

Carnival Time

A Mardi Gras brunch

MARDI GRAS is a time for decadence. The holiday, now as much associated with drinking and debauchery as it is with feasts and king cakes, is designed to be a hedonistic affair. It is, after all, the day before Ash Wednesday, the start of the Lent season: forty days of penance and self-denial. Who can blame revelers who want to fill up on jollies while looking down that barrel? The crowds and chaotic fanfare can make for an overwhelming experience—especially if you haven't eaten first. At NOLA's Cavan, Chef Ben Thibodeaux, Pastry Chef Ruby Bloch, and Head Bartender Isaiah Estell have designed a Mardi Gras brunch that's sturdy enough to fill bellies but light enough to send merrymakers toward the parade floats—well, floating. *—Jessie Hazard*

PHOTOS BY CHRIS GRANGER

CAVAN BARBECUE SHRIMP

Serves 4

3 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
24 large, whole shrimp, peeled and deveined (save the shells and heads)
10 garlic cloves, crushed
3 lemons, 1 peeled so all of the pith is removed
1 tablespoon black peppercorns
6 sprigs rosemary, divided
1 (12-ounce) can beer (avoid stouts or anything too fruity)
1 quart water
Salt and pepper to taste
Old Bay to taste
1 tablespoon butter
½ cup thinly-sliced green onions
Loaf of crusty bread, cut into large slices and toasted

1. In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat 1 tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat until oil starts to smoke. Add shrimp shells and heads and sauté until pink, 5 to 6 minutes.
2. Add garlic, peeled lemon, peppercorns, and 2 rosemary sprigs. Stir and continue to cook another 5 to 6 minutes. Add beer and stir, being sure to scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot. Cook until reduced by half.
3. Add water and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 30 minutes. Allow liquid to cool slightly, then strain through a fine strainer. Reserve stock and discard shells.
4. Cut unpeeled lemons in half and lightly season with Old Bay.
5. In a small nonstick pan, heat 1 tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat. Carefully place lemons cut side down, then sear for about 1 minute or until the lemons start to caramelize. Remove from pan and reserve until ready to serve.
6. In a large bowl, season shrimp with salt, pepper, and Old Bay. In a large sauté pan, add remaining tablespoon of oil and heat over high heat. When oil begins to smoke, add shrimp and sear on both sides. Add remaining rosemary sprigs and sauté lightly for 30 seconds. Add enough shrimp stock to partially cover the shrimp. Cook until stock is reduced by half. Reduce heat to low and add butter. Whisk to combine. To serve, divide shrimp and sauce into four bowls. Garnish each serving with green onions and a brûléed lemon and serve with toasted bread.





ROASTED TOMATO TOAST WITH FRIED EGG AND BACON MARMALADE

Serves 4

For the bacon marmalade:
10 ounces slab bacon, diced
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 red onions, sliced ½-inch thick, grilled, and chopped
½ cup sugar
1 shot espresso
1 ounce bourbon
½ cup apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons sorghum
1 teaspoon chopped thyme
Black pepper to taste

For the tomato toast:
4 medium tomatoes, stem and core removed, sliced ½-inch thick
Salt and black pepper to taste
Leaves from 4 springs thyme, chopped
¼ cup olive oil
4 (½-inch thick) slices crusty bread
8 ounces goat cheese, softened at room temperature
8 ounces bacon marmalade
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 whole eggs
¼ cup arugula

1. Make the bacon marmalade: In a large sauté pan, render bacon in butter until just cooked. Add onions and sugar to bacon. Cook over medium heat until onions are caramelized. Add espresso, bourbon, vinegar, and sorghum. Cook until liquid is syrupy. Add thyme and season with black pepper as needed. Transfer to refrigerator to cool. Let come to room temperature before serving.
2. Make the tomato toast: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. On a parchment-lined baking pan, lay out sliced tomatoes. Season each side with a pinch of salt, pepper, and thyme. Drizzle lightly with olive oil. Bake tomatoes in oven 8 to 10 minutes, or until lightly caramelized and slightly dried. Remove from oven and allow to cool thoroughly at room temperature. Season bread slices with salt, pepper, and a little olive oil. Transfer to a parchment-lined baking pan and bake for 6 to 8 minutes, or until bread is toasty on the outside but still soft on the inside. Remove from oven. Spread 2 ounces of cheese on each slice, top with roasted tomato slices, and top tomatoes with bacon marmalade. In a frying pan, melt 2 tablespoons of butter. Fry eggs sunny-side up and top each toast with an egg. Garnish with arugula and serve immediately.

SIDEWALK SIDE SPRITZ

Makes 1 drink

1 ounce london dry gin (such as Beefeater)
1 ounce Pimm's No. 1
1 ounce dry vermouth
¾ ounce ruby red grapefruit juice
¼ ounce simple syrup (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake vigorously. Pour into a collins glass (or, in New Orleans, a to-go cup) and top with soda water.

THE BEE'S KNEES LEMON PIE

Serves 8

If Meyer lemons aren't available, any local lemons will do.

For the dough:
¾ cup flour
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sugar
8 tablespoons cold butter, cubed
½ cup plus 2 tablespoons cold buttermilk

For the filling:
4 eggs
1 cup sugar
½ cup plain greek yogurt (or sour cream)



¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup lemon juice
Zest of 1 lemon

For the whipped cream:
¼ teaspoon ground juniper
⅛ teaspoon ground coriander
Zest of 2 oranges
2 cups of cream
½ cup of sugar
½ ounce of gin (optional)

For garnish:
Local honey and honeycomb

1. Make the dough: In a food processor, combine flour, salt, and sugar. Pulse until well-mixed. Add butter and pulse until coarse meal forms and butter is no larger than pea-sized. Add buttermilk and pulse just until dough comes together, being careful not to overmix. Shape dough into a disk and wrap tightly in plastic wrap. Chill for at least 1 hour. Once chilled, roll dough to ⅛-inch thick. Press dough into pie pan to fill bottom and extend past edges. Trim edges. Return to fridge to chill at least 20 minutes. Fill with pie weights or rice and bake at 375 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes, or until lightly golden.
2. Make the filling: With a hand mixer or in a stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment, mix together eggs, sugar, yogurt, and salt until combined. Stream lemon juice and zest into mixer until combined. Pour into pie shell and bake at 300 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes until almost set—center should jiggle slightly. Allow to cool and transfer to fridge to chill.
3. Make the whipped cream: In a mixing bowl, combine all ingredients and whip until medium peaks form.
4. Once filling has chilled and set, cut pie into slices and serve with a drizzle of honey, pieces of honeycomb, and a dollop of whipped cream.