

# FoodNewOrleans

The Sally List of things to do in New Orleans .. I hope you get inspired!

## Eat. Drink.

(Keep an eye out for *Haunted* notes, particularly if going out on Hallowe'en!)

**Acme Oyster House** – Shellfish (French Quarter) in business for nearly a century, this is a great place to go with a group. Order a selection of po-boys (submarine sandwiches on a soft roll) and a bunch of sides to pass around the table. Fried is the way to go here, with shrimp being my personal favorite, folks rave about the oysters and soft-shell crab. Signature plates include oysters on the half shell, chargrilled oysters, and boiled crawfish (to eat those properly, you'll need to "suck da heads and pinch da tails" ... however crawfish are currently out of season, so don't attempt to eat fresh ones – those in the shell – outside the March-June timeframe). Crowded, loud, and crazy.

**Angelo Brocato** – Gelato (Mid-City) 100-year old establishment dedicated to yummy Sicilian gelati, spumone, ices, cannolis, and other traditional pastries. The pistachio or stracciatella along with an espresso is definitely worth the trip. Easiest way to get there is by car or cab.

**Antoine's** – French/Creole (French Quarter) institution since 1840 and creators of Oysters Rockefeller. Also claim origination of Oysters Bienville, which is very publicly disputed with Arnaud's. Very old school, formal service. Dinner is exclusively a la carte – with an emphasis on tradition (many of their dishes are rich and may seem underseasoned to some) – with heavyweights such as Huitres a la Foch (fried oysters on pate-slathered toast with brown sauce Colbert), Pompano Pontchartrain (grilled pompano served with butter-sautéed crabmeat) and Chateaubriand (for two; served in the traditional manner with a trio of sauces). Luncheon is served on Fridays only in the main dining room, and boasts a candy-sweet selection of \$0.25 🍷 martinis and a three-course prix fixe (a la carte selections are available by special request). Be sure to take a tour of their many dining rooms – some of them are absolutely spectacular, such as the Rex Room and Japanese Room (that hasn't been in use since World War II). I love traditional dining service, and used to visit Antoine's often whilst living in New Orleans years ago. It was an absolute treat to return each time and be served by the same waiter, who knew me and my preferences and always treated me well. Sadly, whilst Antoine's business has always been strong, they seem to suffer quality- and service-wise post-Katrina (Clifton, their maitre d' for over 40 years, tragically died in the storm; the restaurant also lost their historic wine cellar, and, like so many establishments, numerous long-standing staffers who have been displaced by the storm have yet to return). I brought Charel here for luncheon in February, and left a bit underwhelmed by the mixed experience. It was great to be back, delighted to see that our waiter was Austin Murray – having been promoted from his long-time tenure as busboy to the now-retired original waiter, Gerry – but sadly the food fell flat in several areas, specifically their signature pommes de terre soufflées, which tasted terribly dry as if they were prepared far in advance and held under a heat lamp until wooden in texture. Some of the team of younger servers generally seemed to be happy to be there, being groomed for waiterdom, but prone to what I believe is a generation-wide skewed/misunderstood/disconnected concept of service. But I still stand by Antoine's. Order the enormous, must-be-shared, signature Baked Alaska in advance for dessert and Café Brûlot Diabolique at the end of the meal for a snapshot of showman-infused tableside service from days gone by. Note that although numerous diners show up rather casually dressed (particularly for lunch), do be considerate and dress well out of respect for the place. Or a personal favor to me. *Haunted* Numerous spirits are said to haunt the restaurant, including that of Antoine Alciatore and his son.

**Arnaud's** – French/Creole (French Quarter) among the "usual suspect" old-time heavyweights (founded in 1918; local celebrity magnet), Arnaud's is an undecided's delight, with several sampler plates available showcasing signature preparations including oysters, veal, crabcakes, and crawfish. Seafood-intensive menu features alligator sausage, frog's legs, multiple pompano preparations, shrimp in their famous rémoulade sauce, Oysters Bienville (in fisticuffs with Antoine's over "ownership" of origin), and crabmeat with mushrooms in puff pastry. While mulling over the menu, order a batch of their particularly tasty take on (Antoine's signature) soufflé potatoes paired with a side of rich béarnaise. Best experience is in the more formal main dining room (jackets required, guys!), or try their nightly dixieland jazz dinner, or a drink in the Richelieu Room. *Haunted* The ghost of original owner "Count" Arnaud has regularly been sighted rearranging silverware, place settings, and bar setup; the restaurant's Mardi Gras museum is said to be haunted by his daughter, Germaine.

**August** – Contemporary French/Creole (Central Business District) the most formal of four restaurants owned by James Beard award-winning, Iron Chef-beating, media darling John Besh. Featuring innovative, modern takes on classic French and Creole selections a la carte, 5-course tastings, and grand three+ hour-long degustation-and-wine pairings. The kitchen excels in seafood, and turns out delicate, gorgeous, whimsical, yet beautifully-executed dishes that bring pork belly, rabbit, quail, sweetbreads, shellfish, truffles and other specialties to new heights. August continues to win accolades, including Zagat's top rating for food and service in New Orleans, and named as one of Gourmet's Top 50 US restaurants. Located in a four-story, 1800s French-Creole building just two blocks away from [ApacheCon](#) 2008 hotel; very likely to be site of the HALO Foodie Dinner. Do join us!

**Bayona** – Eclectic/American (French Quarter) perpetually top-ranking restaurant housed in a 200 year-old Creole cottage and owned by one of the city's most acclaimed female chefs. James Beard award-winning chef/owner Susan Spicer and her team turn out beautifully-finished dishes with Creole, Mediterranean, and Asian influences. Graze on eggplant caviar and tapenade whilst perusing the menu; be sure to try the cream of garlic soup, smoked quail salad, and anything duck, rabbit, or grilled. Luscious desserts are not-to-be-missed – no doubt any of their seasonal tarts, custards/mousses, and house-made ice creams will delight.

**The Bombay Club** – Drinks/Piano Bar (French Quarter) sip from a selection of 100+ martinis or have your own creation stirred to-order in an old-school British Colonial-influenced environment. Dark, private gentleman's club ambience, with classic leather seats, cigars, whiskey, and an excellent Creole-influenced dinner menu. Request one of the elegant private draped "booths" (see note below). Live piano nightly and jazz on weekends. Upscale but not "formal", do dress smartly. *Haunted* The bar and booth #3 in particular are haunted by a woman claimed to be a madame; paranormal behavior also reported in the kitchen.

**Brennan's** – French/Creole Breakfast (French Quarter) "breakfast at Brennan's" is an institution at the 60-year old flagship restaurant of the famous Brennan family. Start your experience with a Red Rooster, Mr. Funk of New Orleans or traditional eye opener, followed by a cup of gumbo, Eggs Hussarde (Holland rusks topped with poached eggs, Canadian bacon, Hollandaise and Marchands de Vin sauce), and their signature and widely-imitated Bananas Foster – delightfully prepared tableside with tourists snapping photos of the dessert being flambéed. Servers are witty and attentive. Be sure to make reservations, as the place packs up very quickly, and ask for a courtyard-facing table if available. *\*\*Haunted\*\** Several ghosts are on the property, including a chef and their fun-loving former winemaker Mr. Funk. Ghost-seeking guests request to be seated in the Red Room, where a murder-suicide took place during the Civil War – seems too "dark" for me; I personally won't go near it.

**Brigtsen's** – Creole (Riverbend) creative, dimly-lit, dinner-only little gem in an old cottage on a quiet residential street a couple of blocks from the streetcar line. James Beard Award-winning menu is homey and tasty, featuring comforting favorites with slightly unusual ingredients and innovative accompaniments, but nothing nouvelle or overly progressive in either preparation or presentation – no foams here. Seasonal menu changes regularly, but do try the shrimp rémoulade, saddle of rabbit, and anything duck if available. Renowned seafood platter regularly gets rave reviews and recommends. Relaxed and informal, but plan to dress smartly.

**Café du Monde** – Chicory Coffee and Beignets (French Quarter/French Market) throngs of tourists and locals alike flock to this 24-hour landmark for "the" quintessential New Orleans coffee experience. Established in 1864, the coffee stand has only recently (late '80s) expanded on its strictly coffee/beignets/milk-only menu, adding juice and iced coffee and sodas. Stick to tradition and indulge in the brain-shattering caffeine-rush-meets-sugar-high duo with chicory-infused café au lait and hot square beignets covered in an avalanche of powdered sugar. Be sure to lean forward before biting in, otherwise you'll end up with a chestful of the white stuff. Cash only. \*\*Haunted\*\* Numerous accounts of a "ghost waiter" who takes your order then disappears.

**Camellia Grill** – Classic Diner (Riverbend) traditional counter service reigns at this 60-year old diner set in a Greek Revival home, where little has changed, including the equipment, menu and staff. Charming longtime cooks and servers in white shirts and bow-ties have cute little tricks and entertaining quirks such as singing/shouting out the orders, politely serving drinking straws and snapping napkins with a flourish. The old-timer servers are scarce these days, but are a draw in themselves and well worth the (usually) long wait. Do visit and try the pecan waffles, omelets and grits for breakfast, lunchtime grilled cheese, red beans and rice on Mondays and pecan pie a la mode, and late-night burgers, cheese fries, and chocolate freezes. Cash-only; they apparently now take credit cards.

**Central Grocery** – Muffelleta sandwich (French Quarter) 120 year-old Italian (Sicilian) grocery store and creators of the famed Muffelleta (pronounced "moof-foo-LET-ta"). THE place to go for this massive, hugely popular, much-copied round sandwich stuffed with capicola, salami, mortadella, provolone, emmentaler and their famous olive salad (sliced green olives combined with giardiniera – pickled carrot, celery, and cauliflower – along with seasonings and olive oil). A must-try, must-share with friends!

**Cochon** – Louisiana Country Charcuterie (Warehouse District/Convention Center) carnivores delight in this James Beard award-winning homage to rustic Louisiana comfort cooking that celebrates all things piggy. Highlights include lovingly handcrafted classic Cajun and Creole specialties such as alligator, Andouille and Boudin sausages, as well as shellfish, duck and rabbit. Hugely appealing to adventurous and "risk-taking" diners alike with true nose-to-tail eating, from hoghead cheese to ham hocks, as well as several varieties of homemade moonshine to wash it down. Deep-south treats such as spoonbread, grits, greens, dumplings, buckle and root beer round out the experience.

**Columns Hotel** – Drinks (Garden District) stop for a genteel drink on the porch or the Victorian Lounge inside this 125 year-old landmark. Slow down, savor a Sazerac or mint julep and watch the streetcars go by.

**Commander's Palace** – Luncheon (Garden District) drop in for lunch over \$0.25 martinis and Creole classics from the legendary Brennan family – celebrity chefs Paul Prudhomme and Emeril Lagasse both started their careers here. Classics such as turtle soup, crabcakes, and shrimp rémoulade are always a hit; save room for the booming-large souffléed bread pudding and specialty coffees. A great time to visit is over luncheon, where you can stroll the beautiful Garden District and visit Lafayette Cemetery No. 1 afterwards, located just across the street. (Note: as with all cemeteries, remember to go in a group, be aware of your surroundings, and practice common sense. Be safe!)

**Creole Creamery** – Ice Cream (Uptown) lush, creamy staples include traditional chocolate, strawberry, vanilla, cookies and cream, plus a gorgeous café au lait, and delightfully crazy flavors such as caramel-chicory-chocolate, black-raspberry mojito, [BooBerry](#) pie and wasabi-pistchio ice cream as well as strawberry-basil and melon-ginger-lemongrass sorbet. I adore their scrumptious twist on the Southern classic Red Velvet Cake. Fun and family-friendly. Across the street from La Crêpe Nanou.

**La Crêpe Nanou** – Crêpes (Uptown) exceptional savory and sweet crêpes and classic French bistro fare served in an eclectic, intimate environment. Almost always a wait, but well worth it! The place I usually bring visitors for their first meal in the city (just a few blocks from my home and away from the French Quarter bustle) – unpretentious, intimate environment (some feel the tables are too close together, but that's the New Orleans experience!); friendly staff may be spread a bit too thin at times. Must tries: Savory Crêpes – au Crabe, Provençale, Oignon-Fromage, Ecrevisse, and Bourguignonne; Sweet Crêpes – Marrons, Belle Hélène, and Calvados.

**Dunbar's** – Fried Chicken/Soul (Uptown) home of the City's best fried chicken. Delicious, Creole comfort favorites include red beans & rice (Mondays), rich roux-okra-filé seafood gumbo (Fridays), po-boys, biscuits, greens, smothered okra, crawfish etouffée, and bread pudding. Fried chicken is all-you-can-eat, and crazy-affordable. Relocated to the Loyola law student union on Broadway after their original location was condemned post-Katrina.

**Emeril's** – Modern Creole (Warehouse District) the first restaurant of supercelebrity/media phenom chef Emeril Lagasse and the flagship of his 10-restaurant empire. Beautifully-executed seafood and meats – try their modernized take on local favorites including sausages, escargot, rabbit, oysters, and shrimp. Accompanying sides and sauces excel. Whilst some flavor profiles such as root beer-(infused pork belly), tamarind, molé, and charmoula seem unusual, the resulting dishes are constrained, well balanced and unuddled – no "BAM!" here. Whilst their original peanut butter pie is sadly no longer on the menu, be confident with just about any pie or soufflé ordered for dessert. Monstrously long waiting list for dinner – luncheon reservations may be easier to secure – be sure to call weeks ahead.

**Galatoire's** – Creole/French (French Quarter) the "only" reason I go to Bourbon Street. 120 year-old classic and Tennessee Williams' favorite (where Stella and Blanche fled Stanley's "little card party" where ladies were "cordially not invited"). Long considered the grand dame among the city's century+ old restaurants, Galatoire's is strictly old-line, with its unchanged menu, elegant, multi-generational clientele, tiled bistro floor, and professional, personable service. Start with the sweetbreads, escargot, or sampler of crabmeat Maison and shrimp rémoulade. Seafood preparations are excellent – order anything with crabmeat; "Gulf fish" selections vary seasonally, with pompano, trout and pomfret (butterfish) consistently good. Nice filet Béarnaise and veal chop with Financièrre or Marchand de Vin sauces. Finish with crêpes, crème caramel or bread pudding and a cup of strong, black chicory coffee. As the restaurant accepts no reservations, and there's often a line to be seated, consider going during off-hours to secure a table (Williams' table is just behind the window with the "Restaurant" sign). Jackets required.

**Herbsaint** – Creole (Central Business District) the chef/owner of Cochon and chef/owner of Bayona team up to bring the best of modernized Creole cuisine on a short, snappy menu where frog's legs and shrimp-and-grits meets unctuous, feel-good favorites such as short rib, Kurobuta pork, and duck confit. Ingredients are often complex, yet accessible; gorgeous, toothsome desserts are not-to-be missed. Stylish, chic, and anything but stodgy.

**K-Paul's** – Cajun (French Quarter) the definitive upscale Cajun experience by celebrity chef and blackening-spice mix master Paul Prudhomme, who spearheaded the nation's craze for all things Cajun 25 years ago. Local ingredients drive the daily-changing menu; highlights include gumbo, jambalaya, shrimp-and-corn maque choux, oysters Pernod, seafood Atchafalaya, sausage and tasso, anything blackened, bread pudding, and sweet potato pecan pie. Reservations recommended; dress smart, jackets suggested but are not required.

**Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop** – Drinks (French Quarter) one of the oldest surviving structures in the French Quarter, this tiny, 240 year-old building was the front for legendary pirate Jean Lafitte and his brother Pierre's "business". Theories abound about the location of where his treasure is hidden within the building; both locals and the staff may chat with you about that for a while. Resist the pressure to order a hurricane (good but touristy) but save that for Pat O'Brien's if you must; instead have a couple of Voodoo daiquiris and try to sing along with the pianist. Definitely go at night: dark, moody, candle-lit, dirty, and authentic. *Haunted* Both a male and female presence haunt the location – commonly seen as Lafitte himself, and possibly the noted voodoo queen Marie Laveau or gruesome slave murderess Madame [LaLaurie](#). Beware the fireplace – the energy there totally freaked me out.

**Mother's** – Lunch (Central Business District) head to this 70 year-old mainstay where local laborers, businessmen, families, and tourists line around the block for some of the best po-boys (submarine-style sandwiches) and Creole specialties. Know what you want and familiarize yourself with their nomenclature before placing your order at the counter; whilst the staff may seem brusque or rushed, they need to keep the line moving, particularly during the busy lunch service. Try the filé gumbo (chicken and sausage), jambalaya, red beans and rice (Mondays), special seafood or soft-shell crab platter (Fridays), and always the biscuit. My regular po-boy at Mother's is either the a) roast beef, dressed (served with shredded cabbage, creole mustard, yellow mustard (which I omit), pickles, and mayonnaise), and with debris (those little shredded bits of roast beef that fall into the roasting pan during the slicing process that get scooped up, added to the sandwich, and soaked up by the soft French roll – beware the juiciness!); or b) delectable fried shrimp (served with either cocktail or tartar sauce). Both the jambalaya and debris lacked salt/seasoning during my visit with Charel last February, but I'll continue to go each time I'm in town.

**Napoleon House** – Drink/Lunch (French Quarter) indulge in their take on the quintessentially-British Pimm's Cup in the courtyard of this 1797 landmark, so named from the owner's offer to Napoleon as a new residence-in-exile (he never made it). The bar is very dark and dilapidated, with classical music in the background, and local beers and classic New Orleans cocktails such as the Sazerac flow freely. Overall, you're in good hands with the often-friendly bartenders, but the waitstaff can seem a bit distracted, disinterested, or spread too thin. Try the shrimp rémoulade-stuffed avocado and jambalaya; their Muffellettas are second-best to those from Central Grocery, and are a good alternative if you want to dine in a more "established" environment.

**The Old Absinthe House** – Drink (French Quarter) 200 year-old structure named in honor of the Old Absinthe House Frappe created in 1874, and also bears the name of pirate Jean Lafitte, where he was rumored to have met with Andrew Jackson to plan the victory of the battle of New Orleans. Antique lighting and football regalia are overhead; the original marble fountains used to drip cool water onto sugar cubes on flat slotted spoons atop glasses of Absinthe line the copper-topped bar. Sample classics such as Ramos Gin Fizz, Old Fashioned, Brandy Milk Punch, and the Absinthe House Frappe itself. I rarely visit due to the raucous nature of Bourbon Street, but make exceptions to bring visitors who insist on being there. *Haunted* laughter and sounds of a "ghost" party are often heard, as well as paranormal activity such as chairs and dishes moving about, things flying off the walls, vaporous mist, and tunnel noises from under the building.

**Pascale's Manale** – BBQ Shrimp/Italian-Creole (Uptown) 95 year-old eatery and creators of New Orleans' famous "BBQ Shrimp"; used to be one of my regularly frequented neighborhood restaurants. Old school, old cooking methods, old severs, old décor (although I hear they have renovated post-Katrina). You must go for the shrimp, no exceptions. A note of caution: dinner can easily get out of hand, making you feel extremely full very quickly. As such, share, share, where-ever possible. Start with the fried calamari or oysters Bienville (the subject of controversy between Antoine's and Arnaud's); followed by BBQ Shrimp (whole/head-on shrimp in their shells are baked with an enormous amount of butter, garlic, black pepper, Worcestershire sauce, lots of seasonings, and possibly white wine – this results in a rather soupy and very tasty sauce that you sop up with lots of bread – very messy, but worth it). An alternate approach is to have the BBQ shrimp as an appetizer (again, shared), followed by either the veal Marsala or strip steak. Skip dessert – no need, no room!

**Rib Room** – Friday Lunch (French Quarter) a mainstay for nearly 50 years, the Rib Room is a haven for politicians, celebs, the monied, and powerful. The institution of Friday Lunch is historically executed over several hours, savored over stiff Sazeracs and behemoth "Washbucket" Martinis, excellent wines, many indulgent courses – and for men only. Whilst 45-year veteran busboy-to-Maitre d' Dalton Milton has retired, celebrate his legacy with a Daltontini and let the highly-competent staff take care of your every need. Think deconstructed surf-and-turf: begin with the turtle soup, crab bisque, or crab cakes; those going off-piste with a lighter meal will enjoy the crispy oyster and spinach salad, Cobb salad topped with a warm grilled filet of salmon, or Gulf shrimp off spits from the French rotisserie – the focal point of the dining room. Traditionalists go straight for the beef – both the signature prime rib and grilled tenderloin are an excellent choice. Impeccable, gracious service. Dress well; jacket and tie preferred for gentlemen. Located in the Omni Royal Orleans Hotel.

**Taqueria Corona** – Tacos (Uptown) authentic Mexican favorites shine at this modest taqueria packed by enthusiastic locals and students from nearby Tulane and Loyola universities. Refreshing margaritas delight; share a couple of baskets of grilled cebollitas (scallions) awakened by a squirt of fresh lime, and the excellent pico de gallo with freshly-fried tortillas. Don't miss the black beans – whether the soup or with rice – then delve into tasty specialty (and what may seem as unusual) tacos that include Baja-style fried fish tacos, tongue, pork, and chorizo. Staples such as tacos al carbon (grilled steak) and combo plates (try the flautas and enchiladas) never disappoint. Save a bit of room for their comforting flan and rice pudding. Inexpensive, and worth the wait.

**Uglesich** – Seafood (Central City) family owned, 100 year-old super-casual lunch-only institution specializing in oysters (all forms, from half-shell to fried, are excellent), fried softshell crab, shrimp, or catfish poboys, crawfish etouffee, shrimp Creole, gumbo, and (alli)gator stew. Exceptional seafood overall, but do ask the counterstaff for their recommends for the day's best selections. Always a huge line, so get there early, grab a Bloody Mary or a Barq's root beer, and revel in the city's fastest oyster shucker, Michael Rogers, showcasing his masterful skills. Don't let the run-down appearance scare or sway you (the place is frequently called a dump). Pronounced "YU-gull-sitch" – a.k.a "Ugly's". Cash only. (Note: this part of the city is notoriously crime-riddled, with a sharp spike in violent crimes after Katrina. Go in a group, be very aware of your surroundings, do not stroll aimlessly around the neighborhood, and practice common sense. Be safe!)