

food news

Though it's known by several nicknames more than most towns (Crescent City and The Big Easy to name just two), we believe New Orleans would best be served by a moniker that reflects the collective obsession of its citizenry. The Big Beignet? Crawfish City? Call it what you will, it's a town with some great food and drink. Here are a few ways to sample the best of New Orleans back home.

The Perfect Praline

There's nothing that says New Orleans better than this brittle confection of sugar and pecans.

Loretta's Authentic Pralines makes pretty good praline candy and a very good praline cookie. Loretta's Authentic Pralines (ten to a box) cost \$12, while ten French Market Praline Cookies cost \$6.50. Call 504/529-6170.

Carnival Brands, a New Orleans-based company run by Ray Rathle and acclaimed chef Kevin Graham (British-born but a "naturalized" New Orleanian). Carnival's line of seafood specialties, available for the first time by mail, includes the very tasty, spicy, and robust **Cajun Classics Seafood Gumbo**, with lots of shrimp, crabmeat, vegetables, herbs, and Cajun

that is as much about the plantations surrounding New Orleans as it is a cookbook—anyone with an interest in Louisiana in particular or the South in general would do well to secure a copy of it. Call the league at 504/895-6653.

Louisiana Lager

Just north of New Orleans is the tiny town of Abita Springs, home of the

"Food in New Orleans is like sex; everybody's interested."

—Ella Brennan, doyenne of Commander's Palace, in *The South the Beautiful Cookbook*



seasonings. Shipped frozen, each two-pound container (serves four) costs \$6.79. Call 800/925-2774.

Junior League Jambalaya

The Junior League of New Orleans serves up two old-fashioned cookbooks, **Jambalaya** and **The Plantation Cookbook**. The former features the kind of shorthand recipes you can imagine the busy members of the league whipping up for their families and friends; the latter is a leisurely historical tour

state's beloved Abita Beer, whose handcrafted brews are "designed around the foods of Louisiana." Our favorite Cajun-Creole companion is **Abita Red Ale**, an amber-colored, rich and fruity seasonal brew. The runner-up is Abita's Turbodog Ale, a dark brown British-style ale with a very manly look and a surprisingly mild taste. Abita also makes a traditional root beer. You can't buy Abita's beers by mail, but these three are definitely worth seeking out next time you're down N'awlins way.

Great Gumbo

"To know what life is like in Louisiana, you must live it or you must taste it," runs the motto of

State Beans

Served at the governor's mansion and the state capitol—and at more than a few Louisiana homes and restaurants—Baton Rouge-based **Community Coffee** is virtually synonymous with its home state. This long-established, family-owned company offers a wide array of high-quality coffees, including a rich and flavorful Dark Roast, Between Medium (a roast between medium and dark), and New Orleans Blend, a classic combination of chicory and coffee. Call 800/525-5583 for a catalog.

Mother's

While Mother's (401 Poydras St. at the corner of Tchoupitoulas St., 504/523-9656) boasts the world's best ham, and many have sung the praises of its po'boys, our favorite menu item at Mother's is debris and biscuits.

Though it may sound like something only a particularly frugal mother would serve to her family, debris is delicious bits of roast beef that have fallen into the gravy while the beef cooks. Debris can also be found in Mother's "Ferd Special" po'boy, a compilation of baked ham, roast beef, debris, shredded cabbage, and Creole mustard.

Service is cafeteria-style and the ambience is the same, but the prices are reasonable (you'd have to down a lot of debris to spend more than \$10 for two at breakfast). Open for breakfast (a meal we like a lot more than our correspondent Gene Bourg does—Bourg rates New Orleans in this issue) as well as lunch and dinner, Mother's sits across the street from the Windsor Court Hotel and a half note from the French Quarter.