



# Killer Rubboard

January 23, 2007. Volume 1, Issue 3.

## ISSUE 3: Some Things Foreign and Strange

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *I hope you are enjoying the Mardi Gras season and enjoying the strange and foreign offerings of this humble E-Zine. In this issue, a poignant letter arrives from Spain and we'll tell you where to find a good order of deep fried okra to go. May your Quest for a fine Season of the Mardi Gras be yours!*

-- Aileen McInnis, Editor

## Featured Writing

### I AM SPANISH

By Flamenco

*Flamenco is a young guitarist from Spain who stumbled upon the Visa Quest Krewe in Paris last December and who learned for the first time about Mardi Gras. He writes here with the help of Bob Bell and Debra Page who are travelling and drinking wine throughout Spain and France this winter.*

Dear Queen Aileen,

*I am Spanish.* Of this Mardi Gras, nothing I know but choose to want more. I know it celebrates in Louisiana state of Estados Unidos, and is called the New Orleans. In Spain we have similar, Semana Santa and is also happening with lent. En Sevilla, the virgins from each Cathedrals is brought into the street. There are many virgins in the churches, but not many in the streets until this festival. These church virgins are all beautiful with flowery headdress and gown sewn by nuns. All compete to be most beautiful and all people have opinion that their virgin is the best.

We men dress in traditional robes, black with high pointing hoods. We compete for the honor to carry our virgins, and then we train all year for the strongness because the virgins are weighing very much. It is a challenge but for loving our virgins we grow strong to carry our virgins all night. Then we party. Fiesta, rioja, musica, bailar; for of course, *we are Spanish.*

I have hear of Mardi Gras from American I meet. He say it is the one time in America where it feels like Spain. I think he means this is good because he like to drink the Rioja as much as me. It makes me first know that Mardi Gras is sometime I want. Now I tell tale of other Mardi Gras in Paris I stumbled to.

A nice American girl is working at the library here in Paris where to you I am writing. The French keyboards are cagos de las virgenes with letres in different places. This girl comes to tell me, "No. No. You cannot drink that Rioja in here." She takes my vino and puts it in her desk and then comes back to ask what I write. She laughs when I tell her I write my friend in America but my English badly come. She is so nice and habla espanol, and offers me to type for.

--Hi my name is Debra and I'll help Flamenco with his letter. He says his desire to visit America, Mardi Gras, and Alaska is very strong.-

My parents fled Spain when Madrid fell to Franco. They took refuge in the Pyrenees where the French were sympathetic. My father told me stories of the fighting and one that stuck fast in my mind was when he fought with the American socialistas. They called themselves the Lincoln Brigade and they came to try to stop the fascistas. From these stories I have a high regard for America. In the 1930s they were the shining light of liberty. I was born in France and only returned to Spain in 1975 when Franco finally died. The whole country was in celebration. It must be like the Mardi Gras.

I like to visit France as it was home for many years. The Metro in Paris blooms an underground life of its own. This one night in December when I am traveling with my guitar on the line to Mont Martre, the Metro is very full. We stop at Chatelet where many passengers unload and a horde of merry makers board. The doors close and a man starts hammering on a banjo, an African instrument about which I have heard, but this is the first time I have seen it. The notes from this instrument spank every space in the train. The joy of these people is contagious as they all join in singing with the banjo man, something about a Black Eyed Susie. The usual dour Paris passengers begin to smile. A couple of course make objection and press their cell phones closer to their ears, but most are very happy. Then a young French tough lifts his arms and begins dancing amidst the throng. This is different. When this wild bunch gets off, I grab my guit bag and hop off with them, for *I am Spanish*.

They wind through the streets of Mont Martre, past the Sex-O-Drome, past the windows of dancing girls, the crazy boys hopping the Delivery truck tails, riding drunk down through pleasure palace pathways. My new amigos keep focus, following like lemmings after a pretty French senorita named Jewelly. She stops in front of a small restaurant and opens the door for all to enter, La Petite Canard. I turned to the man I was walking with and asked if I could join. He called himself Smokey, and he said a funny thing, "Sure, we always need observers." We in Spain are proud of our buen comida, our vino rioja, y our amor; but the French..... The food, the wine, the love takes precedence over all. Politics are just a shadow. This restaurant, the Canard, serves duck; tapas, primer plato, entrée, maybe even dessert, all duck. Put down with the backing of French Bordeaux, this was a meal fit for La Reina Isabel herself.

Conversations zig-zag across the table in Francais, English, and to my surprise in Espanol. There are more than twenty of these revelers sharing good food, hearty laughter, and a genuine love of these moments. I discover they are most from Alaska. My mind shivers with image of this fabulous place. They are here on a quest with their Visa cards. Their quest revolves around music, adventure, and just plain fun. We in Spain know of this quest because we love our Don Quixote. I discover much in listening. What I can't understand Eric sitting next to me explains as his Spanish is muy bueno. He has trouble eating because he laughs so much. Saluds, santes, and cheers abound as we all toast. A glass is lifted to all those who would and should be here, but could not make the journey. A loud "Ahhhyeeeee...." erupts from Steve as everyone thanks Alex and Jewelly for hosting such an outrageous affair. Alex is a tall Frenchman who seems non-plussed by the details of sponsoring such a gaggle of goofballs. The Chef gets a big round of applause as he invited these folks here after hearing them play music the previous night at Alex and Jewelly's studio. All were impressed that his boss went for it.

After the meal a young couple entered from the street. They were Swiss and the young man said he had heard Cajun music had found its way to Paris and wondered if this was the right place. The man Ray (I make a funny because this man is much like Man Ray the famous artist) looks about the room and says, "Now that's what I'm talkin' about!!" He pulls out an accordion and hands it to the Swiss. From the first pull it was obvious this was a serious player. Ray's face exploded in grin as wide as Jesus' when Mary Magdelene told him she was with child. He bowed his fiddle, his friend Jennifer thumped her bass and the restaurant erupted with the sounds of the Bayou. Eric played guitar, Danny and Sherry second fiddled,

Sean blew harp, Franny tiptoed with a sax, a killer rubboard ( another contraption new to me) went rub rat-a tat, and pretty Sally beat out the beat on a wrought-iron triangle. *Et toi!*

Those that weren't playing danced. Martha grabbed me and said "Listen up boy. It's a two-step" and let me say it is sexy. I know, for I am Spanish. My appetite expands to hear more of this Cajun, Zydeco music. They played and played. Ray fiddled a waltz tune which everyone sang along on the chorus as they waltzed. "On es putain des chanceaux.....We are so fucking lucky...." Alex had never heard them sing it and it was sung in his honor and his language. He howled his approval. The owner of the Petite Canard sang louder than any. There were two small tables with diners who weren't part of this Vizaquest. It was the noche of their fuckin' luck..

More instruments emerged from their cases as the music shifted to musica traditional de Norte Americano.. Fiddles, guitar, banjo, mandolin, double bass. Wow, songs about history....unions, love, syphilis, cocaine, drink, debauch, railroadin', and gamblin'. They sang and played from the Hart. Everyone joined the acapella "We are Bands of Freeman." A man not with the group lit a lighter and held it aloft. People stopped by the window and gawked and smiled and danced down the street.

"Drink corn likker let your cocaine be....."

Music, music, music. Blues, rock n roll, ballads, gypsy.... Sean and his wife Maridon did some beautiful country duets, then they did some silly Sean songs. "Everything was fine until I bought her a gun." That's funny especial in Spanish! Eric and Ray surprised me when they let me play along on some Cuban numbers. I am Spanish. I know all the songs of the loving tongue. "....eternimente Yolanda." I lapped the music like a dog gone drunk.

At some point music ceased as postres were served. No, it was not canard! Crème brulaise, some chocolat supreme thing, a something so beautiful in its construction it seemed criminal to spoon it into a drooling mouth. All passed each around for all to suckle. Ahhh, the French.....French café good, the wine better, and even the beer (although the best of it was from Belgium) flowed like the sangre of the lamb. I came to find that the latter had much to do with this gathering. Steve and Karen are brewers extraordinaire in Homer, Alaska. To most of the assembled this was a jaunt in the country, but to these two this was a business trip. And they are all business. Many gathered here consider themselves Steve and Karen's flock. "Life would be a dismal swamp without people like them in our bayou." Danny and John told me. It turns out there is a Mardi Gras held in Homer for the unfortunates who can't get to the Big Easy. There are parades and floats and music. People explain to me about the Krewe. Different like-minded groups work all year on their contributions to the grand finale. Many of these Krewes are world renown and have worked and played their magic together through generations. A toast is raised to this--- the Vizaquest Krewe always making preparation for Mardi Gras.

Dinner had begun at 10 o'clock. The music stopped at 6 am. Such a night, and this was only one of many when this busload of buskers were unleashed under Parisian lights. The beauty is it will happen again...like the comet, like the eclipse, like the Mardi Gras. These amigos and their friends will merge somewhere on the planet and when they do I hope to be there to partake in the adventure for *I am Spanish*.

Paz y Amor.

*Flamenco*

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# Krewe Du Review



Eating Establishment Reviews  
By Steve Montooth & Christy Williams

## THIS WEEK FROM THE KREWE DU REVIEW: TAKE-OUT CAJUN

*This week, the Krewe du Review looks at Cajun take-out options. At first we'd wanted to review "fast food" options around town, but we discovered, happily, that Cajun food took a little more time to prepare. We found some great choices and a few surprises cooked while we waited and packed up to take-out. There are a few interesting drive-through options too. Steve and I wanted to see if we could find a drive-through for Cajun food. During a trip to Louisiana we had been intrigued by their drive-through daiquiri stands. Yep, daiquiris -- by the single "go-cup" serving or by the pitcher, in a wild range of flavors. On weekend nights, the tiny stands would have lines five or six deep. Louisiana has drive-through daiquiris, Anchorage loves its coffee carts --- maybe we could find Cajun food in a drive-through.*

*--- Christy Williams and Steve Montooth*

**January 23, 2006.**

### **Tommy's Burger Stop and Po-Boy Shop**

1106 W 29th, Anchorage, AK 99503. (907) 561-5696

**OVERALL RATING:**



Tommy's is best known for its burgers, but we had heard that they serve a few Cajun items also. Tommy, the owner and chef, is the son of the folks who run the Double Musky restaurant in Girdwood. The Double Musky is known for its great Cajun cooking and is one of our all-time favorites. We decided to see what Tommy's had to offer.

Once again, we set out on a freezing day (hot, spicy food does sound good in wintry weather). Tommy's was absolutely packed, although it doesn't take much, as the place is tiny-three four place picnic-type tables and a little counter squeezed into the front of their bustling kitchen. Every table was full, but several people offered to slide over and make room for us. Some people were eating and some were waiting for their take-out orders. The one lone counter person was working hard, taking orders and occasionally bringing food to a funky little window for drive up customers. It looked like an ordinary window in a home, because that's what it is. She would pry the window open and a blast of cold air would pour in. The place was plenty warm though, with a hint of chilies in the air. Salsa music played through a little sound system.

Steve and I looked at the menu and ordered three different po'boy sandwiches to go. The posted menu noted that they were all out of Double Musky pie -shoot! We'll have to make a return trip for that. While we waited, we looked around at the kitschy décor-like the Double Musky, the walls (and every spare space) are covered with odd-ball items. Tommy has his lunchbox collection displayed as well as unusual postcards, Elvis memorabilia and a few strands of Mardi Gras beads. We read reviews of the restaurant

posted here and there. The restaurant has its logo in a large print on the wall-a large red heart criss-crossed with barbed wire with flames pouring out of it. Steve opined that it meant a prisoner of love. I thought it might be pointing out the fiery spiciness of their food AND the heart-clogging nature of their menu selections. We'll have to ask Tommy.

It was a bit of a wait until our food came. The cook came out to check us out like we might be trouble. By that time, we were really hungry and decided to sit down and try the sandwiches while they were nice and hot. We knew that we couldn't possibly eat all three sandwiches, but we wanted to try a sampling of their po'boy choices. I dug into the shrimp sandwich. The shrimp were lightly breaded, fried, and tucked into a warm, dry-toasted French roll that had spicy, homemade remoulade sauce, lettuce, pickle and tomato on it. Yumm!! Spicy, shrimp nice and tender, good bread-it was a great sandwich. I reluctantly shared some of the sandwich with Steve-he did need to review it, too. He concurred-a GREAT sandwich. We cut pieces of the two remaining po'boys to try-halibut, and a cheeseburger po'boy. Cheeseburger po'boy? Steve and I wondered what the "true" definition of po'boy really is-can anything be put onto a toasted French roll and be called a po'boy? We talked about going on a po'boy quest someday.

The halibut po'boy was good, but didn't match the shrimp. It was less spicy-we investigated and noticed that the breading on the fish (also fried) did not have the Cajun seasoning as the shrimp did. It was a good sandwich, but not a great one. The cheeseburger po'boy was basically a burger on a French roll. Again, no Cajun spices graced this sandwich. O.K. if you're in the mood for a hamburger. We had lots of leftovers and packed them back in their wrappers to take home.

"Authentic po'boys in the heart of Spenard" is what Tommy's claims. We'd certainly return. Maybe next visit we'll get there before the Double Musky Pie is gone!



**Food:** The shrimp po'boy rates a 4!



**Atmosphere**



**Mardi Gras Spirit:** We did see a few strands of Mardi Gras beads.



**Lagniappe:** We liked the kooky collection of stuff in this little place. Elvis items are always a plus in our book, and the drive-up window was unique. We still can't figure out how they placed their order or even got the attention of the folks inside!

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## ***Popeye's Chicken and Biscuits***

2960 C Street, Anchorage. 907- 569-1919  
(Also located at 360 Boniface Parkway. 907-333-3363)

**OVERALL RATING:**



I'm not a fast food franchise fan, but Steve brought up the idea of trying Popeye's on a work night when we were both beat and too tired to cook. Once again it was bitterly cold -4 degrees and dropping. As we pulled into the parking lot a person from the restaurant came out and delivered bags of food to a waiting car-engine running to keep the heat going. They do have one of those drive-up gizmos that you talk into

to place your order. Then it looked like the customers drove around to the side door of the restaurant where they would run it out to you. We went in to check things out.

The restaurant has the layout of a typical franchise-a long counter for customers to order and pick up food, large menu with pictures of the items served, large booths in rows through the building. It has bright wallpaper throughout, with New Orleans oriented themes....jazz musicians, a piano player, a red-haired fiddler (a young Dewey Balfa?), cartoon chickens pouring hot sauce with flames shooting out of their little beaks, crawfish playing harmonicas while being dipped out of a big gumbo pot. We liked it!

Steve also liked the menu items and decided to try one of everything that sounded vaguely Cajun. Here's what we ordered: catfish, red beans and rice, Cajun chicken wings, dirty rice, jambalaya, Cajun fries and fried okra. Biscuits came along with our order. The young man taking our order told us, apologetically, that the wings and fish would take eight minutes to cook. (Maybe the car outside had been waiting for their chicken wings). It was no problem to wait, giving us a moment to look around. The restaurant was clean and bright and the bench seats were comfortable in the wood-accented booths. We both liked the wallpaper-at least it didn't feel like your run-of-the-mill burger joint. Later I learned that Popeye's was started in the '70's in a suburb of New Orleans. On the food packaging they had a few fun phrases, one being, "we do good ba-you!"

Our food came (in eight minutes, Steve was counting), and we rushed home, hoping that it would keep hot. We had ordered a huge amount of food, and being up for the job, we tried it all with plenty left for the next few days. I couldn't resist sampling the fried okra first. What a find! I love the stuff (even though it's got to be terrible for you health-wise). It was battered and fried perfectly....I hate it when okra is covered in so much breading that it fries up into a little hard chunk of batter. This was delicious and the price couldn't be beat! I had also ordered the catfish. (Doesn't that sound healthy-vegetable and fish? Of course, both were battered and fried into nutritional deficit.) The portion of fish was generous, nicely spiced, crispy, but not dried out. Steve's favorite was the chicken wings. They clip off the tips of the wings, so they are more like little drumsticks. The meat was juicy and tender, encased in a not too thick Cajun spiced breading.

We could have stopped there, but we didn't. I love good red beans and rice and had to see what Popeye's could do with the dish. Terrific! Creamy, just salty enough red beans over rice-just like they should be done. Red beans and fried okra would be a perfect meal in my book. Add the wonderful, flaky, buttery biscuits and a person from the South would be in heaven.

Back to the Cajun dishes-the jambalaya was good enough but not great. Steve swore that he saw a shrimp and small piece of andouille sausage in it but I never could find any. There were plenty of vegetables (peppers, onion, celery and tomatoes) and a rich tangy sauce. The dirty rice was good, with bits of chicken in it and just the right amount of spice. Steve also tried "Cajun fries", but by the time we got them home they were a bit cold to give them a fair rating. I still think the idea of French fries being a "Cajun" food dish is a bit suspect-they just shake some Cajun spices on the fries rather than regular salt.

We were pleasantly surprised by the food at Popeye's....some great choices, fast-food place prices and a nice change of pace. Some great food *to-geaux!*



**Food:** 3 ½ crawdads overall, yet some items rated a 4 ½



**Atmosphere:** It still is clearly a fast-food franchise.



**Mardi Gras Spirit:** At least the wallpaper gives a nod to its New Orleans roots.



**Lagniappe:** The restaurant does deserve credit for bringing in something a little different to the fast-food scene.

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## ***The Gumbo House (take-out menu)***

611 W. 9th Avenue, Anchorage . 907-222-2930

**OVERALL RATING:** 

Another night of working too late and Steve and I decided to pick up take-out. All in the service of writing our food reviews of course! We've already reviewed the Gumbo House and stick by our rating scale for it, but we wanted to try their take-out options. Steve ordered gumbo and po'boys and we zoomed down to pick them up. The sandwiches were ready and Roberto dipped out the gumbo when we arrived to make certain it would be hot.

The "bucket" of kitchen sink gumbo (it has a bit of everything in it, seafood, chicken and sausage) was enough for two large bowls or four "cup" servings. It was as good as our last visit.... rich, smoky, spicy broth and chock full of goodies. Everything we would want in a gumbo.

On to the po'boys...we ordered a shrimp po'boy and a barbequed beef one. They were huge, sliced in two pieces (thank goodness) and neatly wrapped. The shrimp sandwich was incredible...loaded with lightly battered, perfectly spiced, juicy shrimp. There were so many shrimp on the sandwich that they were falling out! The toasted French roll had their remoulade sauce, lettuce and pickle. Clearly, a five-crawdad rated sandwich!

The barbequed beef po'boy was equally as delicious, with a more than generous serving of tender, spicy, thinly sliced beef. Another five-crawdad sandwich..WOW!! The sandwiches were served with a side of crispy, sweet coleslaw made of red and green cabbage, grated carrots and topped with raisins. Anybody interested in joining us on a "po'boy tour"?

We've already rated this restaurant but give the city of Anchorage a "3- Crawdad" rating for take-out Cajun food. Who knew that we could get gumbo, okra, red beans or po'boys to go? I don't think however that our town is ready for drive through daiquiris.

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**ABOUT THE REVIEWERS:** Steve Montooth and Christy Williams are members of the Anchorage-based Krewe du Roux and have decided to give up butter, fried food, and powdered sugar for Lent after the Mardi Gras season is over, but for now, are enjoying their culinary trip through Southcentral Alaska.

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## Louisiana Food Quiz

How's your Louisiana Food IQ? Take this quiz and check your answers against the key at the end of the test.

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**1. Which Native Indian Tribe was the original source of file, the sassafras powder used as a thickener in gumbo?**

- Iroquois
- Choctaw
- Cherokee
- Souix

**2. Tabasco sauce comes out of what Louisiana community?**

- Slidell
- New Iberia
- Mamou
- Houma

**3. What kind of sausage is made from ground pork, seasoning and rice, is often sold at gas stations and convenience stores in Cajun country, is served wrapped in butcher paper with a pack of saltines, and its best consumed hot in the parking lot?**

- Smoked Bratwurst
- Tasso
- Boudin
- Andouille

**4. Which drink, created in 1860 is hailed as the Royal Libation of Rex, King of Mardi Gras?**

- Hurricane
- Pimm's Cup
- Sazerac
- Brandy Milk Punch

**5. Mortadella is a key ingredient of the muffuletta sandwich which originated at the Central Grocery in New Orleans. What is mortadella?**

- Cheese
- Bologna
- Olive Oil
- Italian Bread

**6. What brand of root beer began in New Orleans?**

- Hires
- Dad's
- Henry Weinhard's
- Barq's



## 7. What Louisiana community claims to be the Crawfish Capital of the World?

- Lafayette
- Breaux Bridge
- Lake Charles
- Mamou

## 8. Bananas Foster was created at what famous New Orleans Restaurant?

- Emeril's
- Commanders Palace
- Brennan's
- Antoine's

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**ANSWERS:** 1. Choctaw , 2. New Iberia, 3. Boudin, 4. Sazerac, 5. Bologna, 6. Barq's, 7. Breaux Bridge, 8. Brennan's

# Links & Lagniappe

## *January 23, 2007. ISSUE 3: Some Things Foreign and Strange*

### Visa Quest In Paris

This year, the traditional Homer Visa Quest travelled to Paris. To see photos of the Vizaquest Krewe in Paris, go to **Visa Quest in Paris** at <http://visaquestinparis.blogspot.com/> .

### Popeye's Chicken and Biscuits

Find out more than you even wanted to know about Popeyes at [Popeyes Chicken and Biscuits](#) at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popeyes\\_Chicken\\_and\\_Biscuits](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popeyes_Chicken_and_Biscuits) I do remember a memorable spring break I spent in New Orleans when I was 19 which included a day trip to the beaches in Biloxi, Mississippi. My friend Sandy and I packed a picnic lunch of Popeyes' chicken and a six pack of Dixie Beer. It was 51 degrees and a chilly wind was blowing, but we were determined to have a day at the beach, even if it was March.



You can find an archive of recipes at Popeyes Recipes at their website at <http://www.popeyes.com/recipearchives.asp/>

### Semana Santa

Did Flamenco peak your interest about Spain's celebration called "Semana Santa"? It translates into Holy Week and because Spain is a mostly Catholic country, many traditions surround the festivities leading up to Easter. (I am intrigued about these sweaty stevedore types carrying around plump virgins....) Anyway, you can learn more about Semana Santa at <http://www.cyberspain.com/life/ssanta.htm>.