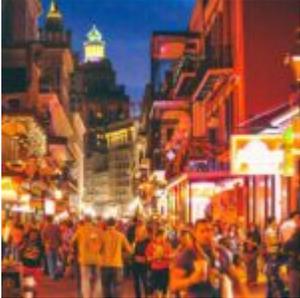


Fat Tuesday in the Old French Quarter



Fat Tuesday is here folks. The end of Mardi Gras, and for many, the beginning of periodic fasting or giving up something special for Lent. The party's over for those who follow these traditions; at least until Easter.

People go all out on Fat Tuesday. New Orleans is the city most famous for their celebration.

I've been to New Orleans a few times; just not for the parade and the party atmosphere that dazzles the crowds on Fat Tuesday. Remember, this is the feast of necklaces with beads, traded for favors. This is the parade riddled with huge crowds of scantily clad women and men who hide their identities behind elaborate costumes. The French Quarter goes through days of cleaning after Fat Tuesday is over. It's one heck of a party. I guess I've matured and I'm too old for those kinds of shenanigans. I used to think I wanted to go to New Orleans for Fat Tuesday; at least once. Now, I think I'm over it.

Last time I was in New Orleans, I decided I liked the city better at night; especially the area around Bourbon Street.

During the day you see the aftermath of the party atmosphere the night before. The party is every day on Bourbon Street; not just Fat Tuesday. There's a smell of stale beer and spilled liquor that hangs in the air. If you're there in July, (like I was the last time), the humidity can be stifling. I much prefer the evenings when it cools down (at least a little), the music is playing and people are out for a good time. It sort of covers up the nasty parts.

What I thought I'd do today is give you a little food tour of my favorite places in New Orleans. It's Fat Tuesday. Seems totally appropriate.

I'm going to include links so you can check these places out further.

First stop – NOLA.



I used to be a huge fan of Chef Emeril Lagasse when he first got famous in the early 80's. NOLA is one of his restaurants in New Orleans. He now has four. I started out my eating adventures in New Orleans at his first restaurant called Emeril's. I like

NOLA's modernity and casual atmosphere. Many of the top restaurants in New Orleans are more upscale. NOLA's is more boisterous and serves food with twists and turns you don't expect from Cajun or Creole food.

Emeril was not born in New Orleans, but he certainly is partial to that city. At one point, he was the Head Chef at Commander's Palace –after the famous New Orleans Chef Paul Prudhomme left. (When blackened catfish was popular in the 80's, I always used Paul Prudhomme's recipe. BIG YUM.) Commander's Palace is probably the most famous New Orleans restaurant.

I preferred the venerable Arnaud's.



Stepping into Arnaud's, you know you're in the deep south,

bathed in tradition. The décor has a southern charm with a French flair. The waiters are all dressed in formal attire and live jazz is playing.

I can only remember one thing I ate at Arnaud's. Don't get me wrong. It was all fantastic, but it was the crème brulee that stole my heart.

Our waiter saw me taking my time reading the dessert menu. He seemed to lose his patience with me. He took the dessert menu out of my hands and told me he'd take care of selecting my dessert. He strolled off.

I was pretty miffed. I fancied myself a foodie and didn't like the idea of some guy deciding my dessert for the evening.

What he brought back was foreign to me. I was young. I didn't have the culinary experience I do now. He set in front of me what I thought looked like a yellow puddle of pudding with some crust on it. I had to break into it to eat it. I have to admit, my eyes rolled back in my head when I took my first bite. I moaned.

The crust on the top was hot and sugary. It broke like glass when I tapped on it with my spoon. The custard was cold and tasted dreamy; like nothing I had ever had.

When the waiter returned to our table, I made some comment about if they had a mixing bowl of the stuff back in the kitchen I'd like to lick it clean.

He smiled. He was quite proud of himself.

I was quite happy with my dessert.

Even though I prefer New Orleans in the evening, I will bring up one other New Orleans specialty that I'd recommend is worth the

carbs.

The beignets.

Café DuMonde is the most famous coffee place in New Orleans and of course, they serve beignets as a breakfast treat.

They also serve chicory coffee. A Cajun tradition. Be careful with that stuff. Chicory coffee has a kick.

The last time I ate a beignet it was "baby-sized" and I tapped off all of the powdered sugar, but just one little one as a treat is something you'll remember forever. Besides, Fat Tuesday is right around the corner.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Zola". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.



**White Chocolate Creme Brulee
(Custard) with Strawberry Coulis
(Sauce)**

Only 10 grams of carbohydrates per serving!