

King Cakes

LOUISIANA'S TOP, INDIGENOUS BAKED CONFECTION IS THE KING CAKE AND THIS CARNIVAL SEASON, WE'RE EXPLORING ITS EVOLUTION THROUGHOUT THE STATE.



Twin's Burgers & Sweet's boudin king cake consists of a savory dough and boudin marriage, drizzled with Steen's syrup on top and cracklin' bits

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the years, the seams of origination have almost disappeared. We still serve king cake on Twelfth Night, the start of the Carnival season on Jan. 6 when the Wise Men brought gifts

to the baby Jesus, and the person who receives the present inside becomes king or queen for the day. But since the tradition crossed the ocean from the French motherland it has changed in taste, styles and color. And with each passing year, there's a new take on the king cake tradition.

Sucr  in New Orleans adds sophistication and luster to its king cake, while bakeries in Central and North

Louisiana cook up theirs with fillings inside, producing moist, flavorful cakes. In Lafayette, a savory boudin king cake was born, topped with Steen's syrup and cracklins. In addition to experimenting with king cakes, Louisiana restaurants have been serving king cake fries, burgers, coffees and cocktails.

For the traditionalists, the folks at Pouparts of Lafayette, who hail

from France, offer the more subtle and equally delicious French variety, while New Orleans bakeries still serve up and sell by the thousands the oval doughy cake topped with icing and sugar sprinkles in the Carnival colors of purple, green and gold.

What's your favorite way to eat king cake? Take a trip around Louisiana and find out.

North Louisiana

Years ago when Shreveport-Bossier City's Mardi Gras was in its infancy, the Saturday parades rolled right past Tubbs Hardware in Bossier City. The revelry was fun for some, but to Don Tubbs it hindered business on the busiest day of the week.

Tubbs had always done cooking demonstrations at the hardware store so he decided to capitalize on the event by creating a king cake recipe and selling the cakes in his store. He experimented with styles, and one day while home sick he watched Emeril Lagasse on TV baking a cake and then freezing it to lock in the moisture.



Burger King

MAGIC GRILL, with locations in Monroe and West Monroe, serves up a King Cake Burger using a slice of regular king cake that's heated on the grill and used as the bun. Diners choose their own additions, said Jada Ali, who owns the restaurant with her husband, Faisal. Along with the requisite fries, the dish comes garnished with Mardi Gras beads.



This year, Tubbs will begin delivering his king cakes, but without the sugar decorations that sometimes get spoiled in shipping. He will include a separate container of icing, plus a booklet on how to decorate the cake and the king cake story.

Tubbs isn't the only one in town creating king cakes taking the public by storm. Lilah's Bakery creates scrumptious king cakes in three sizes and 22 flavors, baking the filling inside the non-braided dough with a fondant icing on top. Some of the flavors include Bavarian cream, peanut butter and chocolate and tiramisu. The king cakes have become so popular — more than 12,000 a year and shipping across the country — that the bakery remains open only for the Carnival season.

"We work really fast during Mardi Gras and we chill out the rest of the year," said Lisa Tike, who owns the bakery with her husband, Sopan.

"[Lagasse] said after you thaw it you've completed the recipe," Tubbs said.

That secret and adding lots of filling to his "Extreme King Cakes" make them different from those sold in New Orleans, Tubbs explained.

He must be doing something right as he sells 10,000 of his king cakes every year.

"And we sell them out of a hardware store," he said with a smile. "That's the joke in northern Louisiana, the best king cake is sold out of a hardware store."

Flavors include traditional cinnamon, extreme cream cheese and strawberry, but new to the lineup is blueberry.

"The blueberry king cake has been the social media rage," Tubbs said.

**Tubbs Hardware
Extreme King
Cake** stuffed with fillings including extreme cream cheese, strawberry and new to the lineup, blueberry

Acadiana



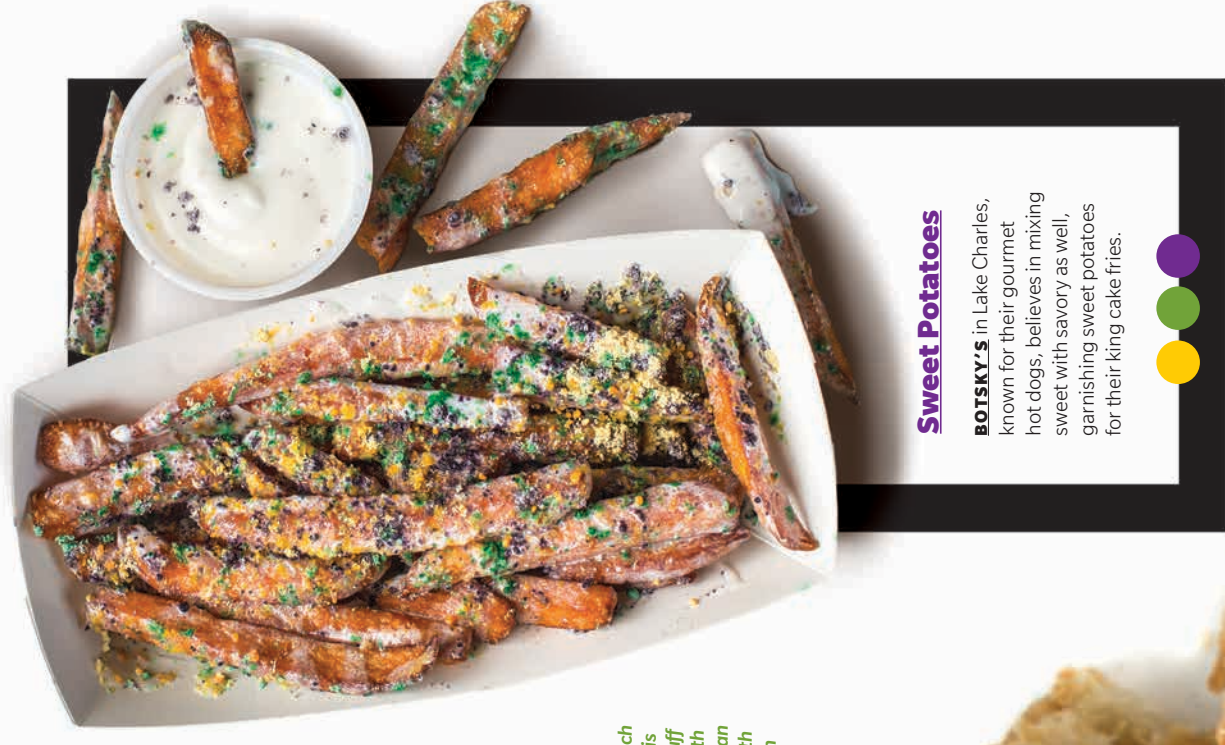
halk up Acadiana as running the gamut of styles. Pouparts Bakery in Lafayette serves up both traditional French *Gateau des Rois* — the family hails from France — and the sugary delights we know of today and Twin’s serves a pastry taking the state by storm, the boudin king cake. In addition, there’s the fried king cakes at Meche’s and Cajun Market Donut Company and a gluten-free cake at Bibi’s Patisserie. For those who desire the traditional

Louisiana king cake, Keller’s Bakery, the oldest in Lafayette, uses an old family recipe from New Orleans.

Pouparts hails back to the 1960s, when modern king cakes were relegated to New Orleans. The family introduced Lafayette to a traditional French king cake, a puff pastry filled with almond marzipan and topped with a paper crown. Like in Louisiana, whoever receives the baby or other item inside the pastry on Twelfth Night — when the Wise Men brought gifts to the baby Jesus — will be the king or queen of the party.



Pouparts
traditional French
Gateau des Rois
King Cake, a puff
pastry filled with
almond marzipan
and topped with
a paper crown



Sweet Potatoes

BOITSKY’S in Lake Charles, known for their gourmet hot dogs, believes in mixing sweet with savory as well, garnishing sweet potatoes for their king cake fries.



University of Louisiana at Lafayette professor Robert Carriker, who’s obsessed with everything boudin — he created *BoudinLink.com* and is author of “Boudin: A Guide to Louisiana’s Extraordinary Link” — decided that Carnival needed boudin as well. He experimented with a boudin king cake and approached Twin’s Burgers & Sweets to ask if they would be interested in producing something new.

The boudin king cake consists of a savory dough and boudin marriage, drizzled with Steen’s syrup on top and cracklin’ bits.

When Twins’ started selling the novelty cake, Acadiana residents lined up to get a taste. Demand has been so high that other bakeries throughout Louisiana have taken up the call, including Quebedeaux’s Boudin and Cracklins in Alexandria and Lilah’s in Shreveport.

But don’t despair if boudin’s not your thing. Twin’s offers a wide variety of traditional Louisiana king cakes, including Bavarian, amaretto and an Elvis king cake consisting of peanut butter, bananas and bacon.

New Orleans



There are numerous bakeries in New Orleans producing the traditional Louisiana king cake. Gambino's, Randazzo's and Haydel's, among so many others, come to mind. But one man wanted to stir up the dough and create something new.

Tariq Hanna and his wife married in New Orleans in 2005 and decided the Crescent City was where they wanted to be.

"This is where we knew we would end up," Hanna said. "This is where we knew we would open a business and spend the rest of our lives."

Hanna had made a name for himself as a pastry chef and joined forces with New Orleans restaurateur Joel Dondis to form Sucré in 2007, serving up chocolates, macarons, cakes and other decadent pastries.

One thing they didn't create at first was king cakes. Hanna, who's won numerous culinary awards and competed on the Food Network, wasn't impressed with the city's offerings, considering many to be "physically dull" and more commercial than its

Gateau D'or King Cake from Sucré is filled with dark chocolate cream, glazed with chocolate and caramel icing and topped with crispy rice pearls



Reigning Rum

The **BOURBON HOUSE** in New Orleans has been offering a King Cake Bevvvy for almost a decade, starting with Twelfth Night and ending on Lundi Gras. The following is a recipe for those who want to try the bevvvy at home.

Blend 1 cup vanilla ice cream, 1 3/4 ounces rum, 1/2 ounce cinnamon syrup, 1/4 ounce orange (almond syrup) and 1/4 ounce orange juice together in a blender until smooth. Garnish with cinnamon and tri-colored sugar to get in the Mardi Gras spirit. Serves 1



original creation. But he wanted to do things right, with respect to the city's traditions.

"I asked customers what they liked," he explained. "I asked, 'What makes you want to spend six weeks gorging on it?'"

The Sucré version of king cake includes more luster. "We were the new shiny kids on the block," he said.

The first year Sucré sold 500. The next year 1500. By the end of the third year the Washington Post published a taste test of several New Orleans bakeries and Sucré topped the list.

"Sucré's king cake, slightly larger than a Danish ring, arrives practically glowing with glittery, iridescent icing," the article read. "A relative newcomer to the New Orleans king cake scene, this Magazine Street bakery quickly won over the city's discerning palates. Sure enough, the combination of whipped cream cheese filling and buttery, yeasted pastry wowed our testers."

Sucré now ships thousands of king cakes during Carnival, and creates a Gateau D'or king cake for local customers that sells out every day of the season, Hanna said. Pretty impressive for someone new to the scene. "I'm so grateful for people embracing us with their tradition," Hanna said.

Central Louisiana

Most Louisiana residents realize there's a baby inside a king cake but once bakeries started shipping the cakes nationwide, many left the baby outside, to avoid someone biting into a slice and being taken by surprise.

Atwood's Bakery in Alexandria still bakes the babies right into the cake, even for the ones they ship. But they make them large enough to spot.

"My wife calls them toddlers," said Aaron Atwood, who owns the bakery with his wife, Jeannie. "It's larger than a quarter."

Atwood's ships their king cakes throughout the continental United States and Hawaii; Alaska is the only state they miss because of the shipping expense. This past year, they shipped 287 king cakes on Lundi Gras to arrive at places such as Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and the headquarters of Regal Cinemas on Mardi Gras day.

"We've hit just about every state and all of them have a baby in it," he said.

Atwood's has been creating king cakes for almost two decades, using a sweet dough with a variety of fillings that's "closer to a coffee cake,"



Atwood said. They create their own cream cheese blends and fruit fillings and bake the fillings inside the cakes, as opposed to adding them later. Fillings include classic cream cheese, strawberry cream cheese, pecan praline and cinnamon, to name a few.

Their deluxe king cake is one third strawberry, one third apple and one third blueberry fillings.

"And then the entire thing is covered with cream cheese, like a sampler," Atwood said.

Atwood's is a full retail bakery and deli, selling pastries, cakes and chocolates, among so much more, plus serving up soups, salads, sandwiches and breakfast. On Saturday, the deli becomes a brunch spot. "We're a little more than an average bakery," Atwood explained. "Doughnuts are the only thing we don't have."

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Beanie Babies

If drinks are more your style, the **CORNER COFFEEHOUSE** in Monroe serves up a king cake latte as well as a Mardi Gras latte, both served hot, cold or in a frappe. They actually serve the drinks year-round but they're most popular during Carnival season.

