

InRegister

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA SINCE 1989

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Curious about Creole?

Cooking Creole

Producing a definitive description of Creole cuisine is as elusive as defining the word Creole. It all depends on whom you ask.

Everyone seems to agree that Creole cuisine is a blend of the traditional cooking methods

of the American Indians, Africans, Anglo-Americans, French, Spanish, Germans, Italians and Caribbeans who settled South Louisiana. Everyone also agrees that the results are gastronomic delights.



By PAM BORDELON

Photos by Layne Photography

Styling by Susan Ross

Jeremy Langlois has been executive chef at Latil's Landing Restaurant at Houmas House since January 2005. The 28-year-old got his start in kitchen of Chef John Folse's White Oak Plantation.

"I was never interested in cooking," he confesses. "My older brother was working as a server and got me a job there when I was 16. I was instantly attracted to the kitchen."

By the time Langlois was a senior in high school, he was running functions at White Oak. He graduated to Folse's Lafitte's Landing, where he worked until it was destroyed by fire.

According to Langlois, Creole cuisine is more sophisticated than Cajun cooking - the other cuisine for which South Louisiana is famous.

"Creole cuisine uses all the influences of the different cultures," he explains. "They used their classic cooking techniques and culture and mixed them with the local ingredients of Louisiana."

While most folks might think gumbo is Creole and jambalaya is Cajun, they would be wrong.

"A gumbo is a soup made from all the ingredients the Cajuns could find," says Langlois. "Jambalaya is nothing more than an attempt to recreate the Spanish dish paella."

When asked about his favorite Creole dish to cook and eat at home, Langlois smiles shyly and answers, "I make a killer duck and wild mushroom jambalaya."

For diners at Latil's Landing, it's Pan-Roasted Duck Breast with Whipped Potatoes & Praline Pecan Sauce accompanied by baby carrots, zucchini and asparagus with a mouth-watering Crab & Mango Cake for an appetizer.

"It shows off the different influences and regionality of the food," says Langlois. "Duck would have been available and prepared with a variation of a French technique."

"The crab cake dates way back as a delicacy ... all the way back to Thomas Jefferson, who was something of a foodie."

Pan-Roasted Duck Breast with Whipped Potatoes & Praline Pecan Sauce

6 duck breasts
Salt & pepper to taste
1 Tbsp. olive oil

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Season the duck breast with salt & pepper. In a large sauté pan, over medium heat, add olive oil. Add the duck breast, skin side down. Sear for 6 minutes. Flip the duck breast over & place the pan in the oven. Roast the breasts for 8-10 minutes for medium rare. Remove the pan from the oven & allow the duck breasts to rest 2-3

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minutes before slicing. Slice each duck breast, on the bias, into 1/2-inch pieces & fan around sweet potatoes. Serves 6

Whipped Sweet Potatoes:

4 large sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into large cubes & boiled until soft
1 stick unsalted butter
2 Tbsp. Steen's Cane Syrup
Salt & pepper to taste

In a mixing bowl mash potatoes with the rest of ingredients & keep warm.

For Sauce:

1/2 cup white corn syrup
1 cup light brown sugar
1/2 stick butter
1 cup pecans (pieces or halves)
Salt & pepper to taste

Combine corn syrup, brown sugar & butter in heavy saucepan, bring to a boil. Boil gently about 5 minutes, stir in pecans, season with salt & pepper. Drizzle over pan-roasted duck breast.

Crab & Mango Cake

1/2 pound jumbo lump crabmeat
1/2 pound claw crabmeat
1/4 cup diced red onions
1/4 cup diced celery
1/4 cup red bell pepper
1/2 cup diced mango
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup Creole mustard
1/4 cup chopped parsley
Salt & pepper to taste
1 egg
1 cup bread crumbs
1 cup oil

In a mixing bowl combine all ingredients except bread crumbs & oil. Blend carefully, being careful not to break the lumps of crabmeat. Dust in enough bread crumbs to hold the mixture together & pick up most of the moisture. Form the crab mixture into round patties, approximately 1/2-inch thick and 2 1/2-inches in diameter. Coat the outside of each crab cake lightly with remaining bread crumbs and pan fry on each side until golden brown. Serve with Chipotle Remoulade Sauce. Serves 4

Chipotle Remoulade Sauce

1 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup Creole mustard
1/2 Tbsp. lemon juice
2 Tbsp. chipotle paste
Salt & black pepper to taste

To make chipotle paste, purée 1 can of chipotle peppers in a blender. In a mixing bowl, combine all ingredients, whisking well to incorporate the seasonings.

