

By Chef Jake Hizny



THROW A Mardi Gras PARTY

MARDI GRAS, WHICH MEANS "FAT TUESDAY" IN FRENCH, is a festival of indulgence before the Lenten season starts. Originating in New Orleans, Mardi Gras is known for its signature colors which are purple, green, and gold – colors chosen by the King of Carnival in 1872.

We Know the History, Let's Plan The Party!

THE DATE: March 8, 2011

PLACE: Your Restaurant

YOUR GOAL: Changing your restaurant into the "Big Easy" and giving your customers the ultimate Mardi Gras Experience!

MASK AND MAMBO CONTEST

Host a free event for your customers, and a way for them to have fun and win prizes. Encourage them to dress up in masquerade for Mardi Gras. Contestants will be judged and prizes will be awarded to the winners in the following categories: Individual, Group, Family and Kids. Prizes can be cash, gift certificates, free appetizers, free entrée, or you can do little trophies and make this a yearly event.

"THROW" A GREAT PARTY

As the owner of your restaurant you automatically become your events "Krewes" (organizer in the New Orleans Mardi Gras tradition) and are responsible for organizing the "throws" to your customers. The most common throws are strings of plastic colorful beads, doubloons (aluminum or wooden dollar sized coins), decorated plastic cups and small inexpensive toys. You can have these made with your restaurant name and logo so these fun pieces will continue marketing your restaurant all year long.

THE MUSIC: LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL!

You can hire a band, a DJ, or buy your own CDs, but you must have Mardi Gras music to set the mood. Scholar and clarinetist Michael White has been quoted saying that the Mardi Gras music makes people get out and dance and that's what the holiday's spirit is all about.

THE DRINKS

The most important part of any Mardi Gras party has to be the drinks. *There are seven drinks that "scream" Mardi Gras: Sazerac, Mint Juleps, Ramos Gin Fizz, Pimms Cup, Mardi Gras Mojito, The Bloody Mary and the most recognizable is the Hurricane.* The Hurricane is, essentially, a rum punch. Three types of rum and three types of juice make this a crazy punch that you barely know has alcohol in it. It can be made individually, or it can be made in punch bowls for large quantity consumption.



THE FOOD

You can do upscale, casual foods or bar-pub. In all cases you need to be thinking about Cajun and Creole foods. What's the difference? The two cuisines are confusingly intertwined and defy definition. The best way I can explain it is that Cajun food is country cooking, whereas Creole food is more elegant and sophisticated. *Here are a few appetizer suggestions:*

► Fresh Shucked Oysters On a Half Shell

Oysters served ice cold and accompanied by a Cajun cocktail sauce

► Cajun Fried Calamari

Fresh calamari seasoned with cayenne and fresh herbs, then lightly battered and fried

► Roasted Andouille Sausage

Hot smoked pork sausage roasted over an open fire, served with zesty Creole mustard

► Al. E. Gator Pops!

Battered alligator tail meat and yes, it's available through Maines! Other menu options you could include: Po-Boy Sandwiches, Gumbo, Classic Crawfish Etouffee, Jammin' Jambalaya, Blackend Catfish, Shrimp Creole, Parihuella (seafood soup), Cajun Ceviche to mention a few. And with any good meal you need to think about dessert...

► The King Cake

No Mardi Gras celebration is complete without a King Cake, also known as Twelfth Night Cake. This cake is actually sweetened yeast bread, usually baked in a ring shape. The cake is frosted with gold, green and purple icing. The maker of the King Cake hides a token in the cake. The tokens used are a dried red bean or a figurine of a baby, representing the Christ child. When the cake is cut and shared, the finder of the hidden treasure is said to enjoy good luck the coming year. Well I hope I gave you enough information to motivate you to bring New Orleans to your restaurant.

PS: I'm going to tell you a little secret.

Mardi Gras will not end on March 8th this year. The party will continue at the Maines annual food show in May. This year's theme is "Mardi Gras." And as they say in New Orleans "laissez le bon temps rouler," or "let the good times roll!" See you then!

RECIPE FOR "THE HURRICANE"

INGREDIENTS:

1 oz. Bacardi 151 Proof Rum
1 oz. White rum
1 oz. Dark rum
½ oz. Grenadine
3 oz. Orange juice
3 oz. Pineapple juice
Crushed Ice

DIRECTIONS:

Place ingredients in shaker, shake and serve in hurricane glass filled with crushed ice, and garnish with orange slice and cherry.



Langostino Fettuccine

YIELDS: 1 Serving



120109	4 oz. Langostinos, thawed and drained
000110	1 oz. Butter
097210	1 ea. Garlic clove, finely minced
156034	3 oz. Beurre blanc sauce
345631	t.t. Black pepper, café
097240	1 tsp. Fresh basil, chiffonade
097240	1 ea. Fresh basil, leave for garnish
096185	1 ea. Lemon zest, for garnish
330038	3 oz. Fettuccine noodles (dry weight)
340620	1 tbsp. Salt

DIRECTIONS

1. In a pot of boiling water add salt and cook pasta according to manufacturer's recommendations. Then drain and reserve for service.
2. In a large saute pan melt butter over medium heat. Add garlic and saute until it becomes aromatic. Then add the langostinos, black pepper, and Buerre blanc sauce. Continue cooking until heated through.
3. To plate: Place pasta in serving bowl and top with langostino mixture. Garnish with chiffonade basil, lemon zest and basil leaves.