

course feast

5 creative chefs share their recipes

by **robert peyton**
photos by **denny culbert**



Louisiana has a deserved reputation for great food. Whether we're dining at home or in a public venue, we eat well. Restaurant meals tend to be more formal, of course, with dishes served in courses, rather than all at once. ¶ In that spirit, we've asked chefs from all over the state to provide recipes for a five-course meal. You could take this menu and put together a fantastic dinner party or make them individually for a more casual weeknight indulgence. ¶ In Southeast Asia, where they know a thing or two about heat and humidity, folks often eat spicy dishes when the temperature rises, on the theory that spicy food will make you sweat and cool you off. That's at least part of the reason we've included the Vietnamese inspired entrée. ¶ Another line of thinking is that hot weather demands cold food, and thus two of the recipes here – the pickled shrimp and watermelon salad and the chilled watermelon and dewberry cream soup – are served chilled. ¶ We've tried to keep the recipes approachable; even the dessert, which may look daunting at first glance, should work out fine for a home cook. ¶ We hope you enjoy cooking these dishes. Whether you prepare one or all of them, we'd love to hear how they turned out.



Chef Greg Doucet

Jolie's Bistro Lafayette

▼ CHEF GREGORY DOUCET has roots in southwest Louisiana. After graduating from Comeaux High School in Lafayette, he attended the John Folsie Culinary Institute at Nicholls State University, graduating in 2012. Doucet served an externship at Orienta Beach Club in Mamaroneck, New York, before returning home to work at Jolie's Louisiana Bistro, where he was named executive chef in 2013.

Jolie's Bistro is elegant without being stuffy. Paintings by George Rodrigue adorn the walls, and the menu is centered on Louisiana classics, but Doucet and his team branch out now and again with dishes like the roasted bone marrow with oxtail jam and smoked salt and the cioppino stew, featuring seafood sourced locally and further afield in a tomato-based broth with a red pepper aioli.

Fried Green Tomato Caprese

■ SAUCE In a small saucepan, reduce ½ cup **Balsamic vinegar** to ¼ cup on low heat. Allow to cool and mix with 1 quart of **Mayonnaise**.

▼ TOMATOES In small bowl, mix 1 cup of **flour** with 1–2 tablespoons of **salt** or **Cajun/Creole seasoning**. In separate bowl, beat 1 **egg** with 1–2 tablespoons of **lukewarm water** to make egg wash.

Peel and slice 1–2 medium **green tomatoes** into ½-inch thick slices. Season with **salt** and **freshly ground pepper**. Dredge slices first in flour mixture, then egg wash and finally into 1 cup **panko bread crumbs** before frying in 350 degree **peanut oil** until crisp and browned.

▼ FINISH & PLATE Brush the plate with about 2 tablespoons of balsamic mayonnaise mixture. Place a slice of tomato over the sauce, a slice of **mozzarella cheese** over the tomato and finish with a **basil leaf**. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

This appetizer combines Southern and Italian elements for a winning combination. The crispness of the tomato works nicely with the soft, fresh cheese, and the balsamic mayonnaise sauce provides richness and a sweet-tart accent. If, like me, you have too many tomatoes in your garden toward the end of the season, this recipe is perfect.



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CHEF PAUL POE is from Oil City, a town of about 1,000 souls in Caddo Parish. He started his culinary career in casino kitchens before joining the team at Bella Fresca about three years ago, taking over the executive chef position earlier this year.

About his inspiration for this recipe, Poe says, "I picked the wild dewberries and grew the jalapeño in my backyard. While making it, I thought of being a kid and putting salt on your watermelon in the hot Louisiana summer, so you should get that up front. The dewberries reminded me of growing up picking them with my family to make cobbler and jelly."

Dewberries, for those not familiar, are close cousins to blackberries and in this recipe they'll give a slight tartness that balances the richness of the sour cream just as the sweetness of the watermelon offsets the roasted jalapeño.

Chef Paul Poe

Bella Fresca
 Shreveport

Chilled Watermelon Soup with Dewberry Sour Cream and Roasted Jalapeño

SOUP
 Dice the flesh of one 8 pound **seedless watermelon**. Blend watermelon, 1 tablespoon **salt**, ¾ cup of **sugar**, 1 cup **Chardonnay** and 2 tablespoon **lemon juice** in batches, then chill for at least 30 minutes.

Chilled soups are, of course, great in the summer, and the addition of sour cream to this one gives it something of a central European feel, where such soups are common.

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SOUR CREAM
 Blend 3 dozen **dewberries** and strain through a fine-mesh sieve to remove the seeds. Mix with one cup of **sour cream** and chill.

▼
JALAPEÑOS
 Roast 4 large **jalapeños** on a burner or grill until the skin chars and blackens. Remove the skin (made easier if you allow the chiles to steam in a paper or plastic bag for 10 minutes) then remove the interior veins and seeds. Cut the peppers into thin strips.

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FINISH & PLATE
 Portion soup into 6 to 8 bowls, add a dollop of dewberry cream, and top with roasted jalapeños.



Chef Troy Deano

Private Chef
Baton Rouge



CHEF TROY DEANO is from the New Orleans area originally but has cooked for a number of years in Baton Rouge, and now calls it home. Deano is an alumnus of the Besh restaurant group, and told me "Rene Bajeux really taught me how to love food while he was at La Provence, and Steve McHugh [another Besh alum] from Cured in San Antonio really taught me how to live it." More recently he worked at 18 Steak in L'Auberge Baton Rouge and was the chef at City Pork Brasserie and Bar. Though young, he's clearly skilled in all aspects of the professional kitchen, as evidenced by his Louisiana Summer Salad. Currently, he's working as a private chef with plans to open up his own restaurant.



Louisiana Summer Salad

PICKLED SHRIMP

Place 1 pound 20 count shrimp (shell on, head off) in a heat-proof container. Combine 2 cups rice wine vinegar, 2 cups water, ½ cup sugar, 1 tablespoon salt, 1 tablespoon whole peppercorns, 1 teaspoon mustard seed, 1 teaspoon chili flake, 3 tablespoon Sriracha sauce, 3 garlic cloves and 2 whole shallots in a small saucepan. Heat to a rolling boil, then pour hot pickling brine over shrimp. Let sit at room temperature for 3 hours, then chill overnight in fridge until shrimp are completely cooked.

WATERMELON

Toss 1 watermelon (diced to one inch squares, about 6 cups) in 1 cup mint syrup (½ cup each; water, sugar, mint leaves) and let set for 30 minutes.

FINISH & PLATE

Mix 4 sliced Creole tomatoes (per salad), 1 cup watermelon salad, 1 pound peeled pickled shrimp, 1 tablespoon Steen's cane syrup, 10 medium mint leaves (per salad), 1 tablespoon kosher salt and serve. If you like, place slices of tomato first, as a base, then add shrimp and watermelon salad.

A quick pickle leaves the shrimp tender and well-spiced; the heat is balanced by the sweetness of the watermelon, and there's a depth of flavor added by the tomatoes and the Steen's. The mint adds a refreshing herbal note to bring everything together.





COURSE: Entrée

▼ CHEF RYAN HUGHES heads the kitchen at Purloo, the restaurant in the Southern Food and Beverage Museum in New Orleans. Named for a low-country rice dish that's similar to jambalaya, the food at Purloo is pan-Southern.

Though neither goat nor curry may spring to mind when you think "New Orleans food," the dish is emblematic of one of the city's more recent immigrant populations, Vietnamese. Vietnamese restaurants outnumber those of just about any other cuisine in the Crescent City, and the number seems to grow weekly. The reason is that the food is vibrant, light and despite its current popularity, still somewhat exotic. Depending on where you're reading this article, goat may or may not be easy to obtain in your local supermarket, but the Louisiana Meat Goat Association (lameatgoat.net) lists producers all over the state. It's a mild meat, but if you can't find it or would prefer something else, you can substitute lamb.

Chef Ryan Hughes

Purloo
New Orleans



Curried Goat

MEAT

Season 5 pounds **goat stew meat**, (or **lamb**) cut into pieces with 2-3 tablespoons **Curry powder** and **Kosher salt** to taste. Let rest for 30 minutes, then brown in oil, in batches, and remove from pan. Reserve.

SIMMERING SAUCE

Add 2-3 chopped **onions**, 2-3 chopped **bell peppers**, ½ head chopped **celery**, ¼ cup **garlic** (chopped), 3 medium chopped **jalapeños**, (seeds and all), 2 bunch chopped **green onions** and more **curry powder**, and stir until fragrant and vegetables have softened. Return seared goat or lamb to the pan, along with 2 cups crushed **tomatoes**, 8 cups **chicken stock**, 2-3 tablespoon **fish sauce**, ¼ cup **sugar**, ¼ cup chopped **lemongrass**, 1 **cinnamon stick** and ¼ cup chopped **ginger**.

FINISH & PLATE

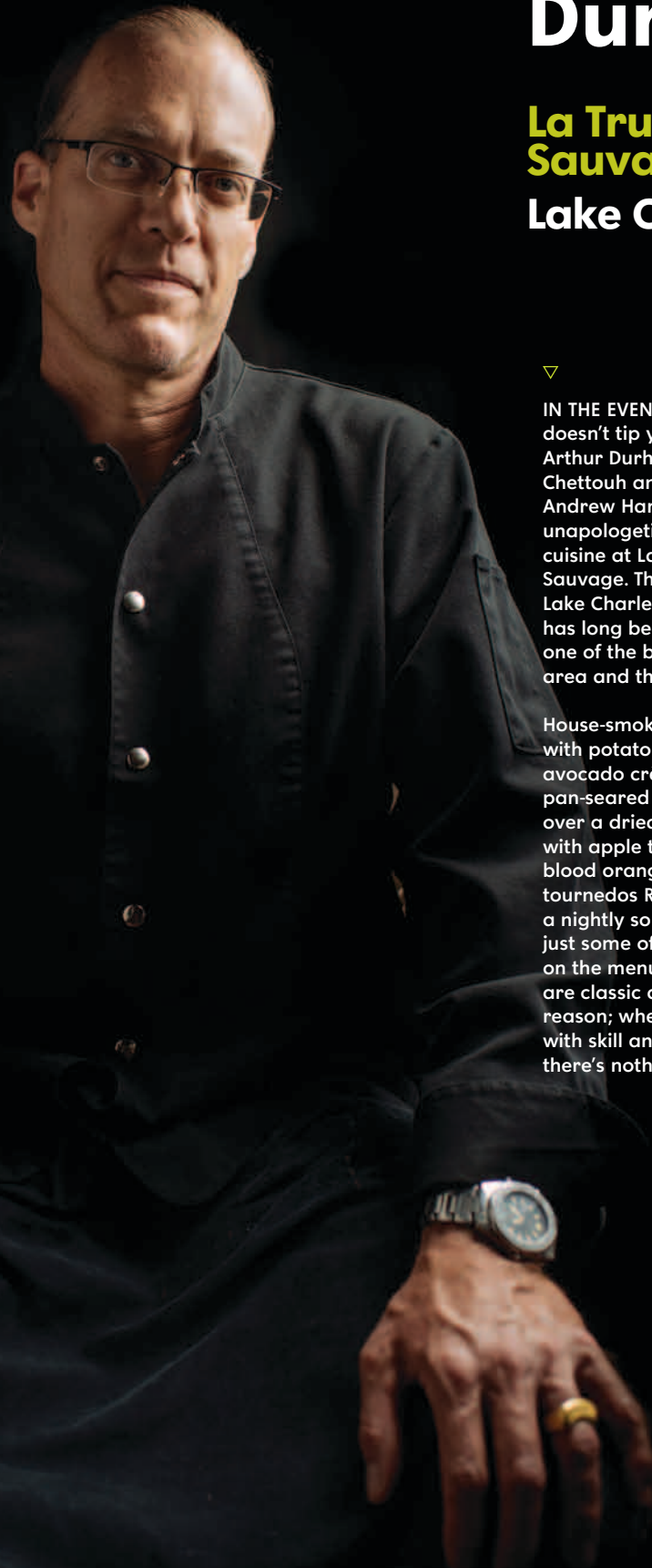
Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until meat is tender, about 1 hour. Taste and adjust for seasoning, then add 2 cups **coconut milk** and 2.5 pounds **sweet potatoes** (peeled and sliced ½-inch thick). Cook until tender, about 15 minutes. Garnish with 1-2 bunches of coarsely chopped **cilantro**, and serve with **bread**, preferably Vietnamese **banh mi**.

*You could also serve the dish over rice, but traditionally it's eaten with the light baguettes called **banh mi** in Vietnam. New Orleans-style French bread works, too.*



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Chef Arthur Durham

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 IN THE EVENT THE NAME doesn't tip you off, chefs Arthur Durham, Mohamed Chettouh and sous chef Andrew Hartman serve unapologetically French cuisine at La Truffe Sauvage. The elegant Lake Charles restaurant has long been considered one of the best in the area and the state.

House-smoked salmon with potato galette and avocado crème fraîche; pan-seared foie gras over a dried fruit brioche with apple terrine and a blood orange reduction; tournedos Rossini and a nightly soufflé are just some of the dishes on the menu. These are classic dishes for a reason; when prepared with skill and attention, there's nothing better.



La Truffe Sauvage Pear-Almond Tart

PÂTE SUCRÉ
 Cream 1 stick plus 1 tablespoon **unsalted butter** and ½ cup **granulated sugar** in a mixer or food processor. Add 1 **egg yolk**, ¼ teaspoon **vanilla**, ½ teaspoon **lemon zest**, ½ teaspoon **lime zest** and a pinch **salt**; mix until well combined. Add ½ cup **all-purpose flour** and mix until just incorporated. Wrap dough in plastic wrap, flatten and refrigerate until firm. When dough is firm, knead lightly until dough is putty-like. Roll on a floured work surface quickly and nimbly until dough is ⅛-inch thick. Transfer dough on to baking sheet and refrigerate until firm.

PEAR CREAM
 Combine 4 teaspoons **unsalted butter**, 4 ounces **almond paste**, 3 tablespoons **almond flour**, 3 tablespoons **all purpose flour** and 1½ tablespoons **brandy** in food processor and process until smooth, set aside.

POACHED PEARS
 Combine 1 cup granulated **sugar**, 2 cups **water**, ¼ cup **white wine** and 1 **lemon** (cut in half) in low-sided saucepan with a lid and bring to a gentle boil, stirring occasionally to dissolve sugar. Peel 2 ripe **Bosc pears**. Cut the pears in half, from top to bottom, and using the tip of a paring knife, carefully remove the stem and seeds. Slit ½ **vanilla bean** down one side and scrape the seeds into the syrup. Place pears in syrup, along with vanilla bean. Gently simmer, covered, until pears are easily pierced with a paring knife. Remove pears and cool to room temperature. Syrup may be used again for poaching fruit.

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The dessert chef Durham shared takes some time, but it's not technically difficult and the result is delicious.

ASSEMBLY
 Preheat oven to 350 degrees. For a 100-millimeter or 3¾-inch tart ring, cut a 135-millimeter or 5⅝-inch ring of **pâte sucrée**. Place ring on a greased or parchment lined baking pan, and press dough into ring. Repeat with remaining rings. Evenly divide the pear cream between the rings. Keeping the dough chilled as much as possible will keep it intact, as when it is warm, it becomes soft enough to mangle easily. Slice the pear lengthwise leaving the top uncut to allow the base of the pear to be fanned in the tart shell. Place pears in tart shells, lightly pressing to flatten, fan the slices. Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, or until the pastry shell and pear cream have a nice golden brown color.

FINISH & PLATE
 Warm and thin the ½ cup **apricot jelly** and 2-4 tablespoons **hot water** in a small saucepan, then brush over the finished tart. Top with ¼ cup sliced toasted **almonds** and a dusting of about ¼ cup of **powdered sugar**.

