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Digital Edition

# The Taste of New Orleans



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## The History of African-American Businesses

## Part 3

# The Taste of New Orleans

## African-American Restaurants in New Orleans



New Orleans is famous for our delicious food. From around the world, visitors come, to sample the dishes prepared here in a way that cannot be duplicated. Something about the seasonings, the fresh seafood, the love and care and expertise, make New Orleans Chef's the best in the world. In the Black community, food has always been the thing which gathered people together.

Written and Edited by Elise Schenck and Edwin Buggage

### A City with a Flavorful History

New Orleans is a City with a rich cultural history. It is a place with a mix of people from all over the world who's left an influence on a City that is a unique cultural jewel. It is truly the most International City in the U.S. Every year people from around the globe come for an otherworldly experience of the Crescent City with its own pace of life.

There is the music with its discordant sounds that plays in the background creating the sweet harmonies of the offbeat character that is New Orleans. In addition to great music and the architectural splendor of New Orleans is it is a gastronomic paradise where you can find savory food whether it is from the finest five star restaurants to corner grocery stores and of course inside the kitchens of families of everyday people all over the City.

The City that lies by the mouth of the Mississippi has a great tradition with a mix of people contributing to it, but the roux of much of the gumbo that ex-

ists in the City comes from its people of African-Descendant. Many great restaurants that both locals and tourist come to enjoy are some of those eateries are owned by African-Americans, who serve up heaping helpings of some of the best food in the world.

New Orleans and its restaurants have been inspirational in television series such as Frank's Place, modeled after Chez Helene and its great Chef the late Austin Leslie who came to call his style of cooking 'Creole Soul.' Or that Princess Tiana of the Princess and the Frog was based on the story of New Orleans Queen of Creole Cui-

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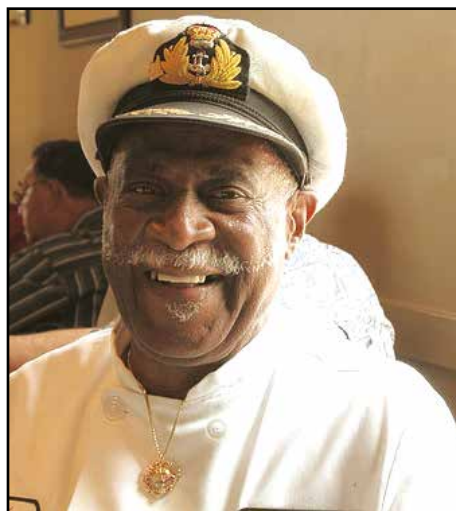
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Willie Mae Seaton



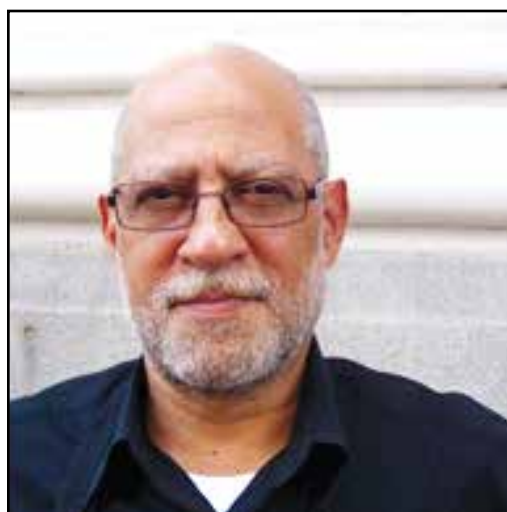
Chef Austin Leslie



Leah Chase



Cecil Kaigler & Curtis Moore



Wayne Bacquet



Chefs Armand Olivier, Jr. and Armand Olivier, III

sine, Leah Chase who also has become symbolic of the resilient spirit of our City. In recent years there's also been a great number of local haunts that have found their way into HBO's series *Treme*. New Orleans food, cooking and flavor is a star all its own that always finds a way to shine and is an important part of the City's heritage, especially as it rebuilds. For its face and identity is changing and there are questions about what the City is to become, so these traditions and businesses become more valuable to the future of the African-American presence in the City.

#### African-American Owned Restaurants: Continuing a Rich Tradition

African-American owned restaurants are an important part of the city's history and legacy. Some are still operating today, such as the James Beard Award Winning, Willie Mae's Scotch House named after the Owner Ms. Willie Mae Seaton, located in the *Treme* neighborhood; this cozy quaint place that for several decades been known for its world famous fried chicken and other soul food dishes. On any given day you can see lines wrapped around the corner with people from around the world savoring a taste of New Orleans finest down home cooking served up with a lot of love and soul.

In the neighborhood that is Faubourg Marigny at 542 Frenchmen and also when one is entering the City at the New Orleans Airport, the Praline Connection is an eatery that serves up some the best of the city's creole/Cajun Soul Food. Started in 1990 by Craig Kaigler and Curtis Moore, it has become a go to place for diners who desire authentic New Orleans cooking at reasonable prices and with great ambiance in its original Frenchmen St. location. In addition to their great food they are known for their pralines that are freshly made daily and a must have for locals and tourist alike.

When one thinks of Creole Cuisine, there are several families that's built great legacies in this City. One of those is the Olivier's whose restaurant located in the

French Quarter has for over three decades left a many of customers satisfied with great food in an upscale atmosphere. According to their website Mr. Olivier has been operating restaurants in New Orleans since 1979. The 204 Decatur Street restaurant is the third and latest in this tradition. The restaurant is run by the family and his long-term management staff. Armand Olivier Jr. oversees operations; his son, Armand III, also oversees operations and is the Executive Chef. Olivier's dishes represent five generations of Creole tradition, beginning with the woman known in the family as Gramma Gaudet, Chef Armand's great-great grandmother. Her recipes were passed on to her daughter-in-law, Mama Jeanne (Gaudet) Doublet (shown below). Mama Jeanne's daughter-in-law, Audrey (La France) Gaudet, carried on the tradition, and passed it on to her daughter, Cheryl (Gaudet) Olivier, Chef Armand's mother.

While many dishes have come to define New Orleans, the one that defines the City in ways that transcends its food is Gumbo. The City is a blend of so many things put together to give it a unique flavor. As quoted in the Southern Gumbo Trail and Oral History, Lil Dizzy's Owner Wayne Bacquet says, "Gumbo is the Soup of New Orleans with soul in it." Wayne Baquet's New Orleans roots grow two-hundred years deep, and his family's history in the restaurant business; they are three generations strong. Wayne thought about leaving the business in 2004, when he sold Zachary's, a restaurant once known for its fried chicken and Sunday brunches in the Carrollton neighborhood. But his passion for the food of his Creole Heritage runs deep: soon he was opening a Lil' Dizzy's Café in the *Treme* neighborhood, which is the oldest African-American neighborhood in the country.

#### A Matter of Survival: The Future of African-American Businesses in New Orleans

Freret Street is seeing resurgence with many small businesses popping up on this busy thoroughfare that may soon rival Magazine Street. But many of those are

not owned by African-Americans, but one of the most talked about places that has become popular is a quaint little place on the corner of Valence and Freret and it is called Freret St. Po Boys and Donuts, owned by Troy Rhodies. It has become a daytime destination for many who come from around the City to enjoy the food from the menu as well as their freshly made donuts that is becoming the talk of the town. Another great place to dine located in the French Quarter is Montrel's Bistro that is continuing the tradition of New Orleans Creole Cuisine. While many of these businesses are on the East Bank of New Orleans; on the Westbank of New Orleans in Algiers, there is Rainey's Restaurant and Caterers, owned by George Rainey. A man who not only feeds his customers great food but serves his community; he was honored by the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club serving as honorary Grand Marshal and also honored by Data News Weekly as a community trailblazer for his work serving others.

These eateries continue doing business in the rich tradition of Black ownership and are an inspiration for future generations of entrepreneurs. These businesses and those who run them are on the frontlines of a changing business climate and their presence is necessary for the African-American Community moving forward. But as all businesses are facing challenges in a tough economy. African-American owned businesses are suffering greater losses, but it is up to African-Americans to use their collective wealth to support African-American businesses. But in this new frontier of business in New Orleans it is important that African-American businesses become innovative and re-invent themselves to stay competitive and relevant in the 21st Century. And as the City rebuilds itself and its brand, it is incumbent that there is an African-American presence in business ownership. With that ingredient in the mix, a burgeoning, bustling of African-American businesses it only adds to the flavor of New Orleans, and makes it a City where everyone can participate not just in the culture, but the economy as well.

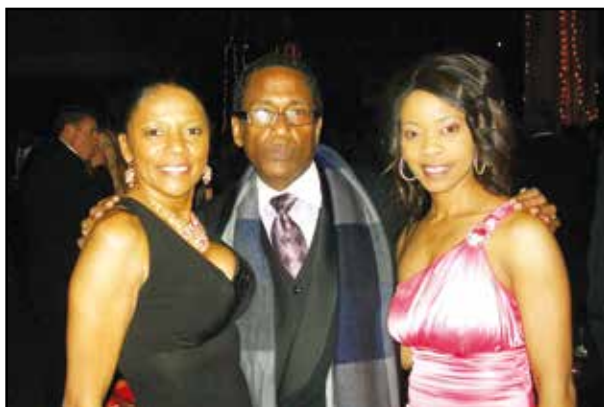


# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

## 2013 Zulu Ball Highlights

Photos by Data Staff Photographers

The tradition continued this year with the Annual Zulu Ball, hosted by the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club. For those who were able to attend, it was a fabulous evening, filled with music, dancing and the treat of the evening a great performance by Maze featuring Frankie Beverly. Of course, Data was there.



For more photos from Mardi Gras, visit [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com).



# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

## Fat Tuesday's After Gras Throw Down Around Town

Photos by Glenn Summers

Fat Tuesday's after Gras throw down around town at some of New Orleans' most popular party spots: Kermit's Treme Speakeasy, Basin Street Lounge, Tiger's Creole Cuisine, Zulu Lounge & Bertha's Place.



For more photos from Mardi Gras, visit [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com).



# Black History Month's Powerful Question



By Lee A. Daniels  
NNPA Columnist

I have a rule about this month. If it's February, I know that somebody somewhere has given an interview or written an article declaring America no longer needs Black History Month.

And, sure enough, the conservative National Review Online of February 4 has given us the article of one Charles W. Cooke. Its title is succinct – "Against Black History Month: This month is Black History Month. Let's hope it's the last."

That snarky comment is revealing, isn't it? Even if you're opposed to Black History Month, no one

would credibly think there's any chance that this month's, or next year's, or the year after that's, or ... you get the picture ... would be the last Black History Month American society commemorates? It's not a serious comment, of course, and it indicates we're not going to get a logical argument from Cooke.

But then, that's not entirely Cooke's fault. That's because there is no logical argument against commemorating Black History Month. Indeed, now it's more important than ever that we plumb the facts and complexities of African-American history.

This is not a matter of "segregating" American history into racial and ethnic enclaves. It is a matter of acquiring a fuller understanding of American history by not pretending that considering American history primarily through that of White Americans is the only approach that counts. Indeed, it's clear that Carter G. Woodson, the great scholar who

established Negro History Week in 1926, had two goals in mind. One was to enable African Americans to see that Blacks had a rich history before their capture and transport to the Americas; and that pursuing the truth of the Black experience in America was the only way to construct an America worthy of its ideals.

Cooke's article follows the usual scheme of the attack on Black History Month. He asserts that the undertaking was necessary before the 1960s, when de jure and de facto segregation ruled the land. Now, however, it's outlived its usefulness and in fact is harming the ability of all Americans to gain a shared understanding of American history. Black History Month should be eliminated and the Black American experiences should be integrated into schools' regular curriculum. "If there is still too little 'black history' taught in America's schools," Cooke writes, "or if 'black history' is being taught incorrectly – then we

should change the curriculum. If black Americans remain unfairly in the shadows, then the solution is to bring them out, not to sort and concentrate them by color."

This is an argument built on sand. For one thing, Cooke cites no actual examples of the supposed sins of Black History Month – no examples of schools or school systems where Black history is taught only in February and ignored in the curriculum the rest of the year. No examples of colleges where Black studies courses ignore the impact of the other currents of American society. No examples where in either elementary and secondary schools or colleges there is what he calls the "equally absurd" repetitive focus on heroic Black figures.

These attacks on Black History Month ignore many things: They ignore how deeply Black history has already been "integrated" into broader examinations of American history, as even a cursory perusal of popular and scholarly

books would indicate. They ignore how complex and searching explorations of Black history have become – as a forthcoming documentary airing next week on the Public Broadcasting Service on Whitney M. Young, Jr., the charismatic leader of the National Urban League from 1961 until his untimely death in 1971, will show.

Most of all, they ignore why over the last four decades other sub-groups of Americans have adopted the "special month" model. Cooke does list some of these: Women's History Month, South Asian Heritage Month, Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month, Haitian Heritage Month, Jewish American Heritage Month, Caribbean-American Heritage Month, National Hispanic Heritage Month, National American Indian Heritage Month, and Alaskan Native Heritage Month.

Lee A. Daniels is a longtime journalist based in New York City. His latest book is *Last Chance: The Political Threat to Black America*.

## Pipeline to the People

By Corey Anderson

*Question: What are your feelings about corruption in politics in New Orleans?*



Clinton Anderson

"I think that corruption is very rampant in New Orleans and that the people who are helping to get rid of this corruption are doing a very good job."



Sharon Aubert

"I see the corruption of New Orleans politics as always being corrupt, but lately they've been cleaning it up. Hopefully we will get better officials in the future."



Ron Stein

"I think it's unfair because they're leveraging their position to make money."

Talk to us on Facebook; let us know how you feel.





# Your Garden as a Symphony



Dwarf Burning Bush



Dwarf Jose Lilac

By MG Calla Victoria

Data News Weekly Columnist  
Your garden should be Symphony of color, texture, and fragrance all year-round. Although many plants are dormant in the winter, this is the time that you should be actively planning your garden. During the winter you can see the bones of your garden with the evergreens and trees that are always there. So it is during the winter time that you should be planning the rest of your year considering ground covers, color, and textures to complement existing plant materials. First of all you want to start with your bulbs because they need to go through the chilling process of winter to bloom in the spring. Try layering your bulbs for extended blooming. Some bulbs require a planting depth of 8 inches, some 5 inches, and

some 3 inches; so select bulbs that bloom at different times. Dig a trench 8 inches deep, plant the first set of bulbs and cover with a little soil (making sure you place the bulbs in the soil pointy side up), then place in the 5 inch depth bulbs and so on. Finally plant something with winter interest on top like pansies, sweet alyssum, or petunias. Now you have color through the winter, and when the pansies start to wilt your first blooms of your bulbs should be opening, then by the time those blooms are fading your second bulbs are opening, and so forth like crescendos in a symphony!

If you are a serious gardener, right about now you are being bombarded with catalogs from nurseries across the country with photos of fabulous plants. By all means check the "zone hardiness" of your plant selec-

tions, as all plants will not grow in all zones. For example, I am in love with the Dwarf Burning Bush shrub (*Syringa vulgaris*) however it will not grow in my zone; nor do most lavenders and the lilac shrubs, which is the most fragrant of all shrubs. Now there is a hybrid lilac shrub Dwarf Josee Lilac (*Syringa josueana*) which is supposed to be hardy in my zone, so I will give it a try.

When I started the Master Gardeners course I was annoyed by all of those crazy Latin names assigned to each plant. But I quickly began to understand their importance. Each plant is assigned two botanical names, the first name is always written starting with a capital letter and that first name denotes the genus or major plant family. The second name is always written in all lower-case letters and

the second name represents the specific species within the major plant family. Now why is this important? The genus (major plant family) can have hundreds of species within the genus, so you need both names to get the specific plant you desire. A prime example of this are the two varieties of lilacs mentioned previously. If I am ordering a lilac plant I want the *Syringa josueana* which will grow in my zone, not the *Syringa vulgaris* which is not hardy in my area. Both plants are in the *Syringa* genus or family, so the species name is required to differentiate between those two plants.

Check out my "Gardening tip of the Week" on my website at [www.thegardeningdiva.com](http://www.thegardeningdiva.com).

Remember never be too busy to stop and enjoy the beautiful flowers!

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