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# Breakfast on the bayous

Spicy boudin sausage is unique to Cajun country, writes **Phil Tripp**

**I**T'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 beer, and a pound of hot white boudin wrapped in paper.

Boudin (pronounced Boo-DAN) is a variety of fat, soft, steamed sausages filled with pork, liver, rice, spice, onions and capsicum (peppers). It's 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 Louisiana, between the bayous of the south and the Evangeline prairies of the north.

As I'm about to rip the wrapper off the boudin and eat it on the bonnet of my Alamo car rental, a lanky and swarthy gent in bib overalls summons 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 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 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 that has more blood than liver, and it's hellishly spiced. I prefer mine, which is of the grey-white variety.

At [www.boudinlink.com](http://www.boudinlink.com) stores, butchers and petrol stops are rated, reviewed and pictured, with maps to help boudin pilgrims.

The website's Bob Carriker has spent decades cruising the small towns and cities of Louisiana, documenting in taste tests and photos the mom 'n' pop stores that dispense sausages in

**THE DEAL**

**Getting there:** Fly to Los Angeles and connect to 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 [www.louisianatravel.com](http://www.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:** [www.boudinlink.com](http://www.boudinlink.com)

**MORE** [www.neworleansonline.com](http://www.neworleansonline.com)

## TOP BOUDIN JOINTS

**1** Sonnier's Sausage and Boudin is a small meat shop off the main drag of Lake Charles which serves boudin three ways: regular, smoked and spicy.

**2** Babineaux's Slaughter House in Breaux Bridge processes local cattle and deer as well as being masters of boudin crafting.

**3** Also in Breaux Bridge is Bayou Boudin and 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.

**4** Charlie's Meat Market in Mamou, serving pre-sliced boudin.

**5** Just off the I-10 highway in Sulphur is a large nondescript building of boudin porkfection called The Sausage Link.



**IN GOOD TASTE** A Louisiana boudin maker who's been in business for 60 years, top, and, Bayou Boudin and Cracklin in Breaux Bridge, above.

Styrofoam containers and butchers who cook up more than 1000kg every Saturday.

Louisiana's five boudin trail icons are within a 50km radius of Lafayette, itself host each October to the Weiner Olympics, known as the Boudin Cookoff.

Although boudin is the centrepiece, there are plenty of 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); 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, we are waiting for the weekly Cajun music jam to begin at Savoy Music Center, a shop in Eunice run by musicians Marc and Ann Savoy.

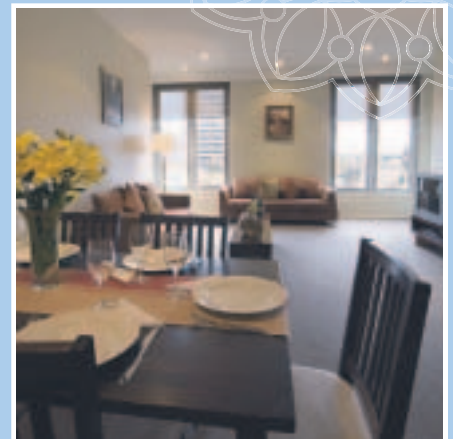
By 9am, at least 30 cars and pickup trucks line the street waiting to play or watch. A sign on the wall reads: "Admission is free but a small box of boudin or cracklins would make you the most popular guy in the house for 2-3 minutes."

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