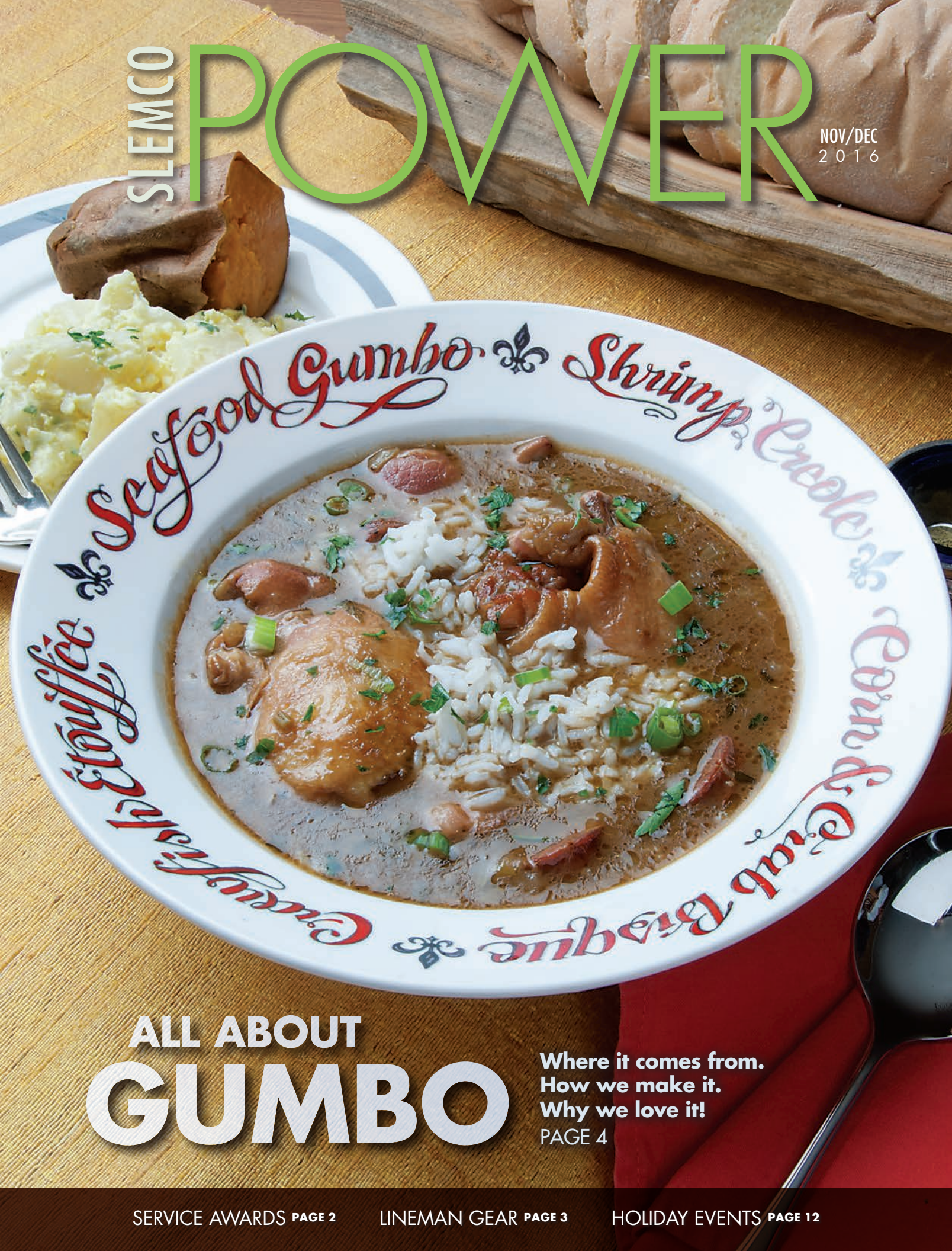


SLEMCO

POWER

NOV/DEC
2016



ALL ABOUT GUMBO

Where it comes from.
How we make it.
Why we love it!
PAGE 4

The Official Publication of the Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation
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Cover photo © Curtis Darrah

TakeNote

SLEMCO HONORS EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

Forty-two employees will be marking major milestones with the company and celebrating 1,035 years of service to the SLEMCO membership in December. Eight of them will be celebrating retirements occurring this year.

Retirees include Dale Boudreaux of Breaux Bridge, underground locator, 40 years; Terry Braquet of Carencro, transformer shop foreman, 38 years; Brent Cormier of Lafayette, senior field engineer, 35 years; Terry Faul of Opelousas, senior field engineer, 38 years; Kevin J. Guidry of Arnaudville, electrical system specialist, 36 years; Elliot Hollier of Opelousas, district superintendent, 35 years; Hilray Lebert of Lafayette, warehouse courier, 37 years, and Karen Moresi of Jeanerette, payroll specialist, 36 years.

One employee is celebrating 40 years with SLEMCO: Allan Guilbeaux of Carencro, warehouse foreman.

Celebrating 35 years each with SLEMCO this year are Dallas Donovan of Abbeville, district superintendent; Dwayne Doxey of Rayne, senior meter shop technician; Kevin Mouton of Broussard, line foreman; Wayne Phillips of Lafayette, marketing and governmental affairs supervisor, and Gaynal Savoy of Crowley, district superintendent.

Marking 30 years are Curtis Catalon of Maurice, serviceman; Dennis Desormeaux of Lafayette, line foreman; Dina Guardia of Carencro, assistant meter reader supervisor; Gerald Larriviere of Lafayette, service clerk; Mary Laurent of Lafayette, communications manager; Robert

Mitchell of Lafayette, economic development specialist; Patrick Spell of Sunset, substation maintenance foreman; Glenn Tamporello of Breaux Bridge, CEO & general manager, and Kenneth Venable of Church Point, underground crew foreman.

Serving the SLEMCO membership for 25 years each are Brian Latiolais of Church Point, warehouse clerk; Chad Miller of Church Point, serviceman, and Christopher Smith of Lafayette, information technologies coordinator.

Twenty year awardees include Corey Courville of Breaux Bridge, meter reader, and Randy Noel of Grand Coteau, right of way tree trimmer foreman.

Fourteen employees are celebrating 10 years each with SLEMCO (Lucky Account Number 3022200334). They are Bryan "Blake" Andrepont of Church Point, substation foreman; Stacy Bragg of Opelousas, customer service representative; Brent Bergeron of Scott, project field engineer; George Fage of Carencro, lineman class A; Joseph Fontenot of Port Barre, mechanic; Kevin L. Guidry of Carencro, lineman class A; Gregory "Ty" Lavergne of Church Point, lineman class A; Gentry Laper of Church Point, right of way assistant supervisor; Hunter Peltier of Breaux Bridge, lineman class A; John Prados of St. Martinville, senior field engineer; William Quirk of Washington, lineman class A; Karen Rutland of Lafayette, engineering technician; Damon Vincent of Carencro, lineman class A, and Nicholas Vincent of Rayne, lineman class A.



GEARED UP FOR SAFETY

The electric lines, transformers and other equipment that SLEMCO uses to deliver power carry dangerous levels of voltage, but our linemen are carefully trained and equipped to handle it safely.

Perhaps you've seen one of our linemen working up on a pole or in a bucket truck and wondered what specialized equipment they use to stay safe while doing their jobs. You can't see the hours of continuing training they have received, but their safety equipment is readily visible every time they gear up outside their truck (Lucky Account Number 1307103500).

This is what our linemen use every day to perform their jobs safely and efficiently.

INSULATED GLOVES

Worn whenever working with high voltages, these protective gloves are carefully tested and stored to ensure their continued safety. Outer leather gloves with Velcro wrist fasteners are worn over the insulated rubber gloves to protect them from punctures or tearing that would compromise their non-conductivity.

HOT STICK

This extendable, insulated pole is a tool linemen use to safely handle and adjust live high-voltage electrical equipment (Lucky Account Number 2044486408).



HARD HAT

Not only factory-tested for strength to protect our linemen's heads from falling debris, these hard plastic hats, with web suspensions, are also tested for electrical conductivity.

SAFETY GLASSES

These are dual purpose, protecting eyes from both hazardous sun glare and from dust and other flying particles.

FULL BODY HARNESS

These are essential and required to protect from falls whenever a lineman works from a bucket truck. The sturdy webbing of the harness has a snap tether that can be attached to an appropriate support.

FIRE-RESISTANT CLOTHING

An electrical arc flash creates a risk that clothing might burn or melt, adding to the danger for linemen in the event of such an accident. Shirts and jeans are made of special fire-resistant synthetic and cotton blends without metallic buttons.

QUALITY WORK BOOTS

Additional rigid arch support is built in to support the lineman's weight when climbing or working on poles.

Photo © Curtis Darrach

2017 SLEMCO HOLIDAYS

All SLEMCO offices will be closed for holidays on the following dates:

JANUARY 2 - New Years Day observed
FEBRUARY 28 - Mardi Gras
APRIL 14 - Good Friday
MAY 29 - Memorial Day
JULY 4 - Independence Day

SEPTEMBER 4 - Labor Day
NOVEMBER 23 & 24 - Thanksgiving
DECEMBER 25 - Observed for Christmas Eve
DECEMBER 26 - Observed for Christmas Day
JANUARY 1, 2018 - Observed for New Years Day



**PICK YOUR INGREDIENTS,
PICK YOUR RECIPE.**

COOL WEATHER CALLS FOR

GUMBO!

BY MARCELLE BIENVENU | PHOTOS BY CURTIS DARRAH

When the first cold front moves through south Louisiana in the fall, my husband claims that chicken and andouille are hard to come by south of I-10.

That's because locals flock to supermarkets to stock up on gumbo ingredients. Items like onions, bell peppers, celery, flour, oil, and rice—along with the chicken and sausage—fly off the shelves. Any cold blustery day simply calls for a big pot of gumbo simmering on the back of the stove.

By today's definition, a gumbo is a spicy, thick Creole soup composed of fish or shellfish, poultry, game, meats and vegetables in any of a variety of combinations. Gumbo is thickened with either okra or filé powder and then ladled over rice.

Historians tell us that the term *gumbo* is the West African term for okra. In Louisiana enslaved Africans (who brought okra to the New World) always used the term in reference to the vegetable itself, not the dish. Often okra was used by the African slaves in soups and other dishes that included meat and shrimp seasoned with salt and cayenne pepper.

Along the way, the French, Spanish, Germans and other ethnic

groups here all contributed to the evolution of our present-day, okra-based dish (Lucky Account Number 4502293400).

The French probably experimented with another thickening agent like roux—a combination of oil and flour cooked to different degrees of color. The Choctaw Indians introduced filé powder (dried ground sassafras leaves) as yet another thickening agent. The Germans and French probably are responsible for the addition of sausages. The Spanish threw in onions and peppers. And so it went, until we now have many tempting varieties of gumbo. And everyone has an opinion on which is best. It's no surprise the term *gumbo ya ya* is said to mean “everyone talking at once.”

As with many other dishes of Louisiana, the origin of gumbo is often a subject of heated discussion. Are the Creoles of New Orleans or the Cajuns of what is now Acadiana the actual originators of this thick, rich soup that is the quintessential dish of Louisiana?

In the book *Stir the Pot, The History of Cajun Cuisine*, co-authored by Carl Brasseaux, Ryan Brasseaux and myself, it is noted that “Gumbo first appears in the historical record at the turn of the nineteenth century.

“The two initial references,



occurring in 1803 and 1804, point to the use of gumbo respectively at a gubernatorial reception in New Orleans and at a *Cajun bal de maison* (house dance) on the Acadian Coast, between Baton Rouge and the Crescent City.”

Ask anyone who lives in Acadiana for a recipe, and you’ll probably get as many versions as there are bayous crisscrossing the state. Ask a neighbor, a friend or a professional chef what’s their favorite gumbo, and you’ll get different answers: every cook has his or her own interpretation.

For example, I happen to be a purist. I don’t want any type of meat in my seafood gumbo—only crabmeat, shrimp and oysters. But in my chicken and sausage gumbo, there’s no seafood of any kind, please, except when I make a wild duck gumbo. Only then will I add a goodly amount of plump, salty oysters and a splash of the oyster liquor at the end of cooking.

However, others tell you that the addition of chicken gizzards, chicken necks, tasso and anything else at hand is perfectly acceptable. Creole cooks like Leah Chase, owner of Dooky Chase’s Restaurant in New Orleans, combine hot sausage, cubed beef, smoked ham and chicken pieces, as well as shrimp and oysters, in their golden roux based gumbo.

FIRST YOU MAKE A ROUX

Most cooks worth their salt will tell you that a good roux is the basis of most gumbos. But some locals never begin any kind of okra gumbo with a roux: they claim okra is the thickening agent (Lucky Account Number 4501076200).

Even making a roux (a combination of flour and oil), varies from cook to cook. First, the oil. In the old days, lard was used, but vegetable oil usually is preferred these days (although some people use peanut or canola oil). Some will insist you use equal parts of flour and oil, while others tell you: “*Non*, use more flour than oil.” The flour part is easy: simple all-purpose flour. Self-rising flour will only produce a bubbly mess.

Both my father (a great outdoorsman and Boy Scout leader) and my mother (who loved to entertain) taught me, at the tender age of eight years, to put equal parts of flour and oil into a cold, heavy pot and stir it slowly and constantly over medium heat until the desired color was reached. But some cooks choose to heat the oil a bit before adding the flour and continuing with



the cooking. Still others may prefer heating the pot before adding the oil-flour mixture all at once.

And just how long is this roux cooked? My mother preached that it usually took about 30 minutes. She would announce to the household when she was going to be making her roux. She was not to be bothered under any circumstances: you could die at her feet and she

wouldn’t even bat an eye! Armed with a highball (usually bourbon and water), she planted her feet in front of her six-burner stove and slowly stirred the roux until it was just the right color.

Ah, but just what is the right color? For a crab stew, Mama said it was to be the color of peanut butter. A darker roux, she claimed, was a little heavy for delicate seafood. For a chicken and sausage gumbo, the roux was darker, more like chocolate.

Mama would roll her eyes when she witnessed other cooks “mistreating” a roux, like cooking it so fast, it almost burns! Because if it did burn, it had to be thrown away and the whole process started over.

Cooks, usually those over the age of 50, will tell you that a homemade roux is the only way to go. Not only will it taste better, they say, but the act of making roux proves that love and patience goes into it, *and* the roux maker has the opportunity to enjoy beverage or two while he or she is standing at the stove! However, commercial roux (which comes in light or dark versions, dry or regular) is perfectly acceptable in a pinch when time is of the essence, such as when making huge quantities of gumbo (Lucky Account Number 2229071001).

ADD STOCK OR ADD WATER?

The addition of stock or broth, rather than water, is the obvious choice for an intense, flavorful gumbo. For example, shrimp and/or crab shells make an incredible, easy stock. Simply simmer the shells for a couple of hours in water seasoned with bay leaves, coarsely chopped celery and onions or whatever else strikes your fancy and *voilà!* Chicken or turkey carcasses simmered with onions, celery, carrots, bay leaves, a few cloves of garlic and black peppercorns make a rich chicken stock.

ALL HAIL THE KING!

Gumbo z’herbes, also called green gumbo, is, as far as I’m concerned, the king of gumbos.

The late Leon E. Soniat Jr. described this gumbo in his book *La Bouche Creole*. Gumbo z’herbes, made with a variety of greens but no meat, was traditionally served on Good Friday. In days gone by, cooks made

continued on page 6



their way to the French Market in New Orleans to purchase the greens, such as mustard greens, turnip greens, collard greens and cabbage that would go into the green gumbo. Most times, seven greens or more were used. “Legend had it that for every green that was put into the gumbo, a new friend was made during the succeeding year,” according to Soniat.

When I was a youngster, my mother and I didn’t visit the French Market for our greens but simply strolled through my grandfather’s garden, picking whatever was available for our own gumbo z’herbes (Lucky Account Number 4501219901).

FILÉ GUMBO ON THE BY-O

No it’s not file (like a fingernail file) but rather filé (fee-lay).

Filé is made from the dried leaves of sassafras trees which grow wild along the Gulf Coast. The Choctaws (as well as other native Indians) used it long before the French or Acadians arrived.

If you use filé powder, when do you add it? Should it be at the end of the cooking time or offered at the table, as my mother preferred. I still have the little blue bowl and tiny silver spoon she used to pass the filé.



- 1 lb. collard or mustard greens (or both)
- 1 lb. spinach
- 1 lb. turnip greens (optional)
- 1 lb. green cabbage leaves, cut into strips
- 1 large bunch fresh watercress (optional)
- 1 large bunch flat-leaf parsley
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 tsp. ground thyme
- 1/4 tsp. ground allspice
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 lb. salt meat or ham, cut into small cubes
- 1 bunch green onions, trimmed and chopped
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 1 tsp. minced garlic

ONE STARCH OR THREE?

There might even be discussion as to what kind of rice—long-grain or short—to serve with gumbo.

Most of the time gumbo is served with rice. Rice is either spooned into the bowl and gumbo ladled over it or, at some tables, a small bowl of rice is served alongside so diners can add rice to personal taste.

Real Cajuns often plop (or eat on the side) a scoop of potato salad or baked sweet potato into the gumbo and rice. Sweet potatoes are served with gumbo particularly in the Opelousas area where yams are a primary farm crop. Ah, starches are wonderful, *n’est pas?*

And don’t forget that hot crusty French bread, yet another starch, is certainly a must with any gumbo.

But as my mama used to say “Your gumbo is good, but it’s certainly not *my* gumbo!” ●



Try some classic gumbo recipes from Marcelle’s repertoire: see below and page 11.



Mama’s Gumbo Z’Herbes

Wash and pat dry all the fresh greens. Put the greens in a large, deep pot and add enough water to cover. Add the cayenne, black pepper, bay leaves, thyme and allspice. Bring the mixture to a boil, pressing the greens down into the water. Cook until the greens are very tender and falling apart. Drain and reserve the cooking liquid: you should have three to four quarts. Set the liquid aside.

Chop the greens, either with a knife or kitchen shears, or you can pulse them (in batches) in a food processor, but don’t purée.

In a large heavy pot or Dutch oven, combine the oil and flour over medium heat. Stirring constantly, make a roux the color of peanut butter. Add the salt meat, green onions, onions and garlic. Cook, stirring, until the vegetables soften, about five minutes. Add the reserved cooking liquid and stir to blend. Add the chopped greens and simmer, partially covered, for about two hours. Adjust seasoning to taste. Yield: 10 to 12 servings

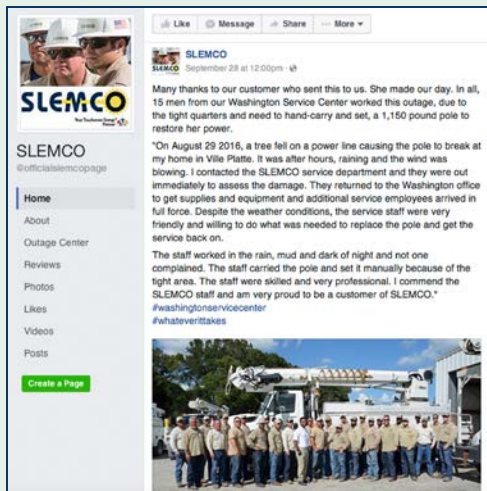
LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

Our Facebook page is always the quickest way to get SLEMCO news.

When we have outages due to bad weather, need to remind you it's time to fill out scholarship applications or merely pass along a compliment from one of our

members, we do it on Facebook. We often feature our workers doing what they do best, serving you, our members.

Like us on Facebook so you, too, can get up-to-the-minute information (Lucky Account Number 1308751500).



LUCKY NUMBER WINNERS

Three lucky SLEMCO members called in to claim their prize after finding their account numbers in the last issue of *SLEMCO Power*. They were **Wayne Nix** of Youngsville, **Dolly H. Usie** of Breaux Bridge and **Jason J. Timmons** of Arnaudville.

Seven others missed out on a \$10 credit. Those customers included **Darrel Leslie** of Broussard, **Harold Sorbet** of Maurice, **Herbert Pope Jr.** of



Opelousas, **Carol Mancil** of Washington, **August J. Rantz** of Lafayette, **Barrett Oge** of Duson and **Dawn E. Quirk** of Arnaudville.

Ten more numbers are hidden in this issue of *SLEMCO Power*. Check to see if yours is among them (Lucky Account Number 2326266000). If so, call Mrs. Gayle Babin at SLEMCO at 896-2504. She will verify if you're a winner and, if so, credit \$25 to your account.

Starting this issue, upcoming winners receive **\$25 CREDITS!**

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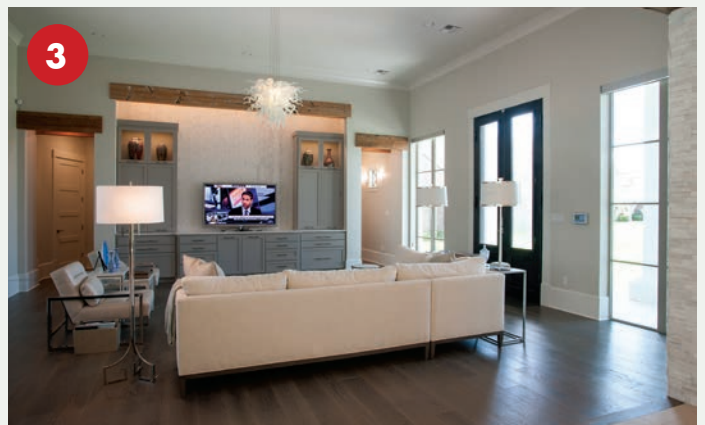
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1

SITE-DRIVEN DESIGN

This home was sited to take advantage of its beautiful setting. The floor-to-ceiling glass wall is actually retractable doors opening to the *lanai*—a glass veranda. It also opens to a deeply sloping, gloriously lush backyard and pool. Designing the house in a V-shape creates rooms with both great views and privacy.

2

FUNCTIONAL ELEGANCE

Antique ceiling beams and door lintels complement the white walls and floors. Glass tile backsplash, marble countertops and lustrous pendant lights whisper elegance. A spacious open floor plan allows natural flow of guests, with the island the central gathering spot.

3

CLEAN AND SERENE

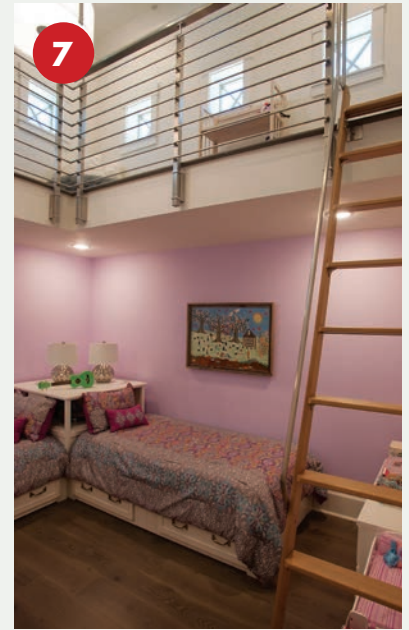
This transitional style easily combines traditional and contemporary furniture and finishes. Plenty of white offers a clean, serene atmosphere. Pale stone and tile, plus beautiful artwork and stunning light fixtures chosen by the homeowners, create an elegant but relaxed atmosphere.

4

RESORT LIVING

The pool—designed in keeping with the angles of the home—steps down to avoid obstructing the view. White quartzite echoes the home's interior, making the pool a natural extension of the home (Lucky Account Number 1053591807).

LIKE LIVING EVERY DAY IN YOUR OWN RESORT



5
BEAUTIFUL AND SMART
The home is energy efficient, with foam insulation, low-emissive glass and high-efficiency air conditioning units. While using passive solar design (keeping direct sun from coming into the house) it still permits open and airy views front to back.

6
PEACE AND PRIVACY
In a separate wing, the peaceful master bedroom suite has windows to the floor—and a stunning view thanks to the yard's 12-foot slope. Genesis roller shades diffuse the light while offering a clean, modern look.

7
PRETTY IN PINK
This loft bedroom is a young girl's dream. Clerestory windows give this princess tower an illuminated private area for reading or homework. These stainless steel railings were custom manufactured locally, along with the home's staircase and upstairs porch rails.

8
NEATLY STORED
Each family member has a personal section with hooks for coats and a drawer for shoes, thus no excuse for scattering personal items throughout the house. Book bags and games all are stored behind doors, both convenient and tidy.

Text: Anne Darrah | Photos: P.C. Piazza | Designer: Edson Davis Design



These holiday recipes are from **Come In To This House**, a cookbook featuring menus for all occasions. It is available for \$34, including shipping, by sending a check or money order payable to Come In To This House to P.O.

Box 61305, San Angelo, TX 76906.

Chocolate Peppermint Squares

FIRST LAYER:

- 4 squares unsweetened chocolate
- 1 cup butter
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup flour
- 2 cups chopped pecans

Melt chocolate and butter. Mix with remaining ingredients. Spread in jelly roll pan lined with foil. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Let cool.

SECOND LAYER:

- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 6 tbsp. butter
- 3 tbsp. cream
- 2 tsp. peppermint flavoring

Spread over cooled first layer.

THIRD LAYER:

- 3 squares unsweetened chocolate
- 3 tbsp. butter

Melt and pour evenly on top of second layer. Cool and cut into squares. Keep chilled. Can be frozen.

Hot Wassail Bowl

- 1 quart apple cider
- 1 pint cranberry juice
- 1 cup orange juice
- 3/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. whole allspice
- 1 tsp. whole cloves
- 3 cinnamon sticks

Combine all liquids in automatic

percolator. Place sugar and spices in percolator basket. Allow to run through cycle. Serve hot. Yield: 18 servings

Cheese Puffs

- 2 cups grated natural sharp cheese
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 1/4 cups flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 48 small stuffed olives

Blend cheese with butter. Stir in mixed flour, salt and paprika. Mix well. Wrap 1 tsp. dough around each olive. Arrange on flat pan. Freeze. Put in plastic bag. Store in freezer. When ready to use, remove from bag, arrange on cookie sheet. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes. Yield: 48 puffs

Gingerbread Boys

- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 cup molasses
- 2 tbsp. white vinegar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 5 cups flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground cloves

Cream shortening, sugar and salt. Stir

in molasses, vinegar and egg. Sift together and add the remaining ingredients. Chill mixture overnight. Divide dough into fourths. Roll one part of dough at a time on floured board to 1/8-inch thickness. Refrigerate remainder. Cut out gingerbread boys with sharp cookie cutter. Place on greased cookie sheets and bake at 375° about 6 minutes. Cool slightly and remove from sheets. Decorate as desired. Cookies will keep several months in airtight container and indefinitely in freezer.

Easy Decorating Icing

- 1 cup sifted powdered sugar
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla or other flavoring
- Water or cream

Blend powdered sugar, salt, vanilla and enough liquid (about 3/4 tablespoon water or 1 tablespoon cream) so icing holds its shape. Tint with food coloring if desired. Squeeze onto cookies from pastry tube or envelope or ziploc bag (cut off tiny corner, fill and use as pastry tube).

Note: If you like holiday decorating, try this on your favorite cookie recipe!

For extra copies of these recipes or to e-mail a copy to a friend, visit **SLEMCO Power** magazine online at www.slemco.com.



CLASSIC GUMBO RECIPES

from Marcelle Bienvenu

Seafood Gumbo

(SHRIMP, CRABMEAT AND OYSTERS)

- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups chopped yellow onions
- 1 cup chopped green bell peppers
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 3 garlic cloves (peeled)
- 5 cups shrimp stock or water (or more as needed)
- 2 bay leaves
- Pinch dried thyme leaves
- Salt, cayenne and hot sauce to taste
- 1 lb. medium-size shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 lb. lump crabmeat, picked over for shells and cartilage
- 2 dozen freshly shucked oysters with the liquor
- 2 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley leaves
- 3 tbsp. chopped green onions (green and white parts)
- Filé powder (optional)

Combine the oil and flour in a large, heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Stirring slowly and constantly, make a medium-brown roux the color of peanut butter. Add onions and bell peppers, and cook, stirring, until vegetables are wilted and lightly golden, about 5 minutes. Add the celery and garlic cloves. Cook, stirring, for 3 to 4 minutes.

Add the shrimp stock or water, bay leaves, thyme and salt. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, partially covered, for 45 minutes.

Add the shrimp and crabmeat and simmer until the shrimp turn pink, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the oysters and their liquor and simmer until the edges of the oysters curl, about 3 minutes. Remove the bay leaves. Garnish with the parsley and green onions. Serve the gumbo over rice and pass additional Tabasco at the table. The filé powder can be passed at the table to allow each guest to season according to taste. Yield: 8 to 10 servings

Note: If you can, buy fresh shrimp with shells and heads still intact. If the heads have been removed, not to worry. Peel the shrimp and use the shells to make shrimp

stock. Put the shells (and heads) in a small stockpot. Add 6 cups of water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, uncovered, for about 1 hour. Remove from the heat, strain through a fine sieve and set aside. If you don't have shrimp stock, water can be substituted.

Chicken and Andouille Gumbo

- 1 hen, about 4 to 5 pounds, cut into serving pieces
- Salt and cayenne
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 1/2 cups chopped yellow onions
- 1 cup chopped green bell peppers
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 10 cups chicken broth
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon ground thyme
- 1 lb. andouille sausage (or smoked sausage such as kielbasa), cut crosswise into 1/4-inch slices
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped fresh parsley leaves
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped green onions
- Filé powder (optional)



Season the hen generously with salt and cayenne. In a large, heavy Dutch oven or black cast-iron pot, combine the oil and flour over medium heat. Stirring slowly and constantly, make a medium-dark brown roux, the color of peanut butter (some cooks prefer it the color of chocolate). Add the onions, bell peppers and celery and cook, stirring often, until they are wilted and lightly golden, about 10 minutes.

Add the chicken broth and stir to mix. Add the chicken pieces, bay leaves and thyme. Cook, uncovered, for about 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally. Add the andouille and cook for at least another hour, or until the chicken is tender.

Remove bay leaves. Add the parsley and green onions. Ladle the gumbo into deep soup bowls over steamed rice. Pass the filé powder at the table to allow guests to add their own according to taste. Yield: 6 to 8 servings

Duck, Andouille and Oyster Gumbo

If and when the ducks hunters come in with their limit, make this gumbo, freeze and pull it out for a dinner during the holidays.

- 2 mallards, cleaned and cut into serving pieces
- 2 tsp. salt
- 3/4 tsp. cayenne
- 1/4 cup plus 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 cups chopped onions
- 2 cups chopped bell peppers
- 6 to 8 cups water or chicken stock
- 1 lb. andouille, cut crosswise into 1/2-inch slices
- 2 dozen oysters, shucked, with their liquor
- 3 tablespoon finely chopped fresh parsley leaves

Season the duck pieces with 1/2 teaspoon of the salt and 1/4 teaspoon of the cayenne. Heat 1/4 cup of the oil in a large, heavy pot (preferably black iron) over medium heat. Add the duck pieces and brown, stirring often. Remove the duck and set aside.

To the same pot add the remaining 1 cup vegetable oil and the flour. Stirring constantly for 20 to 25 minutes, make a dark brown roux. Add the onions and bell peppers and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes, or until they are soft.

Add the water or stock (the amount will depend on how thick or thin you like your gumbo). Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low. Add the duck pieces and the remaining 1 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon cayenne. Cook, uncovered, stirring occasionally, for about 1 1/2 hours.

Add the andouille and simmer for 30 minutes. Skim off any fat that rises to the surface. Add the oysters and their liquid and simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the edges of the oysters curl. Remove from heat. Add the parsley and serve immediately over steamed rice in gumbo bowls. Yield: about 8 servings

A Cajun & Creole Christmas

A GUIDE TO HOLIDAY EVENTS IN ACADIANA

For a complete listing of area Christmas activities, contact the Lafayette Convention & Visitors Commission at 337-232-3737, 800-345-1958, or visit www.lafayettetravel.com.

COUNTRY CHRISTMAS Nov. 20, Sugar Mill Pond Town Center, Youngsville, 1–3 p.m., 337-856-2323, SugarMillPond.com • Ring in the holiday season with free photos with Santa printed onsite, train rides, fun jumps, live music, arts & crafts, and roasted marshmallows.

DOWNTOWN ALIVE! Nov. 23, official lighting of the city tree, Parc Sans Souci, 201 E. Vermilion St., Lafayette, 5:30–8:30 p.m., Free, 337-291-5566, DowntownLafayette.org • Join the Pine Leaf Boys for a special Thanksgiving Eve holiday celebration where the Mayor-President Joel Robideaux will light the official city Christmas tree!

SAFARI OF LIGHTS Nov. 25–26, Dec. 2–4 & 9–30, Zoo of Acadiana, Broussard, 5–9 p.m., 3 years old and above \$6, 337-837-4325, Zoosiana.com • Stroll the glistening pathways at night as Christmas music fills the air. View still and animated lighted animal figurines, North Pole Express Train ride, hot cocoa or cappuccino at the Elves Eatery.

GRAND NOËL Nov. 26, Downtown Grand Coteau, 337-945-4314, CajunTravel.com • Starting at 3 p.m., there will be a blessing of the life-size nativity scene. Gift shops offering refreshments and unique gift items. Enjoy carriage rides, live music and photos with Santa. Food trucks.

BREAUX BRIDGE CHRISTMAS PARADE Nov. 27, Downtown Main Street, 2 p.m., Free, 337-332-8500 • Annual Christmas parade the Sunday after Thanksgiving kicks off the Holiday Season.

ABBEVILLE'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS STROLL Dec. 1, Downtown Abbeville, 5:30–8 p.m., Free, 337-898-4110, MostCajun.com • Enjoy the sights and sounds of Christmas as local merchants open their businesses for holiday shopping, festivities and more.

NOËL ACADIEN AU VILLAGE Dec. 1–23, Acadian Village, Lafayette, 5:30–9 p.m., \$10 at the gate, \$8 in advance, 337-981-2364, AcadianVillage.org • Half a million lights, plus displays, food, entertainment and holiday shopping.

CHRISTMAS AT THE ALEXANDRE MOUTON HOUSE Dec. 1–31, 1122 Lafayette St., Lafayette, Tues.–Sat., 10 a.m.–4 p.m., \$5 Adults, \$3 Seniors, \$2 Students, 337-234-2208 • The Alexandre Mouton House will be decorated for Christmas with period decorations.

CHRISTMAS IN CROWLEY Dec. 1–Jan. 2, Historic Downtown, Parkerson Ave., Crowley, 5:30 p.m.–midnight, 337-783-0824, ext. 301 • Over 200,000 dazzling animated holiday lights synchronized to music. Tune your radio to 93.3 FM and listen to the lights!

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT Dec. 2, Oil Center, Lafayette, 5–10 p.m., 337-232-1267, TheOilCenter.com • Celebrate as the switch is pulled to light the colossal Santa, sleigh and reindeer. Enjoy music, food and fun, and of course shopping! Santa will be on hand to take pictures. Behold the living Nativity and enjoy an outdoor snow yard.

ANNUAL LIGHTING OF THE VILLAGE Dec. 2, 828 E. Landry St., Opelousas, 5–8:30 p.m., Free, 800-424-5442, CityOfOpelousas.com • The annual lighting of the historic Le Vieux Village celebrates the season with children's activities, Christmas carols and a visit from Papa Noël!

CHRISTMAS AT COTEAU Dec. 2–3, Schools of the Sacred Heart, Grand Coteau, SSHcoteau.org • Enjoy Holiday Market, Coteau Café, the Friday gourmet luncheon, Cookies at Coteau, Eat Drink & Be Merry Saturday Luncheon. Hear the Sounds of Coteau, where young students perform Christmas music at 10:15 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. in the chapel.

CARENCRO COUNTRY CHRISTMAS Dec. 3, 5115 N. University, Carencro, 337-280-9570, 337-896-6686 • Arts & crafts, food, choirs and entertainment

ABBEVILLE'S CHRISTMAS PARADE Dec. 3, Downtown, Abbeville, Free, 337-652-0646, MostCajun.com • Enjoy floats decorated for Christmas, marching bands playing holiday favorites and an appearance by Santa Claus.

SACRÉ COEUR KAYCEE AUXILIARY ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EXTRAVAGANZA Dec. 3, Corner of South Ave. E. and Elm St., Crowley, 9 a.m.–3 p.m., \$1 per person, 12 years and younger Free, 337-783-9076 • Forty-six vendors from throughout area, new and interesting items, door prizes, concession. Shopping and dining under one roof.

SONIC DRIVE-IN CHRISTMAS PARADE Dec. 4, Downtown to the Oil Center, Lafayette, 1 p.m., Free, 337-988-5301 • One of the oldest Christmas activities in Acadiana. Parade features over 20 floats, high school marching bands and the official arrival of Santa Claus to Lafayette.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT AND CHRISTMAS PARADE Dec. 4, St. Martin de Tours Church Square, St. Martinville, 337-394-2235, StMartinville.org/Festivals.html

CHRISTMAS IN SCOTT Dec. 7, St. Aubin Park, Scott, 5 p.m., Farmer's Market opens for shopping, Celebration 6–8 p.m., Free, 337-269-5155, CityOfScott.org • Official lighting of the Christmas tree and a visit/photo with Santa Claus. This is the perfect event to put you in the Christmas spirit and enjoy great entertainment.

CHRISTMAS IN CROWLEY "A HOLIDAY AFFAIR" Dec. 7, Historic Downtown, Parkerson Ave., Crowley, 337-783-0824, ext. 301 • Enjoy Christmas carols, live nativity, children's activities, a light show and more!

I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS Dec. 7–11, Worship Center, First Baptist Church, 1100 Lee Ave., Lafayette, 12/7–9: Show starts 7 p.m.; 12/10–11: Show starts 3 p.m., Free tickets can be obtained by visiting the website, 337-593-3757, FBClaf.org • Musical presentation this December commemorating the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARADE Dec. 8, Opelousas, 800-424-5442, CityOfOpelousas.com • The annual holiday event features colorfully-lit Christmas-themed floats, marching bands, costumed characters and Santa Claus! The parade begins at 6 p.m. at St. Landry Catholic Church on Union and Main Street, rolls through downtown Opelousas and ends on Creswell Lane.

LIVING BETHLEHEM Dec. 9–11, Sugar Mill Pond Town Center, 120 Waterview Rd., Youngsville, 7–8 p.m., Free, 337-856-2323, SugarMillPond.com • The Living Bethlehem is a live nativity drama, outdoors at Sugar Mill Pond and features a cast of children, live animals and a children's choir.

THE NUTCRACKER Dec. 10 & 11, Heymann Performing Arts Center, Lafayette, for ticket info call 337-262-0444 or 337-291-5555, LafayetteBalletTheatre.org • Lafayette Ballet Theatre with principal guest artists from the Pacific Northwest Ballet and the entire dance community.

LESSONS & CAROLS Dec. 11, St. John Cathedral, 914 St. John Street, Lafayette, 7:30 p.m., Free, 337-232-1322, SaintJohnCathedral.org • Traditional candlelight service of readings and choral music for the Christmas season in the beautiful ambiance of St. John Cathedral.

NOËL DANS LA VILLE Dec. 11, St. Martinville, 337-394-2233 • Food, arts & crafts, musical entertainment

OLD-TIME CHRISTMAS AT VERMILIONVILLE Dec. 13–21, 300 Fisher Rd., Lafayette, 10 a.m.–4 p.m. daily (Family Day–Dec. 17), Regular admission \$10 adults, \$8 seniors, \$6 students and children 6 & under Free, group rates available, 337-233-4077, Vermilionville.org • Experience the holiday traditions of yesteryear. Meet Papa Noël, learn how to make wax candles, sing along to Christmas carols, watch popcorn stringing and even get a taste of apple cider!

MAGIC OF THE SEASON Dec. 15, Heymann Performing Arts Center, 1373 S. College Rd., Lafayette, 7 p.m., Admission, 337-232-4277, ext. 1, AcadianaSymphony.org • Acadiana Symphony Orchestra's annual Christmas concert celebrates with Zachary Richard.

NEW YEAR'S NOON CARNIVAL & COUNTDOWN Dec. 31, Children's Museum of Acadiana, Lafayette, 10 a.m.–2 p.m., 337-232-8500, ChildrensMuseumOfAcadiana.com • Ring in the New Year at the stroke of noon with fun for the whole family.