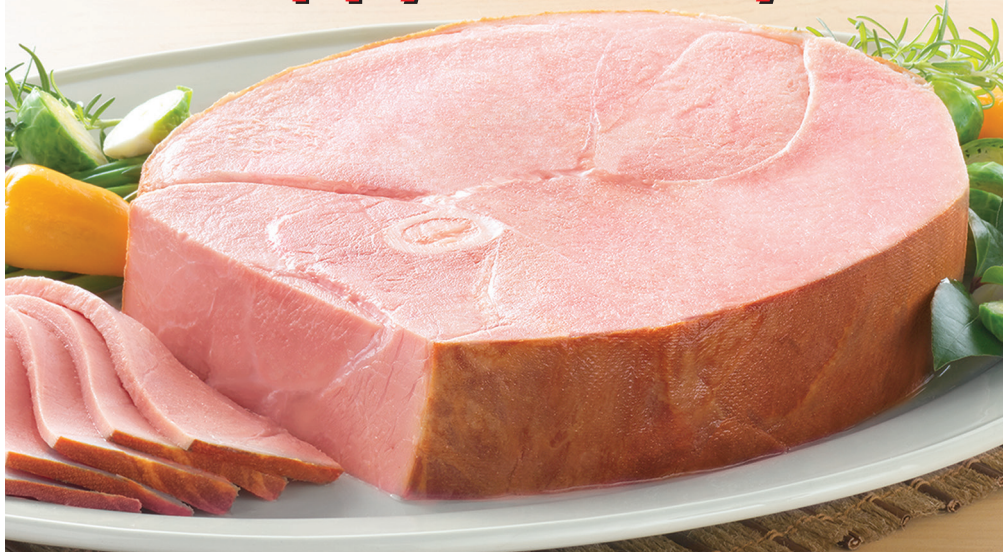
- Splenda is another zero calorie sweetener that is stable for baking. It's an equal ratio when substituting it in recipes, so one cup of Splenda can be used in place of one cup of sugar. However, not all zero-calorie sweeteners are heat stable so I do not suggest trying it.

- Not a fan of alternative sweeteners but still want to cut sugar? Reduce the amount of sugar in a recipe by a quarter to half in baked goods. This will cut down the amount of sugar without negatively affecting the overall product. However, don't eliminate sugar entirely as it will significantly impact the quality of the baked good in a negative way.





Happy Holidays!



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PUMPKIN PANCAKES

Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cook Time: 12 minutes

- 1 egg
- 1 2/3 cups milk
- 1/2 cup canned pumpkin
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 teaspoon **McCormick® Pure Vanilla Extract**
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon **McCormick® Pumpkin Pie Spice**
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

BEAT egg in medium bowl. Add milk, pumpkin, butter and vanilla; mix well. Mix remaining ingredients in large bowl until well blended. Add pumpkin mixture; stir just until blended. Let stand 5 minutes.

POUR 1/4 cup of batter per pancake onto preheated lightly greased griddle or skillet. Cook 1 to 2 minutes per side or until golden brown, turning when pancakes begin to bubble. Serve with walnuts and maple syrup, if desired.

Makes 10 pancakes.

FOR GREAT-TASTING RECIPES, VISIT MCCORMICK.COM

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For everyone on your nice list



Grilled Chicken Caprese Bruschetta Recipe

Ingredients

- 22 oz. *Grilled & Ready®* Fully Cooked Frozen Oven Roasted Diced Chicken Breast
- 3 Roma tomatoes, chopped
- 2 oz. basil leaves, fresh, thinly sliced
- 1 large fresh mozzarella cheese
- 8 tbs. balsamic vinegar
- 8 tbs. olive oil
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 baguette, sliced 1/2" thick

Cooking Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Prepare *Grilled & Ready* Diced Chicken Breast according to package directions.
3. Mix tomatoes, basil, chicken and mozzarella in a large bowl.
4. Blend together the balsamic vinegar, olive oil, salt, and pepper.
5. Pour vinaigrette onto the tomato mixture and gently mix well. Let marinate for 10 minutes.
6. Place sliced baguette onto baking sheet and toast for about 7 minutes, or until toasted.
7. Place marinated tomato mixture on each slice of toasted baguette. Serve.



Get more spectacular holiday recipes featuring *Tyson® Grilled & Ready®* products at Tyson.com.

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Family (DIS) Functions

by Pableaux Johnson

When it comes to family gatherings, the year-end holidays — Thanksgiving and Christmas — probably have the highest stakes. Traditionally, they act as the big-ticket reunions with far-flung cousins, dress codes and plenty of heightened expectations. They are a time of togetherness, good times, and Family with a Capital F.

Problem is that the modern Family Feast is a lot more complicated than it used to be. Where there used to be garden-variety arguments among uncles, now we've got second marriages and smartphones complicating the familial mix.

The good news is that once you recognize these changes, it's possible to update your approach with a few real-life tweaks.

So if you're playing holiday host this year, take heart.

Early Research: Lay of the land

Once you've got a first draft of your guest list (it will change), it's time for a little bit of pre-feast footwork. After you make a list, check it twice, then call the Family Gossip for a little bit of advanced intelligence. This person can be a treasure trove of information about the latest ripples in family politics. The Gossip (bless his/her heart) will know the current lay of the land regarding family realities (long-standing feuds between uncles, pending graduation dates) and a wealth of other info (who said what to whom, etc.).

Pay particular attention to three groups — the Elders, Teens, and

Babies — the rest of the folks can pretty much take care of themselves.

And while you're at it, cross-reference your party schedule with important sports events and baby naps. If you've got wiggle room in your schedule and dedicated fans in attendance, time shift accordingly.

Pre-Feast Truce

Armed with a basic psycho-emotional inventory, you're in the perfect position to head off problems at the source. Just about every family enters the holiday season with a couple of historical beefs and some annoyance on the side — that's just natural. And it's JUST as natural for the host to keep said turbulence at bay during the festivities.

The solution? Try to negotiate a few hours of truce to keep communal stress to a minimum. Have aunts who relive the LSU/Alabama rivalry every time they see each other? Loud cousins who've nursed a Richter scale grudge for 40 years? Bring in the big guns (any grandparent, Sweet Aunt Lula, your brother-in-law who used to work for the State Department) for this one.

Split Shifts

Since stepfamilies are a lot more common these days, it's routine for many folks to have double the amount of "command performances" during a given holiday season. If sleep-deprived new parents have to schlep their newborn among four sets of grandparents on a single day, the logistics can take a toll on everybody. At a certain point,

that baby's going to be either comatose or screaming itself hoarse.

As host, you can be gracious and play the long game with a single move: think of the feast in segments, and let some folks choose what works for *their* schedule. A usual feast can be split pretty easily into early and late shifts (pre-dinner drinks, the meal itself, pie and coffee after). If a beloved nephew can only get there for dessert, ask that they come for dinner next year. Flexibility and grace go a long way, especially for traveling guests for whom time and mileage are precious.

(Added bonus: the early/late designation can also keep the feuding folks separated, just in case truce negotiations fall through.)

Play Zones

One of the beauties of a large holiday gathering is that it's as likely as not to spill into different rooms. (Who has a five-leaf, 20-seat table these days?) Tradition has always dictated a "kid's table" for practical/behavioral reasons, and TV sports spawned a similar tray-based area for uncompromising sports fans. It might not exactly be what Great Grandma Pearl would have wanted, but in the modern day, it keeps the peace.

Figure out your zones, then match the personnel to the spaces. For example: seat like with like (quiet teenagers in one corner works) or use buffer zones to keep Falcons fans away from their equally dedicated Saints-loving counterparts.

Nod to Formality

Since we're talking about a holiday dinner here, we should at least give a hat tip toward tradition, and that usually means a wee bit of formality. A family gathering is a great time to do little formal rituals that get lost in the everyday shuffle, and sometimes it's the little gestures that count.

If you, as host, have a couple of guidelines that lean toward the formal, mention them at the beginning of the meal. (Want a phone-free lunch? Ask nicely and clearly. Expect a pre-meal blessing? Give newcomers a bit of a heads-up.)

Know that it makes mamas and grandmothers proud to see their kids dress up every once in awhile. Know that it's good to let people tell you how much you've grown since last year. Know that the game highlights will run all night if you're talking to Uncle Earl for an hour.

Let it slide

Having constructed a new framework for the holiday feast, this might be the most important thing of all: Let things slide.

It's a time-tested strategy that just about EVERYBODY'S mama has put into effect at some point. You accept a decent percentage of success and ignore the rest. Sometimes the best gift is the gift of compromise.

When you get down to it, no party is going to be perfect (Martha Stewart articles and Pinterest boards notwithstanding), and these few times a year, it's good to let the details go and just appreciate your people.

Odds are you're not going to remember your Deco-themed napkin rings nearly as much as that time that Little Philip saddled up the family sheepdog and crashed through the TV trays. That's the stuff that we'll remember. Just as it should be.

THE *Adult* KIDS' TABLE

by Pableaux Johnson

My grandmother's big kitchen table (where we usually ate anyway) was a quarantine zone, with a door separating the Adult World and a dozen or more grade-school kids attempting what could be generously called "their best behavior."

For the kids, it was a solid holiday compromise that everyone could accept. On the down side, we had to wear church clothes after official mass hours. On the up side, our barely ruly mob was only lightly supervised, which made for an interesting fancy-dress version of Lord of the Flies with the promise of dessert if we "behaved properly." (Propriety, we soon learned, was HIGHLY overrated.)

From your seats at the Kids' Table, you had distinct advantages. The stakes were lower for the JV team because you could ladle your gravy straight out of the pot instead of Aunt Gladys' prized gravy boat (which was, of COURSE, irreplaceable and made out of impossibly delicate Viennese porcelain).

But, most importantly, the Kids' Table was where the funny lived.

Once the doors closed the smaller ones could abandon all pretense of posture and slump all they wanted. One could (hypothetically) make faces at one's cousin who was VERY close to being grounded. On a particularly good night, you could make your little sister laugh at the PERFECT moment so she spit milk through her nose. Somebody would watch the door, and one of the other cousins would crack up the room with selections from the latest grade-school riddle book. When an authority figure pushed the door to check on us, we'd go back to impersonating "good kids" (which most of us were definitely NOT).

And as modern day selfie-friendly parties amp up the fancy factor, I find myself arranging an impromptu Kids' Table for Tall People — gravitating to the far end of the table with a few co-conspirators (always the funny ones), putting a bottle of wine within easy reach, and maybe sitting just out of the most uptight host's sightlines. We try to keep our shenanigans to a dull roar — you know, so that we can get dessert.

It brings back that holiday family feeling all over again.





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Beemster X-O Caesar Salad

Prep Time: 10 minutes | Makes 1-1/2 cups dressing

- 2/3 cup mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon whole grain mustard
- 2 teaspoons anchovy paste
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/3 cup grated Beemster X-O

Combine mayonnaise, olive oil, lemon juice, mustard, anchovy paste, and garlic. Stir in grated Beemster. Season to taste with freshly ground black pepper.

Toss dressing with torn romaine lettuce and top with croutons and additional shaved Beemster X-O.

Store any remaining dressing in a sealed container in the refrigerator for up to one week.



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NEW AT ROUSES

NOCHE BUENA

by Suzette Norris

Cuban genes are a powerful thing. If you ever want to start a conversation with someone who has them just say “*Noche Buena*.”

I had never met Chef Alfredo “Fredo” Nogueira, but when we chatted over the phone recently about this great Cuban tradition on Christmas Eve, the tastes and aromas suddenly appeared like old friends.

I grew up across the yard from my Cuban grandparents on South Jefferson Davis Parkway. In the back stood a metal structure that was used once a year — to roast a butterfied, citrus-slathered 50-70 pound pig (head on/feet off), poked full of garlic. I remember my grandfather, Francisco “Paquito” Valle, wearing a navy blue wool sailor cap joking and laughing with his brothers and friends until the pig was ready to serve. Inside my grandmother, Gisela, finished up the black beans and yucca while we piled turrón (a candy) on dessert plates. My grandparents are gone now, but my brother Michael (Paquito’s apprentice) and my mother and sisters carry on the tradition.

That’s why Chef Fredo’s description struck such a chord. It’s also why there tends to be a little Cuban influence in a lot of his Cajun and Creole dishes at Analogue, a hip craft cocktail lounge in Chicago where he moved after Hurricane Katrina.

“My Cochon de Lait is similar to how my mom would do her pork,” he said. “I just switch out the oregano for the rosemary. And the way we prepare red beans and rice is similar to how you do black beans. The sofrito changes, but it’s basically the same thing — there is a huge Spanish influence on both Cajuns and Cubans.”

The Chef says he plans to cook a classic *Noche Buena*, with all the trimmings, at his mother’s house in River Ridge when he gets married this spring.

“I went to Cuba in January. It was the best trip of my life. While in Cuba, I ate so much rice and beans that I couldn’t eat them for three months afterwards, not even red beans and rice on Mondays.”

**—Donny Rouse,
3rd Generation**

A Louisiana Cuban Christmas

by Chef Alfredo “Fredo” Nogueira

My uncle (Tio) Juan, had a huge wood and sheet metal box that was 4 feet deep, 4 feet tall and 6 feet wide, with shelves at the bottom for charcoal, and wheels that looked like they were repurposed from a Rouses shopping cart. He stored it under a willow tree in his backyard in Metairie, and twice a year, before he used it, he had to patch up any areas rusted out by the humid Louisiana climate.

Every Christmas Eve and Easter Eve, Tio Juan picked up a 200-pound pig from a farmer somewhere on the West Bank. Back home, he prepared it with salt and pepper, a little oregano, garlic and olive oil, and very late that night set it to cook in his Cajun Pork Machine. He would stay up all night tending to the pork, drinking beers, and visiting with his buddies. He used mojo (pronounced Mo-Ho), a mixture of garlic, olive oil, sour orange and onions, to baste the pig.

Throughout the day, literally hundreds of cousins, relatives and friends would roll through the house and back yard to pay homage to Tio Juan’s monumental creation. They would bring along all of the essentials including congri (black beans with rice), sweet plantains and yucca cooked in mojo. To keep everyone from poking their head in the pit while the pig was finishing up, the adults would put out a supply of sausages and a pimento cheese-like spread my mom made called pastica.

Before you knew it, everyone was called inside for a prayer and to give thanks for bringing the family together for another feast. Three or four of the largest stovetop coffee makers you have ever seen pumped out batch after batch of Cuban coffee. We would all eat until we were uncomfortably full, and then maybe eat a little more. Dessert was my mother’s famous flan.



▲ Chef Alfredo “Fredo” Nogueira

Chef Fredo's "Mojo de ajo"

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 cup Rouses Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 cup Cuban sour orange "naranja agria"*
*Can substitute equal parts orange and lime juice
- 5 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon Rouses oregano
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon Rouses salt

HOW TO PREP

Using a mortar and pestle, smash garlic to a paste. Place garlic along with the other ingredients into a saucepan, and set heat to medium low. Stir intermittently till fragrant. Serve on anything.



Chef Fredo's Congri

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 15-ounce can of black beans (juice reserved)
- 1 cup Rouses long grain rice
- 1½ cups rice
- 1 Spanish onion, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon Rouses oregano
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon Rouses salt
- 2 tablespoons Rouses Extra Virgin olive oil

HOW TO PREP

Sauté garlic first in olive oil over gentle heat till golden (don't burn!) Add onions, bell peppers, cumin, and oregano. Continue to cook on low using the reserved juice to deglaze vegetables from time to time. Add rice, beans, salt, water and bay leaf. Bring up to a boil, turn down to simmer and cover for 20 minutes. Remove pot from heat and allow to rest for another 5 minutes still covered.

Chef Fredo's Cafecito

HOW TO PREP

Load stovetop coffee maker with either Café Buestelo or Café Pilon (depending on your family's preference). Do not over pack, or the coffee won't steam through properly. Fill the bottom of the reservoir with water. Heat on stovetop over medium high. When you hear the coffee beginning to come through the top, pour the first few ounces into something like a Pyrex 2-cup measuring cup, and set aside. Set coffee maker back on flame to finish.

Add more sugar to the measuring cup than your dentist recommends (2-3 tablespoons) and stir like crazy with a fork for 5 minutes, making a little foam. Pour remaining coffee into the measuring cup and share with friends. Be prepared for a sudden boost of energy.

Michael Sevante's Paquito's Pig/Gisela's Mojo

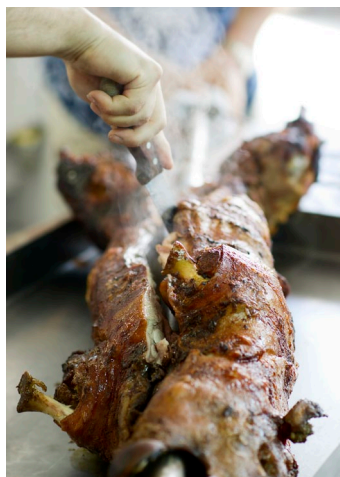
WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 50-70 pound pig, head on, feet off and butterflied to lie flat
- Approximately 30-40 peeled whole toes of garlic (set aside 12 to smash)
- 8 lemons
- 8 sour oranges
- 8 red grapefruits

Seasoning Mix: Rouses black pepper; Rouse salt; Rouses garlic powder; Rouses onion powder; Tony Chachere's; Rouses paprika.

HOW TO PREP

Make mojo by squeezing juice from lemons, oranges and grapefruits into a container. Use the peels to "wash" the pig. Then, using the tip of a knife, make slits throughout the pig, and insert garlic into the meat. Season liberally with seasoning (over seasoning is not possible). Pour marinade over the pig and roast — one hour for every 10 pounds over a charcoal flame. Baste as necessary.





WHAT IS HANUKAH?

Hanukah (also spelled *Hanukah* and *Chanukah*) may just be *THE* Jewish holiday that most Americans are familiar with. Its proximity to Christmas and the proliferation of cards, do-dads, trinkets and tchotchkes make it seem like the pinnacle of all things Jewish. And Jewish kids haven't helped by bragging about getting 8 nights of presents to curtail their own sense of carol and tree envy.

All jokes of Hanukah bushes aside, Hanukah is actually not a major Jewish holiday at all. Hanukah is not the Jewish Christmas. It predates Christmas as a commemoration by a couple hundred years. Gift giving as an element of Hanukah emerged fairly late in Jewish tradition and in North America has inextricably tied to the proximity of the holiday to Christmas. In Eastern Europe and Germany it was traditional for Jews to give a little "gelt" (Yiddish for gold coins) to their children on Hanukah. In the Sephardic tradition from the Mediterranean coast to the Middle East, Jewish children were encouraged to give *tzedakah* (which means righteousness but in this case refers to charitable giving) on Hanukah and many received something similar to gelt on Purim or Passover. (If you have ever wondered about gelt, those gold or silver foiled chocolate coins — they took the place of the real thing once Jews lived in countries with paper money.)

Hanukah has several traditional narratives. The first one you may have heard of involves a revolt against the so-called Syrian-Greeks (Greek colonists and Greek influenced Middle Easterners who wanted everybody to follow Greek culture and civilization). A war lasting several years ensued and a heroic figure Yehudah Maccabee emerged leading the Jewish people to victory. The holiday miracle passed down from generation to generation was that there was only one jar of consecrated oil and this oil should only have lasted one day, but lasted eight days. Hanukah may have also been an attempt to make up for the joyous holiday of Sukkot, which was not celebrated because of the ongoing war.

Some Hanukah traditions you might want to read up on include eating foods fried in oil — to recall the miracle (all Jewish holidays are keyed towards food and most Jewish foods are keyed with specific Jewish holidays); playing the dreidel — a spinning top with Hebrew letters used to do harmless gambling involving candy and other treats; and lighting the hannukiyah or chanukiah (what you may have learned as a menorah) each night for eight nights. We are also supposed to say special prayers including the Maoz Tzur (kinda my favorite tune), which means Rock of Ages, and the Hallel-Psalms of Praise and Shehecheyanu — which is a prayer on new seasons. The candlelighting is blessed every night and some, like myself, observe a special "umph" day called Zot Hanukah on the last day.

Hanukah is a fantastic time to be Black and Jewish, all jokes of latkes and hot sauce be gone. My approach is to use the two themes of the holiday — foods fried in or using oil with "light" foods to achieve a balance. (Nothing could be more traditionally Jewish than a good pun.) This year that means serving West African *akara* (think a fritter like falafel only it's made with black-eyed peas), with a black-eyed pea hummus redolent with tahini and preserved lemon.

Food is an important carrier of memory. The South is known for its fried food, but few know that Jews and enslaved Africans were responsible for the popularization of deep-frying. Sephardic Jews, used to deep-frying in olive oil and West Africans who used to deep and shallow fry in palm, peanut, sesame and olive oils, increased the use of these cooking methods as they were scattered throughout the Western world. In Lisbon, London, Charleston and New Orleans, the cuisines of the African and Jewish diaspora exerted influence side-by-side, cross pollinated and reinforced each other's impact.

History is always a presence at my table. People want to know where their food comes from and I want to know more about the circumstances that brought the people to the food. The table is a teaching space and an opportunity. We can also use the table as a crossroads where all of our identities and strivings meet and make sense. That's why I cook Kosher Soul style — it is my space where I share my spirit.

Enter deep-fried sambusa, a samosa-like appetizer from Somalia, or latkes flavored with the Cajun or Creole trinity and sweet potato beignets. Beignets have long been part of Hanukah celebrations, taking the place of the traditional jelly doughnuts or *sufganiyot* in some communities. Who doesn't love matzoh-meal fried chicken?

For the healthy part it's a good time for collard greens kissed by the frost. Root vegetables get drizzled with olive oil, seasoned with berbere and rof, spice mixtures from Ethiopia and Senegal and roasted brown. Instead of roasted goose, the traditional Hanukah favorite in Eastern Europe, I do a pecan wood smoked turkey. Couscous pilaf salad and Caribbean citrus compote spiked with vanilla and cayenne round it out.

From my menu, you'd never guess this was a minor holiday. It is, however, a major opportunity to educate people through their taste buds at a time of year where everybody likes to eat in community with others. Kosher Soul food allows people to understand the possibilities of the American table — that it is not a matter of fusion, but meaning.

> **Did You Know?**

Hanukah is not pronounced with an "H" sound. It is definitely "Ch," like you have a little bit of a throat issue or something, or you are a cat...





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PAR FOR THE COURSE: *The Best Party I Ever Threw*

by Chris Rose

The best party I ever threw wasn't just one of your run-of-the-mill hot nights on the town. In fact, it was so much fun, it turned into an annual tradition. That is, until the authorities shut it down.

It all started when I found myself living Uptown on Magazine Street, right on top of the Audubon Golf Course. Formerly a resident of the French Quarter and the Marigny neighborhoods of New Orleans, I wanted to find a way to immerse myself in my new Uptown digs, become part of the cultural fabric of my new surroundings. So in my first year Uptown, on the Sunday morning of the Thoth parade — which passed just a block away from my new house — I organized a pre-parade touch football game among friends in Audubon Park.

We had been playing touch football every Sunday morning all that winter anyway, and with Carnival in full bloom and blossom, the talk was of suspending the weekly game so everyone could attend to the vital cultural matters at hand.

My thinking was this: How about we adapt our weekly ritual to fit the vital cultural matters at hand? Let's still meet on Sunday morning and have our game. But let's all wear costumes. I mean, this isn't brain science. It's Mardi Gras.

The pre-Thoth parade costume touch football game was an instant hit and was immediately imprinted on the annual Mardi Gras events calendar of all my friends.

It was the early 1990s and I, like the rest of America, was getting into golf. It was the era of Tiger Woods. And I lived on a golf course. And it was Mardi Gras. And the Uptown parades on that Saturday didn't start until 11 — which gave us several hours to kill between coming home at night from Tipitina's and rolling back out to catch the parades. And thus was born the first annual Thoth Classic Invitational Golf Tournament at the Audubon Golf Club.

Now, about that name. I should probably explain a few things. First, Thoth had nothing to do with us and we had nothing to

do with them. In fact, I'm sure if they knew the degradations we carried out in their name, they probably would have sued us. But I thought it gave the event an official aura, as golf is always supposed to be.

Nor was the event invitational. That's just a term you see in the name of elegant and refined golf tournaments. And our ambitions were nothing short of elegance and refinement. But you didn't need an invitation to play. You just needed to be crazy enough to pay \$50 to put on a dress and play golf.

So here's how it went down: That first year — 1992? '93? Memory is a little fuzzy on this point! — I went over to the golf course clubhouse to inquire about the possibility of renting the whole golf course at one time. Kind of like you do with Laser Tag or an indoor soccer facility when you want to throw a birthday party for your kids. But this was for adults. And "renting" a golf course, it turns out, is a rather tricky matter. Mainly because old duffers do NOT like having their routines upended. These guys hadn't spent a Saturday morning home with their wives since Truman was President and they didn't intend to start now.

So we agreed to "share" the course with the regulars.

There were probably around 30 golfers on our team that first year. The only requirement to participate was that you had to wear a costume. You did not need to be good at golf. In fact, you did not even have to know how to *play* golf.

And let me tell you, some of these guys were awful at golf. Just flat out terrible. And therein was the joy of the event: A few dozen men dressed as ballerinas, gorillas, drag queens, cops and doctors gathered for congenial outdoors activity.

There was a pregnant nun. There was a zebra. (Me.) One foursome arrived costumed as the Blue Man Group and, in Blue Man Group tradition, they never spoke. They just made those Blue Man faces at everyone. And thus, off we set out for a grand round of fellowship and sport.

Accompanied, of course, by a loyal and enthusiastic team of about a dozen women, delivering to us, by means of golf carts, a profligate bounty of Bloody Marys, beer, roast beef po-boys and Dominican cigars.





These women — our friends, girlfriends and spouses — were quite the hit. The Belles of the (golf) Ball, to be sure. They called themselves the Cart Tarts.

Oh, Gods of Golf, please forgive us all. Those were our younger, more vulnerable years.

And so we played. Teams were formed and trophies given to the winners. Each team kept its own score, in the great and honorable tradition of golf. There was no cheating, I am sure.

I am quite sure.

But there was a lot of messy going on. A whole lot of messy out there on that golf course that day for all the world to see. (Or, at least, everyone who drove through the park on Magazine Street that day.)

First of all, a round of golf usually times out at about four hours, at the very most. We teed off at 9 a.m. that first year and the last group — mine — pulled up the 18th green at about 5:30 that afternoon.

You do the math. It seems that somewhere along the way, etiquette broke down. Delays were caused. Mishaps occurred. Mistakes were made. Many beverages were consumed. And many, many rules were broken.

And I'm not talking about rules of golf. I'm talking about the rules of a civil society.

But only one person ended up in the emergency room. So all in all, you'd have to conclude that it was a success. (She was fine, by the way. Just a minor contusion caused by

the unfortunate and accidental incurrence of physical contact between a golf cart moving at low velocity and a woman not moving at all. Until struck by said golf cart moving at low velocity. But she was fine. I promise.)

Most amazing of all is that the golf course let us come back and do it again the next year. And the next. And the next. This went on for many years. The numbers of players and Cart Tarts grew as the party engaged what I would term a "minor reputation" as a must-do Carnival season event. For silly people, at least.

And then, one year, the Audubon Golf Club renovated its golf course. To the tune of \$6 million. I mean, they did a bang-up job on that place. The former course could have been most generously described as a goat ranch. Lousy fairways, crummy greens, stinky sand traps, sputtering golf carts. Then again, it was a perfect place to host such debauchery; after all, what damage could we do?

"My parents use their Golf Carts for everything BUT golf. It's a Gulf Coast thing. I've even seen people come get their groceries on them."

—Ali Rouse Royster, 3rd Generation

Well, that question was answered the first — and last — year that we played on the newly renovated course. With it's fine landscaping

and lush fairways and groomed greens and finely sifted traps and even a brand new fleet of top-of-the-line golf carts.

I just had a feeling that day that things were not going to go well. And they didn't. I'm not quite sure whether the straw that broke the camel's back was when someone buried a flag in a sand trap or when someone else filled a hole with sand or when two Cart Tarts took to mock mud wrestling in the greenside sand trap on the 18th hole.

It could have been anything, really. But what it definitely was, was the last Thoth Classic Invitational Golf Tournament at the Audubon Golf Club.

History shows that great traditions rise fast, burn bright and flame out gloriously. And ours was a great tradition. We got a good ten or twelve years of revelry and laughter in those crazy games of golf. Up until the course regulars and management stepped in to declare: "No mas!"

But who could blame them?

I made a lot of great friends at the event. In later years, people who I had never even met before started showing up to play because they had heard about it from somebody in a bar the night before. They had a costume. They had clubs.

Now *that*, people, is a great tradition.

That is the best party I ever threw.



TRADITIONS & SUPERSTITIONS

A guide for New Year's Day good-luck foods

by Pableaux Johnson + photo by Romney Caruso

When you think about it, celebrating New Year's Eve is pretty simple. Dress up, watch the clock, count down from ten and cheer. Dance a little, drink a little too much champagne, take a cab home, and if you're lucky, sleep until about noon. Sure, it's a multi-step process, but they're steps that most folks have memorized by now.

New Year's Day is another matter. In the cold light of day, last night's high-energy party is moving a good deal slower, and everyone is trying to contend with the Four Horsemen of the Morning After: finding aspirin, making coffee, remembering resolutions, and (of course) eating good luck foods.

In most modern households, the edible traditions of New Year's tend to get the short end of the celebratory stick. After

a night of toasting and after-midnight festivities, most people just aren't in the mood to cook, even if it means better luck for whole year.

Most adults grew up eating a little bit of the traditional New Year's dishes — black eyed peas for luck, greens for money, cornbread for gold — as a kind of savory insurance policy. Even if we didn't *believe* that a few nibbles make a difference on our next algebra grade or the Saint's playoff chances, it just didn't make sense to tempt fate.

So as a public service to my friends and neighbors, I've started my own New Year's Day tradition — throwing an afternoon open house starring big batches of the Good Luck Foods. As gatherings go, it's as casual as it gets: two pots on the stove, an electric cooker full of rice, disposable paper

bowls and noon-to-six open-door policy.

As my own kitchen crew, I like starting my year off in front of a stove: stirring, smelling and basking in the heat of the burners. As the coffee maker burbles in the background, I chop onions, dice smoky andouille and crush plum tomatoes with my fingers. As most of said friends and neighbors sleep late, I'm clanking away, reminding myself that one resolution stays same regardless of the year — “Cook More.”

By early afternoon, the guests start arriving in various states of disrepair — usually bearing gifts of orange juice and champagne that miraculously survived the night before. Over mimosas and a lucky lunch, the various guests swap tales of the “lampshade incidents” around town, overindulgence and well-intentioned resolutions that didn't live to see daybreak.

By sunset, the last stragglers arrive, hoping they haven't missed out on their annual lucky meal. If there's any left by nightfall, here's what they can expect, menu-wise:

Black Eyed Peas for Luck

This is the one dish that you shouldn't skimp on time-wise. If you cook your beans from scratch (and you should), it takes a solid two hours to get these from pre-soaked to tooth-tender. In terms of flavor, black-eyed peas can pack an earthy wallop. (An old roommate always said his grandmother's peas “tasted like dirt, God rest her soul.”) Compensate with plenty of pork (andouille or ham work wonders), but if you're still not sold, hit your bowl with your favorite pepper sauce or a few squirts of vinegar from a bottle of “sport peppers.”

Greens for Money

Many of my friends were raised in collar green families, but my mother always cooked cabbage on New Year's. Never a fan of the boiled stuff, I bent the rules and went with a good coleslaw — the better to keep my apartment from stinking until Easter.

During my first cold winter in New Orleans, I decided to go the smothered route and put this recipe together with the bounty of my fridge. As luck would have it, crisp-fried andouille and caramelized onions go well with garlicky olive salad and tomatoes. By the time the cabbage is smothered down, the flavors are mixed and at their peak.

Cornbread for Gold

This is a tradition that I picked up from some Texas friends, partially because I like any excuse to cook my grandfather's cornbread recipe. More grainy than cakelike, Leon's cornbread is more high maintenance than pre-mixed varieties, but the heat-and-mix technique gives the cornbread a dark, crunchy crust that "baked in a pan" versions can't match. Luckily, I keep three big cast iron skillets on hand for just such an occasion.

Milk Punch for Relief

This big-batch brunch cocktail is classic New Orleans "eye opener" and a sweet, calming way for guests to sip their "hair of the dog" should they be — how to put this? — a little "sensitive to light" from the evening's festivities. You can make this one ahead of time and thaw to slushy perfection as the guests arrive.

Big Batch Bourbon Milk Punch

Serves 8

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- ½ gallon Rouses whole milk
- 2½ to 3 cups confectioners' sugar, or to taste
- 1½ cups (12 ounces) bourbon whiskey
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- Ground nutmeg

HOW TO PREP

In a large pitcher, combine the milk and confectioners' sugar; beating with a whisk until the sugar is dissolved. Stir in the bourbon and vanilla. Pour into a large airtight container (such as a half-gallon milk jug); cover and freeze overnight or even up to a month.

Let the punch thaw at room temperature for at least 2 hours. Pour into a large thermos or straight from the jug. Pour over ice to serve; top each serving with a pinch of nutmeg.

"I cook a whole pig on my Green Egg while I'm deer hunting New Year's Eve. We eat it that night."

—Donny Rouse, 3rd Generation



Skillet Corn Bread

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 2 cups yellow corn meal
- 4 tablespoons All Purpose flour
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon Rouses salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups buttermilk (approximately)
- 3 to 4 tablespoons Rouses vegetable oil

HOW TO PREP

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Sift all dry ingredients together (cornmeal, flour, baking powder, salt and sugar) in large glass or metal bowl (not plastic). Mix in eggs and enough buttermilk to make a loose batter.

On the stovetop burner, heat vegetable oil in a 10-inch cast iron skillet until lightly smoking. Swirl the skillet to coat the interior with oil, then CAREFULLY pour the hot oil into the batter and MIX VIGOROUSLY until the oil is integrated into the batter.

Place the skillet inside the 425° oven for about 25 minutes or center is fully baked.

Uncle Pableaux's Smothered Cabbage

Serves 6-8

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 3 tablespoons Rouses vegetable or extra virgin olive oil
- ½ pound baked ham, diced, or Rouses smoked sausage, sliced ½-inch thick
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes in purée (chopped or smashed between your fingers)
- ½ to ¾ cup amber beer (nothing too dark here)
- ½ cup Rouses Olive Salad
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 (2 to 3-pound) head green cabbage, cored and coarsely chopped
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- Hot pepper sauce, to taste

HOW TO PREP

In a large Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the ham or sausage and cook until browned and crisp. Add the onions in two batches and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are lightly browned. Stir in tomatoes, beer, olives, and basil; increase the heat and bring just to a simmer.

Add the cabbage in batches and cook, stirring frequently, until the leaves wilt after each addition. (Don't worry; huge mounds of cabbage lose their bulk pretty quickly). Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, until the cabbage is tender, about 45 minutes. Stir in the salt, ground pepper, and hot pepper sauce.



Happy BREW Year!

by Nora McGunnigle



The holiday season provides the perfect opportunity to branch out into beer as an alternative (some would say superior) alcoholic accompaniment for Thanksgiving, Hanukah, Christmas, and New Year's food traditions.

Each holiday table has so many different flavor profiles and ingredients; pairing a variety of beer is both a great way to complement the food and an opportunity to give thanks for the many different styles and brands of beer out there that can be imbibed all year long.

The Thanksgiving turkey dinner is made for the subtle yeast spice and balanced bready malt profile of the French *bière de garde*. Bayou Teche's Acadie is a perfect choice for the Thanksgiving table. It's brewed out in Cajun country, where they know a thing or two about good food. The sophisticated yet surprisingly unfussy amber malt profile stands up to the flavors of the meal, and its high level of carbonation works perfectly to wash away the richness of the turkey, gravy, cornbread sausage stuffing, vegetables, and potatoes (both regular and sweet).

If oyster dressing is prominently featured in your family's Thanksgiving, think about trying Goose Island's Sophie, a farmhouse ale lighter in color and on the tongue than the Acadie. Its citrus and spice notes complement oysters perfectly, and again, the effervescence will wash the rich dressing down without feeling heavy, too sweet, or too bitter.

For dessert, finding a beer that works with a variety of pie flavors is crucial. 40 Arpent

out of Arabi, LA has just started bottling its New Basin milk stout and it is a perfect dessert accompaniment, whatever your decision. Or if you would like an after dinner coffee without the caffeine, try Mandeville brewery Chafunkta's Old 504 porter. The Old 504 is also perfect for when one is too stuffed for more food, but would like a little something to finish the meal. Although a dark colored beer, the Old 504 — made with coffee and vanilla — is surprisingly light on the tongue and in the stomach.

For Christmas, different beers will highlight different meats on the table. For a prime rib dinner, keep the accompanying beer straightforward (but still delicious) with an ESB like Southern Prohibition's Jack the Sipper.

A Belgian-style abbey ale like Ommegang Abbey Ale or Corsedonk Abbey Brown Ale is perfect with the intense game flavors of lamb, duck, or goose. Try a malt-forward German-style dunkel or marzen to pair with a ham or turkey dinner, like Great Raft's Provisions and Traditions 3, which is an oak-aged marzen beer brewed in conjunction with the Besh Foundation and Luke chef Drake Leonards.

Pair your Hanukah latkes with wheat beers like Parish Canabrake or NOLA 7th Street Wheat; repeat for 8 nights.

Toast the New Year with special occasion beers like Saison duPont or Unibroue Fin du Monde. And when making black eyed peas and cabbage the next day, grab a schwarzbier such as Great Raft Reasonably Corrupt or Bayou Teche's LA 31 Bière Noire to wash down your food and start your year off right.

.....
“You can always pick up a 6-pack of my standard — Coors Light. It goes with turkey, ham, crown roast and black-eyed peas and cabbage.”

—Tommy Rouse, 2nd Generation
.....



NEW
flavors!



My World Cup Runneth Over

by Chris Rose

I've been to a great many parties, fêtes, feasts, functions, soirées, affairs, events, happenings, bashes, blowouts, throw-downs and doings in my life. Some folks might even consider me an expert on such matters, such as reputations go.

I mean I've been to a lot of parties. A *lot*, right? Who on the Gulf Coast hasn't? Hell, life here is a party without borders, curfew or reason.

But the best shindig I've ever been to was in a place called Bohus Malmön in the Bohuslän archipelago in Västra Götaland County on the west coast of Sweden, just north of Gothenburg.

Of course, you know it! OK, maybe not.

One special night in the summer of 1994, Bohus Malmön was all that, and more.

Very few of us mere mortals ever get to say we danced at the center of the universe. Where reverie, purpose, pride, sports, nationalism, zydeco music and topless Swedish beaches all come together in a harmonic convergence, a perfect storm, the Utopian ideal, Valhalla, and just ... *paradise*.

• • •

For most of the previous decade, I had hosted at my home in New Orleans a great many blues musicians from Sweden. I had become a very close friend of one wickedly talented guitar slinger from Gothenburg named Göran Svenson Svenningsson, and then, over the years, he directed any and all of his musician friends who were visiting the United States, for whatever reason, to contact me. Thus, for many great years I basically ran a flophouse for Swedish blues musicians. And my payday came through when all those many Swedish friends of mine pooled their money together to fly me over to visit them as a thank you gesture for my years of hospitality.

The best way to describe the place would be to compare it to Nantucket or Martha's Vineyard or the Hamptons. It's an island resort that fills up in summertime. Sweden has a tradition wherein pretty much the entire country goes on vacation at the same time, in July. The Volvo plant and the Absolut Vodka distillery in Göran's

home town closed down for the month. Everything closed down for the month. Everything except the bars, restaurants, hotels and resorts. Because everybody else was on vacation and went to them.

At the time, Göran was the lead guitar player in a band called Queen Bee and the Zydeco Amigos. They were, as the name might imply, a Tex-Mex zydeco band. From Sweden. And they were killers.

They had a show the night that I arrived, on the island resort of Bohus Malmön, at a place called Lilla Draget, a local seafood house specializing in traditional Swedish fare — of which one of the specialties was called “crayfish.”

Now, since you are reading this story in Rouses magazine, I am presuming that you are presuming what I was presuming: That they were serving “crawfish,” but had simply spelled it wrong, like lots of restaurants in places that aren't in Louisiana do.

Well, no. These “crayfish” were served like New Orleans “crawfish,” but were about five times bigger. Kind of like mutant mudbugs gone wild. In fact, they were more like little lobsters than what we in Louisiana know as crawfish. And they were some kind of good.

So I was eating these “crayfish” lobster things, and we were all taking shots of a Scandinavian liqueur, a local delicacy called North Sea Oil. It was as powerful as it was awful.

But the crowd was in high gear and the band was burning it down and the walls were throbbing and floor was shaking and it was just sublime. And of course my Swedish friends made me feel like a king, introducing me around the bar, buying drinks, toasting New Orleans



▲ Queen Bee and the Zydeco Amigos

and urging the crowd to join in the general celebration of, well ... me. And there was one more thing, one more element, one more little detail about that night that took it to the next level.

That would be the World Cup.



A little background about that: Way back when, Sweden was a football contender on the European sporting scene. If not exactly a worldwide powerhouse, certainly a top echelon player back in the 1940s and '50s, culminating with a Gold medal at the Summer Olympics in London in 1948.

Then the Swedish national team went into a deep slide through the 1960s, '70s and '80s. In fact, during one stretch from 1978 to 1990, they didn't even *qualify* for the World Cup. But they finally broke out of their international losing streak and managed to qualify for the 1990 World Cup in Italy, only to flame out in three straight losses.

And so they limped into the 1994 World Cup, hosted in the U.S., with very little confidence, credibility or charisma.

And then, Sweden went on a tear. They tied Cameroon and then defeated Russia, then tied Brazil, then defeated Saudi Arabia, then defeated Romania and found themselves facing Brazil again — this time in the championship round, the proverbial Final Four.

They lost that game, as they well should have, to one of the great teams of all time, and Brazil notched its record-holding 4th World Cup title. But Sweden was the Cinderella story of the summer. They scored the most goals of any team in the tournament that year.

And so they wound up matched against Bulgaria for third place, the Bronze Medal, no small beer in a country as small and unprepossessing as Sweden, a country whose football reputation had all but evaporated over the prior quarter century.

The date of that match? July 16, 1994, the day I arrived in Sweden.

And as they had done throughout the tournament, they went on a scoring binge, beating Bulgaria 4-0 — and plunging the nation into unbridled, unfettered, unrelenting celebration.

So the little bar and restaurant where we were at that night, Lilla Draget, with its nuclear crawfish and toxic cocktails and Tex-Mex zydeco band, erupted into a celebration the likes of which I had never seen before and have never seen since, crazier than the night the Saints won the Super Bowl.

After the match, Queen Bee and the Zydeco Amigos kicked up the jams again and not a chair or table was left standing when the music was done. Sitting at the bar, I copped a set of soup spoons from a waitress and played racketsy-racketsy time with the band, like a washboard player — but out of tune and out of time.

But I didn't give a damn. I was the Belle of the Ball, the guest of the band, and the only guy from America in the joint.

The bartender, he and I bonded, did that weird thing guys can do

sometimes where, suddenly you have a new best friend in the world, simply because you talked with each other and got buzzed and good things happened and suddenly: Bromance abound.

It was like that. And Lilla Draget, the restaurant/bar where we were that night, is one of those tchotchke and memento places, where they hang stuff like license plates, pennants, sports jerseys and other memorabilia on their wall.

And I was wearing the coolest shoes that night — after all, I was with the band; I had to look sharp — some really cool retro silver and black saddle shoes that a friend had given me as a Christmas gift the year before. In fact, these shoes were so retro, so out there — that I had never even worn them before back here in New Orleans. They were that loud.

Well, needless to say, the shoes attracted a lot of attention.

And here's what happened that night: I fell in love with Sweden. The bartender fell in love with my shoes. Sweden marked its greatest international sporting triumph in history. And before I left the bar, I traded my shoes for a Swedish flag that hung behind the bar (in its place they hung my shoes —

just like Rock-N-Bowl in New Orleans displays the bowling shoes that Tom Cruise once rented).

The last thing I remember is running down a boardwalk that led to the North Sea as dawn's early light crept up over the town. Me and Queen Bee and the Zydeco Amigos. We never broke stride and never even paused to take off any clothes and we plunged into the dark, icy waters of the North Sea off the Swedish coast and we bobbed up and down in the water and looked at each other and we laughed and laughed and laughed so hard that I have never known laughter or forgetting again like that in my life.

And that was my first 12 hours in Sweden.

I stayed three weeks and you know what's funny? I don't remember a damn thing that happened after that night.

“Don't tell Santa but we ate reindeer meatballs when we visited Sweden. Venison is as popular there as it is here on the Gulf Coast.”

**—Tim Acosta,
Rouses Marketing Director**

North Sea Oil

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- ¼ ounce Triple Sec
- ½ ounce Single Malt Scotch Whisky
- ¾ ounce Cocchi Americano
- 1½ ounces Solstandet Aquavit

HOW TO PREP

In a chilled mixing glass, combine ingredients with ice and stir well. Strain into a chilled rocks glass with large ice cubes.





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Cooking Tip: For an easy gourmet dish, roast Tasteful Selections™ with olive oil, garlic and your favorite seasonings at 425° for 20 minutes. Garnish with some parsley and enjoy!

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Mary Ann's Christmas Salad

Prep: 10 min. • Cook: 15 min. • Serves: 6

Ingredients:	1 generous c. carrots, cut into coins
1.5 lbs. Tasteful Selections™ potatoes	½ medium red onion, cut in wedges
1 tsp. salt	¾ c. light Italian dressing
1 generous c. green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces	½ tsp. dried Italian herbs

Ingredients:

Add potatoes and salt to large saucepan, cover with water and boil on medium high heat for 13-15 min. Then, drain, stir in dressing, and let cool. In separate pan, add water and steam carrots for 2 min., add beans and steam 2 more min. or until just crisped. Place veggies in cold water bath. When cool, drain completely. Add green beans, carrots, red onion and Italian herbs to potatoes and toss. Serve cold or at room temperature.



More Recipes at: TastefulSelections.com

At Season's Peak



Apples

Nine different varieties of apples are grown in Washington State, and that's just one of the states we source apples from throughout the year. Fall and early winter apples are crisp. Most are out of hand apples, meaning they're perfect eaten raw. Look for Honeycrisp, Braeburn, Fuji, Red Delicious, Pink Lady, Golden Delicious, Gala, Jazz and Granny Smith right now in our Produce Department.

Storage: Keep inside the crisper drawer covered with a slightly damp paper towel. Apples emit ethylene gas, which speeds up the ripening process, so keep them away from ethylene-sensitive fruits and vegetables. **Easy as Apple Pie:** Pink Lady, Granny Smith and Honeycrisp are three of our favorites for apple pie. Cut apples into quarters or eights and use a paring knife to remove the core. Sprinkle with lemon juice to prevent browning.

Rouses Dietitian Says: An apple a day keeps the doctor away. Research suggests that frequent apple-eaters have lower risks of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Pears

Bosc pears are some of the prettiest pears we sell. Sweet and crisp, and with their brown skin and slender necks, they make a beautiful addition to a holiday centerpiece. You can poach most varieties of pear, but Bosc hold their shape when heated, which means dessert will look as pretty as it tastes. Anjou pears are also great eating pears. Short, squat bright green Anjou pears have a smooth, juicy flesh; red Anjous are sweeter and milder, with just a hint of spice. Both are perfect on a cheese board, salad or sandwich. Keep in mind that pear slices, like apple slices, will oxidize and turn brown. Add a squeeze of lemon juice to prevent browning. Bartletts are best for baking. Mild, green-gold Bartletts have a thin, delicate skin and sweet juicy flesh. They also smell great. Red Bartletts are sweeter. **Storage:** Ripe pears can be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. To ripen pears quickly, store at room temperature in a brown paper bag (turn occasionally to keep from browning).

Rouses Dietitian Says: Pears are helpful for digestion problems and nausea, and research also suggests they can help lower the risk of stroke.



Beets

Beets come in a variety of colors, but typically, when we think beets, we think beet red, which is actually more of dark or vibrant fuchsia. Beets are a root vegetable. You can eat the root (the bulb) and the stalk — use it in a salad, or cook the way you would mustard or turnip greens. **Roasting:** Remove the beet root, scrub the bulb, and wrap it in aluminum foil, the way you would a baked potato. Baked at 400 degrees for 50 to 60 minutes, or until soft. Let cool before removing the skin. **Storage:** It's best to store the roots and stalks separately in your vegetable drawer. The stalks will keep longer if you place them in a perforated plastic bag.

Rouses Dietitian Says: Beets are a source of nitrates, which have been proven to help lower blood pressure and combat heart disease.



Spaghetti Squash

Spaghetti squash strands make a great substitute for pasta. You can cook spaghetti squash in the oven or your microwave. There's nothing to it. Halve the squash lengthwise and remove the seeds. Place in a medium casserole dish, cut sides down. Add one-half cup water to keep the squash moist. Bake at 375 degrees until tender, about 30 minutes (longer for larger squash), or microwave on high for 12 to 15 minutes. When the squash is cooked, use a fork to rake the strands. **Storage:** Whole winter squash will keep for a month or more if stored in a cool, dark, ventilated area. Cut squash should be wrapped in plastic and refrigerated. It will last that way for up to a week.

Rouses Dietitian Says: Winter squash is a good source of potassium, which helps you keep a healthy metabolism and build muscle. It also controls the electrical activity of the heart.



Mushrooms

White button, cremini and portobello mushrooms are the same variety of fungi, just picked at different stages. Oyster and enoki mushrooms are slightly sweeter than white buttons. Shiitakes are earthy. Chanterelles have a meaty, nutty flavor. **Storage:** Transfer mushrooms from their original packaging into a paper bag, layered between damp paper towels. Don't clean the mushrooms until you're ready to use them.

Rouses Dietitian Says: Mushrooms provide a source of the trace mineral Selenium, which works with vitamin E as an antioxidant to keep skin looking healthy.

Also at Season's Peak:

- Broccoli
- Brussels Sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Local Citrus
- Fennel
- Garlic

- Greens
- Leeks
- Mirlitons
- Okra
- Onions
- Parsnip
- New Crop Local Pecans
- Persimmons

- Pomegranates
- Potatoes
- Radishes
- Rutabagas
- Shallots
- Sweet Potatoes
- Turnips
- Winter Squash

➤ How to Arrange a Fresh Fruit Basket

"We make gift baskets with cheese, chocolates, coffee, beer, you name it, but my favorite basket to make, and to get, is a fruit basket stacked high with locally grown satsumas, oranges and grapefruit. You don't have to use citrus, though; apples, pears, bananas, pineapples, and grapes work well, too, really anything but berries. Look for fruit that is firm and not overripe, and choose a basket or box deep enough and sturdy enough to hold it. Line the bottom with tissue paper or a colorful dishtowel or tea towel, then, on a tabletop or countertop, arrange each variety of fruit heaviest to smallest. Fill the bottom layer of the basket with heavier fruits such as apples, pears and oranges, then add the smaller fruit like satsumas and grapes. Add a jar of Rouse fig preserves or a bag of local pecans, tie a pretty ribbon or bow around the basket, and you're done."

—Susan, Rouses Floral Director

Call or visit your neighborhood Rouses to order gift baskets.







Eat, Drink & Be Berry

About 90% percent of cranberries harvested in the United States are dried, juiced, jellied or jammed. We're a big fan of canned cranberry sauce with our turkey dinner or sandwich, but fresh cranberries are a natural for desserts and drinks. You need to add sugar though; fresh cranberries are extremely tart.

Cranberry Chocolate Brownies

Makes about 16 brownies

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- ½ pound unsalted butter, room temperature and cut into pieces
- 1 pound semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 3 large eggs, cold
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1½ cups fresh cranberries

HOW TO PREP

Position an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat to 350 degrees.

Line the bottom and sides of an 8 by 12 baking pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on all four sides.

In a microwave safe bowl, melt butter and chocolate in 30-second intervals, stirring at each break, until melted and smooth. Transfer into the base of a mixer or large bowl and add the eggs, vanilla, cinnamon and sugar and beat until smooth and thick. Add the flour, baking powder, and kosher salt and mix to fully incorporate. Using a spatula, stir in fresh cranberries.

Transfer the brownie batter to the baking pan using your spatula to smooth. Bake until a toothpick can be inserted into the center and come out almost clean, about 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool before cutting.

Cranberry Mojito

Makes 6 cocktails

- 1 cup fresh mint, trimmed
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ cups fresh lime juice
- ¼ cups light rum
- ¾ cup frozen cranberry juice cocktail concentrate, thawed
- 2 10-ounce bottles sparkling water, chilled
- 4 tablespoons fresh cranberries

HOW TO PREP

In a large pitcher, mash mint and sugar with a wooden spoon or muddler. Add lime juice, rum, thawed cranberry juice concentrate and sparkling water. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Serve over ice with fresh cranberries.

Sugared Cranberries

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 3 cups water
- 3 cups sugar
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 6 whole cloves
- 3 cups fresh cranberries, rinsed
- 1 cup superfine or granulated sugar

HOW TO PREP

In a medium saucepan, bring water to a boil over medium heat. Add sugar, cinnamon sticks and cloves, reduce heat to simmer, and continue cooking, stirring constantly, until sugar is completely dissolved. Remove from heat and transfer to a medium-sized bowl. Stir in cranberries, cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours.

Before serving, drain cranberries and remove cinnamon sticks and cloves. Toss with superfine sugar. Serve cold.





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At Season's Peak

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Gulf Oysters

At Rouses, we love Gulf Coast oysters so much we package our own. They're harvested and shucked by Tommy's Seafood, a nearly 30-year-old company owned and operated by the Delaune family of Chalmette, Louisiana.

Wild-Caught Gulf Crabs

Santa Claws Is Coming to Town. We have blue crabs for cracking, gumbo crabs, crab claws, jumbo lump, lump and claw crabmeat for your Thanksgiving and Christmas dishes.

Wild-Caught Gulf Shrimp

We sell fresh and frozen Gulf shrimp by a count (number) per pound. Whether you're looking for larger shrimp for salads, medium shrimp for mirlitons and dressings, or shrimpy shrimp for dips, you can always count on Rouses for the best Gulf shrimp at the best price.

At Season's Peak:

Oysters - Gulf Coast

White Shrimp - Gulf Coast

Blue Crabs - Gulf Coast

Stone Crabs - Florida

Dungeness Crab - Alaska (November)

Scallops, Clams & Mussels - East Coast, West Coast

Mullet - Alabama, Florida (November & December), Mississippi (December)

Flounder - Louisiana, Florida and Texas (November)

Swordfish - Louisiana, Florida

Yellowfin Tuna - Louisiana, Florida

We carry frozen Louisiana crawfish tails available year-round.

Donny Rouse's Gulf Seafood Gumbo

Serves 12 (On The Cover)

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 1 cup Rouses vegetable oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all purpose flour
- 2 large onion, diced
- 6 celery stalks, diced
- 2 bell peppers, stemmed, seeded and diced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced green onion
- 1 pound Rouses andouille sausage, sliced in $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick rounds
- 4 quarts seafood stock
- 1 pound wild-caught Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 pound jumbo lump Gulf crabmeat
- 4 gumbo crabs, halved
- 1 pint shucked Gulf oysters in oyster liquor
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped parsley
- Rouses salt and pepper to taste
- 6 cups cooked white rice or Rouses potato salad, for serving

HOW TO PREP

In a large, heavy bottom pot or Dutch oven, warm oil over low heat. Add flour, a little bit at a time, stirring constantly, and cook for 30 minutes until you have a medium brown roux. Add your trinity (celery, onion and bell pepper), garlic (the pope), salt and pepper, and continue stirring until vegetables are wilted, about 15 minutes. Add andouille and cook until browned, about 5 minutes. Slowly add in seafood stock, one ladle at a time, stirring after each ladle is added. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add shrimp, crabmeat, gumbo crabs and oysters, including oyster liquor. Return to a boil and cook for an additional 5 minutes. Add parsley and green onion, and season with salt and pepper. Serve over rice or potato salad.



▶ The Sauce Boss!

"Chef Tory McPhail of Commander's Palace debuted his new line of sauces at our stores: Cilantro, Lime and Sea Salt Sauce; Coconut, Key Lime and Curry Sauce; and Pineapple, Ginger and Cayenne Sauce. You can use them as marinades, salad dressings and condiments. Tory recommends the cilantro-lime one as a pre-grill marinade (I used it on chicken wings). The coconut-curry is great on seafood or barbecued. And the pineapple version is perfect for grilled yellowfin tuna." —Donny Rouse, 3rd Generation



Gulf Shrimp and Grits

Serves 4

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- ¼ cup of Rouses bacon, chopped
- 2 large shallots, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 2 dozen 21/25 count Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined
- ¼ cup warm water
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- ¼ cup sliced green onions
- ½ stick room temperature butter
- Creole seasoning, to taste
- 3 green onion tops, chopped
- Creamy Stone Ground Grits (recipe follows)

HOW TO PREP

In a large black iron skillet, cook bacon over medium-high heat until crispy, about 6 minutes. Transfer bacon to a plate lined with a paper towel to drain.

Add shallots and garlic to bacon renderings and sweat until vegetables are wilted, about 30 seconds. Add wine, shrimp and water. Cook until shrimp begin to turn pink, about 6 minutes. Add thyme, green onions and butter. When butter has melted, adjust seasonings.

Serve over warm grits and garnish with bacon pieces and green onion tops.



Creamy Stone Ground Grits Serves 4

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 2 cups water
- 2 cups Rouses whole milk
- 1 stick salted butter
- 1½ cups stone ground yellow grits
- Rouses salt and ground black pepper, to taste

HOW TO PREP

In a medium pot set over medium-high heat, bring water, milk and butter to a boil. Slowly add in grits, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook for 90 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper and keep warm until ready to serve.



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Spiral Ham

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Ducks & Geese

Rabbit

Rack of Lamb & Leg of Lamb

Pork Roasts, Rib Roasts & Crown Roasts

Smoked & Fresh Sausage

photos by Romney Caruso

CIAO DOWN: *A Food Tour of Italy*

by Donald Rouse



We just returned from a research trip to Italy that included stays in Bologna, Tuscany, Reggio nell'Emilia and Parma, four of the most famous food regions in the world.

We like knowing where our food comes from and how it is made. We make at least two major food-buying trips each year. Last year, we went to Rome for Roman artichokes, “00” flour, oil-cured olives, balsamic creams and white truffle oils. On this year’s trip to Italy, we were looking for Parma ham, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, pasta, garlic, wine, olive oils and vinegars.

Pork, especially cured pork, is very popular in central Italy, just as it is here on the Gulf Coast. In Parma we picked out hams made from specially fed North Central Italian pigs. In Langhirano we learned how to cure prosciutto. In Bologna, we watched them make mortadella, one of the meats we use on our muffalettas.

One of my favorite parts of any research trip is a visit to the local markets. In Reggio nell'Emilia, we took a chef-led excursion through the farmer’s market. The stalls are draped with braided strands of garlic (look for them now in our stores), and we stopped and sampled fabulous cheeses, cured meats,

bread and cappelletti. The seafood and fresh fruits and vegetables were gorgeous.

We also visited Modena where we tried the acetaia del balsamico, a full-bodied aged vinegar that’s much stronger than your typical balsamic. The Modenesi use a technique that dates back to the Middle Ages to make it. We sell several varieties — you’ll love it on salads and meats.

My father’s family is from Sardinia, which is famous for its Pecorino Romano, a hard, salty cheese made out of sheep’s milk. Reggio nell’Emilia is famous for its rich, nutty Parmigiano-Reggiano, which is made out of unpasteurized cow’s milk. At O Caseificio Stocchi Andrea we walked among the giant wheels of Parmesan — you can’t imagine the smell. We couldn’t wait to sample! And I can’t wait for you, too — we brought them back for our cheese departments.

If you’ve been, you know Italy is a feast for your nose as much as your eyes, mouth and ears. We arrived at Antico Pastificio Morelli, a family-run pasta factory that has been crafting pasta since 1860, just as they started on their famous truffle pasta. There was a musky, nutty smell inside and out. That’s what real truffles smell like.

In Tuscany we toured the region’s historic vineyards and olive orchards. We had a private tour of a 150-year-old Italian family winery, Cleto Chiarli, with one of its owners, Mauro Chiarli, a fourth generation wine maker. Cleto Chiarli was the first winery to popularized the sparkling Lambrusco wines — try them with our Gulf oysters, shrimp, crabmeat and fish; they’re fantastic with seafood. We also spent a weekend in the hilltop town of Montalcino, which overlooks the vineyards of

sangiovese grapes used to make one of Italy’s best-known wines, Brunello di Montalcino. We sell Banfi’s Brunello di Montalcinos in our stores; they’re ideally paired with roasted meats.

Finally, we went to Florence, where we took a master class with one of leading experts in olive oil (we’re expanding our selection). We were also treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of one of Italy’s most famous bakeries, followed by lunch at the Ricchi family restaurant and dessert at a gelateria. It was the perfect ending to a perfect buying trip.



▲ [LEFT] Donald Rouse [RIGHT] Tim Acosta, Mauro Chiarli, Donald Rouse and Steve Galtier at Cleto Chiarli Winery, Tuscany.

FEAST OF THE SEVEN FISHES

by Tim Acosta, Rouses Marketing Director

I'd heard about but never cooked the Feast of the Seven Fishes before, so while we were in Italy on a recent buying trip, I asked everyone I met about this Italian Christmas Eve tradition, and everyone gave me a different answer about why there are seven fishes.

Now why there is fish at all is easy. Roman Catholics observing “Cena della Vigilia” (the Christmas Eve dinner) had to abstain from meat and milk in anticipation the birth of the baby Jesus on Christmas Day. Hence, seafood was served. Not fish necessarily, as the name implies, but seafood — although baccalà (salt cod) fish balls and fried sardines are popular Christmas Eve menu items.

But why seven? Seven represents the day God rested. (Genesis 2:2 “By the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.”) Seven also represents the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. There are seven hills of Rome. Seven is the most popular number in the bible. And, at the casino, triple sevens on the slot machine is a win.

So, ok, seven. But the Feast of the Seven Fishes can actually feature more than seven fishes. Some people make ten to mark the decade of the rosary, others do twelve for the apostles. Others mark the stations of the cross ...

So seven. Or ten. Or twelve. Or as many as you want on the 24th of December. But Christmas Day? After Roman Catholics receive Holy Communion during Midnight Mass, they can eat meat, so pork, beef and lamb are traditionally served on the 25th. Whether there are seven different dishes is up to the cook.



Tim and Cindy Acosta's Linguini With Seafood

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Kosher salt
- 1 pound linguine
- 3 tablespoons Rouses extra virgin olive oil
- 6 garlic cloves, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Pernod
- 1 pound small clams, washed and scrubbed
- 2 pounds mussels, scrubbed
- 1 pound wild-caught Gulf Shrimp, peeled and deveined
- Rouses ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, crushed and toasted
- Fresh parsley, to granish

HOW TO PREP

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add linguine and cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente. Remove 1 cup of the pasta water before straining into a colander. In a separate, large, heavy pot, heat 3 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add garlic and cook until wilted, about 3 minutes. Pour in the Pernod, and add clams and mussels. Raise heat to high, cover and cook until clams and mussels open, about 5 minutes. Transfer clams and mussels to a plate (use tongs). Pour half-cup of pasta water to the pot and bring to a boil. Add pasta, shrimp and fennel seeds, and cook over high heat, tossing constantly, until shrimp are pink and the pasta has absorbed a bit of the sauce, about 2-3 minutes. Add the clams and mussels, and season with salt, pepper. Garnish with parsley.

**I like to granish with grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.*



Rob Barilleaux's Cioppino Soup

"Fennel (finocchio) is very popular in Italian food, and one of the secrets to Rouses fresh Italian sausage. This fish stew is another great way to use it with seafood. You don't have to add the squid, but I think it adds a nice flavor and texture."

—Rob, Rouses Marketing

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

FOR THE STOCK

- 1½ quarts water
- 1 pint (16 fluid ounces) clam juice
- Pinch saffron

FOR THE SOUP

- 3 garlic cloves, minced
 - 2 medium onions, chopped
 - 1 head fennel, sliced thin
 - 1 tablespoon toasted fennel seed
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 1 teaspoon Rouses dried oregano
 - 2 tablespoons tomato paste
 - 1 28-ounce can whole plum tomatoes, crushed
 - 2 cups dry white wine
 - Handful fresh basil leaves, chopped
 - 1 pound medium wild-caught Gulf shrimp, peeled and deveined
 - 1 pound flaky white fish such as redfish or flounder
 - 1 bag clams, scrubbed
 - 1 bag mussels, scrubbed
 - 1 pound calamari, cut into 1-inch thick rings
- Rouses salt and black pepper

HOW TO PREP

In a large pot, bring the water and clam juice to a boil. Season with saffron, reduce to a simmer, and let cook for 5 minutes.

In a separate skillet, sweat garlic, onions, and fennel in olive oil with a pinch of salt. Add the fennel seed, bay leaf and oregano and cook for 1 minute. Pour in the tomato paste and crushed tomatoes and cook for another 3 minutes. Add wine and seafood stock and cook until reduced by half. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes.

Add fish and cook for 5 minutes. Add mussels, clams, shrimp and calamari and cook until clams and mussels open up, about 3-5 minutes. Remove the bay leaf and season with salt and pepper. Ladle into bowls and serve with Rouses Italian bread.

Mangia Bene!

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

My Sicilian-born grandmother made the Feast of the Seven Fishes every year. She used fresh fish, shrimp, crabs, anything that came from the Gulf of Mexico, including American eel, which we caught in the waters of Chef Menteur Pass. American eels look like snakes but taste like fish.

She bartered for the rest of the meal. My great grandfather had been and my great uncles were butchers at the French Market, and they would trade offal from the pigs and cows they butchered for the bycatch of the fishermen at next stall. That's how she got the squid, water snails and spiny lobsters she served, none of which were sold in the typical seafood market or at the French Market.

When it came to the actual seven fishes, my grandmother was very broad in what she considered fish. Frogs, turtles, even crawfish weren't officially classified as seafood back then. (Alligators didn't make the official cut until 2010, when New Orleans Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond decreed that "yes, alligator is considered in the fish family.")

She was also very broad in what she counted as "a" fish dish. An oyster counted as one fish, two oysters as two fish. Like most Sicilians, she changed the menu every year. And she didn't always stop with seven fish. One year she served 15 because that's how much seafood she had on hand.

While I have yet to make my own Feast of the Seven Fishes for my husband, sons, daughter-in-law and granddaughter, Olivia (the most adventurous eater in the family), families from Sicily, Italy, to Little Italy (Independence, LA), serve the Feast of the Seven Fishes every Christmas Eve. Don't be intimidated by the number: If you use my grandmother's approach of one shrimp equals two fish, you can knock out the seven with one pot of gumbo!

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Call Me OLD FASHIONED

by Bobby Childs

The Old Fashioned — a grandpa cocktail if ever there was one — is back in fashion.

Chances are when you order an Old Fashioned at a bar or restaurant, the bartender mixes some bourbon, sugar and bitters with a muddled orange, stirs in some ice, and garnishes with a maraschino cherry. They may sub the bourbon for rye whiskey, and the muddled fruit for an orange twist.

Bourbon or rye, muddled fruit or twist, these completely different recipes are both called an Old Fashioned. That's because an Old Fashioned refers more to a style of cocktail than a specific drink.

Let me explain.

The first definition of the word cocktail — spirit, water, sugar and bitters — appeared in 1806. This basic recipe was known as a simple cocktail. Notice that the recipe calls for a “spirit” instead of bourbon or rye whiskey. People used all sorts of spirits, including the aforementioned whiskeys, brandy, fortified wines and gin.

An Old Fashioned made with gin? Nonsense, you say! Actually, it was pretty popular.

The simple cocktail became a fancy cocktail with the addition of a lemon twist. This fancy cocktail was later referred to as an Old Fashioned cocktail.

In the early 1900s, bartenders began using muddled orange and cherries topped with a spray of seltzer. The addition of muddled fruit was different than the simple twist of a fancy cocktail, but for some reason, it was still considered an Old Fashioned. (Personally, I'm usually not a fan of what I call the “fruit salad” version of an Old Fashioned. A simple citrus twist will do. To each their own.)

Further experiments led to new famous cocktails, like the Manhattan (whiskey, sweet vermouth, bitters, orange peel and cherry) and the Sazerac (rye whiskey, Peychaud's bitters and an absinthe rinse).

Then, as things do, tastes came full circle. Folks became tired of the cocktail-of-the-moment, and sought a return to something simple. They'd walk up to the bar and ask for a cocktail, “the old fashioned way.”

Old Fashioned

The recipe for an Old Fashioned cocktail is pretty straightforward.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 2 ounces of spirit
- 1 sugar cube
- Water (ice)
- Bitters
- Lemon peel

HOW TO PREP

In an Old Fashioned glass, add 3-4 dashes of bitters to the sugar cube, along with a teaspoon of filtered water. You want just enough to soak the sugar cube. Muddle the sugar until it is dissolved. Add your spirit and ice. Stir for about 10 seconds. Add a twist of lemon and serve.

Old Fashioned Cherries

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- 12 ounce Mason jar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried cherries, pitted
- 1 cup Buffalo Trace Bourbon
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon grated orange peel

HOW TO PREP

Rinse cherries and place in a 12-ounce jar. In a small saucepan, bring bourbon and sugar to a gentle simmer over very low heat. Add orange peel and simmer, stirring, until sugar has completely dissolved. Pour bourbon syrup over cherries. Cover and let stand at least 24 hours to macerate.



▲ Bobby Childs — photo by Romney Caruso



In the Mix

Let's break down each ingredient and component of the Old Fashioned cocktail.

Glass — An Old Fashioned glass simply refers to a rocks glass. It usually holds 10 to 12 ounces of liquid.

Sugar — A sugar cube is traditional, but you can substitute ½ teaspoon of granulated sugar. Or vary the recipe with different sweeteners, like honey, maple syrup and brown sugar.

Bitters — Aromatic bitters are strongly flavored alcoholic concoctions made with botanicals. Many decades ago they were given as medicine for all sorts of ailments. The dry and slightly bitter nature of aromatic bitters makes them a great digestif (meaning they aide digestion).

Traditional preparation of the Old Fashioned calls for Angostura aromatic bitters, but bitters can also be combined. Sometimes, I'll use a dash of orange bitters and a dash of cherry bitters in my cocktail.

Dash — The Old Fashioned calls for 3 to 4 dashes of aromatic bitters. A dash is what you get from a single shake of a bottle that has an integrated “dasher top”. You'll find this on most bottles of bitters. If you buy a bottle of bitters that has a dropper instead of a “dasher top,” use about 10 to 14 drops.

Water — Water plays two important roles. First, that little teaspoon of water you add in the beginning helps to muddle the sugar cube more easily. Second, and more importantly, water provides some dilution of the spirit.

Ice — Ice is really optional. The majority of cocktail drinkers enjoy ice in their Old Fashioned. If you're using ice, go big because large cubes melt more slowly than smaller ones. (As the ice melts, it further dilutes the spirit.)

Twist — A twist is a strip of peel from a fresh, firm, good-looking lemon or orange. You can use a vegetable peeler or knife to cut one. The purpose of the twist is for the essential oils just below the outer surface of the skin to be expressed into the glass. You do this by aiming the twist into the glass and bending it with your fingers. If you look closely, you can see the fine spray of oils. Afterwards, you can drop the twist into the

drink or discard it. I like to drop it in, so whenever I go to take a sip, I get the fresh, crisp aroma of the lemon or orange twist.

The original recipe for the Old Fashioned cocktail calls for lemon twist, although an orange twist is more common nowadays for a whiskey Old Fashioned. Feel free to experiment between the two, or use both.

Bourbon — The most common Old Fashioned preparation utilizes bourbon. Bourbon is an American whiskey made of at least 51% corn, aged for at least two years in a new, charred American oak barrel. It's a sweet whiskey, compared to others, and makes for a great cocktail. I generally like to use bourbon that has a high rye content and a slightly high proof, like Bulleit or Four Roses Single Barrel. For a classic bourbon Old Fashioned, use Angostura bitters and a lemon twist.

Rye — Rye whiskey is another American whiskey made of at least 51% rye. It's a spicy, sharp grain — think of rye bread. I like using Wild Turkey Rye or Knob Creek Rye, a combination of orange and cherry bitters, and an orange twist for a cocktail. Orange plays really well with rye whiskey.

Scotch — Feel free to use a great Scotch whisky for an Old Fashioned. I'd probably stick with a blended Scotch like Johnnie Walker Black Label for a smoky version of the cocktail, or The Famous Grouse for those who shy away from a smoky Scotch.

Rum — Rum was once the most popular spirit in the United States. It's a sweet spirit distilled from molasses or sugar cane. A large percentage of rum comes from the Caribbean, but there are a lots of great bottles made right here at home. Try Bayou Rum, Rougaroux, or Old New Orleans 3-year-old Rum (the black label) with Angostura bitters and an orange twist.

Brandy — If you order an Old Fashioned in Wisconsin, chances are you'll get served a cocktail made with brandy. Brandy is a spirit made from distilling wine or fermented fruit juice. Naturally, it's fruitier than whiskey and makes for an

interesting cocktail. I like using Peychaud's bitters with my brandy Old Fashioned, along with a lemon twist.

Gin — Gin is a distilled spirit flavored with herbs, the most notable of which is juniper berries. I'm not generally a gin fan, although I occasionally make a gin and tonic. Let me tell you, the gin Old Fashioned is a completely different cocktail. I like using a London Dry Gin, like Bombay Sapphire with Angostura bitters (you could also use locally distilled Oryza Gin). For the twist, I interchange lemon and orange depending on my mood. Both work just fine.

Tequila — A tequila Old Fashioned? You read right. Tequila is a distilled Mexican spirit made from the agave plant. There are three different types of tequila: silver, reposado, and añejo. Silver is basically unaged tequila. Reposado is aged between two months and a year, and añejo is tequila aged between one and three years in an oak barrel. All three types work well in an Old Fashioned. Using a silver tequila will give you more of the agave flavor, versus a mellower añejo tequila. I like using orange bitters, agave nectar (instead of sugar) and an orange twist.

Vodka — Vodka is a distilled neutral grain spirit. It's not going to have much flavor compared to other spirits. In a vodka Old Fashioned, the combination of bitters and twist will give you the most flavor impact. I like going the citrus route here, using orange bitters and both a lemon and orange twist. There's no need to buy top shelf vodka. Try Smirnoff or Oryza Vodka, distilled from rice at the Donner-Peltier Distillery in Thibodaux.





DESSERTS

Yule Love

“Our holiday family get-togethers usually include my Aunt Jeaneen’s cheesecake (see page 11 for recipe) and all sorts of goodies from Rouses. There are lots of great pies to choose from in our bakery during the holiday season, but my all-time favorite is Tarte-à-la-Bouillie pie, a Cajun tradition. We make ours with baked milk custard filling, sweet dough and fancy lattice crust. A new must-eat is our Banana’s Foster cream pie, our take on the famous New Orleans dessert. A not-so-common tradition at our family holiday dessert table? A fresh fruit doberge layered cake from Rouses — cue the ‘it’s fruit, so it’s healthy’ joke from half of my family!”

—Ali Rouse Royster, 3rd Generation

photo by Romney Caruso



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INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons oil
- 2 chooped onions
- 1 chopped green pepper
- 3-4 chopped celery stalks
- 2 cooked boneless chicken
- 4 pounds smoked andouille sausage, chopped
- 4-5 fresh tomatoes
- creole or cajun seasoning mix, to taste
- 1 bunch parsley, chopped
- 3 bay leaves
- 6 cups rice

- 2 cups of chicken broth
- 2 pounds peeled shrimp (optional)

PREPARATION

Heat the oil in a large pot. Saute the onions, pepper and celery until soft. Add chicken and sausage. Allow to cook for about 5 minutes, stirring. Add tomatoes. Mix well. Add spices and bay leaves. Add rice and broth. Allow the liquid to come to a boil, then turn off the burner, add the shrimp, stir and cover. Allow the rice to absorb the liquid and serve.

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