

Louisiana 'lobsters' liven up wintertime tables, tastebuds

By Roxanne Powers

There are only 60 miles between the East Texas town I grew up in and the Louisiana border. Yet, the differences, especially as pertains to cuisine, were so vast that the two states could have been on separate planets.

I never even tasted a shrimp until my twelfth year of life, so you can imagine the shock to my system when I attended my first crayfish boil shortly after graduating from high school and moving to South Louisiana.

I entered my hosts' kitchen and saw people not sitting but standing around a table covered with many layers of newspapers which were in turn covered with high piles of bright red crayfish and yellow ears of corn. From the moment someone thrust a crayfish into my hands and demanded that I watch them peel and eat it so I could learn this fine art, every one of my senses was assaulted: the dual scent of cooked crayfish and peppery seasonings, the sound of cracking shells and people slurping or "sucking" the heads (not an entirely accurate description, but certainly the only accepted one); the burning feel of the spices on my lips and fingers, and, of course, the remarkable sight of watching people break open and eat the bug-looking things!

Well, if you suspect that shock would be your family's reaction to crayfish, just tell them that they are a new species of miniature lobster



or something. It's not really a lie; just ask any parent of any age and they will tell you about this thing called child psychology.

We're approaching the peak of crayfish season when supplies are fresh and abundant, and prices are low, and since you're probably bored by now with your usual winter fare, why not give them a try? The following recipe is my very own low-fat version of crayfish stew (only about 12 grams per serving) and only takes about 15 minutes of preparation time. I'm also including a salad to accompany the stew.

If neither your grocer nor favorite chef can tell you where to find peeled, one-pound bags of crayfish tails, you can call 800-356-2905 for Tony's Seafood in Baton Rouge, La., and Steve Bueche (pronounced Bush) guarantees they will get

them to you.

Crayfish Stew

- 1 lb. peeled tails
- 5 tsp. butter
- 4 tsp. flour
- 1-1/2 tsp. Tony Chachere seasoning
- 2 tsp. dry white wine
- 1 medium onion
- 1/2 medium bell pepper
- 1 tsp. parsley
- 2 cups water

In a small skillet, add chopped onions to 1 tsp. of melted butter. Let simmer slowly about 3-5 minutes before adding chopped bell pepper and Tony Chachere or other powdered Louisiana seasoning. Meanwhile, in separate large skillet add remaining 4 tsp. butter until melted. To this, add 4 tsp. flour. Stir constantly on medium high heat with slotted spoon until flour mixture (roux) turns caramel or golden brown. Remove from heat and add the wine. Shake skillet in

back and forth motion several times to distribute wine. Return to heat and slowly add 1 cup of the water while stirring. When flour mixture and water are thoroughly mixed, add crayfish tails, onion mixture and rest of water. Stir well and cover. Let simmer on low for 10 minutes, uncover and let simmer an additional 10 minutes stirring occasionally.

While tails are simmering and rice is cooking, prepare garlic bread. Serve over a steaming bed of rice, with bread and confetti salad for a well-balanced, low-fat, low-calorie meal. (Without the avocado, the confetti salad contains only 3 grams of fat per serving.)

Confetti Salad (serves 5)

- 2 medium cucumbers
- 1 large tomato (or 3 Romas)
- 1 small red or Vidalia onion
- 3 tsp. Miracle Whip Light
- 1/2 avocado (optional)

Cut all vegetables (except avocado, wait until just before serving meal before adding it) in chunks, sprinkle with 1/4 tsp. salt and 1/4 tsp. pepper. Stir and set aside for 5-10 minutes until salt has time to release juices in vegetables. Stir in 3 tablespoons Miracle Whip

Light. Refrigerate until serving time, then, if desired, add avocado chunks and stir again. (While the whole avocado is loaded with nutrients, it has a whopping 37 grams of fat, so you'll want to keep this in mind and adjust or delete accordingly.)

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