

RECIPE

with a full bottle of cognac, a couple of Cajun babes, my lawyer and wife to find Steve Riley and Mamou Playboys tearing up the stage in front of a wildly dancing crowd.

But the fun actually begins early Saturday morning in this area when **Fred's Lounge** in nearby Mamou opens the doors to a small bar and dance floor at 7:30 am for a Cajun dance band to rock the house, broadcast across Louisiana. It's only open that one day and people from 18-85 flock in from all over the state and even east Texas to swirl around like crabs in a gumbo.

Back in Eunice, accordionist **Marc Savoy** and his wife, singer-songwriter Ann with sons Joel and Wilson, host a jam session at the **family music shop** just a few kilometres East (www.savoymusiccenter.com). It kicks off at 9am to noon and features many legendary players and anyone can join in with only one rule: "Only one triangle player at a time." It's a whoop and holler event packed with seated and standing audience, but no room to dance. "Admission is free, but a small box of boudin sausage or pork cracklins would make you the most popular guy in there for about two-to-three minutes," as Marc jokes.

After this session wraps up, it's time to hit the **Boudin Trail** which is a series of butchers, gas stations, supermarkets and convenience stores that steam their own white soft sausages of pork, liver, rice, veggies/peppers and hot spices as well as their counterpart – deep fat fried pork fat cracklins (known as Widowmakers). You rarely find them in restaurants and they are best consumed on the bonnet, boot, dashboard or if you're lucky, a truck tailgate with the fiddle, drums, accordion, guitars and triangle of Cajun music blasting from the radio. (www.cajunboudintrail.com). They also come in red and black versions with the addition of swine wine or blood.


The **Cajun Music Hall of Fame and Museum** in Eunice is a relaxing space to view artifacts, instruments and curios of the genre with the added pleasure of an outdoor set of tables to eat your boudin and neck a few Abita beers. Then it's a burpy stroll through town ending back at the nearby **Prairie Acadian Cultural Centre** and **Caboose Depot**.

Saturday nights in Eunice is another broadcast from the **Liberty Theatre**, the radio and TV *Rendez-Vous des Cajuns* that starts at 6pm in this glorious art deco masterpiece with a dance floor in front of the stage and plush theatre style seats. Cajun music legends and initiates play their hearts out and leave time after a two-hour program to catch other artists in the area. (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Rendez-vous-des-Cajuns-Cajun-Music-Radio-TV-Show-Liberty-Theater/259197744345>).

Forty-five minutes to the Cajun epicenter of Lafayette is the **Blue Moon Saloon** (www.bluemoonpresents.com) with a ten-year history of hosting Cajun and blues acts in this comfy indoor/outdoor venue.

Just around the corner in quaint village Breaux Bridge is **Café des Amis** (www.cafedesamis.com) in a historic building replete with black walnut and marble bar from the 1920s. Though it music most nights and a brilliant menu, it's the Zydeco Breakfast at 8:30 am that lures in Cajun music lovers. The best accommodations in Breaux Bridge are B&Bs like **Maison Des Amis** (www.maisondesamis.com), **Bayou Teche** (www.aubayoutechebedandbreakfast.com), **Isabelle Inn** (www.isabelleinn.com) and **Country Charm** (www.countrycharmbandb.org).

Houma is a scenic drive through bayous and by mansions, home to the **Jolly Inn** (www.thejollyinn.com) where every Friday night from 8-11 pm and Sunday from 3-6pm, the dance floor bursts to the raucous sounds of *Couche Couche*. This is hard-core zydeco at its best and you can be made an Honorary Coonass here with certificate and enjoy being taught the TwoStep.

To round out your bayou blast, take a ride with the **Cajun Man's Swamp Cruise** hosted by accordion whiz Ron "Black" Guidry, who stops the large boat mid bayou to feed gators, spot Bald Eagles, play and sing as well as tell lies (www.cajunman.com). After that it's a leisurely scoot by highway to New Orleans to cap the tour. 



LANCE PITRE'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CRAWFISH ETOUFFEE

I stayed at Lance and Kelly's L'Acadie Inn (www.hotboudin.com) in Eunice Louisiana in 2011 and, like most of the guests hanging out at the barbecue the day before the World Championship Crawfish Etouffee Cookoff, I helped slice the vegetables. This was the recipe he entered and it won. His wife's won second place.

I suggest you double this recipe and if you can't find yabbies, which are our equivalent of the Mudbug (crawfish), use medium size fresh prawns, shelled and head off with poop-chute removed. I also recommend a half teaspoon each of black pepper, white pepper and cayenne pepper.

Makes 6 to 8 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1/3 cup chopped yellow onion
- 1/2 cup each chopped green and red capsicum
- 1/3 cup each chopped orange and yellow capsicum
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2/3 cup half-and-half (half milk, half pure full cream)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 pound peeled raw crawfish (yabbie) tails with fat (or prawns)
- 2 green onions, chopped
- hot cooked white rice

DIRECTIONS

Melt butter in a heavy skillet, preferably cast iron, set over medium heat. Add the onion, peppers, and celery and sauté until the onions are translucent, about ten minutes. Add the flour, stirring constantly until well blended. Add tomato sauce and garlic. Stir to blend.

Stir in chicken broth and cream, and reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer until sauce starts to thicken, about ten minutes.

Increase heat to medium, season with salt and cloves, and add crawfish and green onions. Cook until heated through, about ten minutes. Serve over hot rice.

Pair with a great chardonnay.

More recipes from L'Acadie Inn at <http://www.hotboudin.com/ivan.html>

And you can find flavourful recipes for Cajun Cooking at www.louisianacookin.com 