

a common link

Though a native of Washington State, Dr. Bob Carriker of UL's History Dept. has lent his culinary two cents and left a tasty mark on his adopted home.

BY WILL KALEC | PHOTO BY ROMERO & ROMERO

SO COME ON, BOB

Carriker - critic of meat-stuffed casings, creator of our latest guilty pleasure, and curator of UL's History Department - admit it: all these links are pretty much the same. If you've had one you've had them all. Pork. Rice. Some spices. Cook it up.

Boudin is boudin, right?



"NO!" he yells emphatically through a laugh, thus disturbing the Sunday morning tranquility. "No, not even close! I swear, they're all different - the way they cook the rice, whether they use long-grain or medium-grain, whether they grind the pork up or leave it in chunks, the amount of fat, whether it's dry, wet, spicy, mild. It defies logic that there could be this much variance when the core ingredients are simple, but that's what makes it unique."

Point taken.

For more than a delicious decade, Carriker has showcased that pork-infused passion to print (well, digital print, technically) as the webmaster of *boudinlink.com*, a living, always-expanding bible of boudin. Brandishing an extensive library of reviews, Carriker's quest for the perfect "snap" has taken him from Carencro to California, from super-ritzy supermarkets to one-pump gas stations on rural routes GPS struggles to find.

A bit of a spatula-wielding mad scientist, Carriker also isn't shy to chip-in his own contributions to the Cajun culinary scene. The 9-to-5 history professor created the Johnson's Boucaniere Parrain Special, a brown-bagger's dream sandwich consisting on smashed boudin balls, melted cheese and barbecue sauce. Then, this past Carnival season, Carriker unleashed his greatest delectable hybrid - the boudin king cake. Demand for the boudin-infused

sweet Mardi Gras staple far exceeded the supply Carriker could pump out on his own, so he teamed with Twins Burgers and Sweets of Lafayette to increase production.

Asked if any of his boudin mash-ups bombed or tasted terrible, Carriker pauses for a second before replying, "No, not really" - a confident retort from someone whose left an authentic fingerprint on this eclectic region despite migrating from the Pacific Northwest.

"I much prefer to be a part of what's going as opposed to an observer of what's going on," Carriker says. "That's just always been a part of who I am. Moving here, I didn't want to be on the outside looking in. I wanted to be a part of it - embrace the community completely, which was easy because the community was so open and accepting of us."

The genesis of Bob's metamorphosis into "Dr. Boudin," happened shortly after accepting a faculty position at UL in 1997. Accustomed to co-workers bringing doughnuts, bagels or cupcakes into the office on special occasions, Carriker marveled when a peer plopped down a steaming tray of boudin instead. As he embraced the Cajun custom with a full mouth, he kept his ears open (while chewing) to those around him. Local loyalty dominated the conversation. The woman from New Iberia bragged on the boudin from the shop down the street while the guy from Cecilia dismissed

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