

The Holy Trinity of Cajun Cooking

The Holy Trinity of Cajun cooking is nearly as important to the mostly Catholic French Cajuns' as the churches Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) as it is to attending Mardi Gras, eating Gumbo, attending a crawfish boil, and much more. Ask any Louisianan and they'll tell you so, which is why good things come in threes, right?



Holy Trinity of Cajun Cooking

Creole and Cajun cuisine is distinctly full of flavor, culture, and history and you smell it when you enter a Cajun or Creole home. Three simple vegetables make up the holy trinity (bell pepper, onion, and celery) and once they are sauteed together they form the base for some of the most delicious dishes such as gumbo, jambalaya, and Étouffée. Throw in fresh parsley, garlic, green onion, bay leaf, and cayenne pepper and your dish comes alive!

Other holy trinity versions

In France onions, carrots and celery form the holy trinity commonly referred to as a mirepoix (pronounced *meer-pwah*) named after a French town. The three simple ingredients add

sophistication to French dishes.

In Italy, they have their own “holy trinity” called *soffritto* (*sufreit, odori or battuto*), the Italian word for “under-fried” or “fried slowly”. This describes perfectly the process of gently cooking olive oil, carrots, celery, and onions in a 2:1:1 ratio to soften them and release their flavor.

Which ever “holy trinity” version you decide to use, your meals will be blessed with flavor. Can I get an Amen?

Cajun holy trinity

- 1 large yellow onion
- 1 green bell pepper
- 6 celery stalks
- Oil



Jambalaya

Directions

1. Wash bell peppers and celery thoroughly and pat with paper towels to remove excess water.
2. Chop (you don't have to be so precise with the size) and sauté in oil until soft.

This is the base of your next Cajun dish!

Italian holy trinity (*Soffritto*)

- 80 gr. (1,6 oz) of Onions
- 80 gr. (1,6 oz) of Carrots
- 60 gr. (1,0 oz) of Celery
- 5 gr. (one clove) of garlic
- 10 gr. (0,2 oz) of Salt
- 10 gr. (0,2 oz) Extra Virgin Oil
- 2 gr. (0,05 oz) of Vinegar from wine
- 20 gr. (0,4 oz) Rosemary (optional)
- 10 gr. (0,2 oz) Sage (optional)
- 25 gr. (0,5 oz) Parsil (optional)
- 20 gr. (0,4 oz) Basil (optional)

The uniformly finely chopped vegetables are cooked for about 5 minutes or until they are soft “dorata” or golden in color.

1. Wash vegetables and herbs thoroughly and pat with paper towels to remove excess water.
2. Chop vegetables to even size.
3. Mince the herbs to even size.
4. Sauté vegetables and hers in olive oil until soft.

French holy trinity (Mirepoix)

The sizes should be relatively uniform and the more finely chopped the vegetables are, the more quickly the flavor and aroma are released.

- Two parts onion, to one part each celery and carrot, diced evenly
- Butter
- A small quantity of tomato paste for color (Optional)

1. Wash vegetables thoroughly and pat with paper towels to remove excess water.
2. Chop to even size and sauté in olive oil until soft.

Whether your next dish is Cajun, Italian, or French, the holy trinity of Cajun cooking will add distinct flavor to it.

Po' Boy History

I like my Po' boys dressed, and you? Before you ask, read on to learn about Po' boy history and you'll understand what I'm talking about.



Po' boy sandwich

Around 1910, brothers Bennie and Clovis Martin left their Acadiana region home in Raceland, Louisiana, for the big city of New Orleans. Both worked as streetcar conductors and about 12 years later opened a coffee stand which would eventually make Po' boy (also po-boy, po boy, or poor boy for your Northerners) sandwich history.

Imagine New Orleans in July 1, 1929, hot, hot, and even hotter after heated negotiations with union streetcar motormen and the street car owners went icy cold. There were around 1,100 streetcar workers union jobs in jeopardy and things really started to heat up when the street car company invited non-union workers or "strike breakers" from New York who were known career criminals to run the street cars. This really upset the union supporters and more than 10,000 New Orleanians gathered downtown as strike supporters gathered and then burned the first car operated by a strike breaker.

Sympathetic to the cause, the public avoided the streetcar transit system for about two weeks. Times were hard for the union workers, so businesses donated goods and services to the union including the the Martin Brothers, former union streetcar workers themselves, who said "Our meal is free to any members of Division 194."

The free meal ended up being a sandwich, but not just any sandwich and whenever the Martin brothers saw one of the striking men coming, one of them would say, 'Here comes another poor boy.' Hence the Po' boy sandwich is born.

What is a Po' boy?

Now, a "real" Po' boy contains Louisiana fried shrimp, oysters, soft shell crab, catfish, crawfish, Louisiana hot sausage, fried chicken breast, or roast beef. Equally important is that a Po' boy isn't a Po' boy unless it's served on New Orleans Po' boy French bread which has a crisp crust and a fluffy center.

You see, traditional French bread has narrow ends which doesn't usually get eaten, so the Martins worked with a local baker to develop a 40-inch loaf of bread that retained it's uniform, rectangular shape from end to end and simply filled their Po' boys with your favorite meat or fried seafood.

How to order a Po' boy

My first experience to a Po' boy stand was quite embarrassing. I was a newbie to the Crescent City and when the waitress asked me what kind of Po' boy I wanted. I replied in my most mid-western accent asking "What varieties of poor boy sandwiches do you have please?"

She graciously pointed to the menu wall and the seafood and meat combinations overwhelmed me, so I asked for an oyster poor boy. Then she asked me if I wanted it dressed or undressed? Luckily, a bystander helped me out explaining that

a “dressed” Po’ boy has lettuce, tomato, pickles, and mayonnaise and an “undressed” Po’ boy contains only the meat or seafood filling placed on the Po’ boy bread.

Since then I flock to New Orleans or anywhere in Southwest Louisiana, as often as possible because life without my dressed oyster Po’ boy is simply unbearable.

Mardi Gras King Cake Recipe

Hey, if you are reading this [Mardi Gras King Cake](#) recipe post you either yelled “I got the baby” at a king cake party or just want to bake a delicious piece of New Orleans history. Either way, remember, *Laissez les bons temps rouler* (Cajun French expression meaning) “Let the good times roll.”



Mardi Gras King Cake

Mardi Gras King Cake Recipe

Time: 4 1/2 hours

Yield: Two Mardi Gras King Cakes

1. Scald the milk and remove from heat. Stir in 1/4 cup of butter and let milk liquid cool to room temperature.

2. In a large bowl (or Kitchen Aid mixer bowl), dissolve yeast in the warm water with 1 tablespoon of the white sugar and let stand until creamy and bubbly, about 10 minutes.
3. Once the yeast mixture activates, add the milk/butter mixture. Whisk in the eggs. Stir in the remaining white sugar, salt and nutmeg.
4. Beat the flour into the milk/egg mixture 1 cup at a time (either by using the Kitchen Aid hook attachment or by hand). When the dough begins to pull together, turn it out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic for about 8 to 10 minutes.
5. Use a neutral oil to lightly oil a large bowl, place the dough in the bowl and turn it to ensure all sides are coated.
6. Cover dough with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 2 hours. Once dough has risen, punch it down and divide it in half (for 2 cakes).
7. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) and then line two cookie sheets with parchment paper.

Mardi Gras King Cake Filling Directions

1. In a medium sized bowl, combine the brown sugar, cinnamon, pecans, 1/2 cup flour and 1/2 cup raisins. Pour 1/2 cup melted butter over the cinnamon mixture and mix until crumbly.

King Cake Dough Final Preparation (we're almost done!)

1. Roll dough halves out into rectangles (approximately 10×16 inches). Sprinkle the filling evenly over the dough being careful not to get too close to the long edge and beginning at the long side, roll each half as tightly as possible like a cinnamon jelly roll.
2. Bring the ends of each roll together to form 2 oval shaped rings. Place each ring around a **buttered/oiled**

tall ceramic bowl or empty coffee tin on the lined cookie sheet. This will ensure the Mardi Gras King Cake shape maintains its shape while baking.

3. Let the two king cake rolls rise in a warm spot until doubled in size, about 45 minutes.
4. Remove the buttered/oiled tall ceramic bowl or empty coffee tin before baking.
5. Bake in preheated oven for about 20-25 minutes.
6. Once the cakes are done, make a slit with a knife and push a doll or trinket into the bottom of each cake. Don't forget to warn your colleagues about the trinket otherwise, you might be paying for their dental bill.
7. Frost the cakes while they are still warm with the powdered sugar blend. I used a plastic glove to smear the frosting onto each cake.
8. Quickly sprinkle the yellow, purple, and green colored sugars onto the cake.

Enjoy cake at your next Mardi Gras King Cake party and don't forget to keep track of who finds the baby.

Mardi Gras King Cake

They yelled "Who got the baby?" and the party guest looked bewildered. He took another careful bite, slowly rolling the object with his tongue, and then slowly spit it out yelling "I got the baby, so I'm king for the day!" When I hear such stories it reminds me it's Mardi Gras King Cake time!



Mardi Gras King Cake

Every year Carnival season officially begins on January 6th or the “Twelfth Night,” also known to Christians as the “Epiphany” and oh my, I’m just getting around to baking the holiday cakes nearly two weeks before the end of Carnival. I know, I know, it’s shameful, so today I’m baking two Mardi Gras King Cakes just to catch up.

The seasonal cake, a delicious brioche-like pastry and is not only rich in history but flavor too. The King Cake origin is thought to have been brought to New Orleans from France in 1870. The round or oval-shaped cake is shaped similar to a crown, and has a toy baby hidden inside, but in the past coins, beans, pecans, or peas were hidden in each King Cake.

As pieces of the delicious cake are eaten at Mardi Gras King Cake parties, someone will yell “Who got the baby?” Customarily the lucky person whose piece of cake contained the toy favor was crowned king or queen for the day, but today, the recipient is expected to host a king cake party at least purchase the next cake.



Mardi King Cake trinket, Wiki photo by Nono64

Rich history means rich flavors for a Mardi Gras King Cake. Think yummy cinnamon, brown sugar, fruit marmalade, cream cheese, and of course chocolate fillings. Right now in New Orleans, hoards of bakeries are churning out thousands of varieties of cakes in honor of the three kings and inserting plastic babies representing the Christ-child or their signature tokens.

The cakes are decorated in royal colors of purple for justice, green for faith, and gold for power. The colors chosen resemble a jeweled crown honoring the Wise Men who visited the Christ-child on Epiphany.

It's not too late to eat a Mardi Gras King Cake, in fact in New Orleans they are eaten until Mardi Gras, or "Fat Tuesday," the last day of the Carnival season and the day before Ash Wednesday and not again until the following year on January 6th.

Did you yell "I got the baby!?" if so, bake a Mardi Gras King Cake and pass on a great New Orleans tradition.