Behind the Bowl: Getting to the Roux(t) of National Gumbo Day

Raceland, Louisiana (*October 8, 2026*) – There's no one-size-fits-all recipe for gumbo, and that's exactly how the chefs in Louisiana's Cajun Bayou like it. In advance of **National Gumbo Day**, celebrated on October 12 each year, we want to dig into the story of one of Louisiana's most beloved dishes and discover the techniques and local flavors that make each pot a little different.

At its heart, gumbo is a hearty Louisiana stew traditionally built around a flavorful roux; the "holy trinity" of onion, celery and bell pepper; and a combination of meats, seafoods and seasonings. But ask a handful of cooks exactly what makes a great gumbo, and you'll get several different answers … along with a spirited debate about what actually belongs in a gumbo pot. (All that debate stems back to how each chef's mawmaw and great-grand mawmaw made it in their own kitchens decades ago.)

That variety is part of gumbo's big story. The dish reflects Louisiana's rich blend of cultural influences, including West African, Spanish and Native American food traditions, all of which came together over generations to create something distinctly Louisianan. Here in Louisiana's Cajun Bayou, where food traditions are deeply connected to the region's waterways and communities, gumbo has always been more than just a meal. It's a way of bringing people together and putting a cook's individual stamp on a time-honored tradition.

So, what happens when local chefs get their hands on a gumbo spoon? Around here in Lafourche Parish, the answer is … it depends.



At Lafourche Landing, Chef Alicia Cheramie starts with a traditional roux when she's making her chicken and smoked sausage gumbo. From there, onions and celery cook down into the roux, building another layer of flavor. However, Alicia says the real secret is in her blend of herbs (which, of course, we can't tell you because we're not in the business of giving away trade secrets). And when the weather turns cooler and local oysters are plump and delicious, the restaurant changes things up with a seasonal seafood gumbo. Alicia says the key to getting that version just right is starting with fresh shrimp stock. When it comes to gumbo, the flavor starts long before the bowl ever hits the table.

At Grady V's, Chef Brent Daigle takes a different approach to the base, using a light-brown "peanut butter" roux. The result is a nutty flavor without the richness that accompanies a darker roux, creating what Daigle describes as a more entrée-style gumbo than one that's served as an appetizer.

For Gina Griffin of Griffin's Restaurant, the individuality of gumbo starts with the person stirring the pot. Her gumbo began with a family recipe, but she's added her own influences over the years. She favors a soupy gumbo with a deeply flavored stock, plenty of meat and enough herbs that you can see them floating throughout the broth. Where it really gets unique is with Gina's okra gumbo, which skips the roux altogether. She smothers the okra just enough to develop flavor while keeping much of it whole, then adds shrimp, smoked sausage, canned tomatoes and prepared stock. Tomatoes may be a no-no in most Cajun gumbo traditions, but that doesn't stop Gina.

Though their techniques and ingredients may differ, these chefs share a common philosophy: gumbo is meant to be made with love, then enjoyed and shared. There may be plenty of opinions about the “right” way to make it, but the one thing people around here can agree on is that there’s always room for another pot of gumbo, with another story behind it.

This National Gumbo Day, come hungry and taste what Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou offers … one bowl at a time. There’s no better way to get to the heart of Louisiana’s food culture than with a spoon in your hand!

For more information about where to find your perfect bowl of gumbo in Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou, visit https://www.lacajunbayou.com/places-to-dine.

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