

Jambalaya on the bayou, in the kitchen any old place you chose really.



Hank Williams

September 17, 1923 – January 1, 1953

Goodbye Joe, me gotta go, me oh my oh
Me gotta go pole the pirogue down the bayou
My Yvonne, the sweetest one, me oh my oh
Son of a gun, well have good fun on the bayou

Chorus:

Jambalaya, crawfish pie and file gumbo
Cause tonight I'm gonna see my machez amio
Pick guitar, fill fruit jar and be gay-oh
Son of a gun, well have big fun on the bayou.

Thibodeaux, Fontaineaux , the place is buzzin
Kinfolk come to see Yvonne by the dozen
Dress in style, go hog wild, me oh my oh
Son of a gun, well have big fun on the bayou.

Settle down far from town get me a pirogue
And I'll catch all the fish in the bayou
Swap my mon to buy yvonne what she need-o
Son of a gun, we'll have big fun on the bayou

Jambalaya, a-crawfish pie and-a fille gumbo
cause tonight Im gonna see my machez amio
Pick guitar, fill fruit jar and be [a]gay-oh
Son of a gun, well have big fun on the bayou.
Son of a gun, well have big fun on the bayou.
Son of a gun, well have big fun on the bayou.

Castle Studios was the first of the great Nashville recording studios. Located within the former ballroom of the Tulane Hotel at Eighth and Church the studio had been kick started by three engineers, Aaron Shelton, George Reynolds, and Carl Jenkins from WSM Radio (Tag line: The Castle of the Air) at the stations studios but they soon needed to expand and aside from recording radio commercials for local businesses by August 1947 they were working with major record label artists such as Ernest Tubb and Red Foley.

By that time, though, they had also begun working with a young, unknown singer/songwriter from Montgomery, Alabama called Hank Williams who had recorded his first demos there on Dec. 11, 1946.

In early 1947 Williams recorded a track called "Honky Tonkin'," which won him a record deal with MGM Records and although that success gave him his choice of studios to use he chose to stay with Castle and on December 22, 1948 recorded "Lovesick Blues" which became a 16-week Country number one, even crossing over into the pop Top 25, and winning him an invitation to the Grand Ole Opry - and superstardom - cementing both Williams' and Castle's place in recording history.

A few years later, on June 13th 1952, Hank Williams was back at Castle where he recorded Jambalaya (On the Bayou) and on July 19th duly released it as a single on MGM with "Window Shopping" as its B side and sure enough it too went to Number 1 on the Country charts.

Jambalaya (On the bayou) is almost definitely a song everyone has heard, and most likely sung along to, yet most, I'd suggest, had, at best, only the faintest clue what the song is about.

With a melody based on the Cajun song "Grand Texas", some claim that the song was actually co-written by Hank Williams and Moon Mullican, (born Aubrey Wilson Mullican March 1909 in Texas), with Mullican uncredited apparently because of his contract with King Records but nevertheless continuing to receive ongoing royalties.



Williams had been known to be a fan of Mullican who Combined country, Western swing, and a blues-influenced piano and clearly laid some of the blueprints for the likes of Bill Haley, Hank Snow, Elvis Presley, and especially Jerry Lee Lewis, who covered many of Mullican's songs, while his style of country balladeering had an undoubted influence Jim Reeves who was a member of Mullicans band for a while,

Others claim Jambalaya was one of several songs Williams purchased from other writers; a practice that was relatively common at the time. "Grand Texas" is a song about a lost love, a woman who left the singer to go with another man to "Big Texas", Jambalaya, on the other hand, is about life, parties and Cajun food with the song having a strong Cajun theme despite the fact Williams came from Alabama and Mullican from Texas.

Cajuns, or if you will *les Cadiens*, are a recognised ethnic group mainly living in Louisiana, and are, in the main, the descendants of Acadian exiles and other ethnicities with whom the Acadians eventually intermarried. Today, the Cajuns make up a significant portion of south Louisiana's population.

The word "Cajun" is a variant of *Acadian*, although there is some dispute over the origin of the term *Acadia*; some suggest that it came from the name of the ancient Greek region of Arcadia; others suggest that it is a derivation of the Mikmaq Indian word *cadique*, meaning "a good place to set up camp."

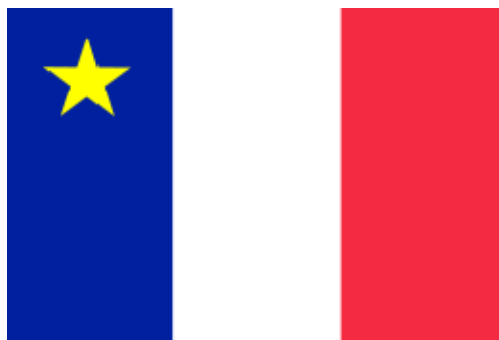
Its well known that France and Great Britain have had their fair share of neighbourly spats down across the centuries and none more so than when each attempted to colonise the New World, and North America. The area France colonised became imaginatively known as New France or *Nouvelle-France* and extended, at its peak in 1712, (before the Treaty of Utrecht), from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains and from Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico. The territory was then divided in five colonies, each with its own administration: Canada, Hudson Bay, Newfoundland Acadia, and Louisiana. Acadia consisting of the parts of Canada known today as New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

Louisiana, named in honor of Louis XIV of France. originally covered a territory that included most of the drainage basin of the Mississippi River and stretched from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Appalachian Mountains to the Rocky Mountains; the area was then divided into two regions, split by the Arkansas River and known as Upper Louisiana (*Haute-Louisiane*), and Lower Louisiana (*Basse-Louisiane*).

Keeping it simple, back in the mid 18th Century the French and The British both wanted to expand their trading rights and just for good measure were also equally wary of each others religions, the English fearing Papal influence from the French while the French (somewhat justifiably it could be argued) feared the anti-Catholicism of the English, Catholicism still being persecuted under English law at that time.

So in time honoured tradition the two sides went to war fighting what is known in the United States as the French and Indian War, as The French enlisted the support of various Native American tribes in the conflict. Quite a sensible move considering New France had 70,000 inhabitants, while the British American colonies greatly outnumbered them, with over one million people (including a substantial number of French [Protestant] Huguenots).

The British forces were inevitably far too strong and France formally ceded Canada to the British in the Treaty of Paris, signed on February 10, 1763 and as a consequence The Acadians were evicted from Acadia in what has become known as the Great Upheaval or *Le Grand Dérangement*.



Acadian Flag

The terms of the 1763 treaty provided 18 months for The Acadians to leave Canada as they became scattered throughout the eastern seaboard where families were split and put on ships with different destinations. Logically many ended up in what was still the French-colonised Louisiana, little knowing that France had actually ceded the colony to Spain in 1762, under the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau.

The interim French officials though provided land and supplies for these refugees and the Spanish governor, Bernardo de Gálvez proved to be equally hospitable, permitting the Acadians to continue to speak their language, practice Roman Catholicism – also, of course, the official religion of Spain - and generally pursue their livelihoods with minimal interference. Some families and individuals did travel north through the Louisiana territory to set up homes as far north as Wisconsin but most Acadians settled in southern Louisiana originally in the area just west of what is now New Orleans, mainly along the Mississippi River. Later, they were moved by the Spanish colonial government to areas west and southwest of New Orleans, in a region later named Acadiana, where they shared the swamps and prairies with the Attakapa and Chitimacha Native American tribes and so Acadians began to become Cajuns.

Cajuns still retain their own French dialect as well as various other cultural traits that distinguish them, although Cajuns were only officially recognized by the U.S. government as a national ethnic group as recently as 1980.

As with any ethnic group, especially refugees, there also grew a Cajun musical culture based initially on the ballads that told stories of earlier times with many of the songs able to be traced back to France via Nova Scotia and New Orleans. These ballads are not widely performed today, but were the basis of what is now accepted as Cajun music.

In the late 1800's, German settlers located in Roberts Cove, Louisiana and introduced affordable accordions which were soon adopted by Cajun musicians and so the music grew and developed into mostly two-steps and waltzes meant for dancing, played by accordion and fiddle and of course sung in the Cajun dialect with its roots in French, the language reflected in the lyrics of Hank Williams' Jambalaya on The Bayou.

So, let's take it from the top:

Goodbye Joe, me gotta go, me oh my oh
Me gotta go pole the pirogue down the Bayou

Any rock n roller worth their salt has come across mentions of The Bayou in song lyrics, after all the masterful John Fogerty almost based an entire and very illustrious career around them.

A bayou (pronounced [ˈbaɪ oʊ] or [ˈbaɪ uː]) is a small, slow-moving stream or creek, that lies in an abandoned channel of a stream, although you can also come across a bayou lake or pool

Bayous are usually located in relatively flat, low-lying areas, for example, in the Mississippi Delta region and are the home of crawfish, otherwise known as Crayfish or crawdads, freshwater crustaceans resembling small lobsters, to which they are closely related, as well as certain species of shrimp, and catfish famed for grubbing their way along the muddy river bed. The Mississippi River known to many as Ol' Muddy.

Thought to originate from the Choctaw word *bayuk* (small stream) the word Bayou was first used by the English in Louisiana.

Originally from the Southeastern United States (Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana). Choctaw are a Native American people of the Muskogean linguistic group and were a part of the Mississippian culture which was located throughout the Mississippi River valley. The Choctaw were known as one of the "Five Civilized Tribes" because of their willingness to integrate and adopt numerous practices of their European American colonial neighbors.

The Choctaw are especially renowned for the fact that midway through the Great Irish Famine (1845–1849), a group of Choctaws collected \$710 (although many articles say the original amount was \$170 after a misprint in Angi Debo's "The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Nation") and sent it to help starving Irish men, women and children. "It had been just 16 years since the Choctaw people had experienced the Trail of Tears, and they had faced starvation ... It was an amazing gesture. By today's standards, it might be a million dollars" according to Judy Allen, editor of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's newspaper, *Bishinik*, based at the Oklahoma Choctaw tribal headquarters in Durant, Oklahoma.

To mark the 150th anniversary of this generosity, in 1981 eight Irish people retraced the Trail of Tears, the forced relocation of Native Americans from their homelands to Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma) in the Western United States.

Having been forced to gather at Memphis and Vicksburg the Choctaws were, initially, to be transported by wagon but a harsh winter brought sleet, snow and floods to halt them. With food running out, the residents of Vicksburg and Memphis were concerned and so five steamboats were employed to ferry Choctaws to their river-based destinations. The Memphis group traveled up the Arkansas for about 60 miles to Arkansas Post where the temperature stayed below freezing for almost a week clogging the rivers with ice and meaning no method of travel for weeks. Food rationing consisted of a handful of boiled corn, one turnip, and two cups of heated water per day. Forty government wagons were then sent to Arkansas Post to transport them on to Little Rock. When they reached Little Rock, Choctaw chief (thought to be Thomas Harkins or Nitikechi) quoted to the Arkansas Gazette that the relocation had been a "*trail of tears and death.*" The Vicksburg group was led by an incompetent guide and had been lost in the Lake Providence swamps.

The first settlements of Acadians in Southern Louisiana were near Bayou Lafourche and Bayou des Ecores, which led to a close association of the bayou with Cajun culture with Bayou Country generally held to be centred on New Orleans, and stretching from Houston, Texas, to Mobil, Alabama along the Gulf Coast.

An alternate spelling "buyou" has also been used, as in the "Pine Buyou" used in a description by Congress in 1833 of Arkansas Territory.

Goodbye Joe, me gotta go, me oh my oh
Me gotta go pole the pirogue down the Bayou

A small, flat-bottomed boat Pirogues are of a design particularly associated with the Cajuns of the Louisiana marsh or Bayou but also with West African fishermen.



Pirogues of Madagascar



A pirogue on the Niger River in Mali

Light and small enough to be easily taken onto land, the design of the pirogue also allows the craft to move through very shallow water and then be easily turned over to drain any water that may get into the boat. The pirogue is usually propelled by paddles that have one blade (as opposed to a kayak paddle, which has two) but, more pertinently for the lyric of Jamabalya, can also be punted with a push pole in shallow water.

The name Pirogue is generally held to come from the Spanish and, traditionally in Louisiana, the boats were constructed of cypress. Many modern duck hunters and fisherman in the swamps of South Louisiana now use pirogues made of fiberglass, some of which are fitted with small outboard motors or "Go-Devils" a type of motor with a pivoting drive shaft for use in very shallow waters, but a few craftsmen continue to build wooden pirogues, often using cypress harvested from the same Louisiana swamps.

Outside of Louisiana pirogues are found for sale at only a few boat dealers in southeast Texas or southern Mississippi.

"They're just not known outside this state," says Ron Chapman, a Chalmette shipwright, and one of a handful of commercial pirogue builders in Louisiana.

Like Chapman, most of Louisiana's commercial pirogue builders sell their boats wholesale to marine dealers who then offer them on the retail market. Prospective pirogue paddlers living outside Louisiana should contact a local marine dealer and ask that he contact a Louisiana dealer or broker for information. The cost of fiberglass pirogues ranges from around \$200 for a 14-foot one-man model to as much as \$400 for a 16-footer that will easily hold two large men and their water fowling gear. Wooden pirogues are more expensive, starting at around \$400 for a one-man model.

For information on fiberglass pirogues, contact Ron Chapman, Shipwright, Dept. FS, 324 E. Solidelle St., Chalmette, La. 70043, telephone (504)277-6526.

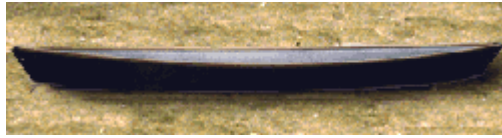
Ron Chapman has produced the finest pirogue in Louisiana for the past 20 years that allow access to places typically beyond reach; these pirogues come in four sizes:



Copperhead,



Cottonmouth,



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Mud Bug.

For even more fun though you could consider building your own Pirogue:



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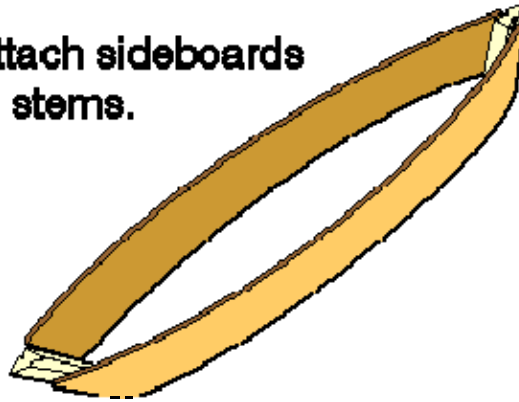
The Classic Cajun Pirogue

*You've heard of the six hour canoe?
Meet the Cajun Pirogue!*

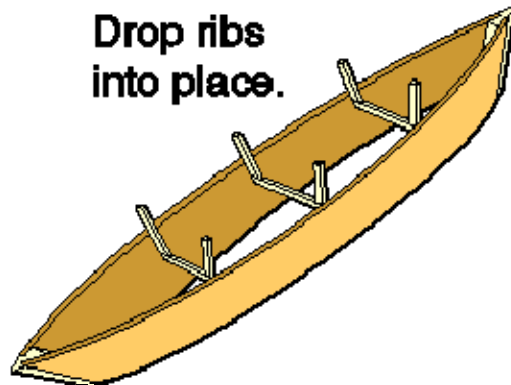
For the easiest-building boat kits we've ever come
across,
write Uncle John's Easy-Build Kit,
Mother Earth News...September 1997

To Build A Classic Cajun Pirogue, You Simply

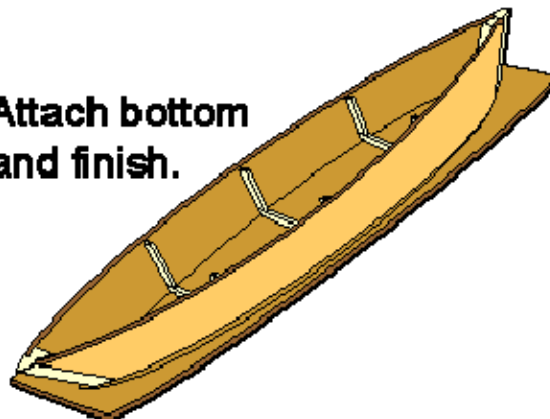
Attach sideboards to stems.



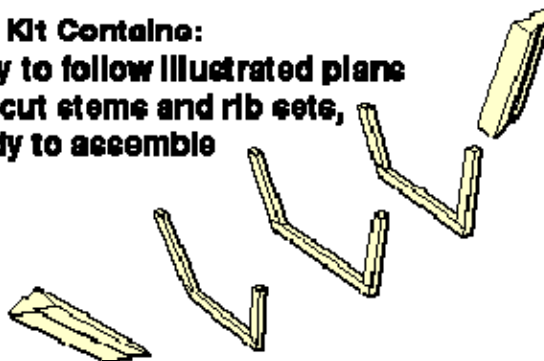
Drop ribs into place.



Attach bottom and finish.



**Our Kit Contains:
Easy to follow illustrated plans
pre-cut stems and rib sets,
ready to assemble**



Our kit contains "the hard parts", those parts that can be the difference between success and failure. Included are pre-cut cypress stems and ribs, bevelled and sanded to assure accurate lines and easy assembly. Our kit has been designed so that an individual with limited experience can successfully build a serviceable boat using basic hand tools. Building the kit requires only six to eight hours of construction time.

***A great father-son project,
or simply fulfill your own fantasy, to "build a boat".***

In addition to the kit, you will need two sheets of 1/4" plywood, one 1" x 4" clear lumber for rub rails, screws, glue, paint, nails, sandpaper, fiberglass resin and cloth.

Length 12' to 15'-8", Beam 31", Weight 35 to 45 pounds.

Pirogue kit: \$59.50 including shipping

Full building plans for those who want "to do it all", \$24.50 delivered via email

Our full building plans are also available in metric.



So, two lines into the song and we've got Hank, or Moon Mullican, or maybe someone else entirely, punting down a slow moving Louisiana stream in a small flat bottomed boat; are you keeping up so far?

My Yvonne, the sweetest one, me oh my oh
Son of a gun, we'll have good fun on the bayou

According to research accredited to a member of Moon Mullican's family it is said that the song Jambalaya came about as a result of the "good times had at a small bar located just south of Choupique Bayou and owned by one Yvonne Little."

Located in St Landry parish and otherwise known as Bayou Choupique the town is South West of Mamou and North West of Eunice.

A choupique is a fish in the same biological class, as a sturgeon so the eggs or roe produce a true caviar, otherwise known as a cypress trout, mudfish, shoepike or most correctly Bowfin, Associated Press report that the choupique is currently creating "a culinary sensation in south Louisiana" as the roe is marketed as 'Cajun Caviar'.



Chef John Folse of Lafitte's 'Landing says he thinks it's better than Beluga caviar even though he accepts he was sceptical at first:

"I had some in the cooler for about a month before some people got to talking about it one night in the bar at White Oak Plantation," he said. "I got it out and I was stunned at the quality of it.

"Look at this kind of gold coming out of Louisiana!"

Folse makes a crawfish caviar crepe --- crawfish in a sour cream sauce wrapped in a crepe with a little caviar on top.

"It's one of our biggest sellers," he said. "As an appetizer, it sells for \$7, and we serve 25 to 30 a night.

"It's not as salty as Beluga, and it fits right into the Louisiana indigenous style of cooking."

At Commander's Palace in New Orleans, Executive Chef and TV Personality Emeril Lagasse serves Louisiana caviar several ways--- on toast as well as in recipes.

"Quite a few ladies are requesting it at their luncheons," Lagasse said. "It's not too fishy or too salty."

A new process for "Louisiana Beluga," made with paddlefish grown in a special experiment, is producing "outstanding Beluga," and Folse reports that the bigger choupique roe makes a dark grey caviar called Caviar Royale. "Best I ever put in my mouth!"

So as the songs protagonist punts off down the stream is he heading away from Yvonne Little's bar or heading toward it? In truth it don't matter cos "tonight (he's) gonna have big fun" and here we get to the bit I can't believe it's taken Big Untidy this long to get to cos now we step into the kitchen:

Chorus:

Jambalaya, crawfish pie and file gumbo

Cajun Jambalaya originates from the bayou where crawfish, shrimp, oysters, alligator, duck, turtle, boar, venison, and other wild game have always been readily available. Any variety or combination of meats, including chicken or turkey may be used to make jambalaya. After the Civil War, the French Creole population lost power in New Orleans, and was absorbed into the Cajun population with the Creoles introducing jambalaya to the Cajuns but since the tomatoes used by Creoles were rarely used in Cajun cuisine, the Cajuns omitted the tomato and used the browning of the meat for color; Cajun Jambalaya becoming known as "Brown Jambalaya" in the City (N'Orleans) but to Cajuns it's simply known as "Jambalaya." also having more of a smoky and spicy flavor than its cousin Creole Jambalaya.

The term 'Creole' refers to native born people descended from the Colonial French and/or Spanish settlers of Colonial French Louisiana, before it became part of the United States in 1803 with the Louisiana Purchase. The commonly accepted definition today is for the community whose members are a mixture of mainly French, Spanish, African, and Native-American heritage. Some may not have each ethnic heritage, and some may have additional ancestries but contrary to popular belief, the term Creole does not exclusively refer to a person of African and French descent; there were (and are) Creoles who are pure French. Creole was used in early generations to refer to colonists of French descent who had been born in Louisiana and were thus native to the territory as opposed to new immigrants. French Creole became the term for those of exclusively French descent.

One legend has it that the name Jambalaya came about late one evening as a traveling gentleman stopped by a New Orleans inn which had hardly any food remaining from the evening meal. The traveler instructed the cook, "Jean, balayez!" or "Jean, sweep something together!" in the local dialect. The guest henceforth pronounced the resulting dish as "Jean balayez." It's more widely and credibly believed, however, that "jambalaya" comes from the Provençal word "jambalaia," meaning a mish-mash or mixup, and also meaning a pilau of rice. This is supported by the fact that the first printed appearance of the word is in a Provençal poem. *Leis amours de Vanus; vo, Lou paysan oou théâtre,* by Fortuné (Fourtunat) Chailan, published in Provençal in 1837. The earliest appearance of the word Jambalaya in print in English occurs in the May 1849 issue of the *American Agriculturalist*, page 161, where Solon Robinson refers to a recipe for "Hopping Johnny (jambalaya)." Jambalaya did not appear in an actual cookbook until 1878, when *The Gulf City Cook Book*, by the Ladies of the St. Francis Street Methodist Episcopal Church, was printed in South Mobile, Alabama. It contains a recipe for "JAM BOLAYA."

There is a suggestion that the Spanish introduced Paella to the Creoles who then added ham (or jambon as it is in Spanish) and the Cajuns adapted it further until Jambonpaella became Jambalaya but this is dismissed as fanciful by the majority who point to the lack of pork in Cajun cooking.

Cajun cooking is rooted predominantly in French cooking but borrows freely and widely from Spanish, African and Native American influences and tastes. Whereas Creole cooking is rooted in the restaurants and homes of the plantation owners in the City Cajun cooking is much more the food of the farmer and the fisherman, "the result of adversity rather than adventure".

Bearing in mind that the newly arrived Acadians had their background and culture rooted in Canada they had a swift change to make when they arrived in South Western Louisiana, nowhere more so than in their eating habits and the ingredients to hand. Game and seafood were readily available and, from native Americans like The Choctaw, they learned the use of local berries and wild herbs while the African influences of workers brought into work the plantations introduced vegetables such as Okra known to them as n'gombo hence the name Gumbo given to the stew that uses fresh Okra when available or, in winter months, substituting dried sassafras leaves known as fille to make a Fille Gumbo, just like Hank says.

With the Spanish influence of the latter part of the 18th Century came more influences notably peppers such as chillies, cayenne, paprika, ground black and white pepper and so on. Of course the Spanish also brought tomatoes but that's a moot point for some who insist tomatoes stay in the city with the Creoles while Cajuns keep with the peppers.

As well as flavourings, herbs and spices, Cajun cooking invariably sooner or later gets round to what is known as 'The Holy Trinity' of Green Pepper, Celery and Onion. There are a wide variety of ways to make jambalaya, with chicken and sausage, or shrimp, or ham, or even duck or alligator but the principle remains, Creole, or Red, Jamabalya will use tomatoes and tomato sauce, Cajun will use chicken or beef stock instead to give a "brown" jambalaya where the meat is first browned in a cast-iron pot. A roux is then made using the fats from the cooked meat adding a little vegetable oil if needed; then the trinity (of onions, celery, and green bell pepper) is added and sautéed until soft before stock and seasonings are added and finally the meats are returned to the pot. This mixture is then simmered, covered, for at least one hour. Lastly, the mixture is brought to a boil and rice is added to the pot before being covered and left to simmer over a very low heat for at least 1/2 hour without stirring, the dish is finished when the rice has cooked. Jambalaya is differentiated from other traditional ethnic Louisiana dishes by the way in which the rice, most often long grain white rice, is included and the flavor of the stew is absorbed by the grains as the rice cooks. Other Louisiana dishes will require that the rice is cooked separately and served as a bed on which the main dish is presented



Once you've got your roux and your Holy Trinity, Jambalaya is pretty much an open road to explore but for Crawfish Pie you'll need a recipe:

- 1 Onion; diced
- 1 lb Crawfish tails; coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup Green onion; minced
- 1/4 cup Parsley; minced
- 2 Garlic; cloves
- 1 tbsp Salt
- 1/2 Bell pepper; diced
- 1/2 cup Bread crumbs; seasoned
- 2 Celery stalks; diced
- 1/2 tsp Red pepper
- 1/2 cup Butter
- 1 Egg
- 1/2 tsp Pepper
- 1/4 cup Tomato sauce
- 1 cup Milk
- 1 10 inch pie plate (double crust)

Crawfish Pie Preparation

Calories per serving: 290 Fat grams per serving: 35 Approx. Cook Time: 1:00 Cholesterol per serving: 18 Saute onions, garlic, bell pepper and celery in butter until limp. Add tomato sauce, crawfish and parsley. Cook slowly for 10 minutes. Turn off heat. Add bread crumbs, salt, pepper, egg and milk then mix well. Bake 35 to 40 minutes in 350 degree oven. If you don't care for the delicious mud bugs you may substitute shrimp.

So we've got our Jambalaya and the Crawfish Pie .. that just leaves the File Gumbo.

Again there's really no set formula for what makes a gumbo. Even though gumbo derives its name from an African word for okra, n'gombo, gumbos don't always contain okra.

Gumbo does though usually consist of one or more meats such as chicken, duck, sausage, or ham. Seafood gumbos can be fish or shellfish, or a mixture of the two. There are gumbos that combine meat and seafood, or there's the ultimate Gumbo Ya Ya, which contains "everything that runs, swims, or crawls!"

As with the Jambalaya the vegetables start with the "Trinity" of bell pepper, onions, and celery and in summer months there'll also be okra.

The first step is to make a roux by cooking flour in oil or butter until it turns nut-brown or darker, the roux provides flavour, colour and thickening for the gumbo.

TV chef Emeril Lagasse maintains that a good roux takes 2 beers. "I put the flour in the oil and open the first beer. By the time I've finished the second one, the roux is just right!"

Once the roux is made, and the second beer finished, sauté the vegetables in the same pan. Okra is used for its thickening properties but of course until recently Okra was only seasonally available and so in the winter months a substitute thickener was used, called file (FEE-lay) powder. Made from dried leaves of the sassafras trees, file powder is sprinkled into the pot only after it has been removed from the heat and immediately before you serve the gumbo. Alternately, you can just let each person add the file powder to the bowl as they are ready to eat.

It almost goes without saying that we've arrived at yet another point of controversy and this time its "shop bought versus home made".

Choctaw Indians settled at Bayou Lacombe on the North Shore of Lake Pontchartrain, legendarily invented file, grinding the dried leaves of the sassafras tree to a powder. The Choctaw also supplied dried bay leaves, an essential flavouring element in most Creole soups and stews. One of the last Indian filé makers. was Nick Ducre, who "once a month would take a schooner across the lake to New Orleans and sell his filé and bay leaves at the market at the New Basin Canal. He would sell out in one day, buy himself a pint of whiskey, and sail for home that night, a happy Indian."

For anyone so tempted to make Home Made Filé Powder be warned Safrole, the main constituent of sassafras oil which is distilled from the bark of sassafras roots, has been shown to cause liver cancer in laboratory rats. However some sassafras leaves are apparently "now treated commercially to produce a safrole-free product" and are safe for consumption but again controversy maintains that the safrole free version has "an inferior flavor" when compared to Filé powder containing safrole.

Safrole was once used as a fragrance in perfumes and soaps, and for aromatherapy. Commercial "sassafras oil" generally is a by product of camphor production in Asia or comes from related trees in Brazil. Safrole is also a precursor for the clandestine manufacture of the drug ecstasy, and as such, its movement and transportation is monitored internationally. The roots of Sassafras were once used in the flavoring of root beer until being banned by the FDA although Sassafras tea can be used as blood thinner and Sassafras was once a commodity prized in Europe as a cure for Gonorrhoea.

The word Sassafras itself is said to be a corruption of the Spanish word for saxifrage although to Gentlemen of a certain age Sassafras was a Welsh Rock band who always turned up on Sundays at The Roundhouse or The Lyceum seemingly when Sam Apple Pie or Hackensack couldn't make it, or that's what my memory tells me. Signed to Chrysalis Sassafras put out a fair few blues tinged albums and are still to this day 'doing it on stage'

How to make homemade Filé Powder

Locate a Sassafras tree and take some branches containing the younger, more tender leaves.

Hang the branches outside to dry (preferably out of the direct sun) for about one week.

When the leaves are completely dry, remove the leaves from the stems and pulverize in a mortar and pestle, or an electric coffee grinder.

Pass the powder through a very fine sieve, or a metal coned coffee filter to remove all of the little twigs, and tough pieces.

Store in an airtight container and keep out of the sunlight.

Connoisseurs maintain that the flavour of the homemade powder is "much more subtle, and the thickening power is about 10 times that of the store bought" although recently great excitement has been generated by Tony Chachere's File powder which is apparently "the real deal, pure Sassafras, just like my homemade. Highly recommended!"

Whichever option you go for only a few tablespoons of powder is needed to thicken a whole pot of Gumbo and Okra and filé should never be used together in a Gumbo or it will be "as thick as mud", although many Cajuns prefer filé gumbo year-round and pass a big bowl of filé around the table, so that all the guests take as much as they want.



Filé Gumbo Recipe

- 1/2 Cup Vegetable Oil
- 3/4 Cup All Purpose Flour
- 4 Tbsp Creole Seasoning (see below)
- 1 Cup Onions, diced
- 1/2 Cup Green Bell Pepper, diced
- 1/2 Cup Celery, diced
- 1 Cup Andouille, sliced or diced
- 1/2 Cup Tasso, diced
- 3 Tbsp Garlic, chopped
- 8 Cups Shrimp or Seafood Stock
- 3 Fresh Bay Leaves
- 4 Chicken Thighs, boned cut into 1" pieces, then seasoned liberally with Creole Seasoning
- 2 Tbsp Worcester Sauce
- Hot Sauce to taste
- 1 lb. Fresh Shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 Dozen Oysters, shucked
- Kosher Salt to taste, if necessary
- 2 Tbsp Italian Parsley, chopped
- 1/4 Cup Thinly Sliced Green Onions
- Boiled Rice
- Fresh French Bread
- Filé Powder at the table

Mix your onion, celery, and bell pepper together: The Holy Trinity.

Heat the oil in a cast iron Dutch oven over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook to make a brown Roux. Add the Andouille, 1 tbsp of Seasoning, and 3/4 of the Holy Trinity, cook, stirring often, for about ten minutes or until the vegetables soften. Gradually whisk in the stock, then add the remaining seasoning, and Garlic. Bring to a Boil, then down to a simmer for at least 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken and simmer until cooked through. About 10 minutes before you're ready to serve add the shrimp, cook until done, then add the oysters and cook until the edges curl. Add the Worcester, Hot Sauce, and 1/2 of the Green Onions. Serve with Boiled Rice, crusty French Bread, and a good cold beer. Garnish with green onions, parsley, and Filé powder at the table.

This makes about 3-4 Main Course Servings

Creole Seasoning

- 2 1/2 tablespoons paprika
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon dried leaf oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried leaf thyme

Veggie Alert

Now I know that we've talked a lot about cooking "everything that runs, swims, or crawls" and I'm also aware that Big Untidy has a fair number of Vegetarians in its readership so presuming you've got this far amongst all the killing and carnage here, just for you guys here is:

Carol's (Vegetarian) Louisiana Gumbo

4 cups water
1 cup roux*
3 cups chopped onion
1 bell pepper, chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
2 cloves fresh garlic
1 large can vegetable broth
Salt, black pepper, and red pepper, to taste
Cajun seasoning, to taste
1 pkg. frozen chopped okra
1/2 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1/2 cup chopped green onion tops
Cooked rice

Method:

- Bring the water to a boil in a large pot. Add the roux and boil for 30 minutes.
- Add the onion, bell pepper, and celery. Cook until softened. Add the garlic, broth, salt, black pepper, red pepper, and Cajun seasoning. Bring to a boil and cook for 5 minutes.
- Lower the heat and simmer for 1 hour. Add the okra and cook for an additional hour. Add a meat substitute and cook for 30 minutes.
- Stir in the parsley and green onion tops 15 minutes before serving. Serve over the cooked rice.

Makes 4 to 6 servings

*Note: For the roux, combine equal parts of flour and oil in a heavy pot over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring constantly, for 30 minutes, or until chocolate brown, being careful not to burn. (If it does burn, you'll have to throw it out and start over.)

So, we've got our Jambalaya, crawfish pie and file gumbo although the Veggies amongst us only have their Gumbo but that don't matter cause tonight I'm gonna see my machez amio or Yvonne as we've established she's known machez amio being a Cajun corruption of Ma Cherie or darling loved one.

Later on we'll Pick guitar, fill fruit jar and be gay-oh (this is 1952 don't forget) Son of a gun, well have big fun on the bayou.

Fill fruit jar? Why, that's simple we're going to go get us some moonshine.

The term moonshine was used in England in the 1700's and is said to have originally referred to "occupational pursuits which necessitated night work, or work by the light of the moon." The 1811 edition of the Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue, originally by Francis Grose, though defines "moonshine" as follows: "A matter or mouthful of moonshine; a trifle, nothing." Although goes on "The white brandy smuggled on the coasts of Kent and Sussex, and the gin

in the north of Yorkshire, are also called moonshine." And it has been suggested that the term might derive from smugglers' explaining away their boxes and barrels as "mere moonshine" (that is, nothing)

The phrase, though, came to be popularly used for illicitly made whiskey, a popular pastime down on the Bayou providing, as the bayou did, a constant supply of water.

A bootlegger then is a person that sells illegal whiskey and a moonshiner is a person who makes the whiskey illegally. Moonshine also goes by many other names such as:

- corn liquor
- white lightning
- sugar whiskey
- skull cracker
- popskull
- bush whiskey
- stump
- stumphole
- ruckus juice
- rotgut
- catdaddy
- alley bourbon
- city gin
- cool water
- happy Sally
- blue John
- jump steady
- old horsey

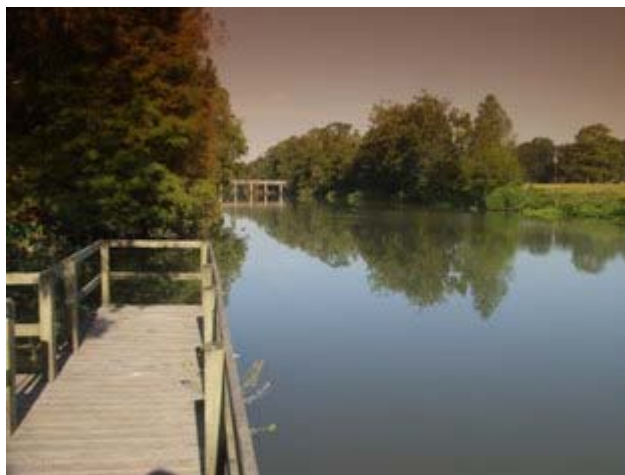
not forgetting block and tackle and mule kick, you get the picture?

Anyway, making moonshine is illegal and deprives the Government of the day of much needed taxes and duties but interestingly knowing how to make moonshine isn't illegal and Google is a popular search engine although other search engines are available.

So, back to the song and a verse and a chorus in and we've got Hank punting up a slow running stream to see Yvonne Little who runs a small bar located just south of Choupique Bayou, later on he's going to get him some honest local food, none of that fancy City stuff, and wash the whole lot down with a few mouthfuls of homemade whiskey.

Thibodeaux, Fontaineaux, the place is buzzin
Kinfolk come to see Yvonne by the dozen

Popular belief has it that Thibodeaux and Fontaineaux are place names and it is only about 8 miles from Choupique to Thibodeaux, past Laurel Grove Plantation.



The Bayou at Thibodeaux

Thibodeaux (pronounced "TIB-uh-doe" or "TIB-oh-doe") is a small city nicknamed "Queen City of Lafourche." and located on the banks of Bayou Lafourche in northwestern Lafourch Parish, Louisiana.

The community was settled in the 18th century and was incorporated as a town in 1830 under the name Thibodauxville, in honor of local plantation owner Henry Schuyler Thibodaux, who in 1824 served as acting governor of Louisiana. The name was changed to Thibodeaux in 1838, and then reverted to the current spelling Thibodaux which was officially adopted in 1918.

A sugar cane workers' strike culminated in the "Thibodeaux Massacre" of Nov. 1-4, 1887, the second most bloody labor dispute in U.S. history. The strike for higher wages of 10,000 workers (1,000 of whom were white) was organized by the Knights of Labor at a time critical to the sugar cane harvest. Alarmed at the thought of losing their total crops Planters in Terrebone and Lafourche parishes persuaded the governor to call in the State militia whose efforts to break the strike resulted in the deaths of a total of 30-35 African American workers.

Thibodaux though also has a happier claim to notoriety as in 1896, the first "rural free delivery" of mail in Louisiana began in the town, only the second in the United States.

Be that as it may I'm afraid I personally subscribe to the theory that the Thibodeaux and Fontaineaux Hank or Moon refer to are actually people, Thibodeaux especially being a very common name in the area, after all if he's punting up a bayou to see Yvonne why is he going to suddenly make an 8 mile detour? That's a big detour in a hollowed out cypress tree log.

Modern day Cajun Culture is populated by many a Thibodeaux from Waylon the Louisiana Rockin Fiddler to Keith a former child actor and musician, best known for playing "Little Ricky" in the TV series 'I Love Lucy' and through to Gary a Wedding photographer in Baton Rouge and author Pamela S, Thibodeaux to name but four.

But Thibodeaux along with his pal Boudreaux is also a central character in much South Louisiana humour. While the subject matter is perhaps universal, the characters give it a unique flavour and in kind of "It could only happen in South Louisiana" way. You know the kind of thing – Boudreaux calls Emergency Services and says Thibodeaux has been shot and may be dead – the operator tells him to first make sure he actually is dead before deciding what action to take, she then hears a shot and Boudreaux comes back to the phone; "Now what?".

The Fontaineaux mentioned in the song would be a descendant of Sergeant Jean Louis Fontenot (Fonteneau) one of six children born to Joachim Fonteneau and Joane Prado of Poitiers, France. Born on December 18, 1686. Jean Louis joined the French Colonial Marines as a young man and left France in 1720, at the age of 34, for assignment in the Mobile (Alabama) military district. Six years later (February 8, 1726) he married a widow from New Orleans (Marie Louise Henrique) and was assigned to the Poste aux Alabama (Fort Toulouse) shortly afterwards. He and Marie Louise had twelve children, 8 sons and 4 daughters, all born at the post. When these children became of age (teenagers), the boys joined the marines and married daughters of other marines and the girls married sons of other marines at the fort.

Jean Louis died in September 1755 at the age of sixty-nine and was buried in the fort cemetery only for the fort to be abandoned by the French in 1763 when it came under the possession of the British. At that time, seven Fontenot sons (one son, Francoise, died several years earlier in Mobile), their families, the widow (Marie Louise), the daughters and their families migrated westward and resettled on land grants in the Louisiana territory. Some of the daughters and their families settled in what is now Edgard, Louisiana. All of the sons and their families (including the widow Louise) settled in the vicinities of Opelousas, Chataignier, Ville Platte and Church Point, after a short stint in the area of Pointe Coupee. All Fontenot's in the US are direct descendants of these early settlers.

So, there you have it Jambalaya, Hank, Moon or whoever he may be, is punting up a slow running stream to see Yvonne Little who runs a small bar located just south of Choupique Bayou, which is maybe where he's going to get him some honest local food, none of that fancy City stuff, and wash the whole lot down with a few mouthfuls of homemade whiskey whilst picking guitar as his good buddies Thibodeaux and Fonteneau, not to mention various

members of the Little family are going to ‘dress in style’, ‘go hog wild’ and “have big fun” practices which need no translation.

Who knows maybe he’ll even ask Yvonne to marry him and “Settle down far from town” then he’ll “get me a pirogue” – ah, so all this time he’s been poling a borrowed pirogue to go see Yvonne – at which point, and predating *Forest Gump* by some years, he’ll doubtless “catch all the fish in the bayou” which is when he’ll spend his hard earned money (Swap my mon) to buy Yvonne what she needs –oh and when he does so you can bet they’ll have one heck of a party and “Son of a gun, we’ll have big fun on the bayou”

Whew, and I didn’t mention Richard and Karen once.



Cover Versions

The song was taken into the Billboard pop charts with a 1952 cover version recorded by Jo Stafford, reaching Number 3. Mitch Miller had originally intended *Jambalaya* to be recorded by Jimmy Boyd but Boyd turned the song down and Miller recorded it with Jo Stafford. Years later Jimmy Boyd did record it for Dot records.

Definitive rock n roll versions were recorded by Antoine Fats Domino and John Fogerty whose screaming rasping vocals fair rip it to shreds..

Other artists who have performed the song include Jimmy Buffett, Jerry Lee Lewis, Emmylou Harris, who included it in her 1976 album *Elite Hotel*, Moon Mullican himself, The Carpenters, (blast), Gerry and the Pacemakers, Brenda Lee, Harry Connick, Jr., Lucinda Williams, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, The Residents, Dolly Parton, Professor Longhair, The White Stripes, Tab Benoit, and Tommy Funderburk (appearing in the film *Steel Magnolias*), and so on.

In India, Usha Iyer (now Usha Uthup) recorded a version in 1968 on the HMV label, that became the best selling song by an Indian artist in English at the time. In 2005, two versions of *Jambalaya* surged in Mexican folk music, one by Banda Limon and the other from the Duranguense style group K-Paz de la Sierra. But in Mexican Banda music, the most famous cover version is by Los Felinos (which was also the first Mexican interpretation).

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OK, so it’s largely a cut and paste job but its something I’ve been meaning to do for ages and I’m open to correction, correspondence comment and input, and there’s a beer for the first person to play *Jambalaya* at The Big Untidy Night Out.