



Killer Rubboard

January 30, 2007. Volume 1, Issue 4.

ISSUE 4: I Got The Baby!

EDITOR'S NOTE: *There's a wonderful tradition of baking a small trinket into a coffee cake during Mardi Gras. Whoever finds the trinket is "King or Queen" for the day, and tradition has it that the elected royalty brings the cake for the next day. The "King Cake" is an old tradition that has undergone many changes. But one of the most delightful traditions is the small plastic baby baked inside. To celebrate, we sent babies to some very creative people and let them loose. We also go digging around in the pagan roots of this practice. Enjoy!*

-- Aileen McInnis, Editor

THE BABY GALLERY: There's just no way to put the totality of the colorful and delightful Baby Gallery into a black and white newsletter and do it justice. Please log on to the main page and go to the Baby Gallery. You won't be disappointed!



Featured Article

Cake Carnage and Making Babies

By Aileen McInnis

"I got the baby!"

I love those plastic babies that abound during Carnival season. If you ever found one lurking in your slice of King Cake, then you know the feeling of being pretend king or queen for the day, a fleeting yet satisfying feeling.

In this issue, we issued a challenge to a variety of artist to redesign or being inspired by the King Cake baby in some kind of design. But where did those babies come from? Like most traditions around making babies, roots of the King Cake lie in ancient pagan roots. Sex and fertility, it seems, are at the root of most traditions that last.

Celebration of Twelfth Night, (January 6 on modern calendars, the Twelfth Night after Christmas) goes way back to Pagan and ancient Roman times. The darkest part of the winter from Winter Solstice to Twelfth night was a great time to celebrate, party and get a little crazy for many cultures. Twelfth Night celebrations seem to have a common ancestor in the King of Saturnalia from Roman times. This popularly elected "King," also given the delightful name of the "Lord of Misrule," presided over an old Roman festival that honored Saturn, the god of agriculture and civilization. The elected royalty would party all night and have a grand old time, and lead the crowd in unbridled fun and passion around the bonfire. Back then, at the end of a year of reign, the faux royalty had to sacrifice themselves to the death at that same bonfire in order to insure fertility of the crops. Sometimes it's good that traditions change, if you know what I mean.

I think Queens Emily and Linda would agree.

But from those roots, those early frivolities seem to share a theme with more modern times. They seem to share the idea that someone is picked by chance to have the glory and the power of being royalty. A-Queen-For-A-Day kind of thing. Choosing your mock royalty by hiding a token in a cake goes way back. The Romans favored the tradition of a fava bean or coin in a piece of cake. The fava bean was a symbol of fertility for the Romans and an important dietary staple. He who found it was elected The Bean King, The Lord Of Misrule, He Who Was Headed Toward The Funeral Pyre.

Well, of course, the Pagans couldn't be allowed to run wild for too long before the Church got involved. The Church knew that people had so much fun and folly during the mid winter feasts that they would never give it up and get baptized. So like many of the old rituals involving celebrations, the Church absorbed the masking, disguise, the chaos and the reign of a Bean King into a sort of Judeo-Christian tradition. In a great article on the history of the King Cake tradition, [King Cakes: A Rich Tradition](#), the author writes, " In Europe, from the 16th century onward, Carnival came to be more or less accepted by Church fathers as a necessary period of foolishness and folly before the fasting and abstinence of Lent. Hence, Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent, was one of feasting."

This festival also retained its emphasis on masking and mock royalty. The Italians really got into the spirit and to this day, Carnevale and the exquisite Italian paper and clay masks are well known around the world. The Creole Society of the South adopted the party aspect of the whole Carnival idea with the same passion as the Italians and tapped into the Spanish custom of throwing grand balls where a king and queen were chosen. Parades started, krewes went wild and suddenly everyone was masking and having

so much fun and forgetting to go to work that the authorities actually outlawed Mardi Gras for a while in New Orleans. That didn't last very long. (You know the drill. *If beads are outlawed, then only outlaws will have beads.*)

The Twelfth Night Celebration signals the beginning to the Carnival season which last through Mardi Gras day. One of the longest lasting krewes in this country, the Twelfth Night Revelers, hosts the first Carnival ball on January 6th in New Orleans and names their chosen king "the Lord of Misrule." It is actually quite a serious affair but at the heart of the celebration, the TNR still poke fun at royalty by taking on different roles, dressing up to mock royalty, and masking.

During its early years, TNR embraced the tradition of a cake of randomly picking someone to be the King (who would then choose his Queen) for the evening of frivolity and mayhem. Turns out at many of the Twelfth Night Balls, when the partygoers got to the choosing a piece of cake (adorned with a true crown destined for the person who would find the token), it was a "first-come-first-served-all-bets-off" fiasco. One article described an early attempt at choosing the evenings royalty by finding the charm as "cake carnage." The token was never found because the inebriated guests made such a mess of the cake, so no queen was appointed that first official ball. A delightful image, isn't it? Ladies and gents of the court with cake crumbs and frosting staining those divine silk gowns and trousers. Now, the piece containing the token is carefully guided toward the predetermined royalty and entourage. No one gets hurt and no one is stuck with an outrageous dry-cleaning bill.

Twelfth Night, January 6, is the feast of the Epiphany, the night the Three Kings found Jesus in the stable and brought him frankincense, gold and myrrh. The day also marks the beginning of Carnival season. The token included in the cake developed to not only be a bean or a pea or a coin, but sometimes a figurine. The French make collector figurines, sometimes of royalty or court figures. In the United States during the 1800's, often times the token was a pecan or a coin. Some plantation owners were also known to put jewels in the cake. The little plastic baby became popular in this county in the mid 1900s, of course after plastic was invented and we made friends with China.

King Cakes are taken to work or offered at parties. The New Orleans tradition is that each person takes a piece of cake and whoever gets the baby in their cake is "crowned" King or Queen for the day and that person is obligated to bring the next King Cake to work or host the next party. Some krewes also use the King Cake to choose their royalty for the upcoming Carnival season.

Like gumbo, every baker of a King Cake seems to have his or her own preference about what it really should be. The standard is made with a rich dough, more like a coffee cake than a traditional cake and cover with sugar topic in the traditional Mardi Gras color: purple representing justice, green representing faith, and gold representing power. New Orleans bakers have love to experiment and make chocolate, blueberry, cream cheese, pecan praline, even crawfish.

King Cakes, once used to choose the life of the party, now also earned the religious symbolism. There are tons of traditions and stories out there, and I don't know which ones are the true and accepted ones. Some include that baby represents the baby Jesus, who is the true King; the circular nature of the cake symbolizes the journey of the Wise Men who traveled to find Him; and the braiding of the dough represents the twists and turns the Wise Men took in order to hide their trail from King Herod, who wanted to kill the newborn king to protect his own reign. The purple, green and gold sugar that adorns every cake represents the official Mardi Gras Colors, representing, Justice, Faith and Power.

The baby remains one of the most endearing images of the Carnival Season. Let's get serious--- babies are cooler than beans or pecans. Now you can find baby figures that are pink, Caucasian, black, metallic blue, green gold and purple, glow in the dark cherubs with wings, and like most things Mardi Gras, are made in China. They are not just hidden away in cakes. The ubiquitous babies adorn necklaces, beads, tiaras, and jewelry as part of the celebration. The customs keep developing and keep changing. But the basics of the tradition remain.

You got your Bean King. Your Lord of Misrule. Your hiding behind a mask. Your cake carnage. Your human sacrifice. The king and queen expected to lead the willing into mayhem, fun and excess and *esprit de corps*. Your royalty chosen by chance. And all of it represented in the little bare-naked amorphous form of the King Cake baby. An endearing symbol of Mardi Gras if there ever was one.

Babies. That's what I'm talking about. We got lots of them in this issue. Take a look. And if you are lucky enough to shout, "I got the baby!" this season, all hail to you. See you at the bonfire.

© 2007 Aileen McInnis



Krewe Du Review

Eating Establishment Reviews
By Steve Montooth & Christy Williams

THIS WEEK FROM THE KREWE DU REVIEW: *BREAD PUDDING*

The Krewe du Review received a special assignment this week from editor Aileen-sample and review the bread pudding available in restaurants around town. I'd only had the stuff once, and that was years ago. I didn't know until Aileen explained her request, that it is a staple in New Orleans restaurants. What a wonderfully creative dish--take stale, old unappetizing leftover bread and make it into an elegant dessert. Add a little sauce laced with something "strong" as my grandmother would have put it, and you really have something. The recipes all have a basic structure that they spring from-- bread, eggs, butter, milk and sugar. From there on, anything goes!

For this round of tastings, we picked up our orders of pudding from around town and gathered together to enjoy them. Before diving into the desserts, we agreed that the real fun of the past few weeks has been to have an excuse to get together more often, eat great food, and to talk to cooks (and wait staff) about their approaches to cooking and the dishes they serve.

-- Christy Williams and Steve Montooth

January 30, 2006. BREAD PUDDING SAMPLES

Gumbo House
9th and F Street, Downtown Anchorage

RATING: 

Our first pudding was from the Gumbo House. The dessert was a generous, hefty rectangle of sliced or torn bread held together by the custard it was baked with. It was a light golden color, toasted brown on

the top. Steve and I smiled to recognize the pattern on the top pieces of bread-it looked exactly like the rolls from the po' boys we had tried last week!

The "pudding" (not really pudding we're used to-you know, the soupy stuff made from those little boxes) was moist, sweet and just chewy enough. Plump raisins were mixed in with the bread and there was a hint, not overpowering, of cinnamon. The topping for the pudding (served separately to add it on yourself) was a Kahlua cream sauce. WOW!! We heated up both the bread and the sauce (it's usually served warm) and gobbled it up. I globbed on the sauce it was so good-sweet, warm and buttery with the little kick of Kahlua. We all (Steve, Aileen and I) loved it.

Snow Goose and Restaurant and Brewery ***717 West 3rd Avenue, Anchorage***



RATING:

While Aileen waited at the restaurant for the pudding to be packed up she copied this description from the menu: "Made from scratch using the full bodied John Henry Stout which boasts nice hints of roasted coffee, with chocolate notes and blended with a sweet apple ale sauce." Sounds like a wine review, doesn't it? The Snow Goose has its own brewery so it makes sense that they use their own specialties in making the dessert. A waitperson named Rena chatted with Aileen and told her that after long busy shifts at the restaurant the staff often sits down to share an order of the pudding at the end of the night. With the description and vote of approval from Rena we could hardly wait to dig in.

Plated beautifully in its Styrofoam container, the Snow Goose pudding looked very different from the Gumbo House dessert. The pudding was dark and dense. It looked like it had been baked in a loaf pan and was sliced into neat thick slices and topped with caramelized walnuts---quite elegant looking. The restaurant provided two sauces, a dark, thick, clear whiskey sauce and a light colored cinnamon cream sauce. Again, we warmed everything up before serving it. We sliced our pieces of pudding and sampled both sauces. The pudding itself was spongy and chewy-we weren't wild about the texture. The taste of the pudding however was wonderfully infused by their ales (I cheated and tried the leftovers the next day, and it seemed even tastier!). The "hard" whiskey sauce was a bit disappointing as you could still taste the granules of sugar. We wondered if the sauce hadn't been fully cooked, as we picked up the dessert early in the day. The cinnamon cream sauce was our favorite.

It looked like the Snow Goose staff really did make the pudding from "scratch", maybe making a sort of "quick bread" using their ales? It was indeed tasty but we preferred the texture of the first pudding.

Fire and Ice ***Off of International Airport Road, between C and Arctic, Anchorage***

The Krewe du Review has made several trips to this quirky little restaurant over the past few weeks. Sometimes they have menu items and sometimes they don't, depending upon how busy the family running it is that day. On our "bread pudding day," I went to pick up some from them but was told that they hadn't had time to make it that day. We did decide to print the description on their menu--so intriguing that I'm sure we'll keep trying to catch them when they have it.

"Sue's nearly famous bread pudding: French bread soaked with Sue's own mixture of milk, eggs, cinnamon, raisins, amaretto, brandy, butter, nutmeg and a bunch of secret stuff, smothered with our own

whiskey sauce and whipped cream. I married her for her bread pudding, but you only gotta fork over a couple of bucks!"

Simon and Seafort's 420 L. Street, Downtown Anchorage

RATING: 

We needed to wait until the evening to sample our third pudding as Simon's didn't open until then. We were all headed to a square dance with the music of The Improbabilities as part of the Anchorage Folk Festival so we picked up a few orders and brought it along. Friends and a few band members sampled along with us.

Once again, this dessert looked very different from the other two samples. We opened the container to see a large chunk of rustic looking torn bread pieces, cooked until brown and soaked in a sauce. This dessert was much saucier than the first two—we could tilt the box and watch the sauce running out of and around the bread. The pudding was also laced with sliced pears and raisins. Unlike the first two puddings, this one was served with ice cream rather than a sauce. It came with vanilla ice cream, generously sprinkled with cinnamon and nutmeg.

The pudding was tasty and moist and we all liked the sauce it was baked with. We were not as excited about the ice cream topping. We all agreed that we liked sauce with a little "punch", whether it be from whiskey, rum, brandy, etc. Aileen decided that she would have liked to combine the Simon's pudding with the Gumbo House Kahlua cream sauce.

One band member, Forrest Gibson (musician extraordinaire), gave us his thoughts on the pudding, "It beats the best bread pudding that you can find in Ketchikan. (He did let us know that you can find it there occasionally). Forrest added that the best bread pudding he had ever tasted was made by his friend and restaurant owner Brad in Seattle, who makes his dessert with leftover cinnamon rolls. The piece de resistance for Brad's pudding is "a killer rum sauce". We of the Krewe du Review are in Forrest's camp—the sauce really can make the pudding.

FINAL NOTE FROM CHRISTY: After our bread pudding quest I hopped onto the Epicurious website—my favorite place to find recipes. The variety in the list was unbelievable—some use French bread, others plain white sandwich bread, chocolate, pumpkin, whipped cream and some are more like soufflés. Like the old-time tunes we were listening to at the dance, the pudding started out with a simple, accessible framework—then was picked up, embellished, added onto, twisted, jazzed up and carried into endless wonderful directions. Special thanks goes out to the "Improbabilities" for providing us with great tunes over the past Folk Festival weekend—a perfect and inspiring "pairing" to our food review adventures.

ABOUT THE REVIEWERS: Steve Montooth and Christy Williams are members of the Anchorage-based Krewe du Roux and have decided that a job that allows you to order three entrees and five sides in the name of "working" is their dream job.

Copyright 2007. All Rights Reserved.



RECIPES

BREAD PUDDING WITH WHISKEY SAUCE

Recipe from Class Act: Simple Authentic Recipes From the New Orleans School of Cooking by John De Mers. 2000

INGREDIENTS:

1 10 ozs. loaf stale French bread, crumbled
2 tsp. vanilla
1 cup raisins
4 cups milk
1 cup coconut
2 cups sugar
1 cup chopped pecans
8 Tbsp butter, melted
1 tsp cinnamon
3 eggs
1 tsp nutmeg

RECIPE:

Combine all ingredients. Mixture should be very moist but not soupy. Pour into buttered 9" x 12" baking dish or larger. Place into non-preheated oven. Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes, until top is golden brown. Serve warm with whiskey sauce.

WHISKEY SAUCE

8 Tbsp. butter (1 Stick)
1 ½ cups powdered sugar
2 eggs yolks
1/2 cup bourbon whiskey

Cream butter and sugar over medium heat until all butter is absorbed. Remove from heat and blend in egg yolk. Pour in bourbon gradually to your own taste, stirring constantly. Sauce will thicken as it cools. For a variety of sauces, just substitute your favorite fruit juice or liqueur for the bourbon.

Links & Lagniappe

January 30, 2007. ISSUE 4: I Got The Baby!

More On The History of King Cakes

To read an extensive article on history of the tradition of choosing faux royalty by a token in a cake and learn far more about King Cake than you ever thought possible, check out [King Cake: A Rich Tradition](#). Can you spell "SATURNALIA"?



Bread Pudding Recipes

Bread Pudding Recipes galore can be found at [About Southern Food Bread Pudding Recipes](#)

[Bread Pudding Recipe from The Bon Ton Cafe in New Orleans](#)

The Recipe Page has a Bread Pudding with Whiskey Sauce recipe from the New Orleans School of Cooking located at 524 St. Louis Street in New Orleans. To learn more about this fun little shop that offers cooking classes, Cajun food and spices, and Joe's Hot Stuff, visit www.neworleansschoolofcooking.com



Many Thanks to the Contributing Artists to the Baby Gallery!

Sara Lawson
Dee Dee Keyser
Christy Williams

Maggie McInnis
Linda Hearn
Steve Montooth

Wanda Lindsoe
Aileen McInnis
Andi Smith



Do You "Got The Baby" ?

Do you have your King Cake Baby? **Killer Rubboard** will send you one if you do not.

Specify pink, gold, green or purple, give a mailing address, and state one sentence why you got to have a baby. Write to [I WANT A BABY!](#) If you want to decorate, reinvent or come up with your own baby design, send a digital picture and I'll add it to the gallery.

The Improbabilities

Forrest Gibson and krewe (Scott Meyer, Brian DeMarcus, Richie Stearns and Grant Dermody) make up the terrific Improbabilities who just played here in Anchorage and who served as a focus group for one of the bread puddings tasted for this issue. Their c.d. is outstanding and you can order it or just learn more about this blues/fusion/funk group at <http://www.improbabilities.com/>