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# Louisiana Kitchen & Culture™

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# Heat in the Kitchen: A Weekend Seafood Boil and Cook-out with an Eclectic Group of Louisiana Chefs

**By Chef Alex Hamman**  
**Editor-At-Large**

Photography: David Gallent



# I'm not a Southerner by birth, but I do have it in my bloodline, and something about this place keeps pulling me back down here—Katrina, Rita, and Wilma be damned.

My brother and I grew up in Montana with a dad from Michigan and a mom from Southern stock. My grandpa (we don't say Paw-Paw up there) was born in Mississippi, and I always entertained myself with the thought that Jackson, Mississippi, was named after him. When Mom served us our ribs and black-eyed peas every New Year's day, she just told us that it was "family tradition." I didn't know until I moved to Louisiana that people here know what black-eyed peas are too. This led me to conclude that Southerners are cool—some more than others. ...

Chef Scott Snodgrass is one such cool person, enough so to have hired me as his pastry chef when he was executive chef at Lee Circle Restaurant in New Orleans way back in the day, way back in the day, meaning: "Back when it was still open." These days find Scott (Scotty One, to me) doing his thing at One Restaurant & Lounge, a place he co-owns with his friend and fellow Atlanta-transplant, Lee McCullough, on Hampson Street in New Orleans' Riverbend neighborhood. The first crawfish boil I ever went to was at One's house on a Saturday during Mardi



Gras, and I have been hooked on this type of gathering ever since. We recently recreated that experience at the home he now shares with Rhett Sassard, an ultra-stylish woman who could surely find work as an interior designer if she ever tires of her career as a general surgeon. Their home overlooking Audubon Park is spectacular—but I'm pretty sure it ain't so 'cause of One's impeccable taste.

Anyway, for our recent get-together, we cooked up piles of huge Gulf shrimp and fat-ass blue crabs caught that morning on Shell Beach. I'll give a shameless plug here to Harlon's LA Fish House: The shrimp and crabs as well as the just-caught Des Allemands catfish we fried were peerless, absolutely beautiful stuff, and the

**OPPOSITE 1:** Russ "Soulman" Halsrud adds plenty of fresh garlic pods to his intensely flavored seafood brew **2:** Big, fat, fresh blue crabs plucked from the shores of Shell Beach just hours before **3:** Soulman's brew, it's time to add the seafood **4:** Pods of fresh garlic will enhance the boil **5:** Karlos Knott arrives with a welcome load of La 31 beer to share **6:** Writer Chef Alex Hamman cracks open a bottle of La 31's Saison d'Ecrevisse

## SoulMan's Seafood Boil

Russ Halsrud, New Orleans

*A Renaissance man, Russ Halsrud is a contractor, locksmith, charter fishing captain, and since 2006, head waiter at One Restaurant & Lounge. He is famous for this boil recipe, which he shares for the first time.*

### water

- 63** ounces extra-spicy powdered crab boil
- 16** ounces liquid crab boil
- 2** pre-packaged bags of extra-spicy seafood boil
- 6** ounces cayenne pepper
- 13** ounces (half a box) kosher salt
- 32** ounces 100 percent lemon juice or 12 lemons, cut in half
- 25 to 30** bay leaves
- 2 or 3** bunches celery, roughly chopped
- 6 to 8** large onions, roughly chopped
- 20** heads of garlic
- 1** stick butter
- 20** pounds ice
- 1** sack live Louisiana crawfish, 8 dozen live Louisiana blue crabs, or 25 to 30 pounds fresh, head on, Gulf shrimp

Fill an 80- to 100-quart seafood boiling pot half full with water. Add all ingredients except seafood; bring to a full, rolling boil. Add seafood; return to boil. Shut off fire under pot. Add ice to pot; stir thoroughly, yet gently to facilitate cooling. If possible, spray the exterior of the pot with a garden hose from time to time to further facilitate cooling. Allow seafood to soak, sampling seafood every 10 minutes until desired flavor/spiciness is achieved. Soaking times will vary based on variety of seafood used.

Do not soak shrimp for more than 45 minutes or they will be tough. **Serves around 15.**









### Tartar Sauce

*Our Kitchen & Culture, LLC, New Orleans*

- 2 tablespoons dill pickle relish
- 2 tablespoons sweet pickle relish
- 1 tablespoon capers
- 2 tablespoons Creole mustard
- 2 cups mayonnaise

Process relishes and capers in a food processor until coarsely chopped. Fold into remaining ingredients. Chill overnight to marry flavors. **Makes 2½ cups.**





**1:** Chef's Scott's savory crawfish cornbread **2:** a meaty Louisiana blue crab **3:** Michele Knott **4:** hostess Rhett Sassard serves up a platter **5:** Chef Tenney Flynn of GW Fins stirs the pot **6:** Boiled seafood with all the trimmings

## Chef Scott's Venison, Chicken, and White Bean Cassoulet

*Chef Scot Snodgrass, One Restaurant & Lounge, New Orleans*

Chef Snodgrass' adoring clients frequently bring him bounties from their fishing and hunting expeditions, so he frequently invites them to his home to share in the final product. He emphasizes starting with all ingredients in place (*mis en place*) and prep work complete before starting the dish.

- 2 pounds dried great northern white beans, rinsed, sorted and soaked in salted water in refrigerator overnight**
- ½ cup chicken or duck fat** (olive oil may be substituted), **in all**
- 2 pounds venison sausage, diced**
- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic**
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme, picked**
- 2 sprigs fresh oregano, picked**
- 2 cups diced yellow onions**
- 2 cups diced celery**
- ½ cup diced green bell pepper**
- ¼ cup finely diced carrots**
- 1 cup roasted, chopped tomatoes**
- 2 bay leaves**
- 2 to 3 quarts chicken stock**
- ¼ cup sliced green onions**
- kosher salt and cayenne pepper**
- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs blended with 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- Crystal hot sauce**
- 1 pound meat from chicken thighs, roasted and pulled**

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Drain beans. To a large, oven-safe Dutch oven, preferably cast iron, set over high heat, add three tablespoons chicken or duck fat or olive oil. When fat smokes, add venison sausage; reduce heat to medium-low and cook until fat is rendered and sausage is almost crispy. Strain, reserving fat. Set sausage aside. Return fat to pot atop medium-high heat. When oil smokes add garlic, thyme, and oregano; stir. Immediately add onions, celery, bell pepper, and carrots.

Cook, stirring frequently, until onions are translucent but garlic is not brown, six to eight minutes. Add tomatoes, white beans, sausage, bay leaves, and two quarts chicken stock; bring to a boil. Season with salt, cayenne, and hot sauce. Place in oven, uncovered, and cook until beans are tender but not creamy, one and a half to two hours, stirring occasionally. If the pot gets dry, add more chicken stock. The goal is to get the beans to absorb as much liquid as possible. Remove pot from oven; stir in chicken. Drizzle remaining oil or fat over mixture. Scatter green onions and panko mixture evenly atop mixture in pot. Return to oven and bake until crust is golden brown, 30 to 45 minutes. Serves 10 to 12.

## White Remoulade Sauce

*Our Kitchen & Culture, LLC, New Orleans*

- 1 rib celery, minced**
- 6 green onions, white parts only, chopped**
- ½ cup chopped parsley**
- 1 small onion, minced**
- ¼ cup nonpareil capers, drained**
- ½ cup Creole mustard**
- 1 cup mayonnaise**
- 1 cup sour cream**
- 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish or more**
- ¼ cup white wine vinegar**
- salt and pepper**
- ¼ cup salad oil**
- 48 jumbo Gulf shrimp, peeled, boiled, and chilled**
- 1 small head iceberg lettuce, cut into thin ribbons, washed, drained, and dried**

Add celery, green onion, parsley, onion, and capers to a food processor. Add Creole mustard, mayonnaise, sour cream, horseradish, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Process until blended. Begin processing again; add the oil in a slow drizzle to emulsify. Chill for six to eight hours or overnight. Correct seasoning with additional horseradish if desired after ingredients have had the opportunity to marry. **Makes 3 cups.**

## Red Remoulade Sauce

*Our Kitchen & Culture, LLC, New Orleans*

- 2 ribs celery, chopped**
- 6 green onions, chopped**
- ½ cup chopped parsley**
- 1 large onion, chopped**
- ½ cup ketchup**
- ½ cup tomato purée**
- ½ cup Creole mustard**

- 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish or more**
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar**
- 2 tablespoons paprika**
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce**
- ½ cup salad oil**

Mince celery, green onion, parsley, and yellow onions in a food processor. Add ketchup, tomato purée, Creole mustard, horseradish, red wine vinegar, paprika, and Worcestershire. Begin processing again; add the oil in a slow drizzle to emulsify. Chill for six to eight hours or overnight. Correct seasoning with additional horseradish if desired after ingredients have had the opportunity to marry. Serve with boiled seafood. **Makes 3 cups.**

## Herb Sauce for Seafood

*Our Kitchen & Culture, LLC, New Orleans*

- 2 tablespoons each finely chopped dill, tarragon, flat-leaf Italian parsley, and chives**
- 2 cups mayonnaise**
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**

Combine all ingredients. Chill overnight to marry flavors. **Makes 2½ cups.**

## Chef Scott's Crawfish Cornbread

*Chef Scot Snodgrass, One Restaurant & Lounge, New Orleans*

- 1½ cups corn flour**
- ¾ cup flour**
- 1½ tablespoons baking powder**
- kosher salt** (Chef Scott uses 1½ tablespoons)
- ½ cup sugar**
- ½ pound Fleur de Lis brand Louisiana crawfish tails**
- 2 eggs**
- 2 cups whole milk**
- ¾ cups melted butter**
- 3 green onions, thinly sliced**
- 2 dashes Crystal hot sauce**

Sift dry ingredients together three times into a large mixing bowl. In a separate bowl, whip eggs until frothy, about two minutes; add milk, butter, green onions, and crawfish; mix thoroughly. Combine wet and dry ingredients; allow to sit at room temperature for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F.

Pour batter into a greased 9x13-inch baking dish; bake until golden, about 25 minutes. **Serves 10 to 12.**





## Chef Scott's Fried Catfish

*Chef Scot Snodgrass, One Restaurant & Lounge, New Orleans*

- 4 cups corn flour
- 6 cups panko
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup Creole seasoning (recipes follows or use a brand such as Tony's or Zatarain's)
- 5 pounds fresh Des Allemands wild-caught catfish fillets
- 2 cups milk
- 2 eggs
- oil for frying

Whip eggs and milk together in a large bowl. Mix all dry ingredients in another bowl. Dip fillets in egg/milk wash then press firmly into dry mixture, coating thoroughly. Deep-fry fillets in 350°F oil until golden, about three to four minutes. Serve at once. **Serves 10 to 12.**







### Creole Seasoning

- ½ cup paprika
- ½ cup kosher salt
- ¼ cup granulated onion
- ¼ cup granulated garlic
- 1 tablespoon cayenne

Blend all ingredients; store in an air-tight container.



results of our communal cooking efforts surpassed any outdoor cookery I've ever had. For this go-round, the boiling responsibilities were turned over to Russ and Ryan Haslrud. While Russ is head waiter at One Restaurant & Lounge, I'm assuming he left the kitchen to work the front-of-the-house at some point in his life, because this dude can really cook.

This gave Will Frank, Sous Chef at One, a welcome day off to enjoy the party with his wife, Winnie.

Well-done, sirs.

I suppose you can find irony in a front-of-the-house guy in charge of cooking for a bunch of off-duty chefs, cooks, a popular seafood purveyor, and the owners of Bayou Teche (La 31) Brewery but no one was complaining. Chef Tenney Flynn of GW Fins was there (see his article on sourcing and

1: A prime Des Allemands catfish 2: Host Chef Scott Snodgrass 3: Will Frank, sous chef, One Restaurant & Lounge 4: Mitch Arens, chef de cuisine, Calcasieu. 5: Remy, the fierce, yet warm greeter at the Sassard-Snodgrass home 6: Venison, Chicken and White Bean Cassoulet 7: Hot and Delicious: Just fried catfish 8: Stephanie Knott with a plate all her own 9: Chef Alex Hamman and Richard DiRosa dig in 10: Winnie Frank shows us how it's done.

cooking Gulf finfish on page 28 in this issue), la Famille Devillere—Justin, Mia, and Ruby—of La Petite Grocery made an appearance, so did Mitch Arens, Chef de Cuisine, Calcasieu. There was a whole lot of heat in that kitchen.

I'll admit I've never been much of a fan of catfish, but Laura DiRosa with LA Fish showed up with both whole fish and fillets that fried up so beautifully as to have converted me into a reborn enthusiast for bottom-feeders. We rounded out the feast with Scotty's Crawfish Cornbread and his killer Venison, Chicken, and White Bean Cassoulet. I would never think to make something like cassoulet for a seafood boil, but this turned out to be the most memorable dish of the day—in a sea of memorable foods. Make the cassoulet. ♦