

Female chefs are running the kitchens and changing culinary culture in a host of Louisiana's top restaurants

BY JYL BENSON PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROMERO AND ROMERO

Welcome to *Louisiana Life's* celebration of take charge women who are running restaurant kitchens in an industry long dominated by men. For the third consecutive year, writer Jyl Benson leads us on an exploration of Louisiana's culinary heritage and the people moving it forward, while at the same time preserving and revealing the treasures of the state's past.

What individuals and different cultures cook and eat tells a story. We asked women in the business of food who are at the top of their game what they cook and to share their stories and experiences fighting to the top of the line in the kitchen.

Not surprisingly, the one thing many of the women we've profiled have in common is zero tolerance for the harassment and condescension that has, until recent months, often been considered the norm in the industry. The culinary world, especially in New Orleans, was shaken at the end of 2017, when *The Times-Picayune* and *NOLA.com* published its eight-month investigation into celebrity chef, restaurateur and cookbook author John Besh who was at the center of sexual discrimination and retaliation complaints filed with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission by former female employees of Besh Restaurant Group.

Like most industries, as the women in this feature have made their marks, some have had to fight back and stand up for themselves, while others have experienced no harassment at all in their careers.

One of the other things they have in common is that each of these women employs their gifts to utilize Louisiana's bountiful agricultural harvest to sustain, enlighten, educate, dazzle and inspire us.

The recipes they shared are as diverse and vibrant as the women and they, along with their female counterparts across Louisiana and the nation, are changing the face and the culture of their industry.

WOMAN'S WORK



SIRLEI GUIDRY

Sirlei Guidry experienced real food in 1966, in the rural lands outside of Santo Antônio do Sudoeste, in the southern Brazilian state of Paraná less than an hour after her birth.

“My grandmother had been out picking corn,” said Guidry. “She peeled a piece and rubbed it on my lips. My mother said I seemed to like it.”

It was a prophetic moment and learning its meaning took a long time.

Today, Sirlei Guidry and her business and life partner, Craig Houin, own Full Moon Gardens & Lua Cafe, where she serves as the manager and landscaper for the lush nursery specializing in exotic plants, as well as the head cook and hostess for the diminutive Brazilian restaurant tucked inside. Despite the many roles she plays and the long hours she works, the tranquil spot in Abita Springs is a sweet, secure counterpoint to years filled with toil, hunger and uncertainty.

“When my parents moved from the countryside where we could forage, to a small town so we could go to school, times got really, really tough, and we went hungry many, many times,” Guidry said.

“The other kids laughed at me and called me names because I had to work as a maid or a babysitter while they played. I became numb. I learned all trades that I could. At 12 I joined a mothers’ club to learn how to sew, knit, crochet and understand home economics.

“I moved to the U.S. in 1996 to give my children a better opportunity. I have worked as a busgirl, waitress, concierge, limo driver, project manager for a stucco company, and many other jobs. The name of the game is to survive, and adapt. That’s my life motto.”

For Guidry the American Dream has worked the way it is supposed to.

“My son just got his degree in civil engineering,” she said. “My daughter has a degree in marketing and public relations. My youngest daughter wants to be an engineer.”



LUA CAFE AT FULL MOON GARDENS
71344 LA-59
ABITA SPRINGS
985-809-5010

BOBÓ DE CAMARÃO (SHRIMP IN CREAMY YUCA AND COCONUT SAUCE)

In a medium bowl, season **1 pound large Gulf shrimp (peeled and deveined)** with **salt and ground pepper to taste**. Reserve in refrigerator.

In a large pot, pour enough water to cover **1 pound yucca (peeled and boiled)**. Add **1 tablespoon salt** and boil until tender, about 20 minutes. Drain.

While the yuca is cooking, in a large skillet or Dutch oven sauté **½ large white or yellow onion (sliced)** and **½ large red bell pepper (deseeded and diced)**, **½ large yellow bell pepper (deseeded and diced)** and **½ tablespoon minced, deseeded habanero pepper** in **2 tablespoons coconut oil** over medium heat until softened, about 4 minutes. Add **2 large tomatoes (diced)** and sauté until softened, about 2 minutes more. Add **2 garlic cloves (minced)** and **½ cup minced parsley**, stir and cook for an additional 30 seconds.

Puree **one 13.5 ounce can coconut milk** and boiled yuca in the blender. Add mixture to sautéed vegetables. Cook mixture over medium heat for an additional 7 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add shrimp and **1 tablespoon red palm oil** and cook until the shrimp are just pink, about 4 minutes. Add additional salt and pepper to taste.

Serve over basmati rice and garnish with a drizzle of palm oil.



GUIDRY SAYS SHE HAS EXPERIENCED AN ABUNDANCE OF HARASSMENT THROUGHOUT HER LIFETIME — BECAUSE OF POVERTY, HER SEXUALITY AND BECAUSE OF HER STATUS AS AN IMMIGRANT. “WHEN I WAS A CHILD I ENDURED INSTANCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE. IT BROKE ME DOWN, UNTIL THE MOMENT THAT I SAID TO MYSELF, ‘I’M TIRED OF THIS SHIT. I WON’T PUT UP WITH IT ANY LONGER,’ AND I GOT STRONGER.”

“Becoming a cafe owner fell in place. I was told many times that my cooking style was unique and delicious. I do not have a culinary degree but I have ‘street cred.’ My inspiration for the Brazilian street food, tapas and desserts I serve is the food that I grew up with — tasteful, healthy and affordable with fresh herbs, non-GMO ingredients, ethically-raised meats, fresh seafood, olive, coconut, palm and avocado oils and Himalayan pink salt. I hate fake stuff.

“Lots of things help me connect and love my craft, but my favorite is when people tell me how much they like my food. To me it’s a privilege to feed other people, and give them something to enjoy. I’m focusing on being the best cook that I can be, and learning new ways to bring my food to different festivals, so that more people can experience the flavors of my country, and taste the love and care I take in preparing each and every one of my dishes.”

CHEF ERNESTINE "TOOTIE" MORRISON

Tootie Morrison recently returned from several weeks in Morocco as the first recipient of a \$2,000 cultural exchange scholarship presented by the Ross Lynn Foundation, which celebrates the legacy of Shreveport's late Ross Lynn, a farmer, artist and philanthropist with initiatives focused on art, outdoor adventure and healthy living.



Morrison's go-to ingredients — garlic, onion, salt, olive oil and lemon juice—are common in Moroccan cooking.

"This opportunity is my destiny," said Morrison.

While in Morocco, Morrison, who was profiled in these pages in 2017, worked with the local community to increase sustainability and knowledge of sustainable agriculture and pest management. She will now work with the foundation and sponsor next year's scholarship recipient.

Morrison's culinary career began after her children graduated from high school. She was

35 when she completed her coursework in the culinary arts program at Bossier Parish Community College in 2008. Since then Morrison has worked at Shreveport's now defunct Macaroni Grill, her brother's barbecue joint, and, following a successful catering gig on a referral, she spent almost six years as the manager and executive chef at Abby Singer's Bistro in downtown Shreveport's Robinson Film Center.

In 2015, Morrison won the inaugural Battle for the Golden Fork cook-off hosted by Louisiana Food Prize. Like Food Network's

"Chopped," the stressful competition placed local chefs at kitchen stations where they had to beat the clock crafting exceptional dishes using whatever ingredients they found their baskets. She wowed the panel of national celebrity chefs and took home a trophy and a \$5,000 cash award.

Cooking is in Morrison's blood.

"I started cooking after years of sitting on the kitchen counter watching my mother cook," she said. "Then when she worked, I cooked. My mother and my grandmother, my father's mother, are my greatest inspirations."

EGG (CUSTARD) PIE

Pre-heat the oven to 350 F.

Add **6 large eggs (room temperature)** to a mixing bowl and beat until light and fluffy. Add **2 cups sugar, 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour,** and **1 teaspoon salt.**

Beat thoroughly. Add **1½ sticks unsalted butter (at room temperature)** and blend thoroughly.

Add **1½ cans evaporated milk (not whole milk or condensed milk)**

and **1½ tablespoons vanilla extract** and blend until mixture resembles curdled milk. Pour mixture into **two 9-inch pie crusts (pre-baked according to package instructions for a custard filling)** and

bake until golden brown and the filling is not juggling, 25 to 30 minutes. Serve warm or chilled.



"WHILE I HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION OR HARASSMENT IN THE PROFESSIONAL KITCHEN, I HAVE WITNESSED ARROGANCE FROM MALE CHEFS WHO FEEL THAT MEN ARE BETTER SUITED TO RUN A KITCHEN AND I HAVE ENCOUNTERED MALE EMPLOYEES WHO DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE DIRECTION FROM A WOMAN. I QUICKLY CORRECTED THEIR BEHAVIOR AND MOVED ON. THEY GOT THE MESSAGE."



EARNESTLY TOOTIE CHEF SERVICES
3064 GORTON ROAD
SHREVEPORT
318-617-6633

SASKIA SPANHOFF AND KATELYN ALANIZ

Though separated by over a decade, geography and life experiences, Katelyn Alaniz, 30, and Saskia Spanhoff, 46, share similar inspirations in the kitchen at Cocha, the produce-forward bistro that has become a must-do in Baton Rouge since its opening in late 2016.



Alaniz's role keeps her firmly in the Kitchen while Spanhoff straddles the line between the kitchen, the front of the house, and her duties as sommelier. Their roles cross in the development of a new menu every four months that focuses on global flavors with plenty of vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options. Both chefs reach for the Vita-Mix blender again and again throughout the day.

Saturday mornings frequently find the co-chefs at the sprawling Red Stick Farmers Market that sets up just around the corner. Hours later vendors and shoppers from that same market show up in the bright, airy space that sat vacant for seven years until Spanhoff and her husband, Enrique Pinerua, took a

chance on the forlorn building. The welcome came immediately from a community hungry for locally-sourced, often organic, produce and sustainably sourced meats and seafood.

Alaniz, a native of Baton Rouge, found her place in the culinary industry at age 15 and holds both an Associate's degree (Advanced Baking and Pastry) and a Bachelor of Science (Culinary Arts) from the Louisiana Culinary Institute.

"In the future I would like to advance into food medicine," said Alaniz. "I want a hand in healing our nation by creating absolutely delicious food that has all the proper composure to cure and heal the food related illnesses that plague us — heart disease, stroke, diabetes — without deprivation or bland food.

Spanhoff, a native of Los Angeles, has an extensive background in the restaurant business, both front and back of the house. Her degrees are in history and geography from LSU and in Culinary Arts from Santa Monica College.

She is inspired by a desire to nurture others through the kind of healthy, organic, food grown and made from scratch by her parents, who are the source for the ethereal Tres Leches cake for which Cocha is becoming justifiably famous.

Spanhoff's plans for the future include the expansion of the restaurant to include a private event space, a rooftop garden, where she will grow more of the ingredients she cooks with, and an exploration of educational based projects with the community, particularly youths.



COCHA
445 N. SIXTH ST.
BATON ROUGE
225-615-8826
COCHABR.COM

COCHA'S STREET CORN EMPANADAS

CORN FILLING: Puree **1 ripe Haas avocado**, **½ cup coconut milk**, **2 tablespoons lemon juice** and **1 cup grapeseed oil** in blender.

Combine **kernels from 4 ears fresh corn**, **juice of one lime**, **¼ cup minced cilantro**, **¼ cups minced red bell pepper**, **¼ cup minced jalapeño pepper**, **2 teaspoons garlic powder**, **2 teaspoons onions powder** and **½ cup diced red onion**. Mix thoroughly. Add avocado puree and blend thoroughly.

EMPANADA DOUGH: Combine **⅔ cup cooked white beans**, **4 tablespoons water**, **¾ cup coconut milk**, **¼ cup almond milk** and **1 teaspoon salt** in a blender.



Add **3 cups all-purpose flour** to a mixing bowl, scrape in white bean mixture and blend until a smooth dough has formed.

Separate dough into 10 golf ball size pieces, and roll each one into a smooth ball. Let rest 5 minutes.

Preheat oven to 425 F.

On a floured surface, roll each ball of dough into a circle about 6 inches in diameter.

Spoon 2-3 tablespoons of the corn filling in the middle of the circle. Brush edges of the dough along bottom half of the circle lightly with water. Fold top half of the circle of dough over the filling to form a semicircle, and press edges together firmly to seal. Brush pressed edge with a little bit of water, and fold the edge over itself, pinching and crimping as you go to make a braid-like effect. Place empanadas on a baking sheet.

Mix **yolk from one large egg (beaten)** with **1 tablespoon of water** and brush mixture lightly over entire surface of each empanada.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until golden brown and slightly puffed. Serve warm or at room temperature.



KATELYN: "I HAVE HAD A LOT OF UNFAVORABLE MOMENTS IN THE INDUSTRY IN THE LAST 15 YEARS. NONE OF THEM HAVE MADE ME GIVE UP YET. FOR ALL OF THOSE NOT SO GREAT MOMENTS THERE HAVE BEEN HUNDREDS THAT MAKE IT WORTH IT. SOMETIMES IT DOES TAKE A STRONG PERSONALITY TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE MURKY WATERS UNSCATHED. CULTURE, RACE, RELIGION, GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITY SHOULD NEVER PLAY A PART IN HOW YOU TREAT PEOPLE OR HOW YOU ARE TREATED." **SASKIA:** "I AM WILLING TO STAND UP FOR MYSELF, EDUCATE OR AS LAST RESORT, FIGHT OR WALK. I HAVE A STRONG WORK ETHIC, WHICH HAS MADE ME VALUABLE TO MY EMPLOYERS AND A STRONG PRESENCE AND STATURE THAT ACT AS A DETERRENT MANY TIMES. WHEN I HAVE BEEN HARASSED, IT NEVER PROGRESSED TOO FAR. YOU USUALLY CANNOT EXPECT THE ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED BY MANAGEMENT BECAUSE OF HOW MALE DOMINATED THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS IS."

CHEF MARTHA WIGGINS

Martha Wiggins has the mettle to walk away from what she knows and loves.

In January, she shocked the industry and her legions of followers when she left Sylvain, the romantic French Quarter spot where she cooked since 2010, the last four years as executive chef. While there she twice earned nominations from the James Beard Foundation.

“For a long time I put myself on the back burner for the sake of my career, said Wiggins, 31. “I gained as much as I have given. I reached a point where I had nothing left to give and nothing left of myself for me. Eventually, I reached a state of peace and clarity. I realized I was ready to leave my beloved Sylvain.

“I have been working part-time with my good friend, Alex Harrel, at Angeline restaurant. I was getting antsy after spending time just relaxing and catching up with my people. Working brunches at Angeline three days a week is just enough to keep the kitchen tweaks at bay while keeping up with my new pastimes: day-drinking, eating crawfish, sleeping and cooking at home.

“Also, I have always wanted kids. I want to adopt and am exploring how others are successfully raising families within this industry.”

A native of Washington, D.C., Wiggins started working in restaurant kitchens at 15 and went on to earn a degree in culinary arts from Bristol Community College in Fall River, Massachusetts.

“The reason I ended up working in kitchens for so long? It suited me as someone with no filter, who is generally irritated by all y’all (myself included), and someone who, for whatever reason, works well with boys. I’ve always been addicted to the rush of pushing myself and my team through the weeds. I call myself the ‘weed eater.’”



MARTHA WIGGINS AT ANGELINE
(VISIT WEBSITE FOR NEW LOCATION)
NEW ORLEANS
504-308-3106
ANGELINENOLA.COM



COCONUT RED BEANS

Add **3 tablespoons vegetable oil** to a large stockpot set over medium-high heat. Add **2 medium onions (diced), 4 cloves garlic (chopped), 4 ribs celery (diced), 1 jalapeño pepper (seeds deseeded, minced) and 3 sprigs fresh thyme** and cook until vegetables are softened and aromatic, about 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Add **1 teaspoon garlic powder, 1 teaspoon paprika, 1 pound dried red kidney or pinto beans (soaked overnight), 2 smoked ham hocks or smoked turkey wings, 3 quarts, chicken, pork or vegetable stock, 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar, 2 cups coconut milk, 2 tablespoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper.** Cut a small slit in **1 habanero**



FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS I HAVE NOT BEEN WITHIN A POSITION TO BE EXPOSED TO THOSE WHO CAN ABUSE THEIR POWER. I HOPE TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE TO LEARN FROM AND TEACH OTHERS HOW TO STOP DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT BEFORE IT PRESENTS ITSELF BY PRACTICING HONEST, INTENTIONAL DIALOGUE AND LESS BUREAUCRATIC BULLSHIT TO COVER THE ASS OF A CEO.



pepper and drop it in the pot. Cover and bring to a boil, then reduce to a very low simmer, stirring occasionally. Cook for 1 hour.

Remove ham hocks (or turkey wings) and set aside to cool.

Add **1 large sweet potato or small butternut squash (peeled and cut into large chunks) and 2 cups of coconut milk** to the pot. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed, bearing in mind that flavors will intensify in the final hour of cooking. Cook for 1 more hour, stirring gently so as to not completely break up sweet potato (or butternut squash). If mixture becomes too thick add a bit more stock, coconut milk or water.

Strip meat from the ham hocks or turkey wings. Discard bones and skin. Fold in meat when the beans are creamy and fully cooked. Adjust seasoning.

Remove habanero (if you can find it!), if desired. Serve over rice.

CHEF CRYSTAL LACHNEY

Some leaders govern their kingdoms with a golden scepter, others, an iron fist. Chef Crystal Lachney rules her domain with tweezers and a fish spatula, the two kitchen implements the proudly self-professed perfectionist and control freak cannot do without.

It was a meat market that drove her to become a chef. “I was 16,” the Alexandria native said. “Business was pouring into the meat market where I worked. Everyone was stressing out except for Robbie, my boss. He was so content and under control with 10 whole chickens in front of him waiting to be de-boned and stuffed with dirty rice. The customers were impatiently waiting, just staring and watching him work. He never lost control in the midst of chaos and pressure. He only cared about the food he was putting out. That’s when I realized ‘Wow I really love food and, being a control freak. I’d found a place where I fit in.”

“The restaurant industry is full of misfits and I happen to be one of them. There’s something beautiful about the vulgarity of the kitchen and all the people that follow it — front of the house and back.”

Now 23 and a graduate of the Chef John Folse Culinary Institute at Nicholls State University, Lachney did her first paid externship at the Michelin-rated Restaurant Marc Forgione in Manhattan where she worked her way from garde manger to the top of the kitchen line within four months. She is now co-head chef at the celebrated Cinclare Restaurant in Thibodeaux and remains addicted to the singular, intense pressures that only a restaurant kitchen can inflict.

“I never feel more connected than when I’m ‘in the weeds’ and there’s a board full of tickets. Two hours later you’ve cooked flawlessly for 150 people with two people on the line. That’s connection. It’s beautiful.”



LAMB SHANKS WITH TOMATO RAGU

Season **6 lamb shanks** with **salt and pepper to taste**. Working in batches if necessary, brown shanks in a large Dutch oven set over high heat. Remove shanks and set aside.

Add **3 ounces salt pork** and **1 pound pancetta** and cook until the fat has rendered out. Add **2 cups diced onion**, **1 cup diced celery** and **1 diced carrot** and cook until brown, about 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Add **2 tablespoons garlic** and cook until fragrant, about 90 seconds. Deglaze pan with **2 cups light, fruity red wine (such as Chianti)** and, using a wooden spoon, scrape the fond (brown bits) from the bottom. Cook until no liquid remains.

Add **4 cups tomato puree**, **6 cups canned diced tomatoes with their liquid**, **6 sprigs fresh thyme**, **1 sprig fresh rosemary**, **1½ tablespoons sugar** and **½ cup capers**. Add reserved lamb shanks, **6 cups beef stock** and **1½ pounds pork bones**. Bring to a boil then cover, reduce heat to low, and cook until meat is falling from the lamb shanks, about 2 hours. Remove bones and herbs.

Serve over **polenta**.



A CHEF, WHO SHALL REMAIN NAMELESS, TOLD ME I SHOULDN'T DO MY EXTERNSHIP IN NEW YORK WITH MARC FORGIONE BECAUSE I WAS A GIRL AND 'IN BIG CITY KITCHENS IT'S SUPER OLD SCHOOL AND THEY MAY HURT YOUR FEELINGS AND TREAT YOU BAD.' WELL, I DIDN'T GET TREATED ANY DIFFERENTLY FROM THE GUYS AT ALL. I WAS TREATED WITH THE UTMOST RESPECT. I EVEN OUT-COOKED SOME GUYS THAT HAD BEEN WORKING THERE BEFORE ME. THEY WERE THOROUGHLY IMPRESSED. I NEVER RAN INTO ANY PROBLEMS IN ANY KITCHEN I WORKED IN BUT THERE HAVE BEEN MULTIPLE MALE COOKS AND CHEFS I HAVE MET WHO OVERLOOKED ME. THEY WOULDN'T EVEN SHAKE MY HAND OR LOOK ME IN THE EYE. MY CO-CHEF, LOGAN BOUDREAUX, IS ALSO MY BEST FRIEND. WE BOTH MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS TREATED EQUALLY AND WITH RESPECT. "

CHEF BONNIE BREAUX

If living well is the best revenge then Bonnie Breaux is a five star general. In 2006, the Lafayette native was in the unenviable position of being newly divorced single mother.



“I took inventory of my talents as a home-cook and opened a small restaurant, Breaux’s, in Covington with the help of my family,” said Breaux, now 51.

In the years since, Breaux honed the self-taught, “heritage-influenced Cajun/Creole” style she learned at the knee of her mother and perfected under Wayne Peltier at Clementine in New Iberia. She steered the kitchen at Roux in Tampa before Alcee and Lucy Durand tapped her to return to her native state to steward the kitchen at The St. John Restaurant in St. Martinville. In doing so, she brought a fresh approach and organizational skills that revolu-

tionized the historic restaurant. Last year Breaux bested and out-cooked scores of other chefs to become the first ever “Queen of Louisiana Seafood,” an honor bestowed by the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board (LSPMB) at the annual Louisiana Seafood Cook-Off.

This spring the energetic executive chef seemingly cloned herself and, with the Durands, opened Café Sydnie Mae in Breaux Bridge.

What’s next on the docket for the ostensibly inexhaustible dynamo?

“Both Café Sydnie Mae and The St. John have high standards for fresh, local ingredients,” she

said. “We plan to expand our farm-to-table model to include greenhouse produce and cage-free poultry. We are also talking about another place.

“If you would have asked me two years ago, if I would have found myself where I am today I would have said, ‘you’re crazy’.”

A rare day off is spent in the kitchen with her mother or teaching her grandchildren to cook, employing her must-have ingredients — the trinity, as well as Steen’s 100% Cane Syrup, hot sauce, cayenne pepper and heavy cream — to accomplish her tasks. Her Old-World cast-iron skillet and new age sous vide immersion cooker are indispensable implements in her kitchen.

BREAUX’S LOUISIANA SHRIMP AND GRITS

GRITS: Melt **1 tablespoon unsalted butter** in a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium heat. Add **1 shallot (finely chopped)** and sauté until soft and translucent, about 4 minutes. Add **1 quart chicken stock** and **1 quart heavy cream** and bring to a boil. Add **2 cups coarse, stone-ground grits**, **1 teaspoon kosher salt**, and **1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper**, stir, reduce heat to low, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until all liquid is absorbed, 30 to 40 minutes. Beat in **8 ounces cream cheese (softened)** with a wooden spoon until fully incorporated. Remove from heat, cover and set aside and keep warm.

SAUCE: Melt **¼ pound unsalted butter** in a large heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium heat. Add **½ medium yellow onion (juliened)**, **½ medium red onion (juliened)**, **½ medium red bell pepper (juliened)** and **½ green bell pepper (juliened)** and sauté until softened, about 8 minutes. Add **3 cups finely chopped smoked Tasso**, stir, then add **2 quarts shrimp stock** and **2 quarts heavy cream** and cook on medium uncovered until mixture is reduced by one third, about 1 hour. Add **1 teaspoon kosher salt**, **¼ teaspoon white pepper**, **½ teaspoon cayenne pepper**, **1 teaspoon Louisiana hot sauce** and **¼ teaspoon granulated garlic**. Add **½ cup sherry** and blend thoroughly. Fold in **2 cups grated smoked Gouda cheese** and blend thoroughly. Set aside and keep warm.

SHRIMP: Combine **1 tablespoon kosher salt**, **1½ tablespoons paprika**, **1 tablespoon garlic**

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LIFE IN A RESTAURANT KITCHEN CAN BE BRUTAL — HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION AND OTHER UNIQUE COMPLICATIONS WOMEN FACE. AS A MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER, I AM PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO THESE ISSUES. FORTUNATELY, FOR MOST OF MY CAREER, I HAVE BEEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES THAT HAVE ALLOWED ME TO ESTABLISH THE CULTURE IN THE KITCHEN. I RUN A TOUGH, BUT FAIR, KITCHEN, WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS. MY CULTURE DEMANDS RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER.”



powder, **1 teaspoon dried oregano**, **2 tablespoons light brown sugar** and **1 teaspoon cayenne pepper**. Blend thoroughly, add **3 pounds 21-25 count Gulf shrimp (peeled and deveined)**, and toss to coat.

Set a cast iron skillet over high heat for five minutes. Working very quickly, add **1 tablespoon unsalted butter**, then shrimp. Allow seasoning on the shrimp to blacken, about 90 seconds. Turn shrimp and repeat.

TO PLATE: Divide grits among six shallow soup plates. Using a wooden spoon, make a deep impression in the center of the grits. Divide sauce, then shrimp atop the grits. Serve at once.