



CENTURIES AFTER LE GRAND DERANGEMENT

French Acadians were forced from their homes in Nova Scotia at the hands of the British, Louisiana's Acadians are in possession of an enviable culture that is undeniably rich in music, art, and especially gastronomy.

While most world cuisines are based on the bounty of either the land or the sea, the Acadian kitchen is based on both; wild game, fowl, and domestic meat (mostly pork) pour in from the prairies. Vegetables and spices, along with finfish and shellfish are hauled in by the bushels from the rivers, lakes and bayous.

When it comes to eating and living well in general, the Acadians have it all. With this in mind, we set out to identify the five Acadian chefs and cooks who best reflect the area's current culinary culture. The result is as diverse as the culture itself — men and women of different ethnicities and life experiences sharing in, and sharing of, the bounty of Louisiana's swamp floor pantry.

BEST CHEFS

**A look at the pros spicing up
Acadiana's culinary landscape**

by Jyl Benson and Photographs by Denny Culbert

LAKE CHARLES

CHEF ANDREW GREEN

Restaurant 1910

WITH A NEW PRELAW DEGREE from the University of New Orleans, Andrew Green returned home to Lake Charles, took the LSAT and started applying to law schools.

Things changed on New Year's Day 2012.

"My dad is conservative," says Green, 29. "Before he was an attorney he was a detective with the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office. I mentioned that I didn't really want to practice law forever, I just wanted to make some money and start a restaurant like the ones in New Orleans. He looked me square in the eye and told me to not go to law school, to pursue my dreams and do what would make me happy. I was stunned to hear him say that."

Liberated, Green bypassed culinary school and instead applied for a job at 121, a Lake Charles hotspot, as a dishwasher. He quickly advanced to fry cook, then



RESTAURANT 1910
949 Ryan St.
Lake Charles
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on to salad, grill, sauté and protein stations.

"When I was made assistant kitchen manager I felt my learning had decelerated so I began studying wine books, mostly ones recommended by the Court of Master Sommeliers and passed a level one sommelier exam," Green says.

Green then applied as a back waiter at La Truffe Sauvage, "to learn some of the old, formal rules of service that were much more relevant around the time I was born."

He honed his front-of-the-house skills further at Restaurant Calla. It was during that time he started Prytania Private Dining and began to execute the many techniques he learned from studying books by his idols.

"After doing a private dinner in Mr. Rick Richard's beautiful office upstairs in the Phoenix Building he showed me the small corner space he had not developed directly below his office," Green says. "I looked

out the window and saw the courthouse lit up under a clear fall night and I knew this little corner was special. I had to make something happen here.

"We call ourselves a neighborhood restaurant with a French backbone and Cajun influences. We have fried gumbo on our menu right next to lamb belly and seared foie gras. We also have wild boar tenderloin for people who may want to try something that they haven't had before."

Restaurant 1910 is celebrated for its extensive craft cocktail and wine programs.

Green is also a partner in Botsky's Premium Hotdogs, a destination for gourmet dogs and sausages, and Prytania Private Dining continues to book private events. His fourth business venture, Camellia Catering Company, is in the late planning stage. His next restaurant, as yet unnamed, is in the early planning stages.

Don't let his decidedly youthful appearance fool you. A partner in four culinary interests with another in the work, this 29-year-old chef knows his business – front of the house, back of the house, sommelier. The man is going places.



LULING

CHEF CHRISTIAN DICARLO

The Fatty Shack

At 23, this young chef and entrepreneur owns his own restaurant and keeps a steady eye on the future he has planned, right down to the location of his flagship restaurant and what he will call it. DiCarlo takes his inspiration from his family and his ancestors. They have served him well.

CHRISTIAN DICARLO'S FAMILY operates an insurance company based out of LaPlace. When he was a child, his mother had to put the kibosh on her young son's habit of offering to cook lavish, impromptu meals for near and total strangers who dropped into the family home after hours to sign insurance papers.

As is the case with many chefs, Grandmother was to blame.

"My elementary school was located next door to my Nana and Papa's home," says DiCarlo, 23. "Every day after school,

I would go there for a couple of hours and Nana had a step stool next to the counter ready for me. She would save certain dishes for us to prepare together and told me to 'cook with love.' I knew early on that I wanted to be a chef with my own restaurant."

DiCarlo operated an informal catering company serving his LaPlace neighbors while attending Brother Martin High School in New Orleans. Upon graduation he decamped for The International Culinary School at the Art Institute of Houston, earning degrees in culinary arts, and baking & pastry. Following stints in area restaurants that include Ruffino's in Baton Rouge, he took over a spot on River Road that once offered walk-up window service. The young chef adorned the walls with



THE FATTY SHACK
13527 River Road
Luling
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signed pictures and memorabilia from some of his mentors and heroes — chefs John Folse, Alton Brown, Scott Craig and Masaharu Morimoto — and opened The Fatty Shack in January 2015 to serve a customer base of plant workers, local businesses, families, and travelers visiting the plantations along River Road.

Most days he sticks to a menu of simple, well-executed homestyle dishes; smothered pork chops with dirty rice; butter beans with shrimp; and "dirty river" roast beef poor boys. For specialty dinners he will turn out, deeply flavorful beef short ribs; one braised, the other sous vide; lobster risotto with spicy lobster tempura; infused pan-seared snapper; and white chocolate panna cotta with fresh cherry sauce and basil.

In addition to operating his full service restaurant, DiCarlo, remarkably, cooks, packages and delivers 1,000 meals each day to nearby Dow Chemical for the employees who work 12-hour shifts.

His plans for the future include the opening of Jiachino's Italian Steakhouse, preferably in Baton Rouge.

"Jiachino is my middle name and the name of my paternal grandfather," DiCarlo says. "Jiachino's will be a steakhouse that serves exceptional cuts of meat as well as my family's Italian recipes."

LAFAYETTE

CHEF MANNY AUGELLO

Bread & Circus Provisions

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT Manny Augello since he cofounded Lafayette's first underground supper club at age 24. He then defined himself as the executive chef at Jolie's Bistro in 2011, where some say he was instrumental in resurrecting the Old World art of charcuterie that now seems to be everywhere and he established Jolie's as a leader in the state's farm-to-table movement. Born and raised in Palermo, Sicily, he practices the cucina povera way of cooking — top-notch ingredients prepared in simple ways leaving little waste behind. Undoubtedly Augello, now 30, will remain evergreen and pertinent: the man simply keeps reinventing himself.

He left cushy job security at Jolie's in 2013 to again jump ahead of the curve when he founded Bread & Circus Provisions out of a borrowed kitchen. This time he resurrected the dying art of jarring pickles, sauces, relishes and preserves — with the slightly off kilter bent concocted by a man like Augello. Think preserved lemon pesto and cherry ketchup. He spent a year selling his insanely popular condiments and ever-present charcuterie at the Lafayette Farmers & Artisans Market at the Horse Farm before opening his brick and mortar location on Bendel Road in 2014 with a menu that spans Cajun, Italian, and Japanese cuisines.

**BREAD & CIRCUS
PROVISIONS**
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bandcprovisions.com



Then he reinvented himself again. Now he's a pizza cook.

In March of this year Augello launched a Kickstarter campaign to have a clay dome, wood-burning oven built and shipped from Naples. He pledged underground dinners and T-shirts in exchange for donations to the cause. Once acquired, he christened the fire-breathing beast Big Bad Ben.

"What B&CP has evolved to today has come in relative full circle with my own life, childhood, cultural background, and upbringing," Augello says. "Three years ago I started B&CP with the simple vision of bringing to the scene — simple, honest, back-to-basics essential pantry staples without all the bullshit ingredients and preservatives you find in them today. This year we took the leap into

evolving fully the concept of a chef's restaurant by embracing the foods and traditions of my background.

"We're focusing on straightforward southern Italian — Sicilian, wood-fired cooking and Neapolitan pizza. Not Neapolitan 'style.' This is the real deal. Ben gives us the versatility of simplicity, and an elemental focus on ingredients. It's back-to-basics cooking where we've let the fuss and frills fall to the wayside and cut loose the high-end expense of menu items, concentrating on what is in abundance.

"Pizza, and southern Italian soul food in general, is a food demanding the gathering of friends and family in times of celebration and distress. We want to be there for those times, especially the good ones."

With a devotion to Old World cucina povera, an encyclopedic knowledge of several distinct cuisines, the confidence to take a chance and the skills to pull it off, the only thing we definitely know about Manny Augello is he will never be boring and we will never go hungry.



BREAUX BRIDGE

GLENDABROUSSARD

Glenda's Creole Kitchen

Specializing in fine, honest, pot-based comfort food, Glenda Broussard blasts the notion that exceptional meals come with a hefty price tag. They just take t-i-m-e — and a Magnalite pot.

EVERY INCH OF GLENDABROUSSARD'S 200 square foot kitchen is crammed with the tools of her trade — whisks, wooden spoons, metal spoons, spices and stacks of Magnalite pots. The magic she pulls from those pots has kept her parking lot jammed for breakfast and lunch seven days a week for 16 years. A line of cars snakes around the building, waiting to get up to the bustling takeout window.

Divorced and working as a dispatcher at the sheriff's office to support her three children, Broussard would bring her lunch to work to save money. Coworkers continually commented on the delicious concoctions she brought in for herself and soon she was cooking plate lunches for them as well. She eventually saved up enough money to assume the note on a building a friend owned and had the building moved to a piece of land her then-boyfriend, now-husband, owned on a stretch of road in Breaux Bridge. He and a friend spent a year of nights and weekends readying the building for her to open Glenda's Creole Kitchen.



Inside the small space, five or so communal tables are covered in brightly patterned oilcloths. First place trophies from the KJCB radio station Gumbo Cook-off, the Okra Festival, and the Sweet Dough Pie Festival are displayed behind the counter alongside Christian memorabilia and a mishmash of holiday decorations. The overall vibe is one of simple warmth and welcome. Guests stand in line for the daily specials, which are set up in steam trays. Broussard is big on stuffing and smothering so the day might bring stuffed turkey wings, smothered pork chops, smothered okra with shrimp and crabmeat, stuffed fried chicken, stuffed brisket, a turkey roll or smothered ribs.

At the end of the short, cafeteria-style line you will be offered a slice of either white or honey-wheat bread, and your choice will be plucked straight from the plastic sleeve from which it was purchased at the grocery store. If you splurge on a slice of cake or a small, sweet-dough pie, your meal might set you back \$10 and will easily feed three people. If you go for a half portion and skip the dessert you will be given one piece of meat, not two, and two sides, which will cost you \$6.

This could be the best money you will ever spend. This is exceptional down home food, prepared with love and skill.

**GLENDABROUSSARD'S
CREOLE
KITCHEN**
3232 Main Highway
Breaux Bridge
337-332-0294



BOO MACOMBER
VIA THE NEW
ORLEANS COOKING
EXPERIENCE
504-430-5274
thenoce.com

ABBEVILLE

JANICE BOURGEOIS "BOO" MACOMBER

Private Cook and High Priestess of the Bayou

SHE TELLS DIRTY JOKES, knows the best fishing spots throughout the marshes, bays, and into the Gulf of Mexico, and if you want to go to her place you will need a boat.

An ageless, insatiably creative woman who never met a stranger, Boo Macomber started cooking in the 1970s while living in the French Quarter. She moved there after graduating from LSU in the 1960s, then backpacking through Europe. As evidenced by the state of her deep freezer — jammed as it is with grillades, gumbo, roux-based dirty rice, several types of etouffee, shrimp and crab stew and more, more, more — she has not stopped cooking since.



"That's my thing, that's what I do here at the camp," Macomber said. "If it's too damned hot to do anything else, I cook. Too cold, I cook."

A private cook, Cajun cooking instructor for the New Orleans Cooking Experience, and unofficial marsh guide based out of Abbeville, she's frequently contacted via word of mouth to guide friends of friends in search of fish and adventure through the marshes. They often end up at her home, Camp Peace on Boston Canal that leads into Vermillion Bay where they are served up the contents of her freezer, often to a soundtrack of Classic Country Saturday Night on 97.3 The Dawg. Her phone also rings when hunters and fishers pull in big hauls and they trust not even themselves to prepare their catch as deftly as she can.

Born in Abbeville, Macomber's culinary style

was influenced by her Sicilian mother, Cajun father, travels abroad, and years in the French Quarter resulting in an amalgamation of Cajun, Italian and New Orleans Creole, much of which she shared in her 2009 cookbook and memoir, "Tastes, Tails & Tales with The High Priestess of the Bayou." The book includes lots of Camp Peace stories, as well Macomber's signature recipes.

She is currently at work on her second book, "On the Avenue," a children's tome detailing the experiences she has shared with her grandson, Donald, in his first two years of life around his home in New Orleans off of St. Charles Avenue.

"It's about waiting for the streetcar on the neutral ground, looking up at beads in the trees, and eating at the Please-U," she says. "That's his favorite place, The Please-U."

Warm, welcoming, complex, and authentic: the essence of Boo Macomber is evident in every Louisiana heritage dish she turns out with skill, grace and good humor. You simply cannot go wrong in her kitchen.