

SLEMCO

POWER

NOV/DEC 2019

THE DAY THE GULF FLOWED NORTH

40 YEARS AGO
AT JEFFERSON ISLAND

PAGE 4

The Official Publication of the Southwest
Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Cover photo of Jefferson Island, by P.C. Piazza.



TakeNote

SLEMCO HONORS EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

Some 38 SLEMCO employees are being recognized for a combined total of 871 years of service to the company and its members.

Eleven employees retired during 2019. They include Line Foreman Jerry Bellard of Lafayette with 42 years of service; Line Foreman Kevin Benoit of Branch with 31 years of service; District Superintendent Dallas Donovan of Abbeville with 38 years of service; Meter Reader Supervisor Gabriel Fortier III of Lafayette with 37 years of service; Serviceman Paul Blair Godfrey of Kaplan with 31 years of service; Serviceman Derrick Hebert of Breaux Bridge with 36 years of service; Assistant Right of Way Supervisor Lester Joseph of Scott with 34 years of service; Right of Way Tretrimmer Foreman Milton Killmer of Crowley with 39 years of service; Safety, Training & Loss Supervisor Gregory Lavergne of Church Point with 4 years of service; Staff Secretary Trudy Mayard of Church Point with 22 years of service; and District Superintendent Gaynal Savoy of Crowley with 37 years of service. *Lucky Number: 4501796900*

Celebrating 35 years each with the company are Senior Field Engineer James Alleman of Grand Anse and Engineering Aide II Donald St. Amand of Opelousas.

Marking 30 years each with SLEMCO are District Superintendent Leston "Paul" Cormier, Jr. of Morrow; System Support Specialist II Lawrence "Jim" Felps, Jr. of Lafayette and Field Utility Person Boyd Vincent of Lafayette.

Serving the SLEMCO membership for 25 years each are Warehouse Data Entry Clerk Tennielle Angelle of Breaux Bridge; SSM Senior Technician Everette Dionne of New Iberia; and District Superintendent Chad Dommert of Egan.

Celebrating 20 years each with SLEMCO are Mechanic Shop Foreman Brent Bidstrup of Opelousas; Inventory Control Supervisor Clifford Brossard,

Jr. of Lafayette; Engineering Information Systems Supervisor Gregory Fontenot of Lafayette; Serviceman Felix Guidry III of Duson; Customer Records Clerk Sheryl Hebert of Lafayette; Meter Reader Denise Lantier of Morse; Serviceman

James Moore of Kaplan; and Line Foreman Seth Sebastien of Opelousas.

Three employees met their 15-year anniversaries recently. They include Human Resources Supervisor Mandi Guidry of Duson; Customer Services Administrator Carlotta Lamartina of Duson; and Line Foreman Dustin Stelly of Cow Island. *Lucky Number: 4518260900*

Ten-year award recipients include Customer Service Representative Carissa Bodin of Youngsville; Remittance Clerk Michelle Duhon of Lafayette; Member Service Clerk Candace Landry of Carencro; Assistant Right of Way Supervisor David Mistrich of Church Point; Right of Way Tretrimmer Foreman Darius Moore of Opelousas; Customer Service Representative Marlene Parks of Sunset; Mechanic Jamison Ryder of Port Barre; and PBX Operator/Receptionist Tanya Waddell of Ville Platte. ☕



2020 SLEMCO HOLIDAYS

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

JANUARY 1 - New Year's Day

FEBRUARY 25 - Mardi Gras

APRIL 10 - Good Friday

MAY 25 - Memorial Day

JULY 3 - Observed Independence Day

SEPTEMBER 7 - Labor Day

NOVEMBER 26 & 27 - Thanksgiving

DECEMBER 24 - Christmas Eve

DECEMBER 25 - Christmas Day

JANUARY 1 - New Year's Day

Photo by Kimberly Ann Photography



SLEMCO EMPLOYS LICENSED ARBORISTS TO MANAGE TREE MAINTENANCE

Louisiana is filled with lush landscapes and moss-laden oaks that are romanticized in countless novels describing our steamy, heat-filled cities and towns. We love our trees—oak or otherwise. But, there's a not so dreamy side of them, too. *Lucky Number: 1207193001*

Those majestic trees that make Louisiana the perfect setting for authors and novelists are the very same majestic trees that mother nature loves to snap, sending them into power lines where they promptly get knotted in wire. And you know what that means—power outages.

As time slowly passes, trees grow and technology gets more sophisticated. There are more gadgets and gizmos that run on electric power than you can shake a stick at.

And, just like in those beautifully written novels, it gets hot quickly in Southwest Louisiana when there is no power to operate air conditioners.

Electric outages are often caused by trees as they fall into power lines. The only way to prevent that is by carefully and expertly trimming trees that hang over or grow into power lines. It's a delicate balance that often stirs heated debates about which is more important—trees or power.

We believe they are both important.

That's why we have highly trained, licensed arborists on staff. We walk the delicate tightrope of tree limbs and lines each and every day, trying hard to protect both.

Our team of 23 full-time treetrimmers includes Louisiana State Certified Utility Arborists, State Certified Herbicide Applicators and in December, two of our employees will be testing for their International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)

licenses. These licenses go above and beyond the Louisiana requirements.

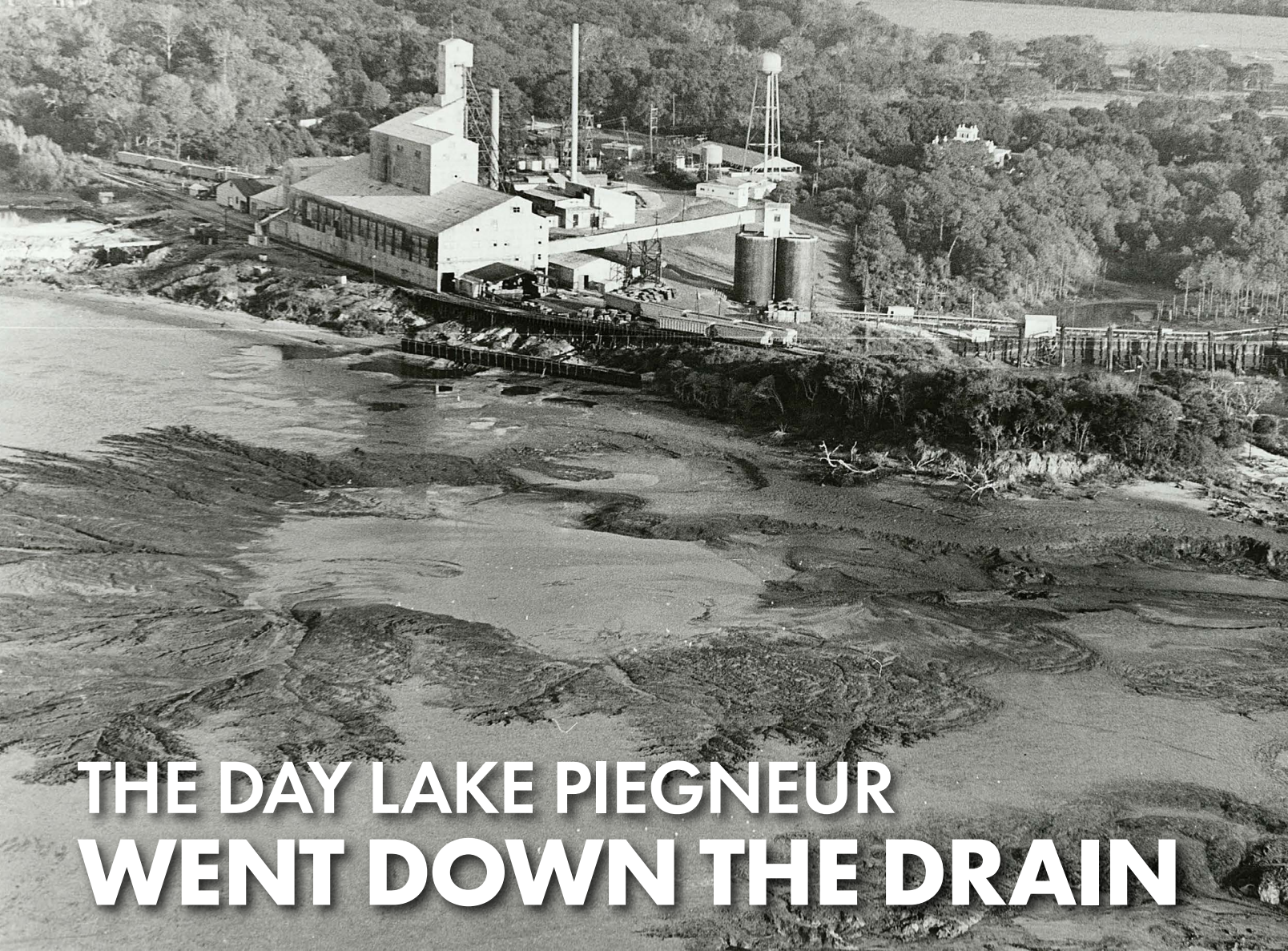
No one likes to see tree limbs cut in such a way that their beauty doesn't shine through. We get it. That's why we also educate our customers to be sure and plant new trees far away from power lines. Otherwise, as the limbs grow into the lines, they have to be trimmed to ensure that reliable power can get to the homes, businesses and life-saving equipment that need it.

Lucky Number: 4518191001

We are dedicated to making sure our treetrimmers are properly trained and licensed. That way, we can protect both your beautiful trees and your power supply. Ⓢ



Photo by Kimberly Ann Photography



THE DAY LAKE PIEGNEUR WENT DOWN THE DRAIN

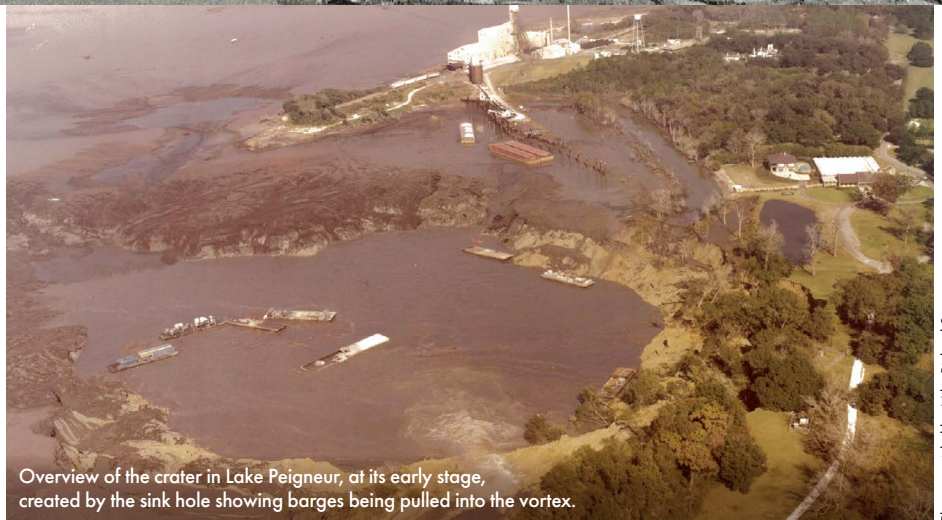
Sitting on the porch at Jefferson Island's Rip Van Winkle Gardens café, owner Mike Richard Sr. looks out at Lake Peigneur and back at November 20, 1980.

"I arrived at the office at 7:00 as usual. Shortly after, we felt some vibrations and noticed the windows and picture frames rattling every 15 seconds or so. At first, we thought it was some blasting in the salt mines underground, as would happen during shift breaks."

Richard saw water sloshing in fountains. Then the unthinkable: "It seemed like the ground was moving side to side."

Minutes later, the superintendent for the Diamond Crystal Salt Company's mine skidded up. A large whirlpool in Lake Peigneur had sucked in the Texaco oil rig. The underground mines were collapsing and an evacuation was needed. Now.

Since 1919, miners on Jefferson Island



Overview of the crater in Lake Peigneur, at its early stage, created by the sink hole showing barges being pulled into the vortex.

Photo provided by Mike Richard Sr.

had been excavating "some of the purest rock salt in the world" from 2,000 acres of giant underground domes under Lake Peigneur. That ended today.

Details of what happened vary from one witness to another, but the cause remains the same: The rig's 14-foot bit

hit salt a few hundred feet sooner than expected. The Louisiana State Geological Survey determined it was a miscalculation in the location of the well. The puncture of the nearly 40,000-foot salt dome's ceiling created a funnel, sucking water into the mine. *Lucky Number: 1043250807*

BY PATRICE DOUCET • PHOTOS BY P.C. PIAZZA



Mike Richard Sr.

“I walked on the front porch of the office and I saw water in a fountain sloshing a bit.” Then Richard noticed something he had never seen before: “It seemed like the ground was moving side to side,” he describes.

accelerated, creating massive landslides, pulling everything into its maw. It took 10 hours for the water to fill the mine, which was about two miles across.

The waters from the canal formed a 150-foot waterfall into the crater where the lake had once been, filling it with salty water. Water flowed backwards from the canal for almost two days before it finally refilled the crater, 600 feet below the land’s natural surface. When it finally filled, some of the sunken barges popped up like bobbers.

The 18,000 square-foot conservatory, with over 300 plants species from around the world, was totally destroyed as the land slid into the lake. In front of the conservatory, is the roof of the Bayless two-story home before it sank.

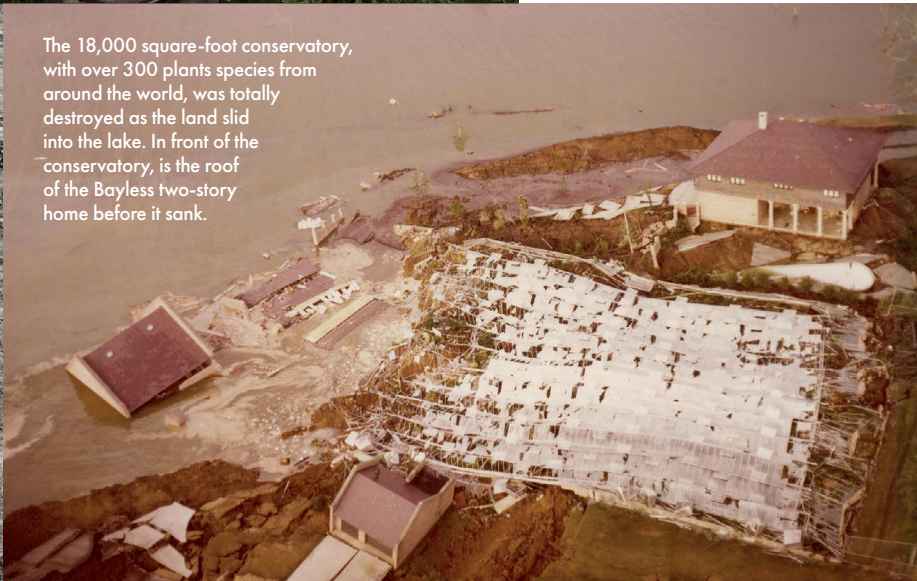


Photo provided by Mike Richard Sr.

Incredibly, the 55 employees in the mine safely evacuated just before the rig tilted. The only person medically treated was a bookkeeper who suffered from stress.

After the rig was abandoned, witnesses say, it took about 90 minutes for the 150-foot structure to sink into the shallow lake measuring no more than 10 feet in depth.

The Diamond Crystal Salt Company closed the mine that year, but the plant on the Island continued solution mining until 1983, purchasing salt from nearby Avery Island. *Lucky*

Number: 1443053502

Over the course of 37 years, Richard and his team hauled in material to rebuild the near mile of Jefferson Island shoreline along Lake Peigneur. The crater that measured a mile long and a half mile wide is 200 feet deep at its core.

It was witnessed first by Junius Gaddison, an electrician at the 1,300-foot level of the dome: popping sounds, loud, and empty barrels jostling in the incoming water, banging at the walls of the mine. Gaddison sounded the alarm.

Amid the chaos, Leonce Viator Jr. and his nephew were on the lake fishing for catfish in his 14-foot boat, oblivious to the drama below. Then Viator saw an “eye in the ground about 100 feet in diameter with barges glooped to it.” He gunned it, reaching shore just in time to lash boat to tree and jump to shore. The last thing he saw as he looked back was the boat and tree disappearing into the vortex.

Richard says he stared in amazement as 65 acres of woodlands including 150-foot pecan trees and centuries-old oaks shuddered, snapped and sank into the angry water. Boats, greenhouses and fully loaded flatbed trucks were pulled under. The massive, two-story home of Jefferson Island’s then-owner John “Jack” Bayless Sr. (newly constructed by Richard) slipped 30 feet into the water, its three-story chimney the

only evidence left of the showplace. An 18,000-square-foot conservatory behind the home and some 300 exotic plant species from around the world were also destroyed. Residents from 10 miles away in New Iberia reported hearing the sound of a nearly 400-foot geyser. *Lucky Number: 4518096700*

At its strongest, the sucking force of the whirlpool reversed the flow of the 12-mile-long Delcambre Canal, which runs to the Gulf of Mexico. An engineer with the Mine Safety & Health Administration said it was the only time in history that the Gulf of Mexico flowed north. The pull dragged 11 canal barges into the swirling vortex where they disappeared.

Engineers estimated that 2.5 billion gallons of water flowed through a 30-foot hole into the salt dome. The pressure surge was 10 times stronger than a fire hydrant, creating a muddy, raging whirlpool. As the hole into the mine widened, the vortex



Jefferson Davis home at Rip Van Winkle Gardens.

Today, Rip Van Winkle Gardens is home to some 400 varieties of plants and more than 260 species of birds. Almost 2,000 people visit the area’s attractions each month, many struck by the chimney still jutting from the water. ☺

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG TO PROTECT YOUR UTILITIES

Before you dig that new flower-bed or install the accompanying sprinkler system, call LA One Call to ensure that no water, sewer, phone, fiber optic, power lines or underground cables are just below the surface.

Not only could you be saving your life—as in the case of pressurized gas lines or underground electric lines—you will be following Louisiana law. Failure to comply with this law can result in civil penalties of up to \$25,000. *Lucky Number: 4502036000*

Since 1988, the law requires anyone who will be digging or excavating to contact LA One Call by dialing 811 or 1-800-272-3020 at least 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) before digging is scheduled to begin.

The program used to be called “DOTTIE” (Dial One Time To Inform Everyone). You may be more familiar with that name, but the service and the requirements are still the same. *Lucky Number: 3402192504*



Once you call in to report your plans, LA One Call will use a computerized mapping system and notify potential utilities or pipeline owners that you will be working near their services. Those companies will

come and mark their lines and equipment so you can avoid damage to their equipment or danger to yourself.

LA One Call recommends that you mark your proposed excavation area with white paint, flags or stakes so that utility representatives will know exactly where to search for potential lines or pipelines.

SLEMCO is a member of LA One Call. Since not all utilities are members, it is important to check the Louisiana Secretary of State’s website under Other Services for a list of utilities that have opted out of the program. To get those companies to mark their services in your area, you’ll need to contact them directly.

For more information, visit <http://www.laonecall.com> or <http://www.sos.louisiana.gov/tabid/669/Default.aspx>.

LUCKY NUMBER

WINNERS

There were two SLEMCO members who called in to claim their \$50 prize after reading the September/October issue of SLEMCO Power. **Irvin Patin** of St. Martinville and **Betty Devillier** of Arnaudville received a credit of \$50 to their SLEMCO account.

Those missing out on a \$50 SLEMCO credit include **Lisa Trahan** of Arnaudville, **Mary Anne Broussard** of Breaux Bridge, **Patrick Castille Jr.** of Carencro, **Allison**

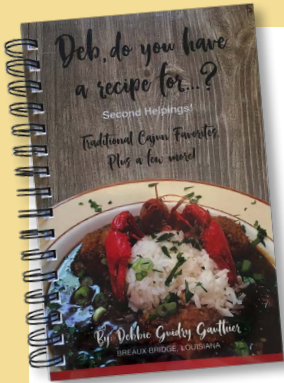


Baker of Rayne, **Ricky Leger** of Eunice, **Douglas Paul Riche** of Carencro, **Adam Marcel** of Youngsville and **Roy Savoie** of Lafayette. *Lucky Number: 4502349000*

We’ve hidden 10 more SLEMCO account numbers in this issue of the magazine. Look now to see if you find your SLEMCO account number. If you do, call Michelle Courvelle at 896-2504. Once she verifies you as a winner, she’ll credit \$50 to your SLEMCO account.

WINNERS NOW RECEIVE \$50 CREDITS!

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Single girls alert: This is a cookbook with traditional Cajun favorites that could win over the heart of any man. In “*Deb, do you have a recipe for...?*” Debbie Guidry Gauthier shares

all of her tried-and-true recipes, so you don’t have to rummage through your recipe drawer. There’s even a section of “Paleo-Cajunized” recipes. **To purchase a copy, email Debbie at DebGauthier62@yahoo.com.**

Blackeyes & Smoked Sausage

- 1lb. bag of Camellia dried blackeyes
- 5-6 cup of water (start with 5)
- 1 tbsp. vegetable or extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1-2 links of smoked sausage, sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped bell pepper
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 tbsp. parsley flakes
- 1/2 can RO-TEL Tomatoes (mild)
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 chicken bouillon cube or 1 tsp. chicken base
- Salt & cayenne pepper to taste

In a bowl, sort through beans then add 5 cups of water and set aside. In a pot, add oil and butter. When butter melts, add the sausage and brown slightly. Add onion, bell pepper, garlic and parsley flakes. Sauté until onions are transparent, then add the beans with water, RO-TEL tomatoes and bay leaves; stir well. Cover and simmer for about 1 hour, stirring occasionally. After an hour, add the chicken bouillon cube. Stir, cover and continue cooking until beans are tender. Season with salt and cayenne pepper to taste.

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

Corn Maque Choux

Freezing maque choux provides one of summer’s best side dishes in the winter months.

- 3-4 dozen corn cobs, shucked, desilked and rinsed
- 1/3 - 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1-2 sticks butter
- 3-4 large onions, chopped
- 2-3 bell peppers, red and green
- 2 tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 large can petite diced tomatoes, or fresh
- 1 can RO-TEL Tomatoes, mild or hot
- 1/2 cup water (enough to rinse out your pan that held corn)
- Salt and pepper to taste

With a sharp knife, cut corn across top half of the kernels, then pass the knife again on the bottom half. With the backside of the knife, swipe up and down the cob to release all the milk, repeat on remaining cobs. Combine all ingredients in a large dutch oven pot and cook on med-high heat for 2-4 hours. Adjust seasonings as needed. Allow to cool, then bag in Ziploc bags and freeze.

Shrimp & Crab Okra Gumbo

The reconstituted dried shrimp gives the gumbo extra special flavor.

- 3 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 cup bell pepper, chopped
- 1/3 cup jar roux
- 4-5 cups water or chicken stock, depending on desired thickness
- 1/4 cup dried shrimp (soaked in little warm water)
- 1-quart smothered okra
- 2-3 lbs. of peeled deveined shrimp
- 1 lb. crab meat (claw or lump)
- Salt and cayenne pepper to taste

Sauté onion and bell peppers in oil. Add roux, water/stock and dried shrimp (or just the juice, if you prefer). Boil until roux is dissolved (about 1 1/2 hours).

Add okra and let simmer for an hour, then add seafood and cook until seafood is cooked through. You may add a little more water depending on how thick you like your gumbo. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with rice.

Paleo Roux

You’ll be pleasantly surprised by this substitute for the standard flour-based roux.

- 1 cup avocado oil
- 1/2 cup almond flour (or coconut flour, if nut allergies are a concern)
- 1/2 cup tapioca flour
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1/2 green bell pepper, chopped

Over medium heat, whisk together oil and flours. Stir frequently until the roux turns a nice deep brown color (about 15 minutes). Add vegetables and continue stirring until evenly mixed.

The Cake

The making of this “cake” is as simple as the name. But the flavor bumps it up several notches.

- 1 box Duncan Hines yellow cake mix
- 1 tbsp. water
- 1 egg
- 1 stick butter, melted
- 8-oz. pkg. Philadelphia cream cheese, softened
- 3 eggs
- 1 box powdered sugar
- 3/4 cup pecans, chopped

Mix and lightly press first 4 ingredients into the bottom of a 9 x 13" pan (spraying a little Pam into the palms of your hands prevents sticking.)

Mix the next 4 ingredients well and pour over the cake mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Let cool and cut into squares with a plastic knife.

Note: You can use a German chocolate or red velvet cake mix instead. You can also add coconut and/or mini chocolate chips to the cream cheese mixture.

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.

LAFAYETTE PARISH

COUNTRY CHRISTMAS NOV 24, Sugar Mill Pond Town Center, Youngsville, Free, 1-3pm.

Ring in the holiday season with free photos with Santa printed onsite, train rides, fun jumps, live music, arts and crafts and of course a traditional favorite – roasted marshmallows. 337-856-2323, SugarMillPond.com

NÔEL ACADIEN AU VILLAGE NOV 30 - DEC 23, Acadian Village, Lafayette, 5:30-9pm, \$10 at gate, \$8 in advance. Festival fundraiser with half a million lights, displays, food, entertainment and holiday shopping. 337-981-2364, AcadianVillage.org

CHRISTMAS IN SCOTT DEC 1, City Hall, Scott, 125 Lions Club St. 3-6pm, Free. Farmer's Market opens for shopping. Come and join us for the official lighting of our Christmas tree and a visit/photo op with Santa Clause. The perfect event to put you in the Christmas Spirit. 337-269-5155, CityOfScott.org

CHRISTMAS AT THE ALEXANDRE MOUTON HOUSE DEC 1-31, 1122 Lafayette St., Lafayette, Tues-Sat, 10am-4pm. \$5 Adults, \$3 Seniors, \$2 Students. The Alexandre Mouton House will be decorated for Christmas with period decorations. 337-234-2208, LafayetteMuseum.com

BROUSSARD LIGHTING OF THE TREE DEC 4, Broussard City Hall, Broussard. 5:30-8pm. Come out and celebrate the kickoff of the Christmas season in Broussard at our annual "Lighting of the Tree" celebration! 337-837-6681

CARENCRO OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS AT CITY HALL DEC 6, 210 E Saint Peter St., Carencro, 6-8pm. Lighting of the Christmas tree, caroling, cookies and hot chocolate. 337-896-6686, Carencro.org

CHRISTMAS WITH THE BOSS DEC 6, Parc Sans Souci, 201 E Vermillion St., Lafayette, 6-9pm, Free. Lighting of the Christmas tree featuring Keith Frank. 337-291-5566, DowntownLafayette.org

DECK THE HALLS, A CHRISTMAS HOME TOUR DEC 8, 6pm. See the most beautiful homes across Acadiana decked to the nines for the holidays. Savor the sights and sounds of the Christmas season as you make your way from home to home. Music at each home by Youth Orchestra members from the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra. 337-232-4277, AcadianaSymphony.org

SONIC DRIVE-IN CHRISTMAS PARADE DEC 8, Downtown to the Oil Center, Lafayette, 1pm, Free. One of the oldest Christmas activities in Acadiana. Photos at Parc International following parade. 337-261-5566, DowntownLafayette.org

OLD-TIME CHRISTMAS AT VERMILIONVILLE DEC 9-21, 300 Fisher Rd., Lafayette, 10am-4pm daily. (Family Day-DEC 14) Regular admission \$10 adults, \$8 seniors, \$6 students and children 6 and under enter free. Group rates available. Experience the simple warmth and beauty of Christmas past as our historic village brings to life the holiday traditions of yesteryear. 337-233-4077, Vermilionville.org

CHRISTMAS AT COURET DEC 14, Couret Farms, Bourdette Drive at Abilene Lane, Lafayette, 6-9pm., Free. Enjoy live entertainment, Christmas shopping from local pop-up shops, kids activities, pictures with Santa and more. Lawn chairs and blankets are allowed for seating. [Facebook.com/CouretFarms](https://www.facebook.com/CouretFarms).

THE NUTCRACKER DEC 14-15 - Heymann Performing Arts Center, 1373 S College Rd., Lafayette. 337-262-0444 or 337-291-5555, LafayetteBalletTheatre.org

LESSONS & CAROLS DEC 15 - St. John Cathedral, 914 Saint John St., Lafayette, 3 pm, Free. Traditional candlelight service of readings and choral music for the Christmas season in the beautiful ambiance of St. John Cathedral. 337-232-1322, SaintJohnCathedral.org

AN ACADIANA CHRISTMAS NIGHT DEC 19, Heymann Performing Arts Center, 1373 S College Rd., Lafayette, 7pm. A Christmas celebration for the whole family! ASO will take the magic of Christmas to another level. Steve Riley & the Mamou Playboys give Christmas an Acadiana twist when ASYO and the youth chorus join the stage. 337-232-4277 ext 1, AcadianaSymphony.org

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

ST. LANDRY PARISH

GRAND NÔËL NOV 24, Downtown Grand Coteau, 4-8pm. Christmas shopping in historical Grand Coteau. Blessing of the life-size nativity scene. Carriage rides, live music, food and photos with Santa. 337-945-4314, CajunTravel.com

ANNUAL LIGHTING OF THE VILLAGE DEC 7, 828 E. Landry St., Opelousas. 5-8:30pm, Free. Children's activities, Christmas carols and a visit from Papa Noël! 800-424-5442, CityOfOpelousas.com

ST. MARTIN PARISH

BREAUX BRIDGE OFFICIAL LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE. FARMERS MERCHANTS BANK & TRUST NOV 23, 100 S Main St, Breaux Bridge, 4pm. Official lighting of the Christmas Tree. Performances by Braz Huval School of Music, Yvette Landry and Friends and local dance teams. BreauxBridgeLA.net

BREAUX BRIDGE CHRISTMAS PARADE NOV 25, Downtown Main St, 2pm. Floats, live entertainment and caroling. Starts at the Armory Hall on Bridge Street, turning on Rees Street and ending on Refinery Road. Bayou Teche Visitors Center 337-332-8500

ACADIA PARISH

CHRISTMAS IN CROWLEY DEC 5, Historic Downtown, Parkerson Ave., Crowley. 6-8pm. Over 200,000 animated holiday lights synchronized to music. Tune your radio to 93.3 FM and listen to the lights! 337-783-0824 ext. 301, <https://members.crowleychamber.com/events/details/christmas-in-crowley-aholiday-affair-3231>

CROWLEY CHRISTMAS PARADE DEC 4, Historic Downtown, Parkerson Ave., Crowley, 6pm 337-783-0824

VERMILION PARISH

ABBEVILLE'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS STROLL DEC 6, Downtown Abbeville, 5:30-8pm. Free. Holiday shopping, festivities and more. 337-898-4110, MostCajun.com