

# Cracklin' yarn draws a blanc

Music, sausage and cold beer. Does it get any better, asks **Phil Tripp**

IT'S 8am on an already steamy Saturday morning, about 200km west of New Orleans on a dusty two-lane blacktop, and I'm ready for a Louisiana backroad feed.

I stop at Eunice Superette and Slaughterhouse, a combination abattoir and convenience store, and order the seven-course Cajun takeaway breakfast: a six-pack of Abita beer, and a pound of hot, white boudin wrapped up in butchers' paper.

Boudin (pronounced Boo-DAN) is a variety of fat, soft, steamed sausages filled with pork, liver, rice, spice, onions and capsicum (peppers).

This is a dish so regional that you'll rarely find it beyond a 200sq km area of the Cajun heartland.

I'm following the culinary tourism trail through small towns between Baton Rouge and Lake Charles in the middle of Louisiana — between the bayous of the south and the Evangeline prairies of the north.

As I'm about to rip the wrapping off the boudin and eat it on the bonnet of my Alamo rental car, a swarthy, lanky gent in bib overalls invites me to his pickup truck.

"Hey, where y'at?" he draws in a French patois, the standard greeting in these parts. "Why doncha park your butt on the tailgate

on my pick'em up and we'll squeeze some sausage!" In return for the favour of a seat (of sorts), I offer Frenchy a cold beer and we proceed to chow down on our respective "go-bags" of a delicacy that is more often than not sucked down while driving rather than cut up on a plate.

Boudin, in a steaming pot, takes pride of place in convenience store rice cookers, petrol station food warmers, roadside butcher shops and abattoirs — but you'll rarely find it on the menu in restaurants.

Frenchy and I use our fingers for the feast. We don't eat the casings, scraping the contents of the boudin out with our teeth. He has a red boudin which has more blood than liver... and it's hellishly spiced.

I prefer my blanc, grey-white variety of the kind you'll find on the steam in the back lanes of the Cajun prairies.

At boudinlink.com stores, butchers and petrol stops are rated, reviewed and pictured, with maps to help boudin pilgrims follow their ground meat holy trail.

The website's Bob Carriker has spent a few decades cruising Louisiana, documenting in taste tests and photos the "mom'n'pop" stores that dispense sausages in Styrofoam containers and



**Breakfast of champions:** Bayou Boudin & Cracklin' (above), and (right) a Cajun band in the groove  
**Pictures:** Phil Tripp

butchers who cook over 1000kg every Saturday for long lines of customers.

Louisiana's five boudin trail icons are within a 50km radius of Lafayette, the host each October of the weiner Olympics — or the Boudin Cookoff, as it's also known. There are other Cajun delights to be discovered on your

travels, including sliced jellied pig's foot cold cuts (spicy and sour, and known as hog's head cheese); delightfully red jars of pickled pigs lips; highly seasoned pork skins deep fried in lard until crisp and brown (cracklins), and, of course, smoked meat of all kinds, from venison to possum.

Back at Frenchy's truck, meanwhile, we're waiting for the weekly Cajun music jam at Savoy Music Centre, a Eunice shop run by musos Marc and Ann Savoy. In this cramped space Marc handcrafts old-style button accordions from antique wood and castaway parts, and modern squeeze-boxes from Bakelite and steel.

Son Joel is a demon fiddler and mum Ann sings sweet, swampy vocals, and has done a duet with Linda Ronstadt.

They tour globally but this bit of Acadian Louisiana is home base. By 9am, 30 cars and pickups wait to play or watch. A wall sign reads: "Admission is free but a small box of boudin or cracklins would make you the most popular guy in the house for 2-3 minutes."

## need to know



Getting there: **One option is to fly to Los Angeles and connect to the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. Another is to fly to LA and connect to Lafayette Regional Airport via either Dallas, Memphis, Houston or Atlanta.** Staying there: **For a range of hotels, guest houses, B&Bs and lodges see [louisianatravel.com](http://louisianatravel.com) and follow the link to "places to stay".**

Seeing there: **Live music, swamps and marshlands, historic sites, prairies, woodlands, galleries, Cajun and Creole cooking.** Eating there: **[boudinlink.com](http://boudinlink.com)** More: **[neworleansonline.com](http://neworleansonline.com)**

**Your link to a tasty sausage**

- **Sonnier's Sausage And Boudin** is a small meat shop off the main drag at Lake Charles that serves boudin three ways: regular, smoked and spicy.
- **Babineaux's Slaughter House** in Breau Bridge processes local cattle and deer as well as being masters of boudin crafting.
- Also in Breau Bridge is **Bayou Boudin & Cracklin'**, which is a 140-year-old Cajun cottage (with rental cabins on the bayou and a swamp tour) serving homemade root beer and prize-winning hog's head cheese.
- **Charlie's Meat Market** in Mamou serves pre-sliced boudin.
- Just off the I-10 highway in Sulphur is a large, nondescript building of boudin porkfection called **The Sausage Link**.

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