

# *Creole Cookery of Old New Orleans*



Published by [www.1920-30.com](http://www.1920-30.com)

**W**HAT the Latin Quarter is to Paris, the Vieux Carre is to New Orleans, a spot unique, distinctive and alluring; and here are to be found the French Market and the many restaurants where, as of old, though not quite the same, one may partake of those dishes which have had almost as much to do with perpetuating the fame of New Orleans as its notable battle, its Mardi Gras or its charming balconies of iron lace. For to the initiated Creole cookery means the best cookery in the world, since the word "Creole" has the same significance to the dweller in Louisiana as the word "Knickerbocker" to the New Yorker. It stands for the best there is in ancestry as well as in foods, and one could wish for no finer feast than a dinner prepared after time-honored Creole recipes from delicious foods obtained in the old French Market.

Sunday morning is the gala time at the market; it is quite the fashion in the Vieux Carre to follow the early church service by a trip to purchase the Sunday dinner, and no one leaves the market or the Vieux Carre without purchasing pralines or calas from one or the other of the picturesque old mammies who, with baskets neatly covered with white cloths, sit on the street corners offering their wares. The calas are strangely delicious little cakes, half fritter, half roll, to be had only in New Orleans, but which might easily become as familiar in the ordinary cuisine as the pan-cake. I obtained the recipe for the making of these little cakes from an old, old woman whose fame for their making once spread far and wide. She made them, so I was told, by the hundreds every morning, and sent them out in their clean white napkins by young colored women, whose tuneful "*Belle calas, tout chaud*" - fine calas, all hot - was eagerly awaited by the early breakfasters.

The principal ingredient of the calas is rice, and this, the old quadroon told me, she pounded to a powder in a stone mortar; but her recipe for the cakes was as difficult to catch as a wild bird on the wing, for she recognized only the usual old mammy rule-of-thumb method, which she declared was *tres difficile* - very hard to describe. I finally contrived to secure both recipe and a snapshot of the old mortar which has seen nearly a hundred years of service.

**CALAS**, then, are made in this way: Boil half a cupful of rice in three cupfuls of boiling salted water till very soft, almost mushy; drain it well and cool to lukewarm. Mash the rice well and add to it half a cake of yeast dissolved in half a cupful of tepid water. Beat well and set away in a moderately warm place to rise overnight. In the morning add three well-beaten eggs, one-quarter of a cupful of sugar, one-half of a teaspoonful of salt, three or four tablespoonfuls of flour or ground rice and a pinch of nutmeg. In the old days, of course, only rice flour was permissible, but I find wheat flour very satisfactory. Beat the mixture hard, and let it rise for fifteen minutes, then drop by spoonfuls into deep boiling fat. When a rich brown, skim out, drain on paper, sprinkle with powdered sugar and serve very hot.

**GUMBO**, eaten in all parts of the South, but with special gusto in New Orleans, is a dish midway between a soup and a stew, and appropriate for luncheon, supper or dinner. Every family in New Orleans has its own special recipe for making gumbo, but almost everyone will tell you that there are three distinct and separate varieties of it, each one of which is served only on the occasion for which it is appropriate.

**OKRA GUMBO** is the most easily made and perhaps the most popular. It requires a chicken, one large onion, six fresh tomatoes or half a can of the vegetable, a quart of okra pods, a bit of chili pepper, a slice of ham weighing about half a pound, a bay leaf, a sprig of parsley and a tablespoonful of lard or butter, with salt, pepper and cayenne pepper to taste.

Disjoint the chicken and cut the ham into small dice. Chop the onion and parsley, and cut the okra into fine pieces. Melt the lard or butter in a large frying pan, and cook the chicken in it to a delicate brown, then add the ham and the onion and other savories, and cook until they are brown, taking care that the okra does not become scorched. Cut the tomatoes, peeled, into small pieces and stir them into the gumbo; then cover and simmer slowly for half an hour. Add two and a half quarts of boiling water; then cover closely and simmer for an hour and a quarter longer. Season well—all Creole cookery is given plenty of cayenne—and serve hot with boiled rice.

Sometimes a knuckle of veal or a shin of beef or the left-over ends of roast beef or fowl are utilized in making okra gumbo, with excellent results.

**GUMBO AUX HERBES**, or gumbo Serbes, as it is familiarly known, calls for a knuckle or brisket of veal, with a slice of ham, as in the okra gumbo. But for it one must have also equal portions of cabbage leaves, radish, turnip and beet tops, spinach or mustard greens, with a few sprigs of parsley and cress, all very young and tender and perfectly washed and dried. A green onion, a large, dry onion, a small bit of pepper pod, a bay leaf, a sprig each of thyme and parsley, a clove, and two or three allspice berries are also required to give the proper flavor.

Trim the leaves and the green onion well, removing coarse ribs and hard portions, then boil them all together for an hour, adding toward the last a pinch of baking soda. Then drain well and chop very fine, reserving the water in which they were cooked. Chop the dry onion fine and fry it brown in a tablespoonful of lard or butter, adding the meat cut in small pieces. When nicely browned, place the greens in the kettle and stir them in the fat for a few moments; then add three quarts of water, including that in which the vegetables were cooked, the herbs, the spices and the pepper pod. Simmer slowly for one hour, then season to taste and serve with the inevitable boiled rice.

**GUMBO FILE**, the third of the traditional gumbos, is a dish of unusual and interesting origin, for it was first inspired by the Choctaw Indians who prepared and offered for sale in New Orleans, in the early days, a powder made of sassafras leaves, which imparted to the gumbo a peculiar pungency and flavor. This powder is now procurable in almost any grocery shop in the city; it goes by the name of File powder, and is used in the gumbo which has chicken and oysters for its foundation. File powder, however, is not a commodity common in other cities, therefore this type of gumbo will not be possible except in the land of its origin.

Shrimp, crab and oyster gumbo are also served on occasion in Louisiana, and now and then the good housewife makes a gumbo from the remains of the Thanksgiving or Christmas turkey; indeed almost any variety of meat or game may be made the excuse for the manufacture of a pot of gumbo; but, when finished, the dish will very probably resemble one of the three I have attempted to describe, which are the true types of gumbo *a la Creole*.

**CREOLE BOUILLABAISSE**, like gumbo, is a dish that is neither a soup nor a ragout, but which partakes of the good qualities of each. For it, one must have three slices of red snapper and three of red fish, six large tomatoes or half a can, half a lemon, three onions, a small bunch of potherbs, a clove of garlic, a bay leaf, a sprig of parsley, a pinch of thyme, three tablespoonfuls of olive oil, one-quarter of a teaspoonful of saffron, with salt, pepper and cayenne to taste.

Place the head of the red snapper and the bones of either fish over the fire in two quarts of water to boil, adding one onion sliced fine and the herb bouquet. Cook rapidly

until reduced to one quart, then strain and reserve the liquid for stock. Chop the parsley and garlic, also the bay leaf and thyme, and mix well; rub the fish all over with pepper and salt, then with the mixture of herbs until the slices are well permeated with them. Lightly cook them on both sides in the olive oil, adding also the two remaining onions chopped fine. Take care that the fish slices do not overlap or become broken. Peel and slice the tomatoes, and place them in a saucepan with the lemon, also cut in fine slices, and the fish stock; let all cook slowly until the tomatoes are done, then season well, and continue cooking until the stock is reduced to one-half its original quantity. Add the fish and cook slowly till done. Next place the fish on slices of fresh hot toast; dissolve the saffron in a little of the hot stock, add it to the rest of the liquid and simmer five minutes; now pour over the fish and serve the dish at once, and I am sure that you will say with Thackeray that "the likes of a Creole bouillabaisse was never eaten in Marseilles or Paris."

**JAMBALAYA** is another unusual dish of New Orleans, an inheritance from the Spanish. To make it, buy a pound of lean pork and cut into minute pieces. Chop fine two onions, also a clove of garlic, a sprig of parsley and half a bay leaf. Melt a tablespoonful of butter or other fat in a kettle and add the pork and onions; let them brown well, stirring often, and add half a pound of ham cut into small pieces, a tiny pinch of ground cloves, and the garlic and other savories. Cook together, stirring all the time, for five to ten minutes; then add six small pork sausages, and cook again until they are brown, then pour in two quarts of boiling water or stock. Bring to the boiling point, and add seasoning to taste; then sift in slowly a cupful and a half of well-washed rice and a pinch of chili pepper. Cook quickly until the rice is well done, then serve at once.

**POMPANO, WITH LEMON BUTTER.** Split the fish down the back, if large; clean and season it well by rubbing it with salt and pepper. Brush the hot broiler with olive oil and broil the fish to a rich brown on both sides. Then place it on a hot dish, spread with soft butter and squeeze the juice of a lemon over it. Garnish with parsley and sliced lemon.

**LA DAUBE** - pronounced dobe - is the dish which means to New Orleans what the pot-roast means to the rest of the world. For its making one may use beef or veal or, on very festive occasions, turkey, goose or chicken; and one may serve the daube hot or cold, or for something very much out of the ordinary it may be cold daube *glace* or cold daube *en gelee*. For a dinner for six or seven persons five pounds of rump or round of beef will be required, with one-quarter of a pound of fat salt pork, two large onions, three carrots, a turnip, a clove of garlic, a bay leaf, a sprig of parsley and a pinch of thyme, salt, pepper and cayenne to taste. Slice the fat salt pork very, very thin and chop one of the onions, the bay leaf, garlic and parsley very fine. Rub the pork slices with salt and pepper, then cut deep gashes in the beef and place the pork in them, cover it with the finely minced herbs and spices; then flour the meat all over. Cut the other onion into slices and brown in fat at the bottom of a heavy iron kettle, lay the meat neatly tied into shape over the onion and cover closely. Cook, turning the meat often until it is well browned on all sides. This is really the secret of a successful daube-every-thing must be well browned. Then lay the vegetables, peeled and sliced or cut in dice, about the meat; brown them well, and finally pour in just enough boiling water to prevent the contents of the kettle from sticking, cover closely and just simmer for three hours or longer. Serve hot or cold.

The housewives of New Orleans take many liberties with the daube. For instance, they may omit the carrots and turnips and add a handful of raisins for variety, or they may use celery cut in small pieces, and sometimes the seasonings are changed, a clove, an all-spice berry or a few drops of some piquant sauce are added. In fact, as one housewife

declared, "One just goes about the kitchen and gathers up whatever may be convenient or desirable to drop into the pot." But all are agreed that thorough browning of the meat and vegetables is essential.

**VEAL DAUBE** is most delicious for cold serving. It must have four pounds of rump or leg of veal, one-quarter of a pound of fat salt pork, two pig's or calf's feet, five large onions, a clove of garlic, a bay leaf, parsley, thyme, and such other vegetables and seasonings as one may prefer. Prepare like beef daube and simmer for four or five hours.

Meantime place the pig's or calf's feet, which have been nicely cleaned, in another kettle, with two quarts of water, a teaspoonful of salt, a sliced onion and a sprig of parsley, and boil until the meat falls from the bones. Then remove the feet, cut the meat from them and chop it fine. Strain the liquid, return the meat to it and cook half an hour. When the daube is finished place it on a platter and pour the liquid over it. Set away in a very cold place for twenty- four hours, or until the meal is well chilled and incased in a delicious savory jelly. When serving, slice thin and garnish each plate with watercress, sliced pickle beet or halved tomatoes filled with mayonnaise.

**POULET CREOLE**, or Creole Chicken. Cut up a fine, tender chicken as for frying, season it well by rubbing it all over with salt and pepper; then melt two tablespoonfuls of butter in a frying pan and brown the chicken slowly in it. Next add one large onion minced fine, and cook until it, too, is brown; then stir in a large tablespoonful of flour, and loss with the butter and onion until it is deeply, brightly brown. Two or three large tomatoes peeled and cut in small pieces, a sprig of parsley chopped, a pinch of thyme, half a bay leaf and a clove of garlic, minced to a pulp, go into the pot next, then it is covered closely and the contents permitted to simmer for half an hour. At the end of this time add a cupful of boiling water and three green peppers freed of their seeds and cut in thin strips. Again cover the saucepan and simmer very slowly for three-quarters of an hour, or until the chicken is very tender. Season before serving.

Of course the logical accompaniment to this dish is nicely boiled rice, and perhaps a word as to the method used for cooking rice in Louisiana may be timely.

**BOILED RICE** in New Orleans is always snowy white, dry, smooth and delicate as one could wish a dish to be. The rice is boiled in plenty of water, two quarts to a cupful being considered none too much. While the water is reaching the boiling point the rice is thoroughly washed through several waters until it is milky white and all starchy particles have been rubbed away between the palms of the hands. A teaspoonful of salt is added to the boiling water and, when the latter is bubbling merrily, the rice is added. Naturally the rapid boiling tosses the grains about and prevents their slicking to the kettle, and no stirring is necessary. In tact it is considered fatal to touch the rice once it has begun to soften. In twenty minutes test a grain by pressing it between the fingers; if it is soft, drain the water from the rice, and set the kettle in a moderately hot oven to permit the grains to dry and become fluffy and delicate. By this method each grain stands out distinct and separate. Rice boiled in this fashion is served with every variety of daube or gumbo; it is, in fact, one of the dishes which one may always expect to find on every well-supplied Creole table.

**FRIED CORN** is a summer vegetable in high favor, especially in the lovely Teche country, the land made immortal by Longfellow, whose Evangeline is buried in St. Martinsville. It is prepared by scoring ears of the tender young vegetable down each row; then the pulp and

juice are pressed from the cob with a blunt knife or fork and seasoned well with salt and pepper; for a real Creole dish a bit of cayenne is added; chop one medium-sized onion fine and mix with the pulp of six ears of the corn; then turn into a frying pan in which a tablespoonful of butter has been melted; stir continuously until well cooked and lightly browned and serve very hot.

**GENUINE CREOLE SALAD DRESSING** will transform a plain salad of lettuce or cucumbers into a dish for an epicure. First the bowl is rubbed with the ubiquitous bit of garlic; then a small piece of ice is impaled on a fork to be used for stirring the dressing, and finally a tablespoonful of olive oil is poured into the garlic-scented bowl, with a saltspoonful of salt and one of black pepper, also a tiny dash of cayenne; then the oil is stirred to a paste with the seasonings, the ice acting as a blending implement, and gradually a tablespoonful of vinegar and two additional tablespoonfuls of oil are added. As the stirring proceeds, the ice chills the oil and a perfect emulsion is made. A teaspoonful of chopped parsley and one of onion are finally added, with any other touches the hostess may wish to include, such as the merest fragment of thyme, or fresh minced bay leaf, or a few drops of walnut catsup or tomato paste. This dressing is served with oyster, shrimp or crab salad, or with any green vegetable.

**BEIGNETS** (or fritters) of every kind are immensely popular in New Orleans. Fruits, either fresh or canned, rice, meat or poultry, corn or other vegetables, even omelet, may form the basis of some delicious fritter. The batter for the making of all these fritters is practically the same, except that when meat, fish or vegetables are to be used the sugar and flavoring are omitted.

**CREOLE FRITTER BATTER** requires one cupful of flour, two eggs, two tablespoonfuls of orange or lemon juice, half a teaspoonful of salt, one tablespoonful of melted butter or olive oil, a tablespoonful of sugar, and cold water to make it of the proper consistency. Beat the egg yolks and add the flour gradually, beating well. Then add the other ingredients, with water to make about as thin as a pancake batter; finally fold in the whites of the eggs whipped to a stiff froth, then dip the fruit or whatever is to be used into the batter and fry in deep hot fat to a rich brown. Drain on paper and, if a fruit fritter, sprinkle with powdered sugar.

**OMELET FRITTERS** are made by cutting an omelet, prepared by the usual method, into small pieces, dipping these in the fritter batter, then frying as usual and sprinkling with powdered sugar.

**MOCHA CAKE** is the queen of desserts in New Orleans. Its base is made in quite a different manner from the usual cake. Eight eggs are required for a large cake, with a heaping cupful of sugar, two scant cupfuls of flour and one-eighth of a pound of butter. Break the eggs in a bowl and add the sugar, then place the bowl in hot water over the fire and beat with a rotary beater until very light and foamy; this will require ten to fifteen minutes, but the mixture must not become hot, just moderately warm. Then remove from the fire and beat till cold; now add whatever flavoring is desired, and gradually beat in the flour, which should be sifted twice, before and after measuring. Finally fold in the melted butter, which should be hot, and turn into layer cake pans, or in one large loaf cake tin which has been well greased and floured. Bake in a moderate oven, 300 degrees; when finished turn out on a cake cooler and, when cold, put together, if layer cake is made, with

Mocha filling. If the cake has been baked in a large tin it may be cut into layers when cold, but a very sharp knife will be required, and one must cut with care.

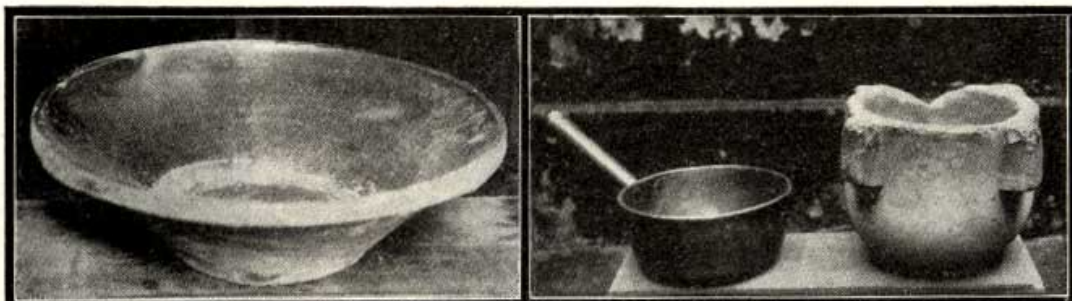
For the filling, wash half a cupful of butter to remove all salt, then dry it carefully and cream well. Now begin adding confectioner's sugar, creaming in at least a pound and beating the mixture till like whipped cream. Dissolve three tablespoonfuls of cocoa in a few teaspoonfuls of hot coffee, and add gradually to the Mocha filling, flavor with a teaspoonful of vanilla, and if necessary stir in more sugar or, if too stiff to spread, a few drops of clear black coffee. Spread the filling between the layers of the cake and over the top; the filling should be almost as thick as the cake layers, and remember that it must not be put onto the cake while the latter is warm, or the butter will melt and become absorbed.

**OMELETTE SOUFFLE ALASKA** is another dessert much beloved in New Orleans, and one not often essayed outside of the restaurant, it is so elaborate. Take a flat piece of deliciously light cake, of the kind used in making the Mocha dessert; this is masked by a thick slice of vanilla ice cream, then mounded over both is a wonderful omelette souffle which has been arranged with the pastry tube and bag in the most remarkable manner; then the dish is popped into a very hot oven, where the omelet is baked and puffed up and fluffed so quickly that the ice cream has no opportunity to melt, so that one is served a solid block of ice cream on a piece of delicate cake, all hidden and incased in a piping-hot sweet omelet!

**CAFE NOIR** is always drip coffee in New Orleans, and so strong and rich that it stains the cup. Boiled or percolated coffee is taboo, and cream is regarded as very bourgeois. Hot milk for breakfast, if you like *cafe au lait*, but for dinner, perish the thought!

The glamour of the old South only begins with New Orleans. As one journeys northward, through the beautiful mountains of Tennessee into the famous Blue Grass region of Kentucky, one is fascinated anew by tales of old-time hospitality; of entertainments that rival those of the Arabian Nights in splendor and lavishness; and best of all one is permitted to feast on the ambrosial fare which has made Kentucky renowned over all the world, and to copy recipes from the precious old cookbooks which are treasured behests like the charming old furniture and other heirlooms from an ancestry of long ago.

If you have enjoyed "Creole Cookery of Old New Orleans" then you will love **470 Crock Pot Recipes** which also contains **300 Chicken Recipes** and **300 FISH Recipes** plus **18 Bonus Recipe** eBooks. You can purchase it online for **\$19** and it is available for instant download. [Click here](#) for full details.



PHOTOS. FROM LOUIS T. FRITCH

*The clabber bowl at left above was a prominent feature of every old Creole kitchen. At right, an old stone mortar used to grind rice for calas, while the copper saucepan, kept shining bright for immediate service, was the pride of Aunt Tizi's and every other old cook's heart.*