

When fall arrives in Louisiana, the gumbo pots come out. We asked the champs of New Iberia's annual cook-off for their recipes.



New Iberia,
LA

Gumbo Gumbo

PHOTOGRAPHS BY YUNHEE KIM



Louisiana natives are quick to tell you that no two gumbos are alike. Tweak a roux here and a spice there, and you end up with a completely different pot of stew—which is why every October gumbo fanatics meet in New Iberia to see who's making it the best. The three-day World Championship Gumbo Cook-Off (October 12 to 14; worldchampionshipgumbocookoff.blogspot.com) starts with live music on Friday night and a Cajun and Creole food festival on Saturday before the main event on Sunday. About 90 teams gather before 5 a.m. to compete in one of three categories: chicken and sausage, seafood, and *mélange* (the wild-card division). For the next few hours, all of downtown smells like gumbo as 40,000 people wait to get their first taste. It's worth a trip for a sample, but in case you can't get there, we asked last year's amateur winners for their prized recipes.



CHICKEN AND SAUSAGE GUMBO ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 3 hr | SERVES: 12 to 15

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¾ cup canola oil ¾ cup all-purpose flour ¼ cup whole-wheat flour ¼ cup finely chopped onion, plus 2 cups roughly chopped 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth 1 cup chopped celery ½ cup chopped green bell pepper 2 teaspoons cayenne pepper 1 teaspoon garlic powder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper 1 pound smoked sausage, sliced 8 ounces tasso ham or andouille sausage, diced 1¼ pounds skinless, boneless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch pieces 1¼ pounds skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch pieces 3 to 4 scallions, chopped Cooked white rice, for serving (optional) |
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- 1.** Make the roux: Heat the canola oil in a cast-iron skillet over medium heat until hot, about 5 minutes. Whisk in both flours and cook, whisking constantly, until the roux is dark brown, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand 10 minutes, then stir in the finely chopped onion.
- 2.** Meanwhile, bring the broth and 20 cups water to a boil in a large pot. Add the roughly chopped onion, the celery and bell pepper; cook over medium-high heat, 15 minutes. Stir in the roux in 3 batches; cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened, 30 minutes. Add the cayenne, garlic powder, 2½ tablespoons salt and ½ teaspoon black pepper. Stir in the smoked sausage and tasso. Reduce the heat to low; simmer 1 hour.
- 3.** Return the mixture to a boil. Add the chicken thighs and breasts and cook 30 minutes. Remove from the heat. Skim the fat off the surface, then stir in the scallions. Serve over rice.



Alcee “Butch” Bayard (pictured, in apron) has been making his team’s chicken and sausage gumbo entry for years, just the way his mother taught him. “It’s kind of my baby,” he says. He had never placed higher than third in the category, but a few days before last year’s competition, he decided to use whole-wheat flour in place of some of the all-purpose in his roux. The small swap made a big difference: Bayard and his team walked away with a first-place trophy. They’ll be back again this year—with the trophy proudly on display.

FOOD STYLING: MAGGIE RUGGIERO; PROP STYLING: ELIZABETH MACLENNAN; INSET: FUSION PHOTOGRAPHY.



James Trahan (pictured, center) and his team are regulars at barbecue and jambalaya competitions in the South. But they hadn't participated in the gumbo cook-off until last year. "After talking about it for a while, we finally decided to go for it," Trahan says. They made a massive batch of the seafood gumbo that Trahan serves at his annual Halloween party and won over the judges on their first try. "I knew whatever we did would be pretty good," Trahan says, "but I didn't have any idea we'd take first place."

SEAFOOD GUMBO ACTIVE: 1 hr 15 min | TOTAL: 5 hr | SERVES: 12 to 15

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| 1 cup all-purpose flour | 4 pounds medium shrimp, peeled and deveined |
| 1 cup vegetable oil | 1 pound crabmeat |
| 2 cups finely chopped onion | 1 bunch scallions, finely chopped |
| 2 green bell peppers, finely chopped | ½ bunch parsley, finely chopped |
| 1 blue crab | Cooked white rice, for serving (optional) |
| 1 lobster tail | |
| ¼ cup Creole seasoning (preferably Tony Chachere's) | |

1. Make the roux: Combine the flour and vegetable oil in a wide Dutch oven over medium-low heat and cook, whisking constantly, until dark brown, about 45 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.
2. Bring 10 quarts water to a boil in an extra-large, wide pot. Stir in the onion, bell peppers and roux and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are very soft, about 45 minutes. Add the blue crab and lobster tail and boil until cooked through, 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the lobster tail and crab; discard the crab. Let the lobster cool slightly, then remove the meat from the shell and cut into small chunks; refrigerate until ready to use.
3. Add the Creole seasoning to the pot and bring to a boil; cook until the liquid reduces by one-quarter, about 1 hour, 30 minutes. Add the shrimp and cook over medium heat until firm, about 20 minutes. Add the crabmeat and reserved lobster meat and cook 10 minutes. Stir in the scallions and parsley and remove from the heat. Cover and let stand 30 minutes. Serve over rice.

INSET: FUSION PHOTOGRAPHY



Last year **Neal Trahan** (pictured, second from right) decided not to go to the awards ceremony with the rest of his team: “Every year I go and I’m just disappointed.” He sat in his booth, but he could still hear the announcer—and when his team won the *mélange* division, he jumped out of his seat. With just a simple addition, his team beat out gumbos with unexpected ingredients like quail and alligator: “We doctored it up with smoked turkey.”

MÉLANGE GUMBO

ACTIVE: 1 hr 15 min | TOTAL: 4 hr 50 min | SERVES: 12 to 15

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| 2 cups plus 2 tablespoons vegetable oil | 1 pound andouille sausage, thinly sliced |
| 2 cups all-purpose flour | $\frac{3}{4}$ pound skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut into pieces |
| 1 large onion, chopped | $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds smoked turkey thigh, skin and bones removed, cut into pieces |
| 2 large green bell peppers, chopped | 1 bunch scallions, chopped |
| 1 $3\frac{1}{2}$ -pound chicken | $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Cajun seasoning |
| 2 teaspoons red pepper flakes | Cooked white rice, for serving (optional) |
| Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper | |
| $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds fresh chicken sausage | |

1. Make the roux: Heat 2 cups vegetable oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until hot, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium, then whisk in the flour in 2 additions until the mixture is the consistency of cake batter. Continue cooking, whisking constantly, until the roux is dark brown, about 20 minutes. Remove from the heat, then stir in half each of the onion and bell peppers. Set aside until ready to use.
2. Combine the whole chicken, 10 cups water, the red pepper flakes, 1 tablespoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper in a large pot. Bring to a boil and cook 1 hour. Strain the broth, then return to the pot and set aside. Remove the chicken skin and bones, then cut the meat into bite-size pieces.
3. Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add the chicken sausage and cook, turning, until cooked through, 6 to 8 minutes. Let cool slightly, then slice.
4. Add 16 cups water to the pot with the broth and bring to a boil. Add the roux; cook over medium-high heat, stirring, until it dissolves, about 5 minutes. Stir in the remaining onion and bell peppers. Return to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium, cover and cook, 1 hour. Add the andouille sausage and raw chicken breasts, reduce the heat to medium low and cook, covered, 30 more minutes. Add the smoked turkey, sliced chicken sausage, cooked chicken pieces and scallions and simmer, covered, 30 minutes. Skim the fat off the surface, then stir in the Cajun seasoning. Serve over rice.

