

CLOSE TO HOME

NEW ORLEANS, HOME AWAY FROM HOME

By DAVID CAMPICHE
FOR COAST WEEKEND

'Music is sound, in time. All sound in New Orleans is a drumbeat, a rhythm tapped out to the tune of 300 years of melding culture. And that is something to celebrate.' — Laurie Anderson

The skies opened and rain fell last night in the Big Easy. Along the iron rails that tangle like spider webs through the city, winds rifled. I kicked myself for forgetting my raincoat, but needn't have worried. By lunchtime, the sun was back, and the typical jamboree that defines New Orleans was in full naked display.

This city is full of tap-dancing surprises. One came in the human form of Uriah Hulsey, the famous and beloved owner-chef, along with his lovely wife, Jeanine, of the Columbian Café in our own River City. Having known Uriah for decades, we sought him out in his second home. For the next several days, Uriah became our guide, the go-to-guy in untangling the urban gifts in a city built on the bayou.

Hulsey has huge presence in a medium-sized body. One can't compare the look except to say, he is a painterly individual, a Fauve. He makes few apologies and doesn't suffer fools easily. He has earned his stripes: It is hard to find a more accomplished or articulate chef.



Cruising on the big river outside New Orleans

A Vietnam vet, he may be cynical at times, ("The war taught me one thing: I'll never trust my government again.") but during many of the remaining hours of our adventure, he helped us to explore fine food, sweet bourbon and jazz, those swinging moments that forever tattoo this city.

Exploring the sublime

Immediately, get on a streetcar. Go to the end of the line. Roll down the window and don your camera. If you

like an area (district or quarter) get off. The tariff is as easy as the city: \$3 a day.

Start with the Garden District and later push into the opposite direction, a destination called the French Quarter, a section of this city often defined by centuries-old buildings and a free spirit seldom replicated across America.

This year the city is celebrating three centuries of habitation from the likes of Jean Lafitte, the pirate, to slews of Spaniards, Frenchmen and free slaves. Yes, there were others: Pierre Maspero's



Uriah Hulsey cooks at his shotgun house in New Orleans

Restaurant was an original slave house, and ghosts of the past flutter down the narrow cobblestone streets that are enhanced by some of the finest collections of 18th and 19th century mansions, Creole cottages, single and double shotgun houses, antique store fronts and stately homes in North America.

New Orleans remains a cornucopia of the living and the dead, as well as a city imbued with the power of now.

Continued on Page 22

Dusk on the Mississippi River at the Port of New Orleans

