

A "TAIL" OF TWO CITIES

Taste-testing crawfish in Bossier City and Minden

BY CHRIS JAY PHOTO BY ROMERO & ROMERO



One look at Kim's Seafood & Po-Boy in Bossier City should be enough to alert an observant diner that they're in for a treat. Flanked by a Western wear boutique and a remote-controlled helicopter shop, Kim's beckons passing drivers on Highway 80 with a 12 foot-long photograph of a fried catfish poor boy. Inside the restaurant, the mouth-watering

Bossier City's Kim's Seafood & Po-Boys's crawfish is a signature item, served with dip sauce and locally made pork sausage.

scent of boiled crawfish and fried seafood is exhilarating. To step out of a banal strip mall parking lot and into a place like this is one of the simple joys of living in Louisiana.

Kim's owner Duc Duong previously owned two poor boy shops in New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina destroyed both businesses, sending the Duong family scrambling to Port Arthur, Texas, where Duong's family works in the shrimping industry. The Duongs arrived in Texas just in time to be waylaid by Hurricane Rita, and, reeling from the double-whammy, they beat a path north as far as the cash in Duc's pocket would carry them.

A decade later, the Bossier City incarnation of Kim's Seafood has become a popular destination for poor boys, fried seafood platters and boiled crawfish in season. The restaurant serves more than a dozen varieties of the sandwich, including favorites like fried shrimp as well as harder-to-find options like Patton's hot sausage.

During crawfish season, the dining room is often elbow-to-elbow with diners intently peeling and devouring pounds of boiled crawfish, spicy new potatoes, corn-on-the-cob and sausage. Crawfish are served in beer buckets, and seafood platters arrive on paper plates, but the lack of silverware doesn't stop a line from forming by 6 p.m. on most nights. As they stand in line, many customers will fix their gaze on a makeshift Hurricane Katrina memorial near the soda fountain.

"I look at it every day," Duong said of the memorial during a 2012 interview with American Public Media's Marketplace. "It's to remind people." ♦

CRAWFISH HOLE NUMBER TWO

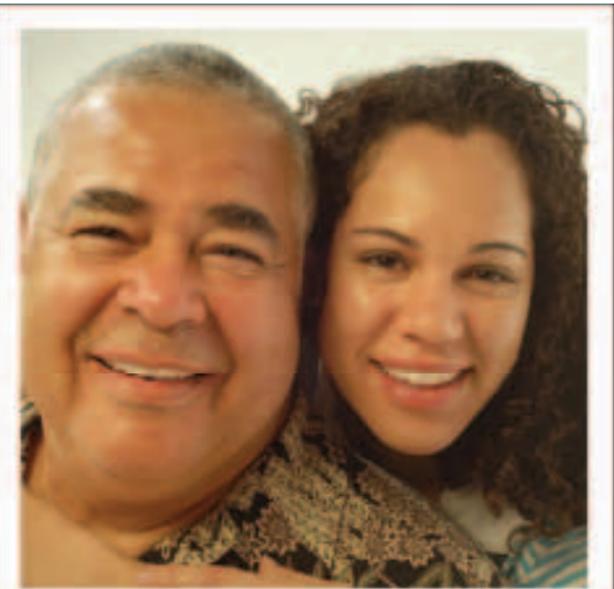
On any given weekend night during crawfish season, there'll likely be a line out the door at Bush Carnahan's Crawfish Hole Number Two in Minden. The spacious dining room - a product of several expansions over the years - seats 128, but another 50 or so typically mill about in the entryway, hungrily eyeballing nearby tables and waiting for their names to be called. Like the venerable Cajun Claws in Abbeville - one of my favorite crawfish joints in the world - Crawfish Hole Number Two offers a cozy bar where customers can swig a cold beer after checking in with the hostess.

What are they waiting for? Big, reasonably priced platters of golden-fried American catfish and brown paper bags filled with clean, bright-tasting crawfish cooked with lemon wedges and onions. For those who doubt that a high-quality crawfish boil could be found so close to the Arkansas state line, which lies just 30 miles to the north, please be assured: Crawfish Hole Number Two deserves to be considered among the very best crawfish joints in Louisiana.

In recent years, the restaurant has expanded their menu to include rib eye steaks, grilled fish and more, but I've yet to see a plate of grilled fish carried past my table during any of my visits. It's not called "Tilapia Hole Number Two," after all.

KIM'S SEAFOOD
901 Benton Road, Suite E.
Bossier City
(318) 752-2425

CRAWFISH HOLE NUMBER TWO
12903 Highway 371
Minden
(318) 377-0252
crawfishhole2.com



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