

Mark L. Olson



**A Highly  
Opinionated  
and Completely  
Biased Guide to  
New Orleans  
Restaurants**

**Advice to Locals, Visitors, and Convention-Goers**

**A HIGHLY OPINIONATED AND COMPLETELY BIASED GUIDE TO  
NEW ORLEANS RESTAURANTS**  
*ADVICE TO LOCALS, VISITORS, AND CONVENTION-GOERS*

**by George Alec Effinger  
and Debbie Hodgkinson**

There's no doubt that New Orleans is one of the best cities in America for dining. If you have any trouble deciding where to eat during your stay here, it won't be for lack of choices. The difficulty may come from selecting from the large number of fine restaurants in the immediate area of the major downtown hotels. There are too many restaurants in the French Quarter and Central Business District (the CBD) even to list, let alone describe, so we'll just present a healthy sampling of places in the following three categories:

1. Casual and/or Fast Food.
2. Nice Restaurants (as your mother would call them; you know, where you probably should put on school clothes instead of jeans).
3. Ritzy (jacket-and-tie kind of places).

For the sophisticated and adventurous, we'll also mention a few of New Orleans' finer dining establishments in other parts of town that are definitely worth a cab ride. We didn't cover anyplace that is basically a bar that serves burgers or similar quasi-restaurants, although you may find a great treat in a place of this kind.

One of the first things we learned about New Orleans' restaurants was that appearances can be very, very deceiving. It's not only that some of the best food can be had in establishments that look like horrible dens of iniquity, but also that the reverse can be true--some of the worst food is served in the loveliest settings. Sometimes it's wise to ignore a little seediness in favor of some truly spectacular food.

One negative thing is that New Orleans is so in love with its own culture that it's often hard to find anything else. Modern jazz has largely been kept out of town by Dixieland, and oyster loaves and muffulettas have guarded against the yuppie food fads instigated by *New York Magazine*. If, for instance, you suddenly develop a hankering for Hungarian cooking while you're here, you're pretty much out of luck. George's mother's family is Hungarian, so he knows what it's like to hunger in vain. Sometimes we miss the wide variety of cuisines that are available in more cosmopolitan places.

That said, let us point out that there is tremendous diversity under the umbrella of "New Orleans cuisine." Just as there is no single New Orleans accent, there is no single New Orleans style of cooking. We can't point out one or two restaurants as "typical." We wish we could. It would make writing this guide much simpler, and it would solve a lot of problems

whenever a friend from out of town wants some "typical" New Orleans food.

(Come to think of it, if you want *really* typical New Orleans food, that's easy: a roast beef po-boy from Mother's and a bottle of Dixie beer. But you may have something else in mind . . .)

We realize that in these pages we often blithely dismiss restaurants that serve the conventional New Orleans array that may include jambalaya, red beans and rice, shrimp and oyster dishes, or some combination of these. Even though we may give these places a short review because we aren't that excited anymore to find, say, crawfish etouffee on the menu, these restaurants may be *just* the thing you've come to town looking for.

So here are A Big Bunch of fine restaurants to choose from. *Bon appetit,*  
y'all! GAE & DH

### AN EXPLANATION OF THE SYMBOLS AND A CAVEAT

Each restaurant description includes the following information: Name of restaurant, address, phone number, days and hours, a few remarks about the kinds of food available, cost of an average dinner for one person (including one beverage, tax, and tip; each dollar sign equals \$10, so \$ means you can eat for \$10 or less, and \$\$\$\$ means it'll run you between \$30 and \$40), which credit cards are accepted, if reservations must be made, and wheelchair access.

As far as subjective ratings go, I'm not going to get into awarding stars or anything like that. I've had more than my share of disagreements with restaurant critics here and elsewhere, but I will say that going out to eat is one of the greatest pleasures in my life, and I know a thing or two about good local food. In the listings that follow, you'll figure out which restaurants are my own favorites. Restaurants marked by an asterisk are those of which at least one of us has first-hand knowledge.

I have to admit that we've dined in only about two-thirds of them. For the remainder, we're relying on friends' opinions. But even if we haven't eaten at a particular place, at least we've let you know it's there, along with some basic information so you can make up your own mind. Doing the research for this guide turned up a lot of places that immediately went on the "let's go there real soon" list.

Unfortunately, the information concerning handicap access may not be completely accurate. Sometimes a place will claim it's accessible if a wheelchair has easy entry into the dining room; but the rest rooms may be a problem. Things may have changed since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, but many of these restaurants, especially in the French Quarter, are in buildings constructed long ago, in unenlightened times. Nearly every place we called that had a step at the door mentioned, without prompting, that they would be *glad* to help get a wheelchair up that step. If

uncertain, call first.

If credit cards are accepted, they are abbreviated as follows: AE = American Express, CB = Carte Blanche, DC = Diner's Club, D = Discover, MC = MasterCard, and V = Visa.

One final advisory: Remember that some of these establishments may change their hours. In revising this guide three times since its 1988 incarnation, we found that a *majority* of the restaurants had changed hours, credit cards, or something else. So, once again, call first, OK?

Most of the following reviews were written by George, some by Debbie, and many are collaborations. We didn't keep track, but we both stand by the final product. Enjoy your meals! GAE

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**FAST FOOD ALONG CANAL STREET** (N.b.: The nicer restaurants along Canal Street will be found in the Central Business District section.) All meals here will be under \$10.

**\*WENDY'S** 509 Canal 523-6141

6:30 am-10 pm Mon-Thu, 6:30-Mid Fri & Sat, 7 am-Mid Sun

Same as every other Wendy's. Next to the Marriott.

**\*POPEYES** 621 Canal 561-1021

10:30 am-Mid Sun -Thu, 10:30 am to 2 am Fri & Sat

1101 Canal 524-5482

6 am-Mid Sun -Thu , 6 am-1 am Fri & Sat

I was once told that the Popeyes in the 600 block of Canal sold more chicken per day than any other single store of any franchised fried chicken chain. It's better chicken than Church's or Kentucky Fried Chicken, and the terrific biscuits were developed by the great New Orleans chef Warren LeRuth. The dirty rice (rice with bits of chicken giblets) and the red beans and rice are also gratifyingly good. Yes, this chain is popular enough to support two outlets only five blocks apart.

**\*BURGER KING** 623 Canal 524-4147

6:30 am-Mid seven days

You know what they serve. They tell you every hour on the tube.

**\*MCDONALD'S** 711 Canal 525-4560

6 am-Mid Sun-Thu, 24 hrs Fri & Sat

934 Canal 524-3116

6 am-11 pm Sun-Thu, 6 am-Mid Fri & Sat



Watch TV for their menu, too.

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**IN THE FRENCH QUARTER AND THE FAUBOURG MARIGNY (N. b.:** The French Quarter extends downstream from Canal Street to Esplanade Avenue, between the river and Rampart Street. The Faubourg Marigny is the next neighborhood downstream from the Quarter, across Esplanade Avenue.)

**ACME OYSTER HOUSE** 724 Iberville 522-5973 11 am-10 pm Mon-Sat, Noon-7 pm Sunday. AE, DC, MC, V. No reservations. Casual: \$ HA

Kind of a funky-looking place between Bourbon and Royal, but it's one of the two classic New Orleans oyster bars that stare at each other across Iberville Street. You can get more expensive oysters on Bourbon Street, but you can't get fresher. My own feelings about oysters are rather negative. I think that if God went to all the trouble to wrap the suckers in a hard shell that's a lot of work to open, and then sunk them on the bottom of the ocean, He's giving us a clue that they're not fit to be eaten. My ex-wife ignored all my warnings and ate them raw anyway, and now she makes twice as much money as I do. Go figure.

**\*ALEX PATOUT'S** 221 Royal 525-7788 5:30 pm-10 pm seven days. All major credit cards. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$

The Patout family has been operating restaurants in the New Orleans area for generations. Currently, Alex Patout is one of the city's celebrity chefs, some others being Susan Spicer, Paul Prudhomme, Tom Cowman, and so forth. Patout takes familiar local and regional entrees and glorifies them. The largest section on the dinner menu is appetizers, which makes my mouth water--sometimes I go into a restaurant and order three or four appetizers and no entree. Some of my favorites here include marinated beef strips served with chipotle peppers on a white bean puree; the boudin (a pork and rice sausage); a fine shrimp remoulade or garlicky char-grilled shrimp; and "Louisiana won tons," stuffed with shrimp and crawfish on a bed of mango chutney. The entrees are divided on the menu into New Orleans, Louisiana, Bayou, and Grill. One popular selection from each category are: Sauteed crawfish tails in butter, parsley, and green onions; braided (sic) filet of pork with two sauces, one a morel cream and the other a pork-soaked prune glaze; Cajun smothered roast duck; and Veal la Louisiana, which is baby veal grilled and topped with lump crabmeat, shrimp, and wild mushrooms in a fresh dill beurre blanc. As you can tell, his cooking is simpler and more elegant than the run-of-the-mill Tabasco parlors.

**\*ANGELO BROCATO** 537 St. Ann 525-9676 10 am-10 pm seven days.  
No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$ HA

Now located in the Lower Pontalba building bordering Jackson Square, Brocato's ices and Italian desserts have been an institution for three generations. When I lived in New York, I used to buy Italian ices in tiny paper cups like the ones nurses use to bring your pills in the hospital, and the ices tasted not much better than crushed Popsicles. They weren't even in the same league with Brocato's. If you're walking around Jackson Square sometime during the convention, go into Brocato's and get a lemon or a strawberry ice (or both, if you're a pig like me). The proof of the pudding is that Brocato's supplies their ices to many of the restaurants in town. They're made only from fresh fruit and water and nothing else, and the lemon is about the most refreshing thing I can think of on a hot day. Brocato's also does wonderful spumoni, cassatta, biscuit tortoni, and spectacular cannoli--for which they're famous.

**\*ANTOINE'S** 713 St. Louis 581-4422 Noon-2 pm, 5:30 pm-9:30 pm,  
Closed Sunday. AE,DC,MC,V. Jacket and tie required. Ritzzy: \$\$\$\$\$  
Reservations recommended, but not essential. HA

Antoine's has been operated for 150 years by the same family, and it is the epitome of true Creole cuisine. Antoine's is my all-time favorite American restaurant. For many years, they claimed they didn't take reservations, and so tourists and other incognoscenti stood in a line at the front door until the maitre d' had a free table. (Get used to it. Some of the finest restaurants--K-Paul's and Galatoire's included--sometimes make you wait in the humidity half an hour or more.)

That's changed; reservations are now accepted over the phone. Still, I know some people go back home and say that Antoine's just wasn't so special. That's sometimes because the waiters can be blunt and quick with customers who show no interest in Antoine's unique offerings. If you show some curiosity about Antoine's cuisine, and put yourself in the hands of your waiter, you'll see a startling transformation. The waiter will be glad to spend a great amount of time explaining everything on the menu, warning you away from the run-of-the-mill stuff, and directing you to the incomparable specialties that have made Antoine's reputation around the world.

Just let me recommend a couple of items. Please don't go to Antoine's without ordering the pommes de terre souffles, which are like hot, hollow, fried potato balloons. Have your waiter bring an order to the table while you're looking at the rest of the menu. If you like oysters, note that Antoine's *invented* oysters Rockefeller, and if you've had that dish elsewhere, it was a pale copy. Try the alligator soup. It was introduced to replace the turtle soup, when the turtles became unavailable. When my waiter suggested it, I

said no. It sounded like a gimmick, but then I tried it anyway. The alligator meat turns out to be good, solid, and delicious, and the soup is terrific.

For an entree, if you like steak, get the filet, which is one of the best in town, but also opt for one of the several sauces, which are sold separately. I'm a sucker for a good bearnaise, but there's an even better choice--try the rich, exquisite marchand de vin. If you're hesitant, have them bring the sauce on the side.

The seafood is very good, although one of the famous specialties, the Pompano en papillote, can be disappointing. There's a good Chicken Rochambeau with two sauces, and a Chicken Bonne Femme that I've been wanting to try for a long time now. Finish the meal with Cafe Brulot, which is not only a stunning gustatory experience, but also a heck of a show. You'll see. And my favorite dessert is the Baked Alaska, which comes out decorated like the Goodyear blimp, with wonderful meringue birds on top. You have to order it at the start of the meal, and it's enough to feed six or eight people. Have your waiter show you the wine "cellar," which is a block long, and maybe he'll give you a tour of the other dining rooms, all of which have interesting stories attached to them.

Just recently, Antoine's has introduced a luncheon menu, with many of the dinner menu favorites. For instance, for a prix fixe 18.40, you can have oysters Rockefeller, the filet Marchand de Vin, soufflee potatoes, and salade Antoine. Think of it as Antoine's "Happy Meal."

Some day when I earn the kind of money I think I'm worth, I'd like to eat at Antoine's at least once a week.

**\*ARNAUD'S** 813 Bienville 523-5433 11:30 am-2:30 pm Mon-Fri, 10 am-2 pm Sun, 6 pm-10 pm seven days. Reservations recommended. Jacket and tie required. All major credit cards. Ritzy: \$\$\$

Arnaud's is another old-line restaurant, and half a century ago it was considered the best of the bunch, but in recent years the kitchen had fallen on hard times. Arnaud's has some new management now, and its formerly tarnished reputation has made a great comeback. It's been some time since I've been to Arnaud's, but their current menu has quite a large number of interesting offerings. Their appetizers include shrimp, crabmeat, turtle, and snails prepared in various ways, seven oyster dishes (four of them house specialties), a broad selection of soups, egg dishes, and salads. The shellfish section has familiar shrimp, crab, and crawfish dishes (and some not-so-familiar); they also offer Frog Legs Provencale and Alligator Sauce Piquante. Similarly, there are excellent choices in the Fish, Fowl, and Meat sections, and any of these can be had either plain or grilled. Arnaud's has a truly grand dessert menu. Among all the other tempting sweets, the one that caught my eye first was Chocolate Terrine Deux Etages . . . a chocolate terrine "two

stories high."

Arnaud's features a special Sunday jazz brunch menu, too.

This is the place you've seen in the coffee commercials, where they secretly replace Arnaud's coffee with a freeze-dried instant. They should have been flogged.

**\*BACCO** 310 Chartres 522-2426 7 am-10 am, 11:30 am-2:30 pm, 5:30-10 pm Mon-Fri; 8:30 am-10 am, 11:30 am-2:30 pm, 5:30-10 pm Sat; 8:30 am-2 pm, 5:30 pm-10 pm Sun. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Nice: \$\$\$ Reservations recommended for evenings, weekends, and parties over four. HA

Owned by the same Brennan family members who own the excellent Mr. B's. I thought the ambience here was beautiful, especially the handpainted silk chandelier and the antique iron gate, but a bit noisy. The service was observant yet unobtrusive; "almost like being spied on," Debbie said.

They offer a good number of first-rate antipasti, including carpaccio with arugula and roasted eggplant stuffed with herbed goat cheese in a light tomato sauce. These can be followed by selections from the salad, pizza, and pasta lists. A few memorable choices are a salad of arugula, shredded poached rabbit, raisins, and pecans in a red-wine vinaigrette; "rags" of pasta, smoked chicken, spinach, and Parmesan cheese; fettuccine tossed with shrimp, sea scallops, wild mushrooms, rucola, and fresh basil; and many, many more. The entrees include wood-fired roasted chicken flavored with rosemary; marinated duck breast; veal scaloppine topped with sauteed spinach and fontina cheese; hickory-grilled swordfish with a sauce of tomatoes, black olives, garlic, oregano; roasted loin of pork with rosemary demi-glace; and a grilled twelve-ounce sirloin steak.

They have seven delicious desserts, but I'd like to specially recommend the ice cream with a sweet and sour balsamic vinegar sauce. It's really good and not the least bit weird.

Oh, they have a lunch menu, too, which is almost completely different from the dinner menu. There are plenty of attractive choices, and they're less expensive.

**BAYONA** 430 Dauphine 525-4455 6 pm-9:30 pm Mon-Thu, 6 pm-10:30 pm Fri & Sat. All major credit cards. Reservations required. Nice: \$\$\$ The dining room has one step; they'll help people in wheelchairs across.

We have celebrity chefs in New Orleans, who get almost as much local attention as our athletes and politicians. If there had been the culinary equivalent of the Rookie of the Year Award for Best New Chef, Susan Spicer would have won by acclamation a few years ago. Spicer has created some remarkable dishes using imaginative new combinations of ingredients. Her



restaurant at The Bistro in the Hotel Maison de Ville was an immediate success, ranking in the top five in the city in food and ambience. Her new place is just as popular and rather small, so reserve a table well in advance. A splendid dining establishment.

**\*BAYOU RIDGE CAFE** 437 Esplanade 949-9912 11 am -11 pm Wed-Sun, Brunch 11 am-3 pm Sat & Sun. AE, MC, DC, D, V. Reservations recommended. Casual: \$\$ HA

Now happily ensconced in their new location, Bayou Ridge continues its tradition of putting together ingredients to create new and marvelous taste combinations. Their menu changes seasonally, and here are some of the more remarkable choices from a recent list. Under salads and appetizers, we like: Blue cheese salad with honey chive dressing, walnuts, and red onions; eggplant patties with shrimp and apple-smoked bacon; chicken and ginger wontons with chili-lime sauce; and many more. Entrees include Grilled duck breast and chicories with orange thyme dressing; fried chicken breast with honey champagne dressing over mixed greens; several salmon and tuna dishes; and one item that the restaurant particularly recommended--Moroccan vegetables spiced with cinnamon, cumin, and coriander over buttered cous cous.

**\*BEGUE'S** 300 Bourbon (in the Royal Sonesta Hotel) 586-0300 6:30 am-2:30 pm, 6 pm-11 pm, seven days. All major credit cards. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

Begue's was an old, grand New Orleans restaurant, but for a number of years the dining room in the Royal Sonesta shared only the name with the original establishment. Begue's has recently been completely renovated, and that goes for the menu, too, which has improved tremendously.

The dinner menu offers a number of creative and provocative items. The appetizers that have caught my eye include rigatoni pasta with lamb shanks, spinach, and goat cheese, as well as rabbit, andouille sausage, and gruyere in phyllo with a tarragon-tomato vinaigrette.

Among the four soups and four salads, I'll mention the grilled pheasant tenderloin, cucumber, cilantro, and mint salad with yogurt dressing.

And some of the entrees that appealed to me include the pan-fried red snapper with zucchini and crab claws in scampi butter; the seared pork tenderloin with apple-potato cake with bourbon-cider sauce; and seared medallions of veal with gruyere-potato gratin and wild mushroom sauce.

One nice thing is that dinner is served until 11:00 pm.

**\*BELLA LUNA** 44 French Market Place 529-1583; 6 pm -10 pm seven days, 11 am-4 pm Sun. All major credit cards. Reservations recommended.

Nice: \$\$\$ HA

At the risk of being considered a superlative monger, I have to say that Bella Luna is another superb Italian restaurant. The difference here is that the cuisine is a sort of Nouvelle Italian--at least as far as the creative combinations of ingredients are concerned. Where the restaurant departs from the typical Nouvelle dining establishment is in the size of the portions. Bella Luna's are enormous. From our visits, I recall wonderful Italian appetizers, salads, and pasta dishes. The entrees run to deliciously different seafood and lamb dishes; I had a remarkable pecanwood-smoked veal with a scallion corn cake. They also feature steak, salmon, oven-roasted pork chops in a creole pecan crust with Abita beer (a small local brewery) sauce. Bella Luna has one of the most beautiful views of the Mississippi River I've ever seen at a restaurant.

**\*BRENNAN'S** 417 Royal 525-9711 8 am-2:30 pm, 6 pm-10 pm seven days. All major credit cards. Reservations recommended. Ritzy: \$\$\$\$ HA

Breakfast at Brennan's may be the most famous meal in New Orleans. A very large percentage of visitors from out-of-town feel that a trip to New Orleans isn't complete without it. If you've never been to Brennan's, this is unlike any breakfast you've ever had. For one thing, it's pretty doggone expensive. We're not talking corn flakes here. We're talking a huge meal that ought to carry you right through to a late supper.

Breakfast often starts with a drink. Brennan's has several unusual alcoholic eye-openers, including a milk punch and a Ramos gin fizz for which they're famous. Then there's oyster soup or a baked apple in heavy cream. The entrees consist of a variety of poached egg dishes, the most famous of which are the Eggs Sardou (on top of an artichoke bottom, with creamed spinach) and the Eggs Hussarde (with Canadian bacon and grilled tomato, covered with marchand de vin sauce). There are others that feature corned beef hash, fried trout, or crabmeat. Almost all are covered with a very good hollandaise.

I personally loathe poached eggs, but Brennan's has other things on their breakfast menu. I'm a big fan of the grillades and grits. Grillades are medallions of veal round in a spicy red gravy. The dish used to be a Creole standard, but for some reason it's hard to come by these days.

There is a very famous dessert here, too--Bananas Foster. It's sauteed bananas in a thick butter and brown sugar sauce, served over vanilla ice cream. You'll love it. But even better--and I guess I'm in the minority for stating this--are the Crepes Fitzgerald, which are crepes filled with a mixture of sour cream and cream cheese and covered with a wonderful sauce of strawberries cooked down in rum and liqueur.

This is a huge restaurant, and the kitchen must be a real factory. Nevertheless, the quality of the food is remarkably consistent, but the seating

and the service can often be sluggish.

**\*BROUSSARD'S** 819 Conti 581-3866 5:30 pm-11 pm seven days. Jacket and tie required. All major credit cards. Reservations recommended. Ritzzy: \$\$\$\$ HA

A beautiful old restaurant, Broussard's has one of the French Quarter's prettiest courtyards, where you can sit and have cocktails before dining. The food is consistently good Continental and New Orleans-style Creole. Broussard's is one of New Orleans' grand old restaurants, on a par with Arnaud's, Galatoire's, and so forth. They offer a table d'hote menu that gives you a choice of several good seafood appetizers, soup or salad, and such entrees as Gulf fish and grilled shrimp in tri-color peppercorn sauce, roulade of chicken and seafood, and braised quail and veal medallions. There is also an extensive a la carte menu. One of odd things I noticed was the language of the latter; fish and crustaceans are *accompanied* by fresh vegetables, while the meat dishes are *embellished* by them. All I can figure is that the diner is permitted to consume the "embellishments," but the "accompanying" vegetables must be home by eleven.

**\*CAFE DU MONDE** 800 Decatur 525-4544 24 hours seven days. No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$ HA

Any visitor to town who does not drop by the Cafe du Monde at least once will have his letters of transit revoked. This place is an institution. There's a large patio diagonally across from Jackson Square, from which you can watch everybody and his weird uncle walk by, all day and all night long. The menu is simple: hot beignets, which are puffy, square, delicious doughnuts covered with powdered sugar; milk; or coffee. The coffee is authentic New Orleans cafe au lait, coffee and chicory so strong it's mixed 50/50 with hot milk. Recent radical innovations include orange juice and soft drinks. What is the world coming to?

There's a small dining room inside, but it's much more fun to lounge on the patio and people-watch. This is a terrific place to come at two or three or four in the morning, after a long day at the convention.

**\*CAFE GIOVANNI** 117 Decatur 529-2154 5:30 pm-10 pm Mon-Thu, 5:30 pm-11 pm Fri & Sat.

All major credit cards. Reservations suggested for dinner. Nice: \$\$ HA

I suppose you'd classify this first-rate restaurant as "contemporary continental." The service is extremely solicitous, but not smothering. There are unique appetizers of quail, salmon, homemade sausage, calamari. The entrees and appetizers vary from lunch to dinner (one example: at lunch they list tournedos marsala, while at dinner they replace that with tournedos in a

green peppercorn sauce). They do the expected, prepared in completely unexpected ways--pasta (like Pasta Absolute: sauteed shrimp and scallops in citron vodka, basil, and cream sauce), grilled fish and meat, chicken breast stuffed with mozzarella and fontina, grilled sweet pepper with Italian sausage and marsala sauce. Executive chef Duke LoCicero says that if your favorite dish is not on their menu, they will try to accommodate you (!). Since each meal is prepared individually, they are happy to modify anything on the menu to make it a vegetarian dish. One odd touch: in successive lines on the menu, they spell linguine "linguini" in one place, and "linguine" immediately thereafter. We're developing a great urge to take a felt-tip pen and copy-edit menu prose wherever we go.

**\*CAFE MASPERO** 601 Decatur 523-6250 11 am-11 pm Sun-Thu, 11 am-Mid Fri & Sat. No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$

There's often a line outside Maspero's, but unlike Antoine's it's not because the maitre d' locks the front door. It's because Maspero's has a wide reputation for serving large portions of good food at low prices. This is the place I send people who are looking for "a good, cheap place to eat." The burgers, chili, and onion soup are fine, but the pastrami or the roast beef and swiss are even better.

**\*CAFE PONTALBA** 546 St. Peter 522-1180 10:30 am-11 pm Mon-Fri, 10 am-11 pm Sat & Sun. MC, V. Casual: \$\$ HA

Basically an OK place for tourists to get burgers near Jackson Square, located in the Upper Pontalba Building. When we called, they were vague about closing time, basically saying they closed when they felt like it, so I wouldn't make a special trip over there after dark.

**CAFE VIEUX CARRE** 241 Bourbon 524-0114 5:30 pm-10:30 pm Mon-Thu, 5:30 pm-11:30 pm Fri-Sun.

AE, MC, V. Casual: \$\$ HA

If Claude Rains were to say "Round up the usual suspects," and he were talking about New Orleans cuisine, they'd all be found on the menu of the Cafe Vieux Carre, but not much else. You know, that shrimp, oyster, andouille bunch. I've heard that the food is OK. For New Orleans, it's not adventurous, not memorable. OK, in a nice enough setting. Live jazz at dinner Wednesday through Sunday.

**\*CARMELO'S** 539 Decatur 586-1414 11:30 am-4 pm, 5:30 pm-11 pm, Sun-Thu; 11:30 am-4 pm, 5:30 pm-11:30 pm, Fri & Sat. AE, MC, V. Nice: \$\$ HA

Carmelo's Ristorante is a pleasant, comfortable place on busy Decatur Street.



They offer regional Italian cuisines. The appetizers lean to seafood, fried cheeses, and so forth. Tempting pasta entrees are typical, such as linguini and gulf shrimp sauteed in white wine, olive oil, and garlic. They also offer interesting entrees featuring veal, chicken, or eggplant, and they're one of the few sources of mussels in the Downtown Dining Demarcation (I just made up the DDD; I wanted to see if I could get away with it). There should be a nice view of the river from Carmelo's balcony.

**\*CASTILLO'S** 620 Conti 525-7467 11:30 am-2 pm, 5:30 pm-9:30 pm seven days. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$\$ HA

Castillo's was one of the first restaurants I ever visited in New Orleans, and I have a lot of sentimental attachment to it. Unfortunately, the quality of the food has declined over the years, but it's still as good as any other Mexican restaurant in the area. I used to think it was pretty good, until I went to a restaurant in Juarez. That's when I realized I'd never actually eaten good Mexican food before. Castillo's, and the other Mexican places in this guide, serve the adequate and sometimes delicious Americanized dishes we've all become familiar with. Here I like the chalupa and the Texas enchiladas, which are cheese enchiladas covered with a good chili con carne.

**\*CENTRAL GROCERY** 923 Decatur 523-1620 8 am-5:30 pm Mon-Sat, 9 am-5:30 pm Sun. No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$ HA

Another institution. This is really a grocery store stocked with gourmet and hard-to-get items, but they also make a sandwich that successfully competes locally with the po-boy--the muffuletta (pronounced, for some reason, muffa-LOTta). A muffuletta is built on a round loaf of seeded Italian bread eight inches across. The Central Grocery piles on ham, salami, provolone, mortadella, mozzarella, and a spectacular garlic-laced olive salad. They now have a small counter where you can sit and devour your sandwich, but I like to get one and a bottle of Coke and carry them down to Jackson Square.

**\*CHART HOUSE** 801 Chartres 523-2015 5 pm-10 pm Sun-Thu, 5 pm-11 pm Fri, 5 pm-Mid Sat. All major credit cards. Nice: \$\$\$

Good seafood and steaks, and they bring the salad bar to the table. The restaurant is located in a beautifully restored old French Quarter building, but there's no way anyone in a wheelchair could get into the dining room: it's up a winding staircase.

**\*CLOVER GRILL** 900 Bourbon 523-0904 24 hours seven days. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

A dependable diner that's gotten national attention. They make one of the city's best burgers here. It starts with a large serving of fresh ground beef,

not a pre-formed patty. I order a bacon cheeseburger with onions, tomato, mayo, and ketchup. It's so big and juicy that I usually have to change my shirt afterward. The burger is similar in intent and execution to the Camellia Grill's. They also have good milk shakes, omelettes, club sandwiches, and daily specials. Be warned: the clientele is drawn from all the fringe lifestyles that hang out on Bourbon Street. Try not to stare.

**\*COFFEE POT** 714 St. Peter 524-3500 8 am-Mid Mon-Thu, 8 am-1 am Fri & Sun. AE, DC, MC, V. Casual: \$\$

HA: Although steps make the main dining room inaccessible to a wheelchair, there are patio tables outside.

Breakfast served to 3 pm daily, lunch starts at 11 am. OK breakfasts. They used to have grillades and grits on their menus, as well as calas (rice cakes, a vanished New Orleans tradition). We just checked--no on the grillades, calas only for breakfast. Their lunch and dinner menu is acceptable, but not worth planning your day around.

**\*COOP'S PLACE** 1109 Decatur 525-9053 11 am-2 am Sun -Thu, 11 am-3 am Fri & Sat. AE, D, DC, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

Typical New Orleans pot dishes--jambalaya, red beans and rice, crawfish etouffee (when available), and so forth--with seafood and pasta dishes a specialty.

**\*COURT OF TWO SISTERS** 613 Royal 522-7261 9 am-3 pm, 5:30 pm-11 pm seven days. All major cards. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

A world-famous restaurant. The local feeling is that it has the loveliest courtyard in the French Quarter, but the food is nothing special. On our latest visit, the presentation was elegant, the continental food was excellent, but thanks to a combination of leisurely service and our own relaxed frame of mind, we were there nearly three hours!

The Court of Two Sisters offers a table d'hote for 33.00 that comes with a choice of appetizer (seafood gumbo, chicken andouille gumbo, fruit cocktail, onion soup gratinee, turtle soup, or three baked oysters any style for four dollars more), and salad. The seafood entrees include Crawfish Louise (crawfish tails sauteed in olive oil with mushrooms, green onions, and garlic, served en casserole with seasoned bread crumbs and parmesan cheese); trout meuniere or amandine; shrimp creole; and so forth. The fowl section lists chicken sauteed and covered with lump crabmeat, hollandaise sauce, and asparagus spears; chicken breast stuffed with shrimp and crabmeat and baked in puffed pastry; coq au vin rouge; and duckling l'orange. The meats offer char-broiled beef tenderloin; char-broiled pork loin with fresh fruit and sweet

potato pancakes; tournedos of veal loin; and breaded baby white veal served with pasta and a cream sauce of artichoke bottoms, mushrooms, black olives, and green onions. Many of these dishes and many others can be found in the a la carte section of the menu.

**\*CRESCENT CITY BREWHOUSE** 527 Decatur 522-0571 11 am-11 pm seven days. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA to first floor dining room.

What a nifty idea, a microbrewery--that serves good food--within stone-throwing distance from the former Jax macrobrewery (now a shopping mall). They serve burgers, sandwiches, salads, and more ambitious entrees: savory alligator and andouille sausage pie, boiled brisket, shrimp chili, and roasted salmon. They offer a sampler of their house-brewed beers: 7 oz each of their pilsner, red stallion, black forest, and harvest bock for \$4.95.

**\*CROISSANT D'OR** 617 Ursulines 524-4663 7 am-5 pm seven days. No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$ HA

Excellent coffee and pastries in a quiet French Quarter location. A sister shop to La Marquise (q. v.) on Chartres Street.

**\*DANTE'S PIZZA** 730 St. Peter 523-2683  
401 Bourbon 561-8670

10 am-2 am Sun-Thu, 10 am-3 am Fri & Sat. No credit cards. Casual: \$  
Pizza by the slice (or whole), baked ziti, and other Italian dishes. Beer and soft drinks. No delivery.

**\*DECATUR HOUSE** 1119 Decatur 523-7702 11:30 am-3 pm, 6 pm-11 pm Tue-Sun. All major cards. Reservations accepted. Casual: \$ HA

Their veal, chicken, and seafood entrees are filling but unexceptional; they do make good po-boys. One item that deserves mention is Veal Bonaparte--an escalope of veal, lightly battered, and sauteed in a white wine sauce with crabmeat and mushrooms.

**\*DESIRE OYSTER BAR** 300 Bourbon (in the Royal Sonesta) 586-0300  
11 am-Mid seven days. All major credit cards. No reservations. Casual: \$ HA

A friend who eats here several times a week says that the fried seafood is always the best, but *do not* order anything au gratin. The decor and the servers' uniforms are evocatively nostalgic.

**\*DI PIAZZA'S** 337 Dauphine 525-3335 5 pm-11 pm Mon-Sat. AE, DC, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$

A nice little family-run Italian restaurant. The menu lists more than a dozen

attractive appetizers (including conch fritters, which are virtually unknown elsewhere in New Orleans). They have a fascinating grid system listed in the entree section. The kitchen will do your choice of prime veal, veal chops, steaks, chicken, lamb, shrimp, or fresh fish in any of the following ways: parmesan, piccata, milanese, marsala, fra diablo, marchand du vin, or mushrooms, peppers, and onions. There are plenty of interesting pasta dishes, too, of course. The portions are huge; a young woman at the next table ordered a seafood salad from the appetizer list and it was bigger than her head. Then they brought her the entree. She hardly made a dent in either plate.

**EMBERS** 700 Bourbon 523-1485 5 pm-1:30 am Mon-Thu, 8 am-2:30 am Fri-Sun. All major cards. Casual: \$\$ HA

A moderately-priced Bourbon Street steak place, aimed at tourists who don't want to deal with strange New Orleans food.

**FELIX'S OYSTER BAR** 739 Iberville 522-4440 9:30 am-Mid Mon-Sat, 9:30 am-10 pm Sun. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

The second of the two rival oyster bars on Iberville. A while ago, Felix's took over the space vacated by an adjacent Italian restaurant, expanding and giving them an entrance on Bourbon Street. What the Soviets failed to accomplish in Afghanistan, Felix's pulled off in the French Quarter. More dependable for raw oysters than anyplace else on Bourbon.

**FRENCH MARKET RESTAURANT AND BAR** 1101 Decatur 581-9855 11 am-11 pm Sun-Thu, 11 am-Mid Fri & Sat. All major cards. Casual: \$\$

What we've got here is lots of seafood appetizers, crabs and raw oysters, with baskets of crawfish and shrimp boiling open by the sidewalk and wafting their fragrances toward pedestrians. The menu lists most varieties of seafood entrees, steaks, po-boys, and pasta dishes. This place is a huge attraction for tourists. After the Sugar Bowl, the pile of trash out back was nearly a half a block long!

**\*G & E COURTYARD GRILL** 1115 Decatur 528-9376 11 am-3 pm Tue-Sun, 5 pm-11 pm Tue-Thu, 5 pm-Mid Fri & Sun. All major cards. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$ HA

They spelled "caesar salad" right, and that's a big point in their favor. On their menu is a muffuletta salad that could be very interesting. Sandwiches include grilled free-range veal with homemade mozzarella, tomatoes, and calamata olives. One attractive dish is lamb and sausage with penne pasta. Debbie, the vegetarian, pointed out the red chard salad with tomato and basil, marinara, and soft ricotta. There is also a selection of seafood.



**\*GALATOIRE'S** 209 Bourbon 525-2021 11:30 am-9 pm Tue-Sat, Noon-9 pm Sun. MC, V. Jacket and tie required. No reservations. Ritzy: \$\$\$ HA

Some people mention Antoine's and Galatoire's in the same breath, although many locals give Galatoire's a slight edge. For one thing, you don't have to go through the waiter-reservation rigamarole. At Galatoire's, you can't make reservations of *any* sort, and if you go by the place at the height of the dinner hour, you'll see a long line of well-dressed people backed up almost to Iberville Street. You can avoid that mob of dinner hopefuls by trying out the menu at lunch, when there is little or no wait. The crowd doesn't really start forming until after 6 pm.

The food and the service are definitely worth the wait, however. Galatoire's is, like Antoine's, an old, first-rate Creole restaurant. The food is exceptionally good, but it depends, of course, on the meal and on what you order. This can get tricky, because Galatoire's has perhaps the largest, most extensive menu I've ever seen. The secret is to remember that most of the items listed in those eight pages are rarely ordered. For instance, I wonder how many people stand in line to get Galatoire's version of bacon and eggs.

Galatoire's is best known for seafood, especially two superb trout dishes, the Trout Marguery and the Trout Meuniere. I'm not all that crazy about fish, but I was once talked into ordering the Trout Meuniere, and I absolutely loved it. It was pan-fried with incredible delicacy. The Trout Marguery is the specialty of the house. It comes poached in butter with a wonderful sauce whipped up from mushrooms and shrimp. You can also go with their shrimp, crab, and oyster dishes. Meat dishes aren't prepared with quite the same distinction.

I might mention my favorite dessert at Galatoire's, which is possibly my favorite dessert in all of New Orleans (I liked it so much that I had my waiter at Antoine's make it for me once, although it isn't on Antoine's menu). It's called Crepes Maison, and they're crepes spread with currant jelly, rolled, and absolutely drowned in Grand Marnier. You might get a buzz off the crepes, because I don't think anyone makes much of an effort to flambe the alcohol. The soused crepes are topped with bits of orange peel, sliced almonds, and, if I remember correctly, powdered sugar. They're absolutely wonderful.

Galatoire's usually places second in any comprehensive list of favorite restaurants (Commander's Palace will be first). It's also within walking distance of the hotels, and somewhat less expensive than Antoine's.

**GRECO'S** 1000 N. Peters 523-7418 11 am -10 pm Mon-Fri, 9 am-10 pm Sat & Sun. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$

Buffet Saturday and Sunday from 9 am to noon and a good view of the river. When we went to gather the basic restaurant information, they asked if we were trying to steal their recipes. From the menu? Anyway, they serve traditional New Orleans dishes such as cajun fettucine with crawfish and

andouille in cream sauce with garlic and red peppers. They also offer grilled seafood, barbecued shrimp, chicken, and beef dishes, but we won't find out about them. There are friendlier places where we can spend our money.

**\*GUMBO SHOP** 630 St. Peter 525-1486 11 am-11 pm seven days. All major cards. Casual: \$\$ HA

This is a well-known spot visited by tourists and locals alike. Both gumbos--the seafood and okra or the chicken and andouille sausage--of course are exceptionally good, and there are versions of other New Orleans specialties that are very good but not great. You can get a reliable sampling of local cuisine here. We might single out the grilled boudin with Creole mustard among the appetizers, and any of the fish dishes among the entrees. Patio dining is available.

**HARD ROCK CAFE** 418 N. Peters 529-5617 11:30 am-Mid Fri & Sat, 11:30 am-11 pm Sun-Thu. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

Just like all the others, this one serves burgers and "All-American food." And they have rock 'n' roll memorabilia and T-shirts. That's about it.

**\*HOULIHAN'S OLD PLACE** 315 Bourbon 523-7412 11:30 am-11 pm Sun -Thu, 11:30 am-Mid Fri & Sat. All major credit cards. Casual: \$\$ HA

Part of a national chain, with a large and inconsistent menu. I can't really recommend anything in particular, because the quality of their offerings all depends on who's working in the kitchen when you happen to drop in. I've had very satisfactory meals here, as well as ones that were perfectly awful. They do a truly mean frozen strawberry daiquiri, though, and they've got a first-rate raw oyster bar.

**JACKSON SQUARE CAFE** 801 Decatur 523-5061 11 am-10 pm seven days. All major cards. No reservations. Casual: \$ HA

Lots of dead animal parts displayed on the wall, and they aren't menu samples, either. Debbie was grossed out. They serve New Orleans pot dishes, burgers, and other sandwiches. Not ambitious, but a great location at the corner of Decatur Street in the Lower Pontalba Building (a construction of considerable historical note, consult your guide book), facing the Cafe Du Monde.

**JOHNNY WHITE'S CREOLE KITCHEN** 718 Bourbon 523-2085 11 am-Mid, Sun-Thu, 11 am-3 am Fri & Sat. All major credit cards. No reservations. Casual: \$\$

First of all, there's definitely no handicap access; on the ground floor is Johnny White's bar, and the dining area is up a narrow, twisty staircase.

Once you arrive, however, things look up. There is a pleasant dining room, and tables on the balcony from which you can watch the oddments down on Bourbon Street as they parade by.

The menu is good, substantial New Orleans food. The appetizers run to boiled crawfish, BBQ shrimp, oysters on the half shell, and so forth. There are a variety of po-boy sandwiches. For dinner, the more complete meals include red beans and rice (with sausage or breaded pork chop); blackened chicken breast; hot and spicy rice creation with chicken, sausage, and shrimp; alligator sauce picante; sauteed frog legs; trout; Alaskan king crab; and Maine lobster. There are also several steak entrees, and platters of fried chicken, catfish, trout, etc.

**\*K-PAUL'S** 416 Chartres 524-7394 11:30 am-2:30 pm Mon -Fri, 5:30 pm-10 pm Mon-Sat. AE. No reservations. Nice: \$\$\$\$ HA

You want to know about K-Paul's, right? You read about Paul Prudhomme in every national magazine except *The Computer Shopper*, and you've seen him peeling crawfish with celebrity talk show hosts. Well, Prudhomme is our most gregarious celebrity chef, and he's a terrific self-promoter. He has a lot to promote, too. He's singlehandedly responsible for the fact that the government had to step in to protect the redfish. Nobody ate redfish until Paul Prudhomme invented the technique of blackening the poor little suckers. And when redfish became unavailable to him, he wasn't worried. He just found some other neglected fish and created still more new recipes.

That, after all, is Prudhomme's genius: he's absolutely brilliant at devising new ways to prepare old dishes, and even better at coming up with new combinations of ingredients to cook in new ways. Generally, this creativity pays off in delicious rewards. Occasionally, it misses (I once had a spaghetti with pastrami and shrimp that was a total failure). But Prudhomme discards the recipes that don't work and goes on.

Now, locals badmouth the place for a couple of reasons. The first is that it started out as a small lunch spot in the shell of an old French Quarter bar (take a look at the martini glass painted on the exterior, leftover from the address's previous incarnation). Then the tourists discovered it, and now the line (yes, another locked front door) at dinner is the longest in the city of New Orleans. They are serving lunch again these days, and that may be your best bet (although the lunch menu is more limited) if you don't want to wait upwards of an hour to be seated.

The service is kind of pleasantly odd--you don't have a single waiter or waitress watching your table, but anyone who's not busy will bring your food to you. This can mean that one person will serve your appetizer, and another will bring your entree when it's finished cooking, whether you're ready for it or not. There are other rules, and many Orleanians object strenuously, despite

the fact that the Cajun food served here is about the best in the area.

K-Paul's uses fresh fish and a remarkable accuracy with spices, as well as vegetables, poultry, and rabbits grown on Prudhomme's own farm. Try the Cajun popcorn as an appetizer; the cute name refers to fried crawfish tails, and they're pretty good here. I particularly like the "frings," shredded and deep-fried onions and potatoes. It's tough to give advice on entrees, because the menu changes daily depending on what the restaurant could get fresh that day, and what the masters in the kitchen feel like making. I've always liked the gumbo, made with turkey and andouille sausage.

You'll know when you've tasted real Cajun food. It won't be just your eyes that'll water.

**\*LA MADELEINE** 547 St. Ann (in the Lower Pontalba Building) 568-9950 7 am-8 pm Mon-Sun. No credit cards or reservations, but they take LA checks. Casual: \$ HA

Our favorite of the three croissant and pastry shops we've listed. It's larger, for one thing, and bakes several types of bread that are otherwise nearly unobtainable in New Orleans. The croissants and brioches are excellent, and this is a good place to sit at a small table, read the paper, and have a light breakfast or snack. There are cases full of gorgeous pastries and filled croissants, and it's always tough to decide on just one or two; we always end up buying more than we can actually eat and bringing the rest home for later. La Madeleine also serves soups, several excellent quiches, salads, a tasty croque monsieur, and sandwiches. I love the Strawberries Romanoff with its incredibly rich brandied cream sauce. You can get a really nice Caesar salad for *one!* It has terrific croutons. And champagne and mimosas are on the menu, too, which is terribly civilized.

**\*LA MARQUISE** 525 Chartres 524-0420 7 am-5:30 pm seven days. No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$ HA

The sister shop to the Croissant d'Or (q. v.). A few tables, good pastries and croissants, and, according to one critic, "perfectly terrible coffee."

**LE JARDIN** 100 Iberville (in the Westin Hotel) 568-0155 6 am-2 pm, 6 pm-10:30 pm seven days, 2 pm-6 pm for Tea Mon-Sat. All major credit cards. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

The Sunday brunch is highly recommended, but the regular lunch and dinner menus aren't as good. Another place where the view beats out the food.

**\*LOUISIANA PIZZA KITCHEN** 95 French Market Place 522-9500 11 am-11 pm seven days. All major cards. Casual: \$\$

This restaurant was a remarkable discovery for us. Both the carnivore and



the vegetarian can dine here happily together. They offer a fabulous list of gourmet pizzas baked in a wood-fired oven. These include my favorite, the cheese pizza with andouille sausage and thinly sliced smoked Italian ham. Debbie's choice is a memorable four-cheese selection. They also serve very good salads, lasagna, manicotti, and so forth. Their wine list as long as the food list.

**LOUIS XVI** 730 Bienville (in the St. Louis Hotel) 581-7000 7 am-11 am Mon-Fri, 7 am-Noon Sat & Sun,

6 pm-9:30 pm seven days. Jacket and tie required. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Reservations recommended for dinner. Ritzy: \$\$\$\$ HA

An elegant, world-famous French restaurant. This is Patee-French food, not New Orleans-French. A first-class place if you want to go the escargot, rack of lamb, and Crepes Suzette route. The menu (*en francais, naturellement*) is very extensive and very impressive. If you want to escape the Cajun and Creole cuisines for a while, and you fancy Continental food (and the \$20-\$30 entrees don't scare you off), this is a good-looking and serious-minded culinary establishment.

**LUCKY DOGS** Every corner Casual: \$

Do not eat the Lucky Dogs. OK?

**\*MAMA ROSA'S** 616 N. Rampart 523-5546 10 am-10:30 pm Sun, Tue-Thu, 10 am-11:30 pm Fri & Sat. MC, V. Casual: \$\$

*People Magazine* once listed Mama Rosa's as one of the nine best pizza places in America. They were wrong. Now, the pizza here is fine, it's just not stupendous. The crust is good and thick, and they pile on a tremendous quantity of whatever toppings you order. The trouble is that you have to wait *forever*, and that's only a minor exaggeration. We've bailed out sometimes an hour after ordering. They bake great fresh bread that they serve with the Italian entrees, and on which they serve their meatball sandwiches.

**\*MAXIMO'S ITALIAN GRILL** 1117 Decatur 586-8883 6 pm-Mid seven days All major cards. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

A chic little Italian restaurant that has become one of our favorite restaurants in all of New Orleans. It's a sleekly decorated renovation in a part of Decatur Street that shows welcome signs of revival. And the service and food more than equal the restaurant's appearance.

In the back, in the second dining room, there is a large and very talented grill, and I'd be willing to bet that everything that comes from it is just terrific. For an appetizer, I love the carpaccio, which is thinly sliced seared beef tenderloin coated with olive oil and ground pepper, with onion, olives,

capers, and creole mustard. The antipasto was interesting, although I have no personal use for anchovies, and the hearts of palm salad was excellent. Debbie is crazy about the grilled slabs of Portobello mushrooms.

Maximo's has changed its menu somewhat since the last version of this restaurant guide. They still offer pasta dishes with a selection of very good sauces, and particularly good veal entrees--especially the saltimbocca. There are daily grilled fish specials, grilled jumbo gulf shrimp with caesar dressing, steaks and chops, and several chicken selections.

**MESSINA'S** 200 Chartres 523-3681 11 am-9 pm Tue-Thu, 11 am-10 pm Fri-Sun. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$

This is a very old, well-established, and very popular restaurant that does a solid lunch and dinner business at its convenient location. The menu consists of familiar Italian entrees, but it also leans heavily to seafood. The family also has two lunch counters and an excellent sit-down Italian restaurant in the Riverwalk.

**MIKE ANDERSON'S** 215 Bourbon 524-3884 11 am-10 pm Sun-Thu, 11 am-11 pm Fri & Sat. All major cards. Casual: \$\$ HA

Cajun-style seafood at less exorbitant prices than some other places along Bourbon Street. The food is good, the restaurant is convenient, and it's pleasant despite the constant tourist rush. There is also a Mike Anderson's in the Riverwalk food court.

**\*MOLLY'S AT THE MARKET** 1107 Decatur 525-5169 10 am-2 am seven days. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

Same look and feel as Molly's on Toulouse, but not the same ownership.

**\*MOLLY'S IRISH PUB AND RESTAURANT** 732 Toulouse 568-1915 24 hours seven days. No credit cards. Casual: \$ HA

Eggs and burgers all day and night in an Irish bar setting. The fried potatoes with onions are pretty good, but then, you'd expect an Irish place to do potatoes right, wouldn't you?

**\*MONA LISA** 1212 Royal 522-6746 11 am to 11 pm Sun-Thu, 11 am-Mid Fri & Sat. MC, V. Delivery. Casual: \$\$ HA

A funky little Italian place in the back of the Quarter. It's not beautiful, but it always seems to be crowded, chiefly with locals--its location is a bit farther back in the Quarter than visitors usually travel. Their menu is straightforward but limited: several varieties of pizza (including a breakfast pizza with scrambled egg and any other topping you like), linguine, spaghetti, fettucine, lasagna, eggplant Parmesan, and so forth, and various sandwiches and salads.

The food is good, hearty, but not elaborate. A good place to drop in for lunch after cruising the French Market area.

Their ad says they'll deliver to French Quarter hotels. Not to homes?

**\*MR. B'S** 201 Royal 523-2078 10:30 am-3 pm, 5 pm-10 pm seven days. AE, DC, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

Owned and operated by one branch of the Brennan family, the one that also runs Bacco (q. v.). It's extremely attractive and the food is first-rate, as you would expect from the Brennan family. You can get a knock-out gumbo here, called Gumbo Ya-ya, and a tomato, gruyere, and onion salad that's enough for a meal all by itself. Some of their remarkable dishes include grilled redfish; grilled duck, chicken, steak, and brochettes of shrimp and andouille sausage; a great chicken gumbo; filet mignon with port wine, raisins, and peppercorns (sounds fine by me); and excellent pasta dishes. To finish, try the excellent hot bread pudding, fluffy, with raisins and whiskey sauce. It's one of the best in a town that serves bread pudding *everywhere*.

**\*MR. GYRO'S** 817 Decatur 523-0214 11 am-11pm Sun-Thu, 11 am-Mid Fri & Sat. AE, D, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

Not ambitious, but a good place to stop while window-shopping on Decatur Street. The gyros and souvlaki are a little better than the Greek food stands you find in shopping malls, and the prices are only a trifle steeper. I love that sticky dessert that looks like shredded wheat--kataifi.

**\*NAPOLEON HOUSE** 500 Chartres 524-9752 11 am-Mid Mon-Thu, 11 am-1 am Fri & Sat, 11 am-6 pm Sun AE, D, DC, MC, V. Casual: \$\$ HA

Everybody loves the Napoleon House, and for some reason it's frequented more by locals than by tourists, despite its location. Maybe it's the dimness of the rooms. The rooms are also cool and filled with classical music. This is an historic building, called the Napoleon House because of a long-ago plot to kidnap the French emperor and bring him from exile to New Orleans. He was to be housed in a secret, hidden story above the present bar and restaurant. Unfortunately, he died before the plan could be executed. The best part of the place is the atmosphere and the opportunity, in the front barroom, to sit by the sidewalk and watch people. The drink specialty here is the Pimm's Cup, and the food is limited to appetizers, salads, and sandwiches, particularly a pretty good muffuletta, which the Napoleon House serves hot and for which they will do time in Purgatory. If you're in the Quarter (and you *will* be, won't you?), stop in for half an hour. This is the Platonic ideal of the French Quarter neighborhood bar.

**\*NOLA** 534 St. Louis 522-6652 2:30 pm-Mid seven days. All major

cards. Casual: \$\$\$ HA

Another restaurant owned by Emeril Lagasse of Emeril's (q.v.). Lagasse is one of the recent crop of celebrity chefs. At first glance, the menu here seems broader and more adventurous than Emeril's. Here are a few selections that caught my interest: "Real Lafayette" boudin stewed with beer, onions, cane syrup, and creole mustard, served on a sweet potato bread crouton (an appetizer); the Nola mixed grill--beef brisket, boudin, homemade andouille sausage, grilled legs of chicken and rabbit served with corn maque choux, greens, and homemade worcestershire sauce; jambalaya pizza (with chicken, andouille, and shrimp); grilled chicken breast with a cornbread andouille dressing; roasted trout with a citrus horseradish crust; and many others. Be sure to get a side order of roasted garlic creamed potatoes or pecan glazed sweet potatoes. For dessert, try the apple buttermilk pie with cinnamon ice cream.

P.S.: The bread pudding is warm with whiskey sauce.

**OLD DOG NEW TRICK CAFE** 307 Exchange Alley 522-4569 11 am-4pm Monday, 11 am-9 pm Tue-Sat.

No credit cards, but local checks are OK. Casual: \$ HA

A small but pleasant vegetarian cafe, ideal for lunch or dinner on a sunny day. It may be difficult for visitors to find; Exchange Alley runs parallel to Royal Street, between Royal and Chartres, three blocks back from Canal Street. The menu items are much more interesting than at most vegetarian restaurants. There is a variety of burgers; they're not soy protein, but made of seasoned brown rice, millet, lentils, and toasted sunflower seeds. They come plain; with barbecue sauce and sun-dried tomatoes; mesquite-flavored with homemade mayonnaise; with cheese, either dairy or non-dairy cheddar; with spicy ginger peanut sauce; and as a kind of Rueben, in whole wheat pita bread with Russian dressing and organic sauerkraut.

They offer a good range of sandwiches, from grilled vegetables to a "TLT" (grilled tempeh, lettuce, and tomato) to red lentil pate to "Tofurama," (tofu marinated in curry paste sauce, broiled with onions and mushrooms, served in an organic pita topped with ginger peanut sauce)(tofu, aarrgghhh). There a few vegetarian pizzas, made with dairy or non-dairy mozzarella, a polenta with green pepper-tomato sauce and topped with your choice of mozzarellas and grilled vegetables, and buckwheat noodles tossed with their ginger peanut sauce.

**\*OLDE N'AWLINS COOKERY** 729 Conti 529-3663 11 am-11 pm seven days. AE, MC, V. Reservations recommended for 6 or more. Nice: \$\$ HA

This was opened originally as a spinoff of K-Paul's, by one of Paul Prudhomme's best sous chefs, but he's left this establishment and opened



another elsewhere. The Cookery still offers a good overview of Cajun cuisine. The consensus is that it's coasting on the momentum imparted by the departed chef. The menu still features some interesting combinations, such as fried trout with pecans rather than almonds. The lemon crepes are highly recommended. It's become pretty much a tourist place and they can seat up to 600 people.

**ORIGINAL PAPA JOE'S** 600 Bourbon 529-1728 11 am-Mid, Thu-Mon.  
AE, MC, V. Casual: \$\$

An OK restaurant popular with browsers along Bourbon Street. It serves the usual shrimp and oyster dishes, gumbo, po-boys, fried seafood platters, muffulettas, steaks, and New Orleans pot dishes. It's not a place to plan your vacation around, but it's serviceable enough if you're overcome with hunger on its doorstep.

**PALM COURT CAFE** 1204 Decatur 525-0200 7 pm-11 pm Wed-Sun.  
AE, D, MC, V. Casual: \$\$

There is shrimp all over the menu, with jambalaya, red beans and rice, cajun beef, a pasta and vegetable dish, and a few things with chicken. The main emphasis seems to be on the jazz, however, with music starting at 8 pm nightly.

**PASTA E VINO** 240 Bourbon 523-3181 5 pm-Mid Tue-Sun; AE, CB,  
DC, MC, V. Casual: \$\$

See Tony Moran's.

**PELICAN CLUB** 312 Exchange Alley 523-1504 11:30-2:30 Mon-Fri, 6  
pm-10 pm Mon-Thu, 6 pm-11 pm Fri & Sat. AE, D, DC, MC, V. Nice: \$\$\$  
HA

It's a very nice-looking, comfortable establishment, with an adventuresome menu. The lunch menu has many of the favorites from the dinner list, along with some lighter appetizers and entrees. The dinner menu features (among other appetizers) escargot and crabmeat baked with garlic, mushrooms, and tequila; eight salads, ranging from Caesar to house-smoked Atlantic salmon with red onions, capers, olive oil, and toasted brioche; veal and shrimp potstickers; duck and pork spring rolls; and crawfish chili with white beans. The entrees include grilled quail with shrimp and sausage cornbread stuffing; grilled Norwegian salmon or swordfish with a choice of three sauces; bourbon peppercorn tuna steak; crawfish-stuffed pompano; cioppino (an "Italian bouillabaisse"); and roasted and grilled ginger duck.

**\*PERE ANTOINE'S** 741 Royal 581-4478 9 am-10 pm Mon-Fri, 8 am-

Mid Sat & Sun. No credit cards. Casual: \$\$ HA

They serve the usual New Orleans fare--muffulettas, red beans and rice, omelettes, jambalaya, seafood, and other local favorites, in a pretty dining room with decorative ironwork and flowers.

**PERISTYLE** 1041 Dumaine 593-9535 6 pm-10 pm Tue-Thu, 6 pm-11 pm Fri & Sat. MC, V. Nice: \$\$\$

This is a nice restaurant in the location that used to belong to Marti's (which is why they have a big etched "M" on their door). The menu is brief, but the entrees are unusual, and the presentation is careful and pleasing to the eye. Of the eight appetizers, we'll mention the veal and sweetbread ravioli with browned butter and sage; herb de provence crusted gravlax (very unusual for New Orleans) with fennel glaze; and the duck breast with sauteed foie gras and grapes. There are also eight entrees, including pan-seared sea scallops with blood orange, leeks, and pernod; grilled quail with currants and pinot noir; and venison with wild mushrooms, rosemary, and balsamic vinegar. This menu is subject to frequent change.

The dining room has a large mural of City Park, done in a rather naive style. Very charming.

**\*PETUNIA'S** 817 St. Louis 522-6440 8 am-11 pm seven days. AE, CB, D, MC, V. Nice: \$\$

Petunia's is a pleasant, comfortable place to come for crepes, seafood, or Sunday brunch.

The menu offers The World's Largest Crepes. At fourteen inches, they may be close, although I'm sure if the word got out, some outraged Gaullic crepiere would soon be pouring fifteen inchers just out of national pride. Inside Petunia's crepes, there are wonderful combinations of ingredients: I recommend the St. Philip (roast beef, onions, mushrooms, gravy, and sour cream), the St. Francis (shrimp, crabmeat, ratatouille, and Swiss cheese), or the St. Michael (broccoli, cheddar, ham or chicken, and cheese sauce. The entrees are well turned-out versions of familiar seafood dishes: Cajun grilled catfish, shrimp in curry and dill sauce with tomato over rice, crabmeat and shrimp au gratin, as well as blackened or grilled steaks. The dessert list is ambitious, with such things as fresh fruit crepes, hot apples and rum flambe over vanilla ice cream, bananas foster crepes flambe, and "Flaming Dame Nellie Melba Crepe," which contains sliced peaches, vanilla ice cream, and a wonderful raspberry brandy sauce.

**PIERRE MASPERO'S SLAVE EXCHANGE** 440 Chartres 524-8990 7 am-10 pm seven days. AE, DC, MC, V. Casual: \$\$ HA

Typical New Orleans fare--red beans and rice, po-boys, jambalaya, seafood,

other local favorites. There are several mid-price restaurants just like this in the Quarter.

**\*POPPY'S** 717 St. Peter 524-3287 24 hours seven days. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

Owned by the same people as the Clover Grill (q. v.), which this is just like, but with beer. They claim to serve "the Earth's best burgers." Could be--get one with bacon, cheese, and grilled onions.

**\*PORT OF CALL** 838 Esplanade 523-0120 11 am-1 am Sun-Thu, 11 am-3 am Fri & Sat. AE. Casual: \$\$

So many people think the Port of Call has the best burgers and the best pizza in town, but I just don't understand it. The pizza I had was thin and scorched and not great. The burgers are made from freshly ground beef, served with grated cheddar, and are pretty good.

**\*THE PRALINE CONNECTION** 542 Frenchmen 943-3934 11 am-10:30 pm Sun-Thu, 11 am-Mid Fri & Sat. AE, DC, MC, V. Casual: \$

As you may be able to tell by its name, The Praline Connection began as a candy shop, and that's still there. More recent, however, is the Creole soul restaurant that opened up adjacent to it. It's very inexpensive, and the food is both good and plentiful. At lunch, you may order from several bean and rice dishes, or greens and rice, all priced at a remarkable \$3; if you add a meat, such as fried chicken livers with gravy, baked, fried or stewed chicken, meat loaf, smothered pork chop, smoked sausage, or turkey necks or wings, the price climbs to a still not-so-hefty \$4.95. There are also soups and salads.

The dinner menu lists five house specialties, including baked, stewed, or fried chicken, meatloaf, stuffed crab, fried fish, stuffed bell peppers, or fried shrimp, all served with cornbread and your choice of greens or beans, for \$6.95 to \$9.95. There are also seafood combination platters, crawfish or shrimp etouffee, jambalaya, and spaghetti and meatballs. The most expensive item on the list is the seafood combo at \$12.95.

A good place to drop in for lunch or dinner, if you're poking around the back of the Quarter or the Faubourg Marigny. Warning: You might have to ask directions to Frenchmen Street. They hide it well.

**\*QUARTER SCENE** 900 Dumaine 522-6533 6 am-midnight Mon, Wed, Thu, Sun; 24 hours Fri & Sat; closed Tue. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$

We used to eat here a lot, maybe because it's only a block from our old apartment, but also because the food is pretty good and their hours matched ours. They've recently undergone a change in ownership, and their menu isn't quite as extensive as it used to be. Also, they're no longer open every day 24

hours a day. It's still not a bad place for lunch or dinner, if you happen to be wandering around the back of the Quarter looking for Tennessee Williams' house.

**\*RALPH AND KACOO'S** 519 Toulouse 522-5226 11:30 am-10:30 pm Mon-Thu, 11:30 am-11 pm Fri & Sat, 11:30 am-9:30 pm Sun. All major cards. Reservations recommended. Casual: \$\$

A very informal place with reasonable seafood served in large helpings. We've also bailed out of the long waiting list for a table on weekends.

**\*RIB ROOM** 621 St. Louis (in the Royal Orleans Hotel) 529-7045 11:30 am-3 pm, 6:30 pm-10:30 pm Sun-Thu, 11:30 am-3 pm, 6:30 pm-11 pm Fri & Sat. All major cards. Reservations for early dinners only. Ritz: \$\$\$\$ HA

Here's another great hotel dining room, visited by both tourists and local residents. On one wall there are banks of rotisseries with spits turning round and round, with roasts and fowls impaled on them. The Rib Room has a comfortable, dimly-lighted, inn-like feeling. The mixed grill, which shows off samples from those spits, is superb. The prime rib is the house specialty, and the dinner specials change frequently. The restaurant put together a delicious vegetable plate for Debbie. The desserts are famous here, especially the pastries and the chocolate mousse. Debbie continued her review of local bread puddings; the Rib Room's version is, to use her grid system: whiskey sauce, cold, dense, without raisins. It came with a nice citrus glaze on top. Debbie gave it an 8 out of 10. The service was faultless and friendly.

**RIENZI** 533 Toulouse 524-1479 11:30 am-2:30 pm Tue-Sun, 5 pm-10 pm Sun-Thu, 5 pm-11 pm Fri & Sat. AE, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Casual: \$\$

Rienzi is located in a building that was once a slave market and later a notorious brothel. These days, it's a pleasant restaurant with good food, perhaps a little further back in the French Quarter than most of the others in this section.

Rienzi offers many familiar local dishes dressed up in imaginative new forms. Among the appetizers are BBQ shrimp; oysters Rienzi (pan-fried oysters with salad greens, corn, fresh tomatoes, and firecracker vinaigrette. I'm sorry to say that I don't know what that last item is); and alligator pirogue (a mirliton stuffed with smoked alligator sausage and shrimp, with sauce picante. I know what a mirliton is, but I'm not going to tell you). An interesting soup is the smoked duck gumbo. It's a variation of the andouille and chicken or turkey gumbos found elsewhere in the city.

More than half the entrees are seafood-based. A couple of these are Rienzi Jazz Sea Combo, with jumbo BBQ shrimp, pan-fried soft shell crab with



white wine butter sauce, served with pasta tossed with crawfish tails, olive oil, garlic, and herbs; and Creole Seafood Panache, a delicate mixture of sauteed shrimp, crawfish, scallops, and oysters in a spicy, creamy tomato-basil sauce, served over linguine.

Other entrees include boneless duck breast, marinated and grilled, served with a Port wine raspberry sauce; sauteed veal and crawfish tails with sun-dried tomatoes, basil, and white wine sauce over linguine with vegetables; and chicken breast with boudin sausage in a smoked andouille sauce over rice with vegetables. As I write this, I'm moderately hungry, and that last entry almost broke my heart just to think about it.

**\*RITA'S OLDE FRENCH QUARTER RESTAURANT** 945 Chartres 525-7543 11 am to 10 pm seven days. All major cards. Casual: \$\$\$ HA  
Seafood, red beans and rice, other local favorites. It's always seemed overpriced to us. Try to ignore the extraneous accent on "olde."

**THE ROTISSERIE CAFE** 47 French Market Place 524-8930 10 am-10 pm seven days. AE, DC, MC, V. Casual: \$\$ HA

"Al fresco dining at the French Market." This cafe may be pleasantly situated, but their menu is rather brief. There are three appetizers: manicotti, cannelloni, and eggplant stuffed with ricotta and mozzarella cheeses, in a marinara sauce. Two soups, three salads, and a list of five chicken entrees from the rotisserie oven. The Pollo alla Siciliana sounds good: Chicken with roasted garlic and herbs, finished with a light brandy sauce. There are three pasta entrees, as well as a few sandwiches. Not ambitious, but there's room in the French Quarter for restaurants like this.

**\*ROYAL CAFE** 706 Royal 528-9086 10:30 am-3:30 pm, 5:30 pm to 10 pm seven days. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$\$\$ HA

They have one section of the menu devoted to Creole cuisine, including creole chicken and red beans and rice with andouille sausage. They have a "Taste of New Orleans" variety plate that is popular. On the more "distinguished" side of the menu, they offer steaks and seafood and elegant desserts. They also have a Sunday brunch menu of omelettes, French toast made from French bread, and a corned beef or smoked duck hash. The latter needs to be tested.

This is one of the more attractive buildings in the Quarter, with lots of decorative ironwork on the balcony. When we dined here, we were impressed by the ambience, but the service was slow, the bread was refrigerated, and all in all we think the Royal Cafe is overpriced. The Sunday brunch may be a better deal.

**SAMMY'S** 627 Bourbon 525-8442 11 am-Mid Sun-Thu, 11 am-1 am Fri & Sat. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$\$

Mostly seafood, as you can tell from their sign, which features either a small lobster or a huge crawfish. The appetizers are all shrimp, crawfish, or oyster dishes. For non-seafood munchers, there are three steak entrees. Otherwise, it's seafood platters, crab platters, speckled trout, catfish, oysters, and crawfish. There are two surf and turf dinners, broiled lobster, flounder, and king crab legs, trout almandine, and lobster Newburg. They have indoor and patio seating, but both are up a set of four steps.

**\*SAMURAI SUSHI** 609 Decatur 525-9595 11:30 am-3:30 pm Tue-Fri, 5:30 pm-10 pm Sun-Thu, 5:30-10:30 pm Fri & Sat. All major credit cards. Casual: \$\$ HA

Sushi and sashimi, teriyaki and tempura, miso soup and seaweed salad. Some people like that stuff, but you couldn't pay me to eat it. Well, *maybe* you could. Last time we walked by, the dining room was full of Asian gentlemen in suits. I guess this is a good sign. It's not all raw fish; a vegetarian can get a good meal here.

**\*SANTA FE** 801 Frenchman 944-6854 5 pm-11 pm Tue-Sat, 11 am-11 pm Fri. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$\$\$

A southwestern-style restaurant run by a German-born chef, Mark Hollger. The food is extremely good and extremely plentiful. The nachos appetizer, commonplace in most Mexican-influenced restaurants, were better than usual. Among the familiar menu items are interesting creations: crab and corn soup; Coquille St. Jacques (not a traditional Mexican offering) consisting of scallops, shrimp, crabmeat, and mushrooms topped with a wine sauce on a bed of duchess potatoes; Pepian, a chicken breast breaded with pumpkin seeds (!) and baked in cheese, cream, and poblano sauce. I had the gypsy fajitas, which were wonderfully seasoned chunks of beef, pork, and chicken, too large and too saucy to be rolled up in the accompanying tortillas. Debbie took advantage of the menu notice that said all the asterisk-marked items could be prepared as vegetarian dishes; the enchiladas were easily the most complex and adventuresome we've ever seen. She also wanted me to mention the terrific comfy chairs. As much as I love flan, I was too full to make it to the dessert course. Maybe next time.

**\*SEAPORT CAJUN CAFE** 424 Bourbon 568-0981 11:30 am-10 pm Sun-Thu, 11:30 am-11 pm Fri & Sat. All major cards. Casual: \$\$

The menu lists many traditional local favorites, and says they are the family recipes of chef Juanita Dilbert. They put out a buffet at lunch seven days a week and for happy hour on weekdays. This might be a good place to try a

little bite of a lot of local dishes. The prices seem reasonable, and you get that inimitable Bourbon Street ambience. With live music now and then.

**SEBASTIAN'S LITTLE GARDEN** 538 St. Phillip 524-2041 11 am-3 pm Mon-Fri, 5 pm-10 pm seven days. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$\$

The lunch menu offers inexpensive versions of many New Orleans favorites, plus such specialties as Veal Amore with garlic pasta, and liver and onions (yipe). I always wondered if anyone in the world ever went into a restaurant and voluntarily ordered liver. I tend to doubt it.

For dinner, there are many of the same local dishes, and a section of Italian pasta or chicken offerings. There is also a seafood section with crab, trout, shrimp, or oyster platters, blackened trout or trout almandine.

**\*SHONEY'S** 619 Decatur 525-2039 7 am-Mid Sun-Thu, 7 am-3 am Fri & Sat. AE, D, MC, V. They accept local checks. Casual: \$ HA

Basic American food, pretty undistinguished except for the breakfast bar, always satisfying, which is open until 11 am Monday through Friday, until 2 pm Saturday and Sunday, and 10 pm to 3 am Friday and Saturday nights. Take the little kids here, then let the grownups go somewhere more interesting. . . .

**\*SIAM** 435 Esplanade 949-1750 11 am-Mid Sun-Thu, 11 am to 2 am Fri & Sat. No credit cards. Casual: \$ HA

This is a modest restaurant in the former location of the lamented Ruby Red's. The lunch menu lists only eight dishes, but the ones I've tried have been uniformly good. I particularly enjoyed the volcano chicken and the cashew chicken. They have stir-fried vegetables for the non-meat eaters. The dinner menu is more extensive. There are several appetizers, including Thai spring rolls and satay (skewered chicken). Among the entrees are beef, pork, chicken, or shrimp curries, prepared the way the chef feels like it that day. The menu warns that the curries are plenty hot, and I believe them. There are several dishes based on chicken or Cornish game hen. My favorite name is "Evil Jungle Prince," diced chicken with basil and shredded chilies. The menu says no "too hot" complaints accepted. There are a couple of beef dishes, two noodle entrees, and a vegetarian plate.

An interesting taste of the Far East around the corner from the French Market.

**STAR STEAK AND LOBSTER HOUSE** 237 Decatur 525-6151 4:30 pm-11 pm, seven days. MC, V. Casual: \$\$\$

The name pretty much says it all. The seafood menu lists shrimp, catfish, oyster, and lobster entrees. The beef menu includes four varieties of steak,

some available with lobster or fried shrimp. That's about it.

**\*STEAK PIT** 609 Bourbon 525-3406 11 am-Mid Sun-Thu, 11 am-1 am Fri & Sat. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Casual: \$\$ HA

As the Zagat guide says, "At least they got the name right." Their big deal is hamburger steak (you know what *that* is) served with all-you-can-eat onion soup.

**\*SUBWAY** 237 N. Peters 568-0169 10 am-11 pm Mon-Thu, 10 am-1 am Fri & Sat, 10 am to 10 pm Sun. No credit cards. Casual: \$

Pretty good standard American subs, as opposed to local po-boys, which run more to fried seafood. They have a whole wheat option, or without bread it's a salad.

**TONY MORAN'S** 240 Bourbon 523-3181 Upstairs: 6 pm-11 pm Mon-Sat; Downstairs: 5 pm-Mid Tue-Sun. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$

Really two restaurants in one, each with its own menu. The casual restaurant is on the ground floor, and the ritzier restaurant is upstairs. Tony Moran's makes all its pasta fresh daily in its shop at 44 French Market Place.

The downstairs restaurant begins right off with some interesting menu items. I was attracted to the Soup de Cortina, made with white veal and vegetables, and a salad of red leaf lettuce with meatball vinaigrette dressing. Among the nine pasta entrees, I'll mention the family recipe for Pasta con Polpettine di Carne, which is pasta and meatballs made from ground sirloin steak. There is also a ravioli of the day, filled with either vegetables, fowl, meats, seafood, ricotta, or other cheeses. The other entrees include Italian green onion sausage with potatoes, garlic, and herbs; chicken or veal parmigiana; and "shrimp in pajamas," jumbo shrimp in a seasoned batter, coated with coarse semolina and French fried, served with a spicy cocktail sauce.

Upstairs, the appetizers are sauteed baby calamari, sauteed eggplant and crabmeat, or cannelloni in a tomato and cream sauce. There are two redfish and four other fish entrees, a shrimp, and a scampi. There are steak, lamb, veal, and chicken dishes, too, and a wide variety of pasta offerings.

**TORTORICI'S** 441 Royal 522-4295 11:30 am-10 pm, Mon-Sat. AE, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$

This is, I think, the oldest Italian restaurant in New Orleans. The odd thing is that I've never known anyone at all who's ever dined here. I guess they do mostly a tourist trade.

**\*TUJAGUE'S** 823 Decatur 525-8676 11 am-3 pm, 5 pm-10:30 pm seven



days. Nice: \$\$

All major credit cards. "Whatever you've got, we'll take it, including ones from Japan."

One of New Orleans' oldest restaurants. Until recently, they didn't have a menu. You went in and you ate what the waiter put in front of you. And on top of it, the waiters were arrogant. That's all changed now. They still don't have a menu, but your waiter will give you a choice of three different entrees. They are very famous for a classic New Orleans dish, brisket of beef in a strong, red horseradish sauce, which I happen to love. The filet mignon entree is perhaps the best choice, but some people like the Chicken Bonne Femme, which is very garlicky. I don't think there can be too much garlic on anything, to tell you the truth. They also usually have a seafood entree and what we call a pot dish--jambalaya, red beans and rice, or something along those lines.

They serve coffee in glasses, like in old Italian social clubs.

**VAN'S** 500 St Peter (Jackson Square at Decatur) 522-2999 8:30 am-8 pm Mon-Thu, 8:30 am-Mid Fri & Sat, 8:30 am-10 pm Sun. No credit cards. Casual: \$

Belgian waffles, po-boys, gumbo, red beans and rice, seafood.

**\*VERA CRUZ** 1141 Decatur 561-8081 11 am-11:30 pm Wed & Thu, 11 am-12:30 Fri & Sat, 11:30 am-9:30 pm Sun. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$\$

A nicely decorated and comfortable Mexican restaurant. The thing to go for here is the roast pork, which has a lot of garlic. The fajitas are good, by east-of-Texas standards.

\* \* \*

**IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT** (N. b.: The CBD extends upstream from Canal Street to Lee Circle, between the river and Claiborne Avenue.)

**\*BAILEY'S** 123 Baronne (in the Fairmont Hotel) 529-7111 24 hours seven days. All major cards. Nice: \$\$ HA

Typical coffee shop in a lovely old hotel serving decent food all night long.

**BON TON CAFE** 401 Magazine 524-3386 11 am-2 pm, 5 pm-9:30 pm, Mon-Fri. AE, DC, CB, MC, V. Reservations recommended for dinner. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

Crawfish Central! This Cajun restaurant was around long before Paul Prudhomme opened K-Paul's. It serves authentic southwestern Louisiana

food, although it's not hot and spicy. This is the place to come for a variety of catfish, crawfish, and crab dishes; the menu lists four etouffees and two jambalayas.

There is a lunch and a dinner menu, and both feature a wide range of *prix fixe* meals. The appetizers are extra, but shouldn't be passed by. You can get excellent fried catfish tidbits or fried crawfish tails, each with the special house sauce, a plate of half catfish and half crawfish, or a shrimp and crawfish jambalaya.

There are a few chicken, steak, and fish entrees, more on the dinner menu than the lunch, but in both cases the emphasis is definitely on crawfish variations--eight for lunch and six for dinner. They also expertly prepare crab (four different ways), oysters, and shrimp. They also have *two* bread pudding desserts. The Bon Ton is a New Orleans landmark; if you're in the mood to try mudbugs, give the place a try.

**\*CAFE PROMENADE** 500 Canal (in the Sheraton Hotel) 525-2500 6:30 am-2 pm seven days. All major credit cards. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

Undistinguished hotel coffee shop (and I mean that sincerely) with rather slow service.

**\*EMERIL'S** 800 Tchoupitoulas 528-9393 11:30 am-2 pm Mon-Fri, 6 pm-10 pm Mon-Sat. All major cards. Nice: \$\$\$\$ HA

We'd heard nothing but raves about Emeril's, and even though One Of Us hasn't yet dined here, we'll recommend it highly. The food is nouvelle with a local accent, under chef Emeril Lagasse. Our friends were excited about a four-mushroom entree with potato leek flan (!) that appeared among the specials for that day. Many of the dishes come from the busy grill. The regular menu includes such interesting appetizers as grilled homemade andouille sausage, duck confit ravioli, smoked salmon cheesecake, and barbecued pork strudel. There are six salads to choose from, and some of us like the idea of a BLT salad, with bacon bits, baby lettuce, vine-ripened tomatoes, served with saffron mayonnaise. The entrees offer grilled steaks and chops, pan-roasted salmon and sauteed shrimp, a hickory grilled chicken with blackbean sauce, pico de gallo, and guacamole, roulade of duck breast with pumpkin pecan stuffing, a grilled beef filet with bourbon mashed sweet potatoes, and roast quail boned and stuffed with andouille in a port wine sauce. The special dessert is J.K.'s chocolate soufflee (small or large). That doesn't sound bad, either.

**FILLETS** 500 Canal (in the Sheraton Hotel) 525-2500 5:30 pm-10:30 pm seven days. All major credit cards. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

The Sheraton's dinner restaurant.

**\*GOLDEN WALL** 930 Canal 523-3230 11 am-11 pm Sun-Thu, 11 am-Mid Fri & Sat. No credit cards. Delivery available. Casual: \$ HA

We thought this was a great find. We've grown bored with the usual hole-in-the-wall chop suey-and-egg roll joints, and we barely notice them anymore. When the Golden Wall opened, I glanced through the menu posted in front, and I discovered the magic words: Fried Dumplings! Well, I just had to try them; and they were great, as good as those at the Five Happiness (q.v.). Not only that, but their Chinese entrees are far above the hole-in-the-wall variety in quality. It's a big, nearly undecorated room, and you give your order at a counter, pick it up, and carry it to your table--no amenities except the excellence of the food.

They offer a good deal at lunch, from 11 am to 3pm. There are twenty-one entrees to choose from, each served with white rice or pork fried rice, for prices ranging from \$3.50 to \$3.99. The portions are plenty large. Add an appetizer from the huge regular menu, and you've got a very good, very cheap meal.

As for the regular menu, it runs the gamut from familiar Cantonese dishes (between \$4 and \$7) to twenty-four specials that include many Szechuan selections, Moo Shu Everything, and plenty of choices in garlic sauce. I'm particularly fond of the Orange Beef and General Tso's Chicken. It's fast, it's cheap, it's convenient--and it's very good.

**GRILL ROOM** 300 Gravier (in the Windsor Court Hotel) 522-1992 7 am-10:30 am, 11:30 am-2 pm, 6 pm-9:30 pm seven days. All major credit cards. Reservations required. Ritzy: \$\$\$\$\$ HA

Acclaimed as one of the finest dining rooms in the U.S., this is easily one of the best restaurants in town, under the guidance of Chef Kevin Graham. Before I list some of the more interesting items on the luncheon and dinner menus, I'd like to register a mild complaint. Years ago, when I lived in New York City, it seemed to me that some restaurants scored points by searching out obscure ingredients to satisfy the eternal NYC hunger for novelty. There was a time when we all lived happily without knowing what arugula and radicchio were. That trend spread to Los Angeles and other areas where sophisticated diners demanded the most up-to-the-minute offerings. Jeez, I can recall when pasta salad was a novelty--of course, that was a long time ago, but then, I'm very old.

My complaint against the Grill Room is that their menu is peppered with this type of obscurantist fare. Here is a selection of ingredients that I've never heard of (and I'm perfectly willing to admit that this may be due to my own provincialism): breek, marscapone, mezzuma, rabe, tatsoi, salsify, basmati, skordalia, coulis, paysanne, and brunoise. I hate having to ask the waiter for clarification, and I believe that the average diner feels the same, particularly if

there are multiple terms.

Nevertheless, this is a spectacular restaurant. Let me just list some of the most attractive offerings, and the descriptions should make you sit up and take notice. All of them are absolutely first-rate.

On the luncheon menu, there are potato, pesto, and oven-cured tomato lasagna with sweet garlic and basil as an appetizer; sashimi of beef with bean sprouts and mezzuma for a salad; sesame-seared tuna on broccoli rabe with gingered vegetables; ratatouille-stuffed quail with skordalia as specialties; a table d'hote of curried seafood breek with minted yogurt, soup of the day, or the sashimi of beef; the sesame seared tuna, penne pasta with roasted peppers, Italian sausage, and mozzarella, or the ratatouille-stuffed quail; and for dessert, the trio of sorbets, exotic fruit plate, or today's ice cream (when I got the menu, it was chocolate caramel swirl)--all for 14.75.

For dinner, the menu is expanded. The nine appetizers include seared scallops on sweet rice croutons with ginger butter; smoked mahi, tuna, and swordfish with cognac horseradish; and Parma ham with warm pear compote. The soups are paysanne of fruit in passion fruit stock; rabbit and tomato broth; and truffled potato with chived creme fraiche. An interesting salad is mezzuma and red mustard with molasses vinaigrette.

For entrees, try lacquered duckling with a coffee-mandarin glaze; medallions of lamb on apple cakes with Calvados; grilled chicken breast with chartreuse and raspberries; and medallions of beef with Vidalia onions and onion coulis. There are three vegetable dishes, including green and white asparagus with warm shallot vinaigrette. For dessert, try the nougat souffle.

Also listed is the "table de gustation," which is made up of gulf seafood with pepper relish, seared scallops on sweet rice croutons with ginger butter, truffled potatoes with chived creme fraiche, medallions of halibut bruschetta, chemised noisettes of veal with hazel nuts and morels, red and green romaine Caesar salad (Caesar spelled wrong), and your selection from the Grill Room dessert table--a pretty good deal for \$70, considering.

**\*HUMMINGBIRD GRILL** 804 St. Charles 561-9229 24 hours seven days. MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

Moving from the sublime to the ridiculous as far as hotel dining rooms are concerned, we have the wonderfully seedy Hummingbird Grill, showplace of the off-putting Hummingbird Hotel. This is a diner frequented by off-duty cops, cab drivers, winos, and young ladies of questionable reputation. More conventional types come here, too, for greasy-spoon food in the middle of the night. One morning about 3 am, while I was having one of the Hummingbird's decent cheeseburgers, Leon Redbone came in and sat down, just like a normal person. Nobody noticed but me. Maybe it wasn't Leon Redbone, although he's pretty easy to identify. This is a terrific place for



watching and listening to people. And if your spoon isn't greasy, the friendly help will get you one that is, instantly and with a smile.

**\*KOLB'S** 123 St. Charles 522-8278 11 am-10 pm Mon-Sat, 4 pm-10 pm Sunday. All major cards. Nice: \$\$ HA

An old restaurant serving German food and typical New Orleans dishes. Both the furnishings and the kitchen have seen better days. I love German food (my dad's side of the family is German), and when I first came to New Orleans 21 years ago, I went to Kolb's thinking that it might remind me of Luchow's in New York. The food was so-so, but the old-time network of mechanical fans on the ceiling was fascinating.

**\*LA GAULOISE** 614 Canal (in the Hotel Meridien) 527-6712 6:30 am-10 pm seven days. All major credit cards. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

More than a hotel coffee shop, not quite as stiff as an exclusive hotel restaurant, La Gauloise is a comfortable and gracious place to dine along Canal Street.

There are some main course salads (marinated beef salad with herb dressing; grilled chicken breast salad with almond vinaigrette; fried catfish with Oriental dressing) as well as familiar favorites. There are also plenty of seafood appetizers. For more substantial fare, there are sandwiches, ranging from tuna salad in a pita pocket to first-rate burgers. Among the entrees, divided into seafood, meat & poultry, and a couple of vegetarian offerings, are stir-fried shrimp Thai style, vegetable ravioli with basil cream, grilled beef tenderloin with Roquefort pecan butter (I thought the last mentioned might be a teensy bit too . . . creative). There are nine desserts, and they all sound good.

Oh, there's a luncheon buffet, too.

**\*LIBORIO'S** 322 Magazine 581-9680 6 pm-9 pm Sat, 11 am-2:30 pm Mon, 11 am-2:30 pm, 6 pm-9 pm Tue-Fri. AE, D, MC, V. Casual: \$\$ HA

One of the two very good Cuban restaurants I know of in town (the other is Garce's, in the Carrollton neighborhood and beyond the scope of this guide). Not fancy, not pretty, but some of their Cuban specialties are very good indeed, particularly their breaded steak, stuffed steak, and roast pork.

**\*MOTHER'S** 401 Poydras 523-9656 5 am-10 pm Mon-Sat, 7 am-10 pm Sun. No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$ HA

Listen, take my advice and have lunch at Mother's once during your stay in town. You've seen po-boys advertised all over New Orleans; well, Mother's makes the best po-boys in the city, and they've got the awards to prove it. Some oldtimers prefer Parasol's, uptown in the Irish Channel, but they're

wrong. You have to stand in line at Mother's, like at a cafeteria. The wait may be twenty or thirty minutes, but it's really worth it. And they usually have a big pan of fried cracklings set out, and you can stuff yourself with them for free while you wait.

Mother's bakes its own ham, roast beef, and turkey on the premises. I like the Ferdi special, which is ham and roast beef, dressed, on a loaf of French bread. You can even ask for the burned edges, the crispy pieces of meat. The gravy on the sandwich is a sauce made with the little chunks of meat that fall off during cooking and slicing.

Mother's also serves good, hearty plate specials--gumbo, red beans and rice, etc. Don't dismiss this place because you think it's just another sandwich shop. You'll remember Mother's po-boys. And they're cheap, too.

**MULATE'S** 201 Julia 522-1492 11 am-11 pm seven days. All major cards. Casual: \$\$

This location is two years old, a new branch of the established Mulate's in Baton Rouge and Breaux Bridge. *Lots* of seafood. They even have two different gumbos. Their specialty is catfish, and they also serve crab, shrimp, frog legs, baked duck, and blackened prime rib. Live music 7:30 pm to 11 pm. "The king of Cajun dine and dance halls," says *Travel and Leisure Magazine*.

**NATCHEZ HOUSE RESTAURANT** 421 Natchez 524-7840 6:30 am-2 pm Mon-Fri. No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$

Good for breakfast and lunch, popular with office workers in the neighborhood. Nothing elaborate, but you should get your money's worth.

**\*PALACE CAFE** 605 Canal 523-1661 11:30 am-2:30 pm, 5 pm-10 pm Mon-Sat, 11 am-2:30 pm, 5 pm-10 pm Sun. All major cards. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

Owned by the Commander's Palace branch of the Brennan family. We discovered this restaurant a while ago, and are we ever glad we did. You can't go wrong at any place that has the Brennan named attached to it (to complete the set, we recently dined at The Third Coast, the Brennan branch in Houston. It, too, was very different from all the others, and it was every bit as excellent).

There are three menus: brunch, lunch, and dinner. From the brunch list, we'll just single out the breakfast parfait (berries, homemade granola, candied pecans, and Creole cream cheese); eggs Armstrong (poached eggs on crawfish cakes); eggs Basin Street (tender veal and poached eggs on a grits cake, topped with Creole sauce); and a turtle pot pie. For lunch, there are several attractive appetizers, including my favorite, the grilled andouille with honey mustard sauce and duchess sweet potatoes (I always replace the sweet

potatoes with garlic mashed potatoes). There are green salads and entree salads, which include a rotisserie duck breast salad, with spinach, peppers, onions, and roasted pecans tossed with an orange marmalade vinaigrette. The entrees include imaginative variations on familiar catfish, veal, shrimp, fish, and pasta dishes. At dinner, their great French rotisserie prepares chicken, pork, and prime rib. Many of the appetizers and salads are repeated from the lunch menu, and the entrees are excellent and beautifully presented, with daily specials.

I have to remark on two outstanding desserts. The first is a warm chocolate pudding cake, and the second is Debbie's all-time favorite bread pudding. It's totally unlike any of the several conventional combinations; it's unbelievably rich, warm, with a wonderful white chocolate sauce.

**\*PASTORE'S** 301 Tchoupitoulas 524-1122 11 am-2:30 pm Mon-Fri, 6 pm-10 pm Mon-Sat. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$ One step.

Some people like this Northern Italian restaurant a lot, while others think it's inconsistent. We like it a lot. They do several things with veal, and they have shrimp in garlic butter sauce that's very good. There is an elegant variety of pasta dishes and a ravioli soup with clear beef broth. Their variation of bread pudding is made with cake, not bread, and is served cold because it has pudding in the middle.

**\*PEARL OYSTER BAR** 119 St. Charles 525-2901 8 am-9 pm seven days. AE, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

A long-time downtown oyster bar, which also serves po-boys and plate lunches. The quality of the food probably hasn't changed much over the years, and it's not the most atmospheric place in the world. And the waitresses are just like the little old ladies who worked in your high school cafeteria. It's good enough and it's cheap, and one of the few places downtown where you can get a first-rate corned beef or pastrami sandwich.

**PIRATE'S PANTRY** 803 Convention Center Blvd. 588-1319 7 am-Mid seven days. No credit cards. Casual: \$ HA

They have a wide selection of po-boys, sandwiches and salads, breakfast from 7 to 10:30, and daily lunch specials, but probably the best thing about this place is that they'll deliver in the French Quarter and the Warehouse District.

**\*PRALINE CONNECTION** 901 S. Peters 523-3973 11 am-10 pm Mon-Sat; 11 am-6 pm Sun. AE, DC, MC, V. Casual: \$ HA

Please see the review of their other location in the French Quarter/Faubourg

Marigny section. This CBD branch offers something special, though: A gospel brunch at 11 am and again at 2 pm on Sunday. Jazz brunches are fairly commonplace in New Orleans. I think a gospel brunch is a wonderful concept.

**\*RIVERVIEW** 501 Canal (in the Marriott Hotel) 581-1000, ext. 4301 6 pm-Mid seven days, Sunday brunch 10 am-4 pm. All major credit cards. Jacket and tie required. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

An attractive hotel dining room with fine food. This is the Marriott's upscale restaurant, not to be confused with the coffee shop, the Cafe du Marche. We had a very good meal here a while ago, and I remember remarking that I've always had good luck in the Marriott's nicer restaurants. We had a terrific meal in the Atlanta Marriott, as well. The Riverview wasn't very helpful as to their menu, because, as they explained, their daily specials change every day. That makes a certain amount of logical sense. You can count on first-rate Continental and New Orleans-style food, and some desserts that may require a note from your mother.

**SAZERAC** 123 Baronne (in the Fairmont Hotel) 529-4733 11:30 am-2:30 pm, 6 pm-10 pm seven days. All major credit cards. Reservations recommended. Ritz: \$\$\$\$ Jacket and tie required. HA

An elegant restaurant in a grand old hotel, with lots of dark wood and red plush. Lobster is big here, in both a rich bisque or roasted and taken out of the shell and served with a vanilla-flavored butter sauce. Other recommendations include the Duck Bernard and the rack of lamb. I like the idea of saffron shrimp with lime butter. Jeez, now I'll be thinking about that all night . . . .

**\*SERIO'S** 133 St. Charles 523-2668 7:30 am-2:30 pm Mon-Fri. No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$ HA

Good roast beef po-boys, pastrami sandwiches, etc.

**ST. CHARLES RESTAURANT** 333 St. Charles 522-6600 11:30 am-2 pm Mon-Fri. All major cards. Casual: \$\$

A sit-down lunch place catering to the office workers in the CBD.

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## **ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY AND WORTH A TRIP**

**BRIGTSEN'S** 723 Dante 861-7610 5:30 pm-10 pm Tues-Sat. AE, DC, MC, V. Reservations required. Ritz: \$\$\$\$ HA



We've all sworn not to reveal this to outsiders, but Frank Brigtsen, one of Paul Prudhomme's former sous chefs, opened his own establishment uptown, and serves very fine dishes created in the same style as at K-Paul's. The nice part is that it dropped the food-fascist tangle of ordinances that K-Paul's enforces. Brigtsen's (pronounced Brite-son's) is a small restaurant, and its menu shows that Brigtsen learned his lessons well. He builds his recipes around the same ingredients that Prudhomme and the Cajun food fad have made popular, especially rabbit. Everyone talks about the rabbit livers and caramelized onions, but I have an aversion to dining on viscera. Because catching redfish is now illegal, Brigtsen has turned to other neglected Gulf fish such as amberjack. His sauteed trout pecanette, with a crabmeat and pecan sauce, is unusual and delicious. And if you have to have something blackened, try the blackened prime rib. You can take the St. Charles streetcar line to stop #44, get off and walk two blocks to the left to Dante, then it's two doors over on the left.

**\*CAMELLIA GRILL** 626 S. Carrollton 866-9573 8 am-1 am Sun, 9 am-1 am Mon-Thu, 9 am-3 am Fri, HA  
8 am-3 am Sat. No credit cards or reservations. Casual: \$

I've mentioned some New Orleans institutions before, but the Camellia Grill is one of the greatest. It's a glorified lunch counter, but there's a maitre d' to help seat you, and there are linen napkins on the counter. The place is full of university students, uptown well-to-do types, and characters (and some of the waiters number among the latter). The food is always terrific, including one of my favorite New Orleans burgers. They serve a nearly perfect bacon cheeseburger (you can put on your own freshly chopped onions and relish) that I have to have every couple of weeks or I begin to lose my powers. The trouble is that I also love the Grill's omelettes, particularly the chili cheese omelette, and I have the same argument with myself every time I eat here. And for dessert, there are pies. Do yourself a big favor and have a slice of apple pie--tell your waiter to warm it up on the grill, so it caramelizes, and have him throw a scoop of vanilla ice cream on top to melt a little.

You can take the streetcar here, too. Get off at the turn in the route between St. Charles and Carrollton.

You'll get a kick out of the waiters mannerisms. I'll let the rest be a surprise.

**\*CARIBBEAN ROOM** 2031 St. Charles (in the Pontchartrain Hotel) 524-0581 6:30 am-10:30 pm seven days Jacket and tie required. All major credit cards. Reservations recommended. Ritzzy: \$\$\$\$ HA

One of the loveliest hotel dining rooms in New Orleans, the Caribbean Room is where many of the city's celebrities and power elite go out to be

seen by the common people. The food is the reason--the Caribbean Room has been awarded the Holiday Magazine Award for fine dining every year since 1958. Specialties are Trout Veronique, Crabmeat Remick, and one of New Orleans' most famous desserts, Mile High Ice Cream Pie. This is also on the streetcar line.

**\*CHEZ HELENE** 1540 N. Robertson 945-0444 7 am-Mid seven days.  
AE, MC, V. Nice: \$\$

If you ever saw the short-lived TV sitcom "Frank's Place," you'll recognize this restaurant as the model for "The Chez." Even the TV characters were based on real employees at Chez Helene. For instance, if you went into the kitchen, you'd see a large black chef wearing a sailing cap, and there's an elderly head waitress just like Miss Marie.

The reason Chez Helene has been so faithfully reproduced on our little screens is that it's the most famous and most justly popular of all New Orleans soul food restaurants. If you find the label intimidating, think of it as "Haute Soul Food." The clientele is very mixed, and the ambience is congenial, whatever one's phenotype. I might mention that while you'll be graciously welcomed within the restaurant itself, the surrounding neighborhood is, how shall I say?, an adventure waiting to happen. Take a taxi and you'll be fine.

They may have the best Southern fried chicken in New Orleans. They're also famous for their stuffed bell peppers, red beans and rice, and fried seafood platters. Some people even rave about the yams and the succotash. This is another great restaurant to consider for lunch--lower prices and shorter lines.

**CHRISTIAN'S** 3835 Iberville 482-4924 11:30 am- 2 pm Thu & Fri, 5:30 pm-10 pm Mon-Sat. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Nice: \$\$\$

Here we have a restaurant inside a former church, but that's not the reason it's called Christian's. The owner's name is Christian Ansel, and he's a member of the family that operates Galatoire's. The menu is mostly seafood, and the oyster, shrimp, and crab dishes are outstanding. Other than seafood, recommendations include filet mignon, steak au poivre, veal specialties, and broiled lamb chops. This restaurant is located one block off Canal Street.

**\*COMMANDER'S PALACE** 1403 Washington Ave. 899-8221 11:30 am-2 pm, 6 pm-10 pm seven days. Jacket and tie required. Special seating times for brunch Saturday and Sunday. All major credit cards. Reservations required. Ritz: \$\$\$\$

Bar none, the most popular restaurant in New Orleans, according to those polled for the Zagat guide. Operated by of the Brennan family, this is a

grand, dependable restaurant, beautiful and famous for its elegant Creole food. You can't go wrong with almost anything on the dinner menu, but special mention should be made of the jazz brunch, which is truly an experience on Saturday and Sunday. There's a dessert called the Celebration, which is a pile of chocolate and raspberries, with a raspberry sauce, into which a couple of lighted sparklers have been stuck. The streetcar drivers are used to telling people which stop they want for Commander's; it's a couple of blocks' walk from there.

**\*COPELAND'S** 4338 St. Charles 897-2325 11 am-11 pm Mon-Thu, 11 am-Mid Fri, 10 am-Mid Sat, 10 am-11 pm Sun. AE, MC, V. Nice: \$\$\$ HA: They have one table at wheelchair height. Please call to reserve it in advance.

"Copeland" is Al Copeland, the founder and genius behind the Popeye's fried chicken chain. Now, I admit that when I heard that he was opening an upscale, sit-down restaurant, I didn't have a lot of hope for it. I imagined that it might be uninspired food served with a lot of potted ferns. Well, I got the fern part right. I was dead wrong about the food. It's exciting, original, and delicious. The menu is large and varied, heavily Cajun influenced, and even the most common New Orleans dishes arrive in new and jazzed-up guises. Give the onion mum a try. It's a whole onion cut to look like a chrysanthemum, fried, and served with a spicy sauce. They use a lot of pepper here, but if you like it spicy--if you're not one of those who eat nothing but bland, American, brown and white food--this is just what you've been looking for. Tell the streetcar driver you want off at Napoleon Avenue.

**\*DOOKY CHASE** 2301 Orleans 821-0600 11:30 am-10 pm seven days. AE, DC, MC, V. Nice: \$\$ HA

Dooky's is, along with Chez Helene, one of the two best-known and most popular Creole soul-food restaurants. It's elegant on the inside, although its location, across from a housing project, is not terribly attractive. Tourists are advised to take a cab here, because the food is remarkably good. You can have great, authentic gumbo and jambalaya, or a marvelous dish with a prosaic name: Chicken Creole, which are chicken breasts braised with shrimp, okra, and green pepper. This is the home of one of the city's great bread puddings, this one served with an enlivening whiskey sauce.

**\*FIVE HAPPINESS** 3605 S. Carrollton Ave. 482-3935 Noon-10:30 pm Sun, 11 am-10:30 pm Mon-Thu, 11 am-11:30 pm Fri & Sat. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Nice: \$\$ HA

The Chinese restaurant we love, and we eat here regularly. Five Happiness is owned by Sidney Lee, and it seems that most of the very friendly

employees are members of the family. The food is good and plentiful, and I've never been less than satisfied with anything I've tried on the eclectic menu.

The hot and sour soup is very good, but the wonton soup (which I stopped ordering years ago because I thought I was too sophisticated, but which I've been enjoying again lately, now that I'm more confident about my manhood) is as good as you'll ever get. Among the appetizers, I especially like the potstickers, which are fried dumplings with a wonderful meat and vegetable filling. Sometimes I have to get a second order. What can I say?

The moo shu pork is excellent, except if you're like me, you'll have to get a second batch of pancakes. I've had several knockout meals from the list of the restaurant's more expensive specialties. The orange beef is very memorable, and they have vegetarian plates for the grazers among us.

**GAUTREAU'S** 1728 Soniat 899-7397 6 pm-10 pm Mon-Sat. CB, D, DC, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$

Gautreau's is a small, very popular restaurant serving Nouvelle New Orleans cuisine. It's housed in a former pharmacy, and some of the old fixtures remain, such as the pressed tin ceiling and the wood and glass cases, which now store bottles of wine. The tin roof and tiled floor make it kind of noisy, so take off a point for ambience. This is more than made up for, however, by the food. The Nouvelle influence is shown in the lightly prepared fish and the delicate sauces. The menu changes every day, and the chef, Armand Jonte, is continually experimenting, even with his most popular offerings. The one common theme seems to be eclecticism--Jonte doesn't mind mixing influences, and one food writer claims that he had Mexican, Chinese, Greek, and French in a single meal. He recommends the pasta dishes for a first course, and any of the soups. There are always six entree choices at dinner, one each of chicken, veal, rabbit, steak, fish, and shellfish. Thank goodness that the food is generally consistent in its excellence, because with Jonte's flair for improvisation, it's almost impossible to mention particular dishes.

\***LA CREPE NANOU** 1410 Robert 899-2670 6 pm-10 pm seven days. MC, V. Nice: \$\$ HA

Surprise! It's a crepe restaurant! And a very good one, too. This charming little place is tucked away in an uptown neighborhood, far, far away from the usual tourist haunts. This gives the out-of-towner the opportunity to "discover" it and mention it in conversation, when everybody else is going on at great length about Commander's Palace and Antoine's. There is a wide variety of fillings with the crepes, and they're all made superbly, both the dinner and dessert crepes. There is also a limited menu of non-crepe items. This place is just a block from St. Charles on your left; tell the streetcar



driver you want off at Robert Street.

**\*PASCAL'S MANALE** 1838 Napoleon Avenue 895-4877 11:30 am-10 pm Mon-Fri, 4 pm-10 pm Sat, 4 pm-9 pm Sun. Reservations recommended. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

Come here for one reason: if you like shrimp. They've got something called Barbecue Shrimp here, which are many giant, whole shrimp staring up at you with their tiny black, beady eyes. They're drowning in a spicy, peppery butter sauce that makes you believe you can actually hear your arteries slamming shut. It's a great meal if you like shrimp, and if you like making a mess all over the table. They even give you a bib to wear. The rest of the menu is fair to good Italian food, but the shrimp are a real experience. Oh, and there's a side dish called Spaghetti Collins, which is spaghetti in another butter sauce, goosed with a ton and a half of chopped scallions. Manale's guarantees you 100% of your Minimum Daily Requirement of cholesterol. Get off the streetcar at Napoleon for this one, too, and walk about three blocks.

**\*REGINELLI'S** 3923 Magazine 895-9229 12:30 am-2:30 pm Tue-Sat, 6 pm-10 pm Tue-Thu & Sun, 6 pm-11 pm Fri & Sat. Reservations suggested for parties of 5 or more. DC, MC, V. Casual: \$\$ HA

This is a nice little cafe and art gallery. While they have a stuffed filet mignon on the menu, and a few other animal-kingdom dishes, they serve some exquisite entrees that just don't happen to have any meat in them. Vegetarians are happy and carnivores come away satisfied. What more could you ask for?

Everything we've tried here has been excellent. They have a polenta of the day, a grilled fish of the day, and a pizza of the day, about which your waiter will tell you. Among the appetizers, we can highly recommend the roasted garlic spread; under soups and salads, the gnocci and soup (Italian potato dumplings in a hearty tomato and leek soup). The management loses half a grade point for misspelling "Caesar." For entrees, choose among Garlic Marsala Chicken, Cioppino (a seafood and vegetable stew in a light tomato and wine sauce served over linguine), "Stuffed" Artichoke and Shrimp Fettucine, and many others.

When you finish eating, take some time to look at the paintings and photographs hung throughout the restaurant.

**\*ROCKY AND CARLO** 613 West St. Bernard Highway 279-8323 5:30 am-11:30 pm Sun & Mon, 5:30 am-Mid Tue-Thu, 5:30 am-12:30 am Fri & Sat. No credit cards. Casual: \$

I have a real love for unassuming, working-class places that serve good food in large portions. Rocky and Carlo's is just that. It's a family operation, and

it's especially popular with the workers from the nearby refinery in Chalmette. The Italian food is served cafeteria-style, and they're famous for their macaroni and cheese. OK, so if you come to New Orleans for a convention or on vacation, you're not thinking of driving to Chalmette for macaroni and cheese. But this is *great* macaroni and cheese. And they also serve such Creole Italian specialties as bruceloni. You want true New Orleans blue-collar color while you're munching on wonderful homemade Italian sausage? Can't do better than here.

**\*RUTH'S CHRIS STEAK HOUSE** 711 Broad Street 486-0810 11:30 am-11:30 pm seven days. AE, DC, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

This is the place to come for steaks. You'll dine with many of New Orleans' best-known lawyers, politicians, sports figures, and other power-brokers who know which side their baked potato is buttered on.

This is a first-class aged prime steak here, broiled perfectly and served New Orleans-style, which means in a bubbling hot butter sauce. There are great side dishes as well, including my favorite au gratin potatoes and fried onions. If you've burnt out on jambalaya and oysters and need a fix of carnivore heaven, Ruth's Chris (ask *them* what the name means) should do it for you.

**\*TIPTON COUNTY** 5538 Magazine 899-9626 11 am-2 pm, 5 pm- 11 pm Sun-Thu, 5 pm-midnight Fri & Sat. Casual:\$\$ HA

Barbecue! *Decent* barbecue! And pretty inexpensive, too! I thought, when I first moved here many years ago, that being so near to Texas, New Orleans would be overwhelmed with barbecue places. Not so. Tipton County isn't even a Texas-style barbecue restaurant. Tipton County is in Tennessee. The specialties here are ribs (a huge--and I mean HUGE--rack runs \$17.75; half a rack ought to be enough for one person, at \$9.85), pulled pork, smoked beef brisket, pulled chicken, and pork tenderloin. All come as platters, and there's a dinner special combination--a choice of three from pulled chicken, pulled pork, beef brisket, and ribs, including two side dishes and corn bread, for \$8.95. The servings are generous, and the special is a great value. There are better than average appetizers, salads, sandwiches, and desserts, too.

**\*UPPERLINE** 1413 Upperline 891-9822 5:30 pm-10 pm Wed-Mon. Jacket and tie required. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Nice: \$\$\$ HA

This was a very good restaurant serving more-or-less Nouvelle versions of traditional New Orleans dishes. Then they brought in a truly great chef, Tom Cowman, and made the Upperline even better. Cowman, in an earlier incarnation, was similarly brought in to salvage the menu of the late, lamented

Jonathan's. The ideas here are creative, delicious, and sometimes surprising. I would have bet money that I'd live out my life without ever ordering liver voluntarily in a restaurant, but after tasting Cowman's light version in orange sauce (at Jonathan's), that's just what I did. Upperline specializes in charcoal-grilled entrees, particularly fish, chicken, and veal, and it's all first-rate. They also have a garlic festival with every dish in the meal featuring garlic, even the dessert.

I remember another spectacular dessert I had once. They offer ice cream with chocolate sauce, and ice cream with raspberry sauce. I twisted the arm of my waitress and got them to put *both* on mine, and everyone else at the table cursed bitterly that they hadn't done the same. This place is a block away from Crepe Nanou, so tell the streetcar driver you want off at Robert Street. Walk a block back the way you came to Upperline Street and then one block toward the river.

**\*VERSAILLES** 2100 St. Charles 524-2535 6 pm-10 pm Mon-Sat. Jacket and tie required. AE, MC, V. Reservations required. Ritzzy: \$\$\$\$

Versailles is one of the best restaurants in New Orleans, and one of the finest examples of classic continental cooking. The chef here is Gunter Preuss, who has taken the European cuisine of his heritage and embellished it with Creole touches. The ambience is quiet and pleasantly formal, and the food is presented in a masterful way that the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* calls "frankly sumptuous." Preuss, who was born in Berlin and received his training in hotel restaurants, is especially successful with the veal and beef dishes. The tournedos Rossini (with a demi-glace and truffles sauce, with pate) is marvelous, as is the rack of lamb. There is a particularly good wine list that I've enjoyed reading, and someday when I'm rich and famous, I'd like to dive into. This is another restaurant you can get to on the streetcar; tell the driver to let you off at Jackson Avenue.

### **About the Authors:**

George Alec Effinger is a full-time author who has been writing professionally for over twenty years. He is the author of more than twenty-five science fiction books, as well as two crime thrillers. He has lived in New Orleans since 1973. It's been the Creole cooking and the lack of snow that's kept him here.

Debbie Hodgkinson's mother is a terrible cook who once took the family out to eat every night for three years. Debbie thinks New Orleans would be the perfect place to live if you could only turn left.