



Killer Rubboard

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ISSUE 5: The Krewe of Gambrinus

EDITOR'S NOTE: There is just no doubt that Mardi Gras in Alaska was no more than a reason for a bar to throw a party until Karen Berger and Steve McCasland showed up in Homer bringing with them a rich tradition. Over the years, a host of traditions grew and flourished until now, Kings and Queens dot the landscape and the Krewe of Gambrinus is a regular in the Homer Winter Carnival parade. This issue is devoted to the little New Orleans of Homer and it's Krewe of Rex, the Krewe of Gambrinus. And we ask the question, just who the heck is this Gambrinus guy? Enjoy!

Featured Writing

Mardi Gras, Homer style.

By Karen Berger (with Haiku by Jennifer King)

Karen Berger, along with her husband Steve McCasland, own the Homer Brewing Company and are founding members of the Krewe of Gambrinus, A Social Aid and Pleasure Club. They have been instigating Mardi Gras celebrations in Homer since 1995 and have taught hundreds of Alaskans of the traditions and history of the Carnival Season. Jennifer King owns her own business Fit for A King in Homer, but more importantly, plays trombone in the Bossy Pants Brass Band.



*We are hunkered down
With the low light of winter
A delicious time*

*Beads start to appear
On people around Homer
And downtown Fritz Creek*

*Our Cosmic Hamlet
Recognizes Mardi Gras
In a special way.....*

It began with a mess-o-crawfish, a King Cake, a handful of beads and a homemade cardboard crown in 1995. The crawfish came from Breaux Bridge Louisiana (www.breauxbridgelive.com), proudly known as the "crawfish capital of the world". The King Cake was from Paul's Pastry Shop in Picayune Mississippi, (www.paulspastry.com), a true "Party in a Box". Steve had brought the beads with him from New Orleans, via Dallas and Seattle, to Homer from a trip to the real thing circa 1986. Mind you, this is before the availability of the useful www and finding our sources required phone calls to old friends and kept business cards from past travels. With all of the authentic accoutrement, we could find, we gathered around as big a table as we could create, covered it in newspaper and took to pinching tails and sucking heads.

It was a first for everyone except Bob Folsie (a Homer Coon-ass), Steve and me and the blended mix of folks just didn't quite know what to do with those crustaceans. Luckily for them, a fisherman contributed some king crab legs and all were happily cracking something. We passed out single strands of beads for everyone and Steve gave his much shorter then story of the King Cake. We sliced it up and passed it around, no one really grasping what it meant to "get the baby". Jerry Breese, a local bachelor, was crowned our first "King of Homer Mardi Gras." He proudly wore his poster board crown for the rest of the party and proceeded to take it to his home and store it reverently in an enclosed, dust-free china cabinet. Something that most bachelors of Homer are not noted for having.

*Your bright eyes meet mine
Strands of beads adorn your chest
You who wear the crown*

Mardi Gras 1996 came and King Jerry was working out of town and unable to return for his kingly duties as party host. I was given access to his house where I was able to retrieve the ensconced crown and Steve and I hosted the second party in our new, tiny house. This was the year Steve began making his world famous gumbo. (Sorry, no links to this recipe, but I'll tell you he stirs his roux for at least 4 hours. Yes, by hand, 4 hours and always uses ghee (www.food-india.com/ingredients/i001_i025/i007) as the oil and only in a cast iron skillet. That's all I can share or he would have to kill me.) I, again, ordered the King Cake from Paul's Pastry Shop in Picayune, Mississippi. The masses came and the momentum was picking up. Some even wore masks. The cake was cut and passed around, whereupon I found myself holding up the little pink baby. Now I'm Queen! (It's good to be queen.) Honestly, I had no idea where that baby was in the cake....remember it comes from Paul's Pastry Shop in Picayune Mississippi. They put the baby in it.

*That special King Cake
Where the baby is hidden
Who will get the slice?*

1997 marked the first Winter Carnival parade for Homer Brewing Company and we created a float with a throne made of kegs and a cauldron of "brew" using dry ice. It sounded good, but didn't really work out too well. The yet-to-be-named krewe on the float were dressed in empty "Bioriginal Organic Malt" bags. We tossed candy root beer barrels to the crowd. It was a start.

The party was held at the home of a friend that had moved to Homer and had held the dubious distinction of being an elephant handler at the New Orleans zoo. He well understood Mardi Gras. The King Cake from Paul's Pastry Shop in Picayune Mississippi was cut and passed around. All of the pieces had been taken and still no baby. The last piece was passed to Steve...and he was crowned king. We were beginning to wonder what juju was that baby had that wouldn't allow us *not* to throw this party.



*The cold time of year
Feels right for making merry
You and me and beer*

*More music and BEER
We can't get enough, I fear
Grog, nog, and more cheer!*

1998's party came and once again we were gathered back at our small house with even more joining the krewe. We've got our Paul's Pastry Shop in Picayune, Mississippi king cake and those folks were starting to remember me. Steve cut the cake and passed it around. The suspense of the baby is such a party highlight. There is a quiet that takes over while the baby is being sought out in those pieces of dough, fruit and colored icing. The discovery was made and it almost seemed like voodoo has more to do with it than juju as I came up with that plastic baby for the second time. It's good to be queen, but *double queen????*

*Double queen you are
No one could be more royal
All down on one knee!*



1999 brings the first parade with beads to toss. I have discovered School and Carnival Supply (www.school-carnival.com) in Gulfport, Mississippi, and the helpful employee, Darlene, spent a great deal of phone time with me as there is still no www. and the first real parade throw was sent up for the Winter Carnival parade. The beads were a huge hit with the crowd. The float is starting to show more effort, embellishment and festooning in the afternoon that we spend out in the cold building it. Whatever the theme that the Chamber of Commerce announces for the Winter Carnival is somehow entwined into our float, but the theme of Mardi Gras is always the basis for our float.

This was the year of "Homer is Where The Heart Is" as noted by the heart on the palm of my waving hand. The photo that was run on the front page of the Homer News and I really did feel like "Queen for a Week" as it is a weekly publication. We won "Honorable Mention" from the parade committee, probably due to the amount of beads we tossed and bribed the judges with.

*I saw her bare breasts
Today when the beads hit air
I think she wants you*

The party that year was once again at our tiny house, with folks spilling out around a bonfire. Who says you can't draw a crowd for a party on a Tuesday? Now I'm on my 4th cake from Paul's Pastry Shop in Picayune Mississippi and by now they have all of my mailing information on file. Bless their hearts. It is this year I make the royal rule that if you have been king or queen once, you are exempt from taking a piece of King Cake. I make this rule knowing that something has to be done to get that baby out of our house, but I'm sure my ulterior motive is that I just don't want anyone to ever "out royal" me. This is my only way to rule the world! Remember the elephant handler from New Orleans? Yep, that's right. That baby wasn't going to let someone that didn't understand Mardi Gras and the importance of its traditions get it. It's a very smart baby. King Jim Pitt. We are all quite pleased with our new king and as you can see by his photo, he makes quite a statement as a human being. He really does appear kingly. All is well until that summer and the hurricane force winds of change blow around King Jim and he has to move from the Cosmic Hamlet. He attempts to give me back that poster board crown, but I declare, which I can because I am double queen, he host a Lagniappe (An old Creole word for "something extra.") party. It was held in our backyard in August. We call Paul's Pastry Shop in Picayune Mississippi and order up another King Cake. Pass the cake and from King Jim the crown passes to now King Ray. Who is this King Ray you ask? King Ray just happens to be the hottest Cajun accordion player this side of Eunice La. And is the "Ray" in *the Ray-Jen Cajun Band*. What did I tell you about that baby?



*That baby must know
It is that stuff, the music
Makes us want to live*

*Makes us want to go
Go Go Go Go GO GO GO!
But not anywhere*

*Music and people
Oh, and maybe food and drink
Don't we have the life?*



In honor of King Jim, he has since gone on to that great throne in the sky. Bless his soul.

King Ray hosts the party and the krewe continues to grow. This is the first year poetic license was taken with the King Cake and it proves that the magic is in the baby, not the cake. The lucky piece is taken by Diana Carbonell. A woman with intense community spirit and the amazing ability to create anything out of paper mache. This is very important to float building. Oh, and she just happens to be a professional chef. Queen Di is a welcome addition to the Royal Family as we do like to eat.



*Oh, it's the season
To eat bowls of beans and rice
Purple, green, and gold*

The Winter Carnival floats begin to take on a greater and grandiose look with the use of the brewery's new space. We now have our own den.* **(Den: A large warehouse where Carnival floats are built and stored).** 2001 is the year of "Back to the Future" and we build a parody of the movie, 2001, A Space Odyssey monolith. Ours is a "Mardilith" and Queen Di demonstrates her amazing paper mache creativity with our first Bouef Gras* graced the roof of the pulling van. **(Bouef Gras: The fatted ox or bull that has, since the Middle Ages, been a part of pre-Lenten celebrations.)** It symbolizes the last meat eaten before Lent. Queen Di adds a proper throne to the Royal cache of goods and looks stunning waving her queenly wave from the rear of the float. Her photo graces the Anchorage Daily News and we again win honorable mention for our parade float efforts.

The party that year was notable for its amount of great food, a new large house (finally), a raging bonfire and live Cajun music. The momentum of the essence of Mardi Gras is growing. Queen Di creates her own version of King Cake and Steve makes his ever growing longer speech about the royal responsibilities that come with the baby in the cake. "You can't just have the munchies and grab for the cake. You must be prepared to host a party, participate in the float building, ride on the float and generally represent our still un-named krewe in a royal manner. For this, you will be treated like the king or queen you are. Wishes and demands are generally met." The suspense builds and the moment is met with slight confusion. The baby slips about and is found lying helplessly on the floor by Tom Marakowitz, longtime employee of HBC. No one is quite sure exactly which piece of cake it fell from, but Tom's save crowns him King.

*Sitting on my stool
The bass strap slung on my neck
My sharp eyes see all*

The parades are becoming centered around how many beads we can toss to the crowds and how well we can bribe the judges with "special throw". It seems to be working, no matter what the theme of the parade, we usually receive "honorable mention" from the judging committee which nets us a little cash from the nice sponsors at ACS and it goes into the bead fund. Believe me, it is drop in the bead bucket, but it helps.

*Here comes that woman!
The one who always wants beads
The one with no bra!*

Tom's party is unusual in that he lives on Crossman Ridge here in Homer and it is an impressive hike into his neighborhood. His party is hosted by Regent Phillips, his "next door" neighbor. Due to the remote location and true winter weather most often experienced at Mardi Gras, the mix of the party leaned heavily to the male persuasion. Everyone knows that a party without a closer ratio of boys to girls can sometimes run amuck. Not that this one did that, but I felt that when it came time to cut the King Cake, again, from Paul's Pastry Shop in Picayune Mississippi, a new double queen royal ruling needed to be enacted. Along with the above mentioned considerations, the party must be on the road system or at least a team of snow machines be made ready to shuttle the fainter of heart. With this in mind, and believe me the munchies were running rampant at this party, the pool of cake takers was thinner than the crowd that was gathered. There were a few scares, as the munchies overtook a few folks that did not live on the road system took a piece. Again, the baby knew just where to go. With the air as thick with suspense as it was with other things, the baby found its way to Rick "Freedom" Cline. This man was due for some kingly pleasures and privileges as he had spent the last year standing by his wife that battled and won against breast cancer. They were on the road to

conception and during his reign Sharlene became pregnant with twins. She was a beautiful sight, full bellied, at next year's party at their lovely home on the road system.

*My head is swimming
With thoughts of you and of love
On this Mardi Gras*



The parade that year was noted with the addition of Bung and the name of our Krewe. We are now "The Krewe of Gambrinus, a Social Aid and Pleasure Club" and Bung is a character from the comic strip Wizard of Id. The term "bung" is also associated with a beer keg as it is the hole in the side of the keg that is used to gain entry into the vessel. Bung is made to look like the comic character with his very large nose and pointy hat. Two hands are made, one that looks like its tossing beads and the other is the famous flag inspired "peace sign" hand. Again, made by the paper mache talented Queen Di. This was 2002 and we were a country at war. We again win Honorable Mention in the parade.



*It seems very odd
That people are fighting wars
When there is music*

*I can't help but think
We are so fucking lucky
Think it every day*

The next in line for the throne was Tarri Thurman. The baby felt it was time to have another queen. Di and I were finding ourselves being taxed by all of the feminine duties that come with the royal life. We are now up to 2003 and this was the year that a new tradition was born. The Epiphany party. It is tradition that King Cake be eaten on Epiphany as that is the day that the 3 wise men wandered upon the baby Jesus. In the history of the king cake, it's design, a braided circle, comes from the supposed route the wise men took making way to the baby Jesus. They were walking in the sand and in an attempt to keep King Harrods's troops from finding the wise men; they would walk in circles and odd twisting ways in order to throw them off of their trail. January 6th, being Epiphany, began the new tradition of a Krewe gathering at the brewery to eat beans and rice and anyone's leftover holiday treats. A king cake is served, now traditionally made by Queen Di and the recipient of the baby is responsible for throwing a party during the carnival season that runs from Epiphany to Mardi Gras. Not a huge party, just a gathering of folks to help while away the long nights of winter. All rules are off regarding the taking of cake. It's a whole new tradition.

Everyone takes cake. Let the new tradition begin I announce, as double queen. The cake is cut and is passed around by someone other than me. I'm enjoying myself at this party, not having any prior encumbrances or titles; chatting with King Ray as the cake makes the room. I reach for my piece, as it has been years since I've had a taste of cake, where what do I find....the baby. This makes 5 pieces of cake and 3 babies for me. What are the odds of that? That's it, I'm finished with cake. This is when Mardi Bowling began and for those that haven't been, I say, come on down to Homer for some fun theme bowling at our Kachemak Bowling Alley. I don't have to have this party every year, but it is so much fun, it just has to happen and we usually have this the Friday night before the parade on Saturday of Winter Carnival. You readers that have made it this far with me are very much invited. Just come up with a bowling name and dress kind of wacky. Think bowling alley cheese.



*The Epiphany
Is when we start to party
Eat gumbo and cake*

*At this first party
We see who will be host
For the next event*

*Any fun will do
Bowling, skiing, or a fire
For all of our friends*

We are now up to the King Tobias the Fair as our King for 2004. A humble king, indeed. 2005 gave us King Cefferino Maryott, partner of Queen Di and professional chef as well. I did mention how this Krewe likes to eat didn't I?

2006 brings us full circle, as we have a relative of King Ray's, his beautiful niece, Queen Emily. We needed some youth in the royal family.

*The queen is a doll
My friend and partner in crime
She is of my heart*

*I will sit and sew
And make her a special crown
To adorn her head*

This year's parade is shaping up to be a real, over the top, no holds barred; we're going for First Place kind of spectacle. You read it here first...you'll see it on Saturday, February 10th. Homer's Winter Carnival first ever...marching brass band! Yes, that's right; The Krewe of Gambrinus, A Social Aid and Pleasure Club introduces "The Bossy Pants Brass Band" in association with "The Bossy Panty Twirlers".

*We have been talking
About a band for so long
Clarinet, trombone*

*All the horns are tuned
I take a deep breath and turn
Your nod says "Let's go"!*

*But I am laughing!
So hard I can't purse my lips
Bye-bye embouchure*



I highly suggest a trip to Homer for this grand event. It will also be the 25th Homebrew Competition and the weekend will top off with a Cajun dance at Down East on Sunday, February 11th. You are now up to date on the history of Mardi Gras Madness in Homer and I hope you will join in our fun and frivolity or at least start some of your own, wherever you are. Carnival is a season to celebrate.

*It is such a kick
To get together often
Ground full of new snow*

*The drink on my lips
The food on my tongue so sweet
Ash Wednesday ... oh shit.*



From the entire Krewe of Gambrinus—Happy Mardi Gras!

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When The Saints Go Marching In

By Aileen McInnis

A cursory check of the internet reveals multiple entries claiming that Gambrinus is considered the "unofficial patron saint of beer." He is actually was not a saint at all, though it seems the reverence hold for him in the hops department seems to be well justified. Gambrinus was not a saint, but he was a legendary king in Flanders, probably most likely to be John, Duke of Burgundy in the late 1300s and early 1400s who some believe to be the inventor of hopped malt beer. He is often pictured in kingly garb or as a knight, as he always has a stein in his hand and a smile on his face. Because of his significance, many European and North American brewers have adopted his name or logo as part of their beer brands. The Krewe of Gambrinus, having been birthed by worthy brewers, follow in this tradition.



Okay, there you have it. Gambrinus is the *unofficial patron saint* of beer, but certainly not the real thing. You just can't throw around the title of patron saint. You must have lived a worthy life and have a miracle or two attributed to your intercession. Gambrinus is a fine, mortal who has achieved immortality in the hearts of fine beer drinkers, and in the Krewe of Homer, but he's not a saint. So that still leaves the question --- who is the real deal?

That honor is reserved for St. Arnold.

St. Arnold-official patron saint of brewers

Saint Arnold is recognized by the Catholic Church as the Patron Saint of Brewers. He was born in Austria in 580. Even back in those days the Austrians were famous for their love of beer, and admired for their beer making skill.

Arnold entered the priesthood as a young man and worked his way up to Bishop of Metz, in France. He is said to have spent his life warning peasants about the health hazards of drinking water, since it wasn't that safe to drink during the Dark Ages. Beer, on the other hand, was quite safe. Arnold frequently pointed this out to his congregation. He is credited with having once said, "From man's sweat and God's love, beer came into the world." Oh yeah. That's one way to get people to go to Church. He died in 640 and was buried at a monastery near Remiremont, France.



In 641, the citizens of Metz requested that Saint Arnold's body be exhumed and carried from the monastery to the town of Metz for reburial in their local church. Along the way, the procession stopped for a rest and went into a tavern for a bit of beer. Much to their dismay, they were informed that there was only one mug of beer left, and that they would have to share it. That mug never ran dry and the thirsty crowd was satisfied.

Every Saint needs a miracle. That's how the Church decides you are a Saint. The story of the miracle mug of beer spread and eventually Arnold was canonized by the Catholic Church for it and designated as the Patron Saint of Brewers.

Who Are the other Patron Saints of Mardi Gras?

That got me thinking about who are all these Saints that keeping marching in during Mardi Gras and New Orleans celebrations? The Catholic Church designates patron saints to intercede on the behalf of us here on earth, but I like to think of them as persons of inspiration. I did some research and discovered that there are no official patron saints oversee the traditions and fun of Mardi Gras. No surprise there. But there are some very worthy choices that I would like to nominate for the various details. Here are my nominations.

Saint Cecelia, Patron Saint of Music, Musicians, Brass Bands, and Accordion Players

St. Cecelia has got to be the shoe-in for the patron saint of brass bands and accordion players, since she is already the Patron Saint of music and musicians in general.

I love this representation of St. Cecelia by artist Margaret Morrison (link here) It reminds me of all the members of the Bossy Pants Brass band and the lovely Bossy Panties Baton Twirlers who will be marching in the parade in Homer. Margaret Morrison is an artist who portrays an exuberant Saint Cecilia that one critic described as a "voluptuous heroine, silver bodied and blowing on a giant brass sousaphone ... marching across a desert under a cloud-filled blue sky, bursting with light." That's what I'm talking about!



So it seems that St. Cecelia is a grand candidate to over see the music of the season, the guide brass bands in their journey down the street, and intercede on the behalf of accordion players who have gone astray and can't find their way back...



St. Lucy, Patron Saint of Eyes, Light and of Mardi Gras Masks and Flambeaux Carriers

Again, I'm struck by the artistry of Margaret Morrison who portrayed St. Lucy in a way that makes her a natural.

Morrison's portrait of a pretty, green-haired young woman in a sexy black evening dress called "St. Lucy" gives thought to nominating St Lucy as the Patron Saint of Masks "I put her in gothic attire," Morrison says, "to go along with the Mardi Gras theme. She holds a feathered mask with eyes because St. Lucy was martyred by having her eyes gouged out, for staying true to her religion." St Lucy, or St Lucia is also the inspiration for the Swedish holiday in December where the youngest daughter in the family puts a crown of lighted candles on her head and brings fresh cinnamon rolls to the entire family. I say that makes her appropriate for the flambeaux, the torch carriers for the nighttime Mardi Gras parades. Watch your eyes, though, fellas!

Saint Honorius of Amiens, France. Patron Saint of Chefs, Bakers, Pastry and of King Cake

I nominate St Honorius as the Patron Saint of King Cakes partly because he really is the Patron Saint of Bakers, but mostly because he is French, and the French are wild about King Cakes. *C'est Bon!*





Saint Lawrence of Spain, Patron Saint of Cooks, Vintners, Restaurateurs, and of Gumbo Makers

Even though Louisiana is a very Catholic region, I couldn't find a straight out patron saint of gumbo making. (I did find out the Louis IX (St. Louis) is the Patron Saint of New Orleans which is cool.) But a bit of research uncovered St. St. Lawrence whose extraordinary story makes me nominate him for the job. He was a very devout early Christian and when the unbelievers came looking for wealthy Christians to put to death and steal their fortunes, well, they found Lawrence.

Some legends say he was beheaded, but the most persistent, if untrue legend says that he was tortured by his captors by being lashed to a large grill and slow roasted over the fire. When the torturers continued to questions him about other Christians, instead of giving them up, he is reported to say, "You should turn me over, I'm not done yet." Well, I don't believe that story for an instant, but because of his faith and steadfast believe, he has been declared the patron saint of cooks, kitchen suppliers, vintners and restaurateurs. He died from being grilled to death in Spain 10, August 258. *Mi dios!* A man with that kind of faith, fortitude and tolerance for heat in the kitchen I think is quite qualified to over see the making of a black roux. Patron Saint of Gumbo, he is!

St George Patron Saint of Soldiers, Scouts, Men on Horseback, and the Courir de Mardi Gras

St George is a very early figure in the church, having died in 304 and is also a very popular saint in Europe. He is the patron Saint of soldiers, of scouts and of Horseback Riders, which makes him the perfect Patron Saint of the riders of the Courir de Mardi Gras. If you remember from the Beaded Shoe, The Courir de Mardi Gras is the Cajun celebration where men, dressed in rag tag clothes of royalty, wire masks, and large conical hats ride through the countryside begging for chickens, rice, sausage and peppers in which to make into a large community pot of gumbo (*See Saint Lawrence*).



The riders often put on a comical display as they chase the chickens around the yard, and sing distinctive songs of the season as they ride through the countryside. I think St. George is definitely their man!



Saint Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint of Animals and Birds, including Chickens.

Turnabout is fairplay. If St. George is overseeing the well being of the riders of the Courir de Mardi Gras, some one else must be looking out over the chickens who are running the danger of getting tossed in the gumbo pot. That kind person, of course, would be the gentle St. Francis of Assisi who is considered the patron Saint of all animals, including birds, which includes chickens. Even though Mambozo* is a practioner of Santaria, I happen to know as a fact that he wears a St. Francis medal just to cover all the bases.

*Don't know who Mambozo is? Dude, you got to read the [Killer Rubboard](#) novels!

Krewe Du Review



Eating Establishment Reviews
By Steve Montooth & Christy Williams

February 6, 2006.

Little New Orleans Restaurant

8201 Old Seward Highway, Anchorage (Off Dimond Boulevard)

RATING: 

Of all the restaurants we've visited so far, Little New Orleans is the only one owned and operated by a bona fide Louisiana native. Not only does the Krewe du Review feel that the restaurant deserves "extra credit" for this, but also for the fact that for the past five years the owner and chef, Johnny Duplantis (great name, non?), has sought to bring real Louisiana food (and music) to the people of Anchorage.

Last month, we made the pilgrimage to Little New Orleans to have dinner and hear friends playing music to celebrate the anniversary of the restaurants opening. Two members of the Krewe du Roux were playing music with the Zydecohos, so they joined us, tables pushed together, to sample some of the restaurants offerings. Krewe member Jason's two young children, Jack and Lucca were along and chose to sit at the restaurants long counter. They were content to play with some toys they'd brought along and a special Mardi Gras chicken (Mambozo?) that Aileen had given them. The restaurant staff seemed comfortable with the kids playing and just hanging out as we adults visited, ate and danced. The restaurant was bustling, with a good number of people there, and the band was playing lively music, bringing unsuspecting diners up to join them to play rubboard.

The Krewe du Review set to work. We poured over the menu, clearly the most extensive offering of Louisiana fare anywhere in town. They offer etouffés, Cajun pepper steak, seafood dishes, gumbos, nine varieties of po'boys, and lots of Southern "sides". We ordered a sampler seafood appetizer plate, three entrees and several side dishes to try out. The sampler tray arrived with a generous serving of battered and deep fried oysters, shrimp, crawfish and okra. It took a few minutes to chase down our waitress to get some silverware and napkins (not that we're above eating with our fingers!) Being an okra fan, I first snapped up a piece of the fried stuff. It was hot and the batter made it nice and crunchy. My second bite was a piece of battered crawfish. I love just about all types of seafood, but I knew that this was not good---it had a strong, "muddy" flavor. Maybe they'd received a bad batch of the little mud bugs, but I stayed away from the others on the platter. We pondered how the restaurant gets crawfish to Anchorage-it is a long way from the bayous of Louisiana. It was a bit difficult deciphering what was what on the platter, as all of the items were fried in the same batter and looked pretty similar. The oysters and shrimp were good, especially when dipped into the thick spicy remoulade sauce accompanying the dish.

Steve ordered the seafood platter. Basically, it was a larger serving of the items on our appetizer platter and several times I started to eat off of his plate, thinking that it was our appetizer-oops! We all shared the dirty rice and jambalaya he ordered and sent it around the table for all to sample. Both were tasty and had lots of goodies, bits of vegetable and meat.

Aileen ordered the crawfish etouffés. She had had this dish in Louisiana, loved it, and hoped that it could be as memorable. It was spicy but not too hot and the etouffés sauce was dark, thick and rich served on white rice. The crawfish in her dinner were good and fresh tasting-not "muddy" like the appetizers. Aileen's only critique- that there was not enough crawfish in the dish. It was more sauce than anything else. She did report later in the week that it tasted great heated up as leftovers the next day.

The seafood gumbo that I ordered was the prettiest dish of the bunch. Served in a large bowl it had a neat scoop of rice to the side and a piece of toasted French bread perched on the rim of the bowl. The broth was dark, smoky and spicy the way I like it. Unlike other gumbos we have sampled this had a much thinner broth, more soup-like. It was filled with plenty of shrimp, peppers and onions.

I also ordered a side of beans and rice. This is another dish that we could spend weeks trying, as every restaurant cooks it a bit differently. Little New Orleans uses kidney beans-they are sweet, firm and keep their shape. The beans looked like they are cooked with onions, peppers and sausage. They were nicely spiced, and had plenty of sausage too, but I learned that I'm a fan of the creamier red beans, that are cooked until they almost dissolve into the other ingredients.

Jason's two children entertained themselves all evening, but they were waiting patiently for the promised dessert-beignets, deep-fried puffy rectangles of dough served hot and sprinkled with powdered sugar. Jason's wife Erica brought platters of the beignets to the table-for the kids and the rest of the table. They were enjoyed by all.

We jotted down a few notes as we visited and listened to the music. All of the Krewe du Roux have enjoyed eating at the restaurant over the past few years and appreciate having a cheerful, bead-decorated venue to hear music. We noted that we appreciated the owner's dedication to keeping selections within the realm of Louisiana fare and for setting aside a spot in the restaurant for live music-an absolutely essential ingredient in the "gumbo" of Louisiana culture.



Food: *The food is good but not "great" in our opinion. Of course there are many more items on the menu we need to "research"!*



Atmosphere: *The restaurant is nicely laid out and decorated. The kitchen is open so diners can watch food being prepared. Service can be a bit spotty-wait staff are friendly but sometimes nowhere to be found.*



Mardi Gras Spirit: *Beads, masks and other New Orleans themed items decorate the restaurant.*



Lagniappe: *The bandstand, dance floor and spice shop (they sell Cajun and Creole spices) are wonderful "extras". In past visits they have also sold fresh pralines to take home.*

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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Links & Lagniappe

February 6, 2007. ISSUE 4: The Krewe of Gambrinus



The Homer Brewing Company, 1411 Lake Street, Homer, Alaska 99603.

If you haven't already been enchanted by and converted to the fine country ales of the Homer Brewing Company, check them out the next time you are in Homer. You can also read a nice review from [Dr. Fermento](#), the beer reviewer for the Anchorage Press, from back in 2000 before HBC moved into their new place down on Lake Street.

Homer Winter Carnival

Thinking about coming down to Homer for the Winter Carnival? Here's the [schedule of events](#). You can get a cup of hot chocolate at the hospital after the parade, but you can also meet up with the Bossy Pants Brass Band down at Cups.

Musical Saint Trading Cards

Alaskan-fiddler-and-candidate-for-Governor-now-living-in-Texas Wolf Cartusciello has put together a whole set of Musical Saint Trading Cards, so if you like the idea of a Patron Saint of Gumbo, you are really going to like the Patron Saint of Banjo Players. Check his whole line of Big Ernie, banjo, and Musical Saints Trading Cards at <http://banjohazard.homestead.com/musicalsainttc.html>.

Margaret Morrison, Patron Saints and Rituals

Do you like this over the top image of St. Cecilia? Then you might be interested in more art from Margaret Morrison who constructed a whole exhibit around patron saints. Check out her cyber art show at her show [Patron Saints and Rituals](#).

