



Killer Rubboard

January 9, 2007. Volume 1, Issue 1.

ISSUE ONE: Bill O' Fare

Editor's Note: You may be a faithful reader and know for the last three years, **Killer Rubboard** has been the site of three murder mysteries set during Mardi Gras Season. You can still find those past novels on this site. But for the 2007 Mardi Gras season, **Killer Rubboard** changes into something else -- a chance for other writers to pick up the pen and write about the season. As always, the Carnival Season begins on January 6th and this year ends on February 20th, Mardi Gras. This year, **Killer Rubboard** will bring a weekly offering of good and fanciful writing, including fiction, poetry, history, and of course, food, all to educate and enhance the Mardi Gras Spirit. Check in every Tuesday for a new edition, and remember, *Laissez les bon temps rouler!*

-- Aileen McInnis, Humble Editor

Featured Writing

ONE NIGHT AT THE RENDEZ-VOUS CAFÉ

By Joe Karson, Juneau, Alaska

Joe Karson is author of many previous works including "Dining With Hitler and Hemingway." He can be reached at josephkarson@yahoo.com.

"Dud, *mon frère*, what's on your bill o' fare?"

This is from Beau, easing through the café door like he does. Always got some snappy line for the folks in there. Smell that cologne? Beau drives clear into New Orleans just to buy that cologne. Hear the *click!* of those heels? Oh yeah, no mistaking when it's Beau walking through the door. Everyone around here comes to the Rendez-Vous—Beau *arrives*.

Dud, he's standing behind the counter with his hands (*magic* hands, some say!) on his hips, staring at Beau and rolling his eyes like he does. Beau knows that bill o' fare from head to hock—

knows it about as well as Dud knows it himself. Of course, that's no small feat. Most nights Dud's bill o' fare is likely to be as long as anything Beau's read in his life. But not tonight.

"Got that glide in my stride," says Beau, "now I need you to cook me up something gonna put a little pep in my step."

It's Saturday night and Beau's all chalk-stripes and painted silk. Wearing his two-tone "spades" with the stacked-up wooden heels for that just right *click!* Got his pants "draped" and "pegged"—belt loops dropped low and cuffs tight around the ankle. Creases looking about sharp as one of Dud's butcher knives. Got a fresh gardenia in his lapel shining bright as a flashbulb—bright as his brand-new '52 Buick convertible parked out front. Shining bright as the eyes of the young women when they watch Beau step out of that famous machine. Only car in town with wire wheels and dual chrome tailpipes. That "spinner" on the steering wheel is made from a solid ivory cue ball and it's not just for show. Needs that knob for navigating one-handed down those twisty back roads. You ask any lucky gal he's given a ride home from the café.

Dud still staring at Beau. He's wiping his hands on his greasy old apron and just staring at that boy. It was Beau Broussard and his crowd, of course, who gave him his name. The only name he's known by around here. Not that his true Christian name, Dudley Fecteau, was anything to crow about. Especially the "Fecteau" part. The Fecteaues have been long notorious as the most worthless sorts in the area and Dud's mamma, Angel Fecteau, was no exception. She abandoned him when he was just a child, and, since his daddy was not known, he had to bear the further shame of becoming a Fecteau by taking the name from his *mamma*. That's how they do it around here. Anyway, Pep Bergeron, owner of the Rendez-Vous, took Dudley in. The Bergerons got so damn many kids it seemed that one more would hardly matter. Room being scarce as it is in their home, Pep (short for Pépin, or *seed*, another community-bestowed name) raised Dudley in the café and it was there he discovered that the boy had a gift.

Dudley could cook. Makes no sense at all, but even as a little boy, he could cook. Sure didn't learn it from his mamma. Didn't learn it from Madame Bergeron, who was more concerned with how to feed fifteen children with one rabbit than what sauce to put on it. Didn't learn it from anyone in that wandering tribe of greasy-spoon cooks that used to work the Rendez-Vous kitchen just long enough to buy a jug of wine. And, no, just like what Beau's got, what Dud's got you can't get from a book. There's no explanation for it—and it's best to leave it at that. Of course, you'll find folks living out in the black water that claim there's some sort of *juju* involved here. Well, they can believe what they want. What I believe is, some people are just special. They're put on this earth for a purpose, and Dud was put here to cook. Simple as that.

Good thing young Dudley was gifted like that, too. Being so slightly built, there wasn't much else he could have done but help in the kitchen to earn his keep. Pep, he wasted little time turning Dudley's childhood playground into his workshop. Can't really blame him. When you got someone around with such a gift, it's only natural to take advantage of it. So, pretty soon, Dudley, he's running that kitchen where he used to just peel potatoes and stir the gumbo. (Folks here will swear on a Bible that the first time Dudley stirred the gumbo, customers asked Pep if he'd finally

hired a real cook). Before he was even a teenager, that skinny, nervous little kid had become a genuine chef. I guess it's been a good ten years now that everyone in this small town has just taken the fine fare at the Rendez-Vous for granted. Come to expect it like the rising sun. And if Dudley Fecteau missed out on a real childhood, or if he didn't exactly learn all the social graces—if he had to become “Dud,” well, maybe that's just the price you pay for having a gift.

Now let me tell you something more about this gift. I'm just going to have to take the time to do that because . . . well, let me give you an example. Every mother's son around here, legitimate or otherwise, can whip up a proper *roux*. They'll cook all the different *roux* in the book. But Dud, he's got a red *roux* that makes people break out in freckles and the most beautiful chorus of Danny Boy you've ever heard. People that never sung a note before in their lives! He's got a blonde *roux* that after one taste is going to put you on a bear-skin rug with the Northern Lights swirling around your head. Folks in the café know to wear a sweater when Dud cooks with that *roux*. His *roux noir* can turn your hair nappy and every song on the jukebox into jungle drums. Now, now you see what I'm talking about? You see why maybe I'm not so anxious to be discussing this subject? And there's more. The boy's *etouffée* doesn't smother those shrimp, just massages them into a mellow mood so they'll crawl onto your spoon, curl up and purr. His *sauce piquant* sets them dancing on their tails. (Leaves on their rear legs for the *cancan*). And his sausage! He doesn't stop with a *boudin blanc* and a *boudin rouge*, oh no. He's got a *baiser premier*, his “first kiss” sausage, and a *bris d'pretemps*, his “spring breeze” sausage. His “mother's smile” sausage, his *boudin sourire l'maternel*, has been known to leave the biggest, toughest men in the parish dropping tears into their plates. He knows the secret of the *mélange*, too—knows how to make the just right combinations. Like, you ever go walking with your sweetheart on a frosty fall night and stop to give your sweetheart a hug? You ever reach inside your sweetheart's coat for that warm, bundled-up body, and at the same time press your face against your sweetheart's cool cheek? Well, if you've ever done that, you'll know about Dud's spicy Creole chicken with the chilled vinaigrette on the side. And you'll know why he calls that dish *Octobre Nuit*. All his young life, Dud's been in the kitchen cooking up those fantastic meals. But not tonight.

Tonight, Dud's just standing there, watching Beau Broussard work that crowd like he does. Always knows what to say, that boy. Always gets the folks laughing.

“Need something nice,” says Beau, “like some sticky chicken and dirty rice.” Beau, he's making like a rooster now.

Dud's already told Beau that he can't have whatever he wants tonight. Any other night, you want some sticky chicken and dirty rice and it's not on the bill o' fare, no problem. Dud's going to cook you up whatever you want. Heck, you sick of sticky chicken and dirty rice? He'll cook you up some dirty *chicken* and *sticky* rice, if that's what you want. But not tonight.

Pep himself is in the café tonight, been over talking with that stranger sitting alone at the counter. Skinny guy with his hat brim pulled down over the side of his face.

"Don't know who that guy is," Pep says to Beau, "but he seems kinda familiar. Sounds like he's from over in Alabama somewhere."

Beau's shaking his head. "Whoever he is, he sure looks like he could use a meal. Wonder if he can pay for one."

"Oh, he says he's got all the work he wants. Just likes to go out sometimes and 'drift'."

"He's sure drifted into the right place if he wants to fatten up a bit—but not particularly tonight. What's wrong with ol' Dud, there?"

"I don't know," says Pep, scratching his chin. "Told me not to worry. Says he's got plenty food cooked up, but it's a 'limited menu' tonight. Says the food's all cooked up and ready to go, but he's leaving the café early. Never known him to that."

"Damn!"

Dud's taken his apron off, thrown it back in the corner. He's sporting some new "chino" pants and his penny loafers look like he's been buffing them half the day. Must be the first time folks here have seen Dud in anything but jeans and that nasty old apron. They been steadily bugging him about this 'limited menu' thing, but, Dud, he's sticking to his guns. He's got some good local specialties cooked up and that's just going to have to do. Can't be stuck in that kitchen all night—not tonight. Dud's heading for the countryside to visit a certain little someone he's met. It was out at the farm where he goes to pick up his honey, that's where he found something sweeter than all the honey in the world. A nice country girl, not like those girls that hang out with Beau and his crowd. Not some girl who's been hanging out late nights at the Rendez-Vous with the smoke and the hot, sweaty bodies all pressed together. Never danced to that throbbing bass and the *chanky-chank* of the *frottoir*. He likes her family, too. Hard-working folks to whom he's still Dudley or Monsieur Fecteau.

Beau and the others, they're still going on about their food, but Dud's already stepped out from behind the counter. He's got the night's fare cooked. He's got those three dishes all cooked up, and he sings out loud and clear just what they are. Sings it out so everyone in the café can hear. Customers, now, they're all grumbling and asking what's happened. Folks around here get set in their ways, you see. They want Dud to tell them why things are different tonight, but he's sick of dealing with those folks. Sick to death of them. That's why he likes having a little secret from them. That's why he walks over to the stranger and says into his ear, " 'cause tonight I'm gonna to see my. . ."

Stranger just looks up at Dud and gives him this big smile.

First You Make A Roux...

Musings on Food and Cooking and Seasoning



By Aileen McInnis

Me Oh My Oh...

Almost everyone, even if they are not familiar with most Cajun music, has heard Hank William's classic song "Jambalaya." From the beginning saw of the fiddle introduction, people start humming along and moving their feet in that familiar two-step.

*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, we'll have good fun on the bayou*

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

You can almost feel the steamy humidity in the packed shack in the swamp, hear the slide of the flat bottomed pirogue against the swamp grass, and feel your nose tickle at the smell of the snappy cayenne. But most of all, you can hear your stomach rumbling for a steaming bowl of gumbo with a side plate of jambalaya. What about those delicious food items that Hank seems to crave so much that they make it into the chorus? Yvonne seems to be a big draw for the swamp folks, especially the Thibodaux and Fontaineau folk mentioned in the second verse, but I suspect that jambalaya, crawfish pie, and filé gumbo is what really kicks the place in the butt.

JAMBALAYA

Jambalaya, according to Paul Prudhomme's Louisiana Kitchen is a rice dish highly seasoned and strongly flavored with any combination of beef, pork, fowl, smoked sausage, ham or tasso or seafood and often containing tomatoes. According to the Acadian Dictionary (Rita and Gabrielle Claudet, Houma, Louisiana, 1981) the word jambalaya "comes from the French "jambon" meaning 'ham', the African 'ya' meaning rice and the Acadian language where everything is "a lá."

There are dozens of different recipes for jambalaya. Here is just one.

[RECIPE FOR JAMBALAYA](#) (Check LINKS Page on Website For Recipes)

CRAWFISH PIE

Now what is the heck is crawfish pie? When I was in Lake Charles, I saw people ordering and eating piles, no, *mountains* of crawfish, going through the well practice motion of grab, pinch and suck. I've had crawfish etouffé which I loved, but a whole pie of crawfish? Ya ya! Did you know that Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, is officially the Crawfish (or l'écrevisse) Capital of the world. Some crawfish pies are fried like a pastry, others are made in individual pastries, and some are made like a regular pie. Try this recipe, from Chef Alex Guillory.

[RECIPE FOR CRAWFISH PIE](#) (Check LINKS Page on Website For Recipes)

FILE GUMBO

Filé gumbo refers to a kind of gumbo that uses filé to thicken up the gumbo, which is actually ground sassafras leaves. True Cajun cooks use either okra or filé to thicken up a gumbo, but they don't use both. In a February 21 article on gumbo in the Anchorage Daily News, Richard Stewart of the Gumbo Shop in New Orleans' French Quarter was quoted as saying, "You wouldn't want to use filé and okra in the same gumbo. I guess you could, but it would be disgusting." Here is a Creole Gumbo that uses filé . No okra.

[RECIPE FOR CREOLE GUMBO](#) (Check LINKS Page on Website For Recipes)

ONE LAST THOUGHT

Still, all apologies to Mr. Williams, this meal doesn't feel complete to me. I think I would add in "a piece of cornbread" from Beau Jacques album (Kick it, Chucky!) and a Louisiana Sunburst Salad from the Gumbo Pages. I'd fill that fruit jar with some good Homer Pale Ale which always goes good with gumbo. Then I'd be ready to dine with Hank.

Krewe Du Review



Eating Establishment Reviews
By Steve Montooth & Christy Williams

January 9, 2006.

9th and F Street Gumbo House
611 W. 9th Avenue, Anchorage. 222-2930

OVERALL RATING: 

The Krewe du Review's first outing was an ambitious one—we chose to visit two restaurants, the tiny "Gumbo House" and "Gelano's Cajun Fried Chicken". Several of us (the group included Steve, our editor Aileen, her distinguished dining companion, Joe Page, and I) had been to the Gumbo House before, but none of us had heard of Gelano's until seeing an add in the paper this week, with a picture of two smiling guys with chef's hats. We had to try it! It was a gorgeous late Fall evening. We set out under a bright pink sky, the last rays of the sun setting. En route we needed to make a quick stop as a young moose sauntered across the road. An auspicious beginning to our quest!

The Gumbo House is set in a cozy little house off of Anchorage's park strip. It is a tiny establishment—two rooms with a small, jam-packed counter where food and beverages are ordered. Behind the counter is a window opening up into the kitchen. The house is decorated simply and the walls are painted a deep orange. There are about one dozen small wooden tables and as we enter it is quiet—only two diners are in the restaurant. It is "J.R." and his dining partner—J.R. is a Hawaiian dance instructor and an active member in the local Polynesian Cultural Society. He spots us, smiles and gestures a big "thumbs up", recommending the "kitchen sink" gumbo.

We are quickly greeted by Roberto, the restaurant's owner and chef. He said that it looked like a quiet night (it was quite chilly out tonight), so he had sent his "help" (his son) home early. Roberto was a one-man operation. He took our food and drink order, put the ticket up on a spinner at the kitchen window, then assembled our beverages. He then went around the hall into the kitchen, took the order off of the spinner and began preparing our meal. Steve noted that he felt he was watching a Saturday Night Live skit.

We sat ourselves down at a little table—nice and neat plus several choices of Louisiana hot sauces. We perused the place for our "Mardi Gras spirit" rating. There were several strands of beads here and there, pictures of Mardi Gras masks and such. No music was playing, but a baseball game was on over a television in the adjoining room. Between the rooms was a giant Altoid dispenser. Is the food going to be so hot that we need them?

Our appetizers came quickly—an order of fried oysters to share. They were piping hot, tender, juicy and spicy. We were all hungry and we savored every bite. The plump oysters were served with a remoulade sauce. At first we all thought the sauce was too "ketchupy/mayonaisse", but the spicing was just right and we dipped up every bit of it as we relished our oysters. Steve bought a corn muffin. These were served cold, each wrapped in plastic and set out in a basket on the counter. They seemed a bit sterile for

my taste, but Steve gave it high marks. Though served cold the jalapeno chilies in the muffin provided plenty of zip.

Our gumbo was delivered by Roberto, served up in colorful square bowls. Aileen and Joe shared a bowl of shrimp gumbo. Steve and I refused to share, each of us ordering a bowl of the kitchen sink. The gumbo was served over rice and was loaded with plenty of okra and peppers with a thick, creamy, chocolate brown broth. Aileen and Joe raved about the shrimp and our gumbo indeed contained everything but the kitchen sink-chicken, andouille sausage, oysters and shrimp. A hush fell over the table as we ate (we were tape recording this first outing and at this point all that I could hear was soup spoons hitting the bowls and contented murmurings).

The side order of jambalaya was less inspiring. Aileen and Joe liked it, but Steve and I found it to be missing something. Too bland? Not enough vegetables and shrimp? Perhaps we have been spoiled by another restaurant in town that shines in the jambalaya department. This dish just didn't pack much of a punch spice or taste-wise.

The dinner conversation drifted to an interesting topic. Our distinguished dining companion, Joe, a professional in beverage distribution, pondered what "pairs" best with Cajun food. It seems that beer is the standard accompaniment for most Cajun dishes (I happen to like iced tea with it). Joe wondered if any particular wines would go well with Cajun cuisine-possibly a very dry white wine such as a chardonnay or fume blanc. Aileen wondered if a pinot grigio would fit the bill.

Before the conversation got too deep into wine trivia, we were visited by our server, chef (and cashier) Roberto. Did we like the food? He received a resounding "YES!" He visited a bit, sharing, at our request, how he had begun to cook Cajun food (Roberto is Hispanic and the restaurant had originally featured Mexican fare). He spoke about his experience cooking at a high-end restaurant in town, where he learned to prepare the roux to make their gumbo. Roberto graciously shared some of his roux "secrets". We won't reveal these here, but hope to discuss roux preparation and gumbo styles in future columns. The controversies abound-should butter be used, or oil? Do you prepare roux the old-fashioned way, stirring it on the stove -top, or try the "new" method of cooking it in the oven at super-high temperatures? How thick should the broth be? Do I really like the creamy rich gumbo because I secretly like gravy? Oops.....back to the review.

Roberto asked if we saved room for bread pudding. We were all too full and had another restaurant to visit this evening. We left wishing that we could have tried other items on the Gumbo House menu. They serve six varieties of po' boys. We will certainly have to return. Just before leaving we spotted a string of beads over the cash register-Mardi Gras beads with a chicken. Great! On our first night out, we were visited by the spirit of "Mambozo"! If you don't understand the reference, you're encouraged to go to the Killer Rubboard website to read the on-line murder mystery. Mambozo lives on!

Off we went-full, happy and eager to pursue our next culinary destination!



Food



Atmosphere



Mardi Gras Spirit



Lagniappe

Gelano's Cajun Fried Chicken

3636 Mountain View Drive, Anchorage 277-3555

OVERALL RATING: 

This is a restaurant worth the visit. Served with our order was Cajun fried chicken, jambalaya, dirty rice and Cajun fries. Well worth the visit. Upon initial contact there were two very eager employees ready to take our order. They were cheerful in the florescent- lit quick mart and gas station across from the Alaska Super Pawn Shop on Mountain View Drive. There were a few tables set up next to the display of cold medications and jerky. Upon walking into the restaurant I was distracted by an Anchorage Police Department officer detaining a psychotic man hearing voices. The middle aged man taking our order was not distracted and engaged our foursome with an eager smile and delightful response to our food questions. Slightly distracted from screaming outside and flashing lights, our food was served at the table in short order.

I thought that this kind of service would be worth a return no matter what happens outside. The Cajun Fries were hot and spicy without the typical heavy oil taste. The Cajun fried chicken was cooked right with a thick crunchy batter coating. The Jambalaya was spicy and cooked with care, much more "inspired" than the dish earlier this evening. The Dirty Rice was tasty, chock full of both meat and vegetables, a great side order. Dinner is served with coffee, tea and what ever is stored in the Quik Mart coolers. This is a great take out place and the cook and server's attitude was a plus.

Cajun Fries were a special hit and worth the visit alone. The atmosphere was questionable considering the action outside and florescent institutional lighting.

The Krewe du Review ended the evening stuffed, but happy. As the food at Gelano's was served in take-out Styrofoam and paper plates, it was easy to pack up to take home the leftovers. Our distinguished dining companion, Joe, admitted that he had begun the evening a bit skeptical about being able to find good Cajun fare in Anchorage. He stated that the food had been great and noted that he learned that we have to open our minds a bit and do some real looking around, for good things can be found even if they are across from the Alaska Super Pawn shop.

 **Food**

 **Atmosphere**

 **Mardi Gras Spirit**

They did have a nice big sign in Mardi Gras colors AND I would like to have the two proprietors of the restaurant on any Mardi Gras float!

 **Lagniappe**

Where else could you grab a Cajun dinner, fill up your tank with gas, pick up a bottle of Motrin AND watch a commitment process all at the same time!

ABOUT THE REVIEWERS: Steve Montooth and Christy Williams are members of the Anchorage-based Krewe du Roux and know a good gumbo when they taste one.

Links & Lagniappe

January 9, 2007. ISSUE 1: Bill O' Fare

Lagniappe:

Still puzzling over the story **One Night At The Rendez-Vous Café** ? Ask yourself two questions:

1. *What were the three dishes Dud cooked for the limited menu that night?*
2. *What Alabama born singer sometimes went by the alias "Luke the Drifter"?*



More Writing by Joe Karson

Interested in more writing from Joe Karson? Check out his book of short stories **Dining with Hitler and Hemingway** Plumb Bob Press, Fairbanks, Alaska 1999. Contact [KILLER RUBBOARD EDITOR](#) for ordering information.

Calendar

DATE	EVENT	INFORMATION
January 6. Epiphany or Twelfth Night	Beginning of Carnival Season! Okay to wear beads and start eating King Cakes!	See Links Page for Mardi Gras Events.
Tuesday nights, January 9, 16 and 23, from 7:30 to 9:00.	CAJUN Waltz and 2 Step Lessons taught by Betsey Howard. Cost is \$7 per class.No partner required. Held at Square and Round Center in Government Hill in Anchorage.	Call Betsey for more information at 272-2868.
Friday, January 12 & Saturday, January 13. 5:00 to 9:00 p.m.	ZydeCohos Play at Little New Orleans Restaurant 8201 Old Seward Highway. FREE Great Cajun food, dance floor.	Call 646-2226 for more information.