

SEAFOOD SECRETS

Acadiana chefs let us in on some of their 'best kept'

ANYONE WHO'S EVEN HEARD OF LOUISIANA KNOWS seafood is a staple of our diet — whether fried, grilled, boiled, smoked, sautéed or steamed. And for those of us who grew up in the southern part of the state, Friday must ... and Chris ... the same without oyster c

Apparently we're on to the world over enjoyed food is a great source of fatty acids, they explain, indulgence. Lafayette chefs and are proud to prepare a variety of delicious ways as tapas, sushi, in pasta or they all agree on is "fresh Louisiana waters yield fr

Story by agent
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Riverside Inn Shrimp Remoulade

2 c. mayonnaise

live & let dine

CHEF WILLIAM ANNESLEY Pamplona Tapas Bar

Annesley says he searches for the highest-quality, preferably local, seafood and strives for simple flavors nestled in delicate yet sexy sauces. His top choices include sardines and fresh char-grilled shellfish — evocative of his favorite seaside spot in Mallorca, Spain. Sardines arrive by boat, are baked in salt then char-grilled on an open flame with herb butter or lemon juice. This exotic piece of resistance will soon grace the Pamplona menu alongside other succulent seafood delights, such as Mussels in Saffron Sauce, Char-grilled Oysters and this five-star dish:

Chef William Annesley's Seared Scallops with a Pomegranate Molasses

Chef Annesley salts fresh sea scallops and dips both sides in ras-al-hanout — a vast blend of bold Moroccan spices exuding a subtle aroma and literally meaning "top of the shop." He finishes the dish by sautéing the scallops in olive oil. The sauce comprises fresh pomegranate and lemon juices, sugar, a cinnamon stick and a little Jamaican allspice. The ingredients are reduced until the concoction resembles molasses. For the presentation, Chef Annesley spoons the sauce onto a small plate,



PAMPLONA'S SEARED SCALLOPS Photo by Gwen Aucutt

seared scallops and garnishes with a sprig of mint.

CHEF BILL SCHWANZ Blue Dog Café

Schwanz — who advocates for fresh, subtle aroma and good form — shares this fresh fish shopping tip: "If you press on a fish fillet and it doesn't spring back, it could be bad. Look for pink, clean gills and shiny eyes when purchasing whole fish."

Among the many choice dishes from his busy kitchen is the savory Seafood Cheesecake (shrimp or crab), made with a custard in a bain-marie, goat's, blue-vein or smoked cheese, served with a marsala tomato coulis to tie the fabulous flavors together. Baking this dish en papillote (in parchment paper), with a few herbs sprinkled in will reveal a fresh, clean flavor. Or, for those who prefer a richer, bolder flavor, fish may be added to complete a gratinée with cheesy béchamel and spicy seasonings.

Crawfish Alfredo is a longtime Blue Dog favorite, and patron's are raving about Schwanz's latest culinary creation, currently offered as a special: Arctic Seabass — sweet, flavorful, flaky and sumptuous — topping a bed of pasta and hugged in a Rockefeller cream with roasted red peppers and fresh asparagus.

CHEF BRIAN BLANCHARD iMonelli

Blanchard's gold medal-winning Stuffed Rainbow Trout — on the iMonelli menu for the past 20 years — is guaranteed to please the palate. Other favorites include his Grilled Grouper, topped with jumbo lump crabmeat and finished with a pesto chardonnay cream sauce; his signature Shrimp iMonelli; and some of the best Crab Cakes in town. At iMonelli, seafood is in no short supply. Blanchard recommends the Lobster Bisque and anything from the restaurant's wood-burning grill.

Blanchard's seafood secret: Cook the freshest catches you can find.

"You can be the best chef in the world, but if you aren't

dealing with fresh seafood, you're just not going to cut it," he says.

Chef Brian Blanchard's Shrimp iMonelli

1 T olive oil
6 large peeled shrimp
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. crushed garlic
1 tsp. crushed oregano
1 tsp. crushed black pepper
1 tsp. ground nutmeg
¼ c. white wine
¼ c. heavy cream
2 T fresh Parmesan cheese

Pour olive oil in skillet over medium heat. Add shrimp and sauté for about 4 minutes. Add salt, garlic, oregano, black pepper, nutmeg and white wine. Bring to a boil for 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Strain contents, holding liquid and removing shrimp. Pour liquid in skillet; add cream and Parmesan cheese. Bring to a boil. Add shrimp and let simmer for 5 minutes until thickened. Serve over pasta.

CHEF NOLTON BATISTE Poor Boy's Riverside Inn

Poor Boy's has been serving fine seafood to Acadiana for more than 75 years. Batiste — the restaurant's chef since 1965 — has lots of tips and tricks to offer:

Even if kept in a cooler, freshly caught fish and seafood should be iced immediately, he says. The faster you cool it, the fresher it will be when processing. When buying fresh crabmeat, he advises, ask for a small sample. If it feels stringy or has a texture like hair, it has been frozen and defrosted. Aside from crab fingers, never freeze crabmeat unless you plan on using it in soup or stuffing.

The Inn's bestseller is the House Salad, but don't be fooled by the mundane moniker. This simple-sounding dish delights diners with a complex blend of jumbo lump crabmeat, shrimp, crawfish, bacon and cheese, tossed in a mild dressing with lettuce, garnished with an array of pickled vegetables and tomato, and topped with a slice of boiled egg.

Other favorites include Jumbo Lump Crabmeat Sautéed in Butter and the Shrimp Remoulade.



Photo by Julia Price

Chef Bill Schwanz's Crawfish Alfredo

1 lb. butter
2 c. diced yellow onion
2 c. diced green bell pepper
2 c. diced celery
2 tsp. granulated garlic
½ T black pepper
1 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 T Creole seasoning
2 ½ c. all purpose flour
3 c. chicken stock or chicken broth
5 c. half & half
5 c. heavy cream
1 lb. shredded cheddar or Gruyere cheese
olive or canola oil
2 lbs. peeled crawfish tails
white wine
pasta
Parmesan cheese
fresh parsley

To prepare Alfredo Cream Sauce: Melt butter over medium heat in a 6-quart heavy bottom stockpot. Add onions, bell peppers and celery. Cook until vegetables are translucent. Add garlic and dry seasoning and simmer for 2 minutes. Add flour and mix thoroughly. Add chicken stock, half & half and heavy cream. Whisk frequently until sauce thickens. Add cheese and whisk until completely incorporated.

To prepare Crawfish Alfredo: In a sauté skillet, heat olive oil or canola oil on high heat. Add crawfish and cook for another 30 seconds. Deglaze the pan with white wine and let reduce for 30 seconds. Add 6 oz. of Alfredo Cream Sauce and lower heat. Stir sauce to blend all the flavors in your skillet. Serve over 2 c. (per person) of your favorite prepared pasta. Garnish with grated Parmesan and fresh parsley.