

FOOD

From hearty recipes for one-pot stews to new ideas for the season's best ingredients, we have you covered in the kitchen. Stay warm and eat healthy. Please, email SharonS@portlandobserver.com, to request or share a favorite recipe.

Fat Tuesday is February 5th

The greatest contribution of Louisiana kitchens to American cuisine is gumbo, a classic Cajun and Creole dish central to the celebration of Mardi Gras.



Mardi Gras

In New Orleans, Mardi Gras is celebrated with revelers in costume and elaborate parades. In the Cajun countryside, it's celebrated with the "Courir du Mardi Gras," when maskers ride on horseback from house to house in search of ingredients for a communal gumbo. Whatever the tradition, it always includes good food and good times. So cook up a few Cajun and Creole favorites, invite friends over, and create your own Mardi Gras tradition.

Cajun and Creole Cooking

Cajun and Creole, two similar yet distinct cooking styles, are the culinary cornerstones of any Mardi Gras celebration.

Both foods make liberal use of the "holy trinity" of cooking: The most common misconception is that both foods are spicy, fiery hot. Both Creole and Cajun cuisines have a depth of flavor, borne of a loving blend of local herbs and (quite often) roux and may or may not be spicy.



Cajun Cuisine

Cajun cuisine is a robust mix of French and Southern food. The recipes use simple ingredients and often include a dark roux thickener of flour and pork fat. Most recipes rely on sautéing onions, celery, and green bell peppers (otherwise known as the "holy trinity") and adding a lot of spices and filé powder, which is made of ground sassafras leaves and used as a thickener.

Creole Cuisine

Caribbean, African, French and Spanish immigrants created Creole cuisine. Creole recipes frequently include butter, cream and tomatoes. Just like Cajun food, Creole cooking uses sautéed onions, celery, and green peppers, plus filé powder for thickening.



Authentic Louisiana Red Beans and Rice



"Authentic Cajun flavor! My best friend grew up in Louisiana and loves red beans and rice; these are just like she remembers. Serve with Tabasco sauce for a little kick. Try a splash of cider vinegar in yours; it's real good!"

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound dry kidney beans
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 6 cups water
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon dried sage
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 teaspoon Cajun seasoning
- 1 pound andouille sausage, sliced
- 4 cups water
- 2 cups long grain white rice

DIRECTIONS

Rinse beans, and then soak in a large pot of water overnight. In a skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Cook onion, bell pepper, garlic, and celery in olive oil for 3 to 4 minutes. Rinse beans, and transfer to a large pot with 6 cups water. Stir cooked vegetables into beans. Season with bay leaves, cayenne pepper, thyme, sage, parsley, and Cajun seasoning. Bring to a boil, and then reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer for 2 1/2 hours. Stir sausage into beans, and continue to simmer for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare the rice. In a saucepan, bring water and rice to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes. Serve beans over steamed white rice.

SUNDAY SLOW COOKER COLLECTION

Slow Cooker Jambalaya

"This recipe has been in the family for years. Serve over cooked rice."

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast halves - cut into 1 inch cubes
- 1 pound andouille sausage, sliced
- 1 (28 ounce) can diced tomatoes with juice
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 large green bell pepper, chopped
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons dried parsley
- 2 teaspoons Cajun seasoning
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 pound frozen cooked shrimp without tails

DIRECTIONS

In a slow cooker, mix the chicken, sausage, tomatoes with juice, onion, green bell pepper, celery, garlic and broth. Season with: oregano, parsley, Cajun seasoning, cayenne pepper and thyme. Cover, and cook 7 to 8 hours on Low, or 3 to 4 hours on High. Stir in the shrimp during the last 30 minutes of cook time. Serve over your favorite rice.

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