



EXECUTIVE
CHEF MICHAEL
SHELTON'S
GRILLADES AND
GRITS FROM
APOLLINE IN
NEW ORLEANS

As a child of New Orleans, coming up in the '70s and '80s, I was accustomed to seeing the same things on restaurant menus again and again, as I dined out with my gustatory-minded parents.

Common were panéed meat, poultry or fish, both crabmeat and potatoes au gratin, crawfish bisque, whole fish stuffed with seafood dressing, long-smothered grillades of pork or round steak, redfish court-bouillon, trout Marguery, crabmeat ravigote, trout meunière or amandine, Pompano en Papillote, shrimp or chicken Clemençeau, chicken bonne femme, and chicken Rochambeau. While these old classics, most of which have roots in Louisiana's French heritage, have not disappeared they are by no means as prevalent as they once were. Explanations range from cost (crabmeat) or labor (crawfish bisque and stuffed fish) prohibitions to general, societal dietary changes that eschew heavy sauces and, often, breaded and fried preparations.

In our annual celebration of our culinary heritage, we visit a few of the Louisiana chefs who continue to explore our iconic fare.

Chefs around the state
keeping the culinary heritage alive
through its iconic dishes

CLASSICALLY LOUISIANA

CHEF DAMIEN R.L. "CHAPEAUX" CHAPMAN

CHEF/OWNER
ORLANDEAUX'S



SHREVEPORT STUFFED SHRIMP

Stuffed shrimp are exceedingly popular in Shreveport, particularly within the city's African American community on the city's west side. They look like corndogs and, so beloved are they, as to be featured like stars in color photographs adorning the walls of some of the places that serve them.

The hefty shrimp hand food originated at the

long-gone Freeman and Harris Café, established in 1921 in the 1000 block of Texas Avenue. At the time the black-owned café was one of a small handful where black and white people could dine together. Averaging about four inches in length, Shreveport-style stuffed shrimp are typically served three to an order. They start as U-10-to-15-count

shrimp that are peeled, deveined, butterflied, stuffed with a zesty crabmeat dressing, and hand-rolled in a flour batter before they are fried to a golden crisp. They are typically served with tartar sauce.

In June, Shreveport launched the first annual Shreveport Stuffed Shrimp Festival.

Born into Shreveport culinary royalty, Damien "Chapeaux" Chapman obtained a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Southern University's A&M College in Baton Rouge before accepting a job with Halliburton as a field engineer.

Chapman's restaurant pedigree dates back to Freeman and Harris Café, established in 1921 in Shreveport. At the time the black-owned café was one of a small handful where black and white people could dine together.

Following the deaths of co-owners Scrap Chapman and Pete Harris (Chapman's great uncle) his grandfather, Willie Chapman, opened Pete Harris Café. Pete Harris Café closed in 2006 and Orlando Chapman, son of Willie Chapman and Damien's father, opened Brother's Seafood. The business was later renamed Orlandeaux's Cafe.

"Orlandeaux's Café is the direct lineage of Freeman & Harris Café," says Damien Chapman, 30. "We are the legacy of the oldest continuously-operating African American restaurant in the United States!"

He started working the family restaurant bussing tables when he was 14.

"As expected, I did everything — hosting, serving tables, washing dishes, cooking. But after working like a slave and missing what I thought were very important parts of my life — prom and parties with my friends, I made up my mind that I was going to be on the first train smoking out of here. I left on a marching band scholarship to SU and never looked back.

ORLANDEAUX'S CAFE
4916 Monkhouse Dr.
Shreveport
(318) 635-1641
orlandeauxs.com

"Yeah right! Every holiday, every spring break, every summer, I was home working the café. Slaving like I never left.

"After visiting home for a fishing weekend with my Pops and younger brothers, I received the most devastating phone call: My father had passed from a very sudden heart attack. Initially my family was against me leaving my career to run the café because they have all watched our family members die in the business from stress and anguish. But they saw my unwavering passion to ensure that the family's legacy didn't die so they were all behind me.

"My plan is just to simply continue this rich legacy that was set out before me 98 years ago. I feel a very strong presence of my father, grandfather, and great grandfather. They all cooked from the soul, and when I feel their spirits around me I know that they live and cook through me."



“ORLANDEAUX'S
CAFÉ IS THE
DIRECT LINEAGE
OF FREEMAN &
HARRIS CAFÉ. WE
ARE THE LEGACY
OF THE OLDEST
CONTINUOUSLY-
OPERATING
AFRICAN AMERICAN
RESTAURANT IN THE
UNITED STATES!”

“ I AM IN MY ELEMENT UNDER PRESSURE. THOSE THREE HOURS BEFORE SERVICE WITH A PREP LIST A MILE LONG AND THE RESERVATIONS ARE GROWING. THAT PRESSURE IS MY COMFORT ZONE. I LOVE CONQUERING THE CHALLENGE.”



MICHAEL SHELTON

EXECUTIVE CHEF
APOLLINE

Michael Shelton started cooking at age 10.

“My parents worked and both went back to school so I cooked for my family.”

Now 39, as an adult a personal tragedy led Shelton to leave Jackson State University in Mississippi where he was pursuing a degree in marketing. This setback led to a revelation.

“I took a job at Waffle House in my 20s.” The experience triggered the memory of a task he had once mastered as a child: cooking breakfast for his brothers and sisters.

“That got my motor going.”

He moved on to become an assistant manager at Jersey Mike’s Sub Shop. It was here that he met Chef Joshua Wilkinson of 2 Johns Steak & Seafood, who offered him his first kitchen restaurant stage, which led to a job at on the grill line at 2 Johns in Bossier City. Shelton went on to work at Wine Country Bistro and Bella Fresca, both in Shreveport. He left northern Louisiana to accept a job in the kitchen at La Petite Grocery, then The Caribbean Room, and, later, Compere Lapin, all in New Orleans, before becoming executive chef at Little Gem Saloon, then Sala. He took over the kitchen at Apolline, a popular bistro on a lively stretch of Uptown Magazine Street specializing in Southern contemporary cuisine.

APOLLINE
4729 Magazine St.
New Orleans
(504) 894-8881
apollinerestaurant.com



“I am in my element under pressure,” Shelton says. “Those three hours before service with a prep list a mile long and the reservations are growing. That pressure is my comfort zone. I love conquering the challenge.”

He is direct and unapologetic regarding his goals for the future.

“My goal is to be a great dad. I had my children prior to choosing this career so this has benefited those relationships. It fulfills me — a career field I genuinely love. So I have to be a solid chef to make my family situation run properly. That peace and fulfillment is key.”

The Philadelphia native serves as a mentor with both Café Reconcile and Son of a Saint and plans to incorporate a devotion to service to others into his professional career in the future while continuing his personal advocacy work against abuse and toward promoting wellness in restaurant kitchens.

“All young cooks, male or female, always be ready to stand up and fight for themselves and their wellbeing. We do not owe this business our happiness. Fortunately, in this age of accountability resources exist to help you out. I recommend FairKitchens.com as a helpful resource in bringing about change in professional kitchen culture.”

GRILLADES

Though the word “grillade” is French for grilled, in Louisiana grillades (note that the word becomes a plural noun as opposed to a verb) are pieces of meat that are pounded, seared in hot fat then smothered in a rich sauce of aromatic vegetables and tomatoes. The regional origin is believed to have come about when Cajun country butchers preparing a boucherie sliced thin pieces of fresh pork, pan-fried them in cast iron, then smothered the mixture over a low fire for workers to eat throughout the course of the day over grits or rice. Today, the combination of grillades and grits is particularly popular for weekend brunch.

ERIC COOK

EXECUTIVE CHEF/PROPRIETOR
GRIS GRIS, NEW ORLEANS



REDFISH COURT-BOUILLON

The method of poaching protein in a seasoned liquid, such as vegetable broth enlivened with mirepoix (minced onion, celery, carrot) or fish stock enriched with herbs predates the founding of the Louisiana colony by at least a century. Though Louisiana cooks favor the redfish (red drum) for poaching, this quick cooking method may also be used for vegetables, eggs or meats.

The cooking method is credited to François Pierre de la Varenne, the 17-century author of *Le Cuisinier François* who received his initial training in the kitchens of the French king Henry IV and his second wife, Marie de' Medici. This period ushered in the Age of Enlightenment when the culinary arts were regarded as central to the reflection general culture. The cooking method was "of the Court."

Following the establishment of the Louisiana colony, to the existing poaching base Creole, and later, Cajun cooks added tomatoes, cayenne, and bay leaves. Bell pepper was substituted for carrots, which were not available in the early colony. Following poaching, the protein, in our case redfish, may be removed in order to thicken the poaching liquid with a bit of roux. The resulting gravy and poached fish are then served atop steamed rice.

A graduate of Chalmette High School and a retired combat veteran with the U.S. Marine Corps, Eric Cook found comfort in the regimented structure and high-pressure environment of the restaurant kitchen.

"The kitchen is crazy," says Cook, 49. "Success is dependent on all the elements coming together in just the right way for things to work — just like the military. If one element falls off everything can come down. I love the sense of teamwork and the hustle and bustle."

He left the John Folse Culinary Institute at Nicholls State University to accept a position at Brennan's under Chef Mike Roussel. He then spent the next 20 years working his way through the kitchens of Commander's Palace (sous chef), The American Sector at the WWII Museum (executive chef) Dickie Brennan's Bourbon House (Executive Chef) and Tommy's Cuisine (executive chef).

In 2018, Cook opened Gris-Gris, a chic but comfortable restaurant and bar in the triangular-shaped building at Magazine and Felicite streets in New Orleans' Lower Garden District. Gris Gris is firmly rooted in New Orleans'

singular style of warm hospitality and features inspired takes on the classic dishes locals cherish and visitors seek out.

"My mom makes this every year for my birthday and I plucked this straight from her," Cook says of his deeply satisfying chicken and dumplings, which have the power to bring a warm smile to the stoniest of faces. Tender ribbons of pulled chicken mingle with carrots and pillow-like dumplings, the long-cooked dish enlivened at the last moment with the addition of fresh thyme. For the chef's rendition of Redfish Court-Bouillon a whole, fried specimen arrives swimming in a pool of a light, yet deeply flavorful tomato broth.

"I know who I am and what I do well," Cook says. "I am staying in my lane, serving the foods I grew up cooking and eating with my family, my best memories. My mom always cooked the New Orleans staples like red beans and rice for dinner. My dad came in [the kitchen] on the weekends to cook the big classics. He would take my brother and [me] hunting or fishing and a part of that experience was cooking the deer, rabbit, fish, or whatever wild thing. I made it a point to try everything and learn the best way to cook it and present it."

GRIS-GRIS
1800 Magazine St.
New Orleans
(504) 272-0241
grisgrisola.com

“ I KNOW WHO I AM
AND WHAT I DO WELL.
I AM STAYING IN MY
LANE, SERVING THE
FOODS I GREW UP
COOKING AND EATING
WITH MY FAMILY, MY
BEST MEMORIES. ”



“ I BROUGHT MY RECIPES FROM HOME AND BEGAN TO ADAPT THEM TO THE SIZE NEEDED FOR THE CAFÉ. ”



LOUISE RICHARD

CHEF/OWNER
CAFÉ JEFFERSON

With no formal training, yet armed with a passion for cooking and hospitality learned from her mother, Louise Richard opened Café Jefferson in 2004 on the grounds of Rip Van Winkle Gardens, which she and her husband had purchased the year before.

At first the restaurant served only salads and sandwiches for lunch.

“I brought my recipes from home and began to adapt them to the size needed for the cafe,” Richard said. She says her mother’s spirit is at the base of the menu at Café Jefferson and she draws inspiration from the bounty of the area’s fresh seafood, poultry and game.

Her restaurant, which is situated in a grove of ancient live oaks, offers a breathtaking view of the gardens and Lake Peigneur from a glass-in porch. It is a fitting backdrop for decadent, old fashioned dishes like seafood cream bisque crowded with local crawfish, jumbo lump crab, and large Gulf shrimp; crawfish Cardinale stew with fresh mushrooms and fine Cognac; her rich, blue-ribbon crawfish etouffee; and a rich creamy crabmeat au gratin served hot and bubbling straight from under the broiler. Richard’s chicken sauce piquante is made the old-school way with a full leg quarter simmered long and slow in a sauce of tomato and roasted bell peppers enlivened with tasso and andouille.

Richard, 67, says her moments of greatest confidence in the kitchen come when she is inundated with orders, breathless, and without a moment to stop. Humble, she acknowledges her culinary skill as the cornerstone to her success but is quick to attribute her business to her team.

“My strength is in the artful preparation of delicious food. Personnel management, the most daunting task of any business, I leave to my dear friend and confidante , Dinah Boudreaux, who has the complete love and respect of all our staff. I have always believed that the effective management of any restaurant depends on the utilization of the strengths and skills of staff.”

CAFÉ JEFFERSON
5505 Rip Van Winkle Road
New Iberia
(337) 359-8525
ripvanwinklegardens.com



CRABMEAT AU GRATIN

Another dish with French roots, this decadent favorite features delicate lump or claw crabmeat bound together in Béchamel sauce to which a blend of mild cheeses has been added.

The dish is then topped with either more cheese or a blend of cheese and bread crumbs.

The terms “au gratin” or “gratinee” refers to any dish prepared this way then baked in

a shallow, ovenproof oval or round gratin dish, which increases surface area thereby ensuring a larger crispy portion after the dish makes a pass under the broiler before serving.

RUSSELL DAVIS

CHEF/CO-OWNER
ELIZA RESTAURANT



PANEED FISH WITH SAUCE BEARNAISE

Breaded and fried foods are about as classic as it gets. In the Louisiana parlance panéed (locally pronounced “pon-aid”) simply means a pan sautéed dish — usually thinly-sliced chicken, veal, pork or fish filets served with a sauce. Often a dredge in egg wash and flour or breadcrumbs is employed to add a crisp coat to the dish.

Itself a classic French sauce, Béarnaise is made with a reduction of vinegar, wine, tarragon and shallots and finished with egg yolk and butter. It pairs well with simple preparations of meat, fish, eggs and vegetables.

Russell and Sally Davis both began their careers at Commander’s Palace Restaurant in New Orleans. She was in event planning, he in operations. When a co-worker set them up on their first date they discovered shared passions for food, hospitality and the entrepreneur’s drive to create something special of their own.

Russell, a native of Newton, Massachusetts with a degree in marketing from the University of Denver, opened Saltwater Grill in the Riverbend area of New Orleans in 2004, making the long-desired moved from the

ELIZA RESTAURANT & BAR
7970 Jefferson Highway
Suite J
Baton Rouge
(225) 349-8895
elizabatonrouge.com

business side of the operation into the kitchen. In 2016, Sally joined Russell, long since her husband, in opening Eliza in Sally’s hometown of Baton Rouge. They named the bright, airy contemporary Creole restaurant for their 10-year-old daughter.

The menu at Eliza spans generations to cover classics like crabmeat salad maison, panéed Gulf fish with lump crabmeat and sauce Béarnaise, a fried soft-shell crab with pecan Meunière sauce, as well as a grilled shrimp bánh mì poor-boy, and seared tuna tartine.

“I fell in love with food and cooking in my grandmother’s kitchen at a young age and my mother is my greatest inspiration,” Russell says. “After college I spent some time in Europe then moved to New Orleans to be a part of the food scene. It’s a good fit for me. My family reacted to my choosing the restaurant industry with guarded optimism. They knew of the long hours and high failure rate but, like anyone who wants to be successful in a field, I put in the long hours. But that has never deterred me from starting a family (I have four great kids) or finding a work/life balance. I just don’t sleep as much.”

Now 53, Russell says he is most connected to his craft when teaching and working with others.

“Seeing a young cook develop or perfect a technique keeps me engaged with my craft and helps me to learn, as well.”

He and Sally are planning another restaurant “in the near future” where they will continue to perpetuate the nurturing professional culture they have created at Eliza.

“There’s no time for nonsense,” Russell says. “It detracts from our goal of putting out great food. We try very hard to create a good culture behind the scenes and believe it’s just as important as what guests see in the dining room. It affects the whole experience.”

“
WE TRY VERY HARD
TO CREATE A GOOD
CULTURE BEHIND
THE SCENES AND
BELIEVE IT’S JUST
AS IMPORTANT
AS WHAT GUESTS
SEE IN THE DINING
ROOM. IT AFFECTS
THE WHOLE
EXPERIENCE.”

