

Louisiana cooks create variations on basics

AP — "The most important key to Louisiana cooking," says Ray Gust Jr. in "The 100 Greatest Dishes of Louisiana Cooking," "is that no two cooks prepare any single dish exactly the same way."

There are basics, to be sure. The basic of gumbo is a roux made with flour and oil. Jambalaya usually contains some sort of hot or smoked sausage. Grillades are small pieces of beef or pork. But there are variations — even with the most traditional dishes.

Shella Almbinder's "The Legends of Louisiana Cookbook" (Firestone Books, \$10.95), for example, contains eight different recipes for traditional red beans and rice.

Enola Prudhomme, author of "Enola Prudhomme's Low-Calorie Cajun Cooking" (Hearst Books-William Morrow, \$17.95), has revised the classic gumbo roux: she prepares hers by simply browning flour to yield the same flavor as the typical fat-based roux.

And chef Kevin Graham of the Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans has created dishes the city is known for — but with his own distinct accents.

"We all have our own palates and our cooking will eventually reflect that individuality, and rightly so," says Guste, "so relax and cook."

The popularity of Louisiana foods is reflected in several new, newly revised or revised cookbooks including Guste's "The Restaurants of New Orleans: Revised Edition" (Norton, \$27.95).

"THE RESTAURANTS" of New Orleans features nearly 200 recipes from more than 40 restaurants including Antoine's, Arnaud's, Brennan's and the Court of Two Sisters. Brief descriptions of each restaurant provide a background for the recipes that range from Bananas Foster to Shrimp Remoulade.

In Almbinder's "The Legends of Louisiana Cookbook," Commander's Palace Restaurant proprietor Ella Brennan says "Creole, even Cajun cooking, is now the rage of the country."

"The Legends of Louisiana Cookbook" is a blend of recipes and stories compiled by Almbinder, who

lived in New Orleans while working on the city's new Riverwalk Market place.

"Having eaten my way through the city and practically through the state," Almbinder says in the introduction, "I look at this book as part of a natural progression. It is from the people of the city, about themselves, their history and most importantly, their food."

Almbinder's cookbook includes the history and recipes for Pot au Feu, Couche-Couche, King Cake, Hush-puppies, Black-eyed Peas on New Year's, the Po-boy Sandwich and more. It also provides a "Dictionary of Terms for Out-of-Towners."

"Simply Elegant" (Grove Weidenfeld, \$25) is a collection of recipes from Windsor Court Hotel chef Kevin Graham, a native of Cheshire, England, whose style of cooking is described as "contemporary American" — a mix of classic French tech-

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niques with lighter American cooking. His recipes include Creole Ratatouille, Shrimp and Cilantro Bisque and Sole Fillet with Lavender.

Enola Prudhomme, a sister of chef Paul Prudhomme, has created low-calorie variations of more than 200 dishes including Crawfish Etouffee, Chicken and Turkey Sausage Gumbo, Cajun-style Chili and Southern Style Oven-Fried Chicken. Her cookbook, "Enola Prudhomme's Low-Calorie Cajun Cook-

ing," includes calorie, fat, cholesterol and sodium counts for each recipe.

Enola Prudhomme blackens chicken breast and serves it with a baked potato and salad. Each serving contains 243 calories.

BLACKENED CHICKEN BREAST
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground red pepper

1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper
1/4 teaspoon onion powder
1 boneless chicken breast half, skinned

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Heat a medium cast-iron skillet over high heat for 15 minutes, or until very hot. In a small bowl, combine all the dry seasonings, mix well and set aside.

Spray one side of the chicken with non-stick vegetable cooking spray and sprinkle with half the seasoning; reserve the remaining seasoning. Place the chicken in the very

hot skillet, seasoned side down. Repeat procedure with second side of the chicken; cook for 1 minute on each side.

Remove the chicken from the skillet and place it on a paper towel-lined plate that has been sprayed with non-stick vegetable cooking spray. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 5 minutes. Makes 1 serving.

Nutrition information per serving: 243 cal., 5 g fat, 120 mg chol., 550 mg sodium.

Recipe from: "Enola Prudhomme's Low-Calorie Cajun Cooking" (Hearst Books-William Morrow, \$17.95, April 19, 1991).

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Boneless chicken for fast meals

AP — When your schedule demands fast-cooked foods, remember boneless chicken breasts. With the bone already removed, they're flat enough to cook in minutes, whether you're grilling, poaching, steaming, broiling or cooking in the microwave oven. Add a dab of butter or non-stick spray coating, and low-fat chicken breasts are great for skillet-cooking, too, as in the spicy recipe below. For a hotter sauce, you can add 1/4 teaspoon ground red pepper.

INDIAN CHICKEN AND RICE
1/4 cup long grain rice
3 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 8 ounces)
1 tablespoon margarine or butter
1/4 cup orange juice
1 teaspoon dried minced onion
1 teaspoon curry powder
1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
1/4 cup seedless grapes, halved
1 tablespoon apricot, pineapple, or peach jam

Cook rice according to the package directions. Meanwhile, in a 10-inch skillet cook chicken breasts in hot margarine or butter about 5 minutes or until brown, turning once. Add orange juice, onion, curry powder and coriander. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer about 5 minutes or until chicken is tender and no longer pink.

Transfer chicken to a heated serving platter; cover to keep warm. Over medium-high heat, bring pan juices to boiling. Stir in grapes and jam. Serve juices over chicken with rice. Makes 3 servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 280 cal. (16 percent calories from fat), 5 g fat, 44 mg chol., 20 g pro., 38 g carb., 98 mg sodium. U.S. RDA: 10 percent iron, 16 percent vit. C, 15 percent thiamine, 49 percent niacin.

Add orange juice, onion, curry powder and coriander.