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the
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issue

the Good Life

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MAY 2014

TRAVELOGUE

JOHN T. EDGE WILL ALWAYS FIND HIS WAY BACK

Before my first trip to Cajun country, down in Southeastern Louisiana, I read books on Cajun folklore by Barry Jean Ancelet. I watched a documentary on the *courir de Mardi Gras*, in which men mounted horses and tore through the countryside, plundering smokehouses for

sausages to cook a community gumbo. Inspired by Paul Prudhomme's cookbooks, I even learned to blacken redfish in a butter-slicked cast iron skillet. None of that prepared me for what I would find.

In the 20 years since, I've danced in an okra patch at the annual Zydeco music festival and drunk cocktails with umbrella swizzle sticks in a ruined 1930s casino. I've spent the night in an old railroad hotel, where the keeper invited me to finger the bullet hole left in the bar after a recent scuffle. On a countryside boudin crawl, I learned to suck boudin from its innard sleeve and determined that I prefer the subtly hot links from Bubba Frey's store, sliced into rounds, mounded on crackers, and topped with fig preserves. I've tasted sugarcane syrup made by Charles Poirier in a backyard sugarhouse

in Youngsville, and I've sworn off maple syrup since.

I've watched couples waltz at nine in the morning at Fred's Lounge, a shot-and-beer bar in Mamou, where proprietor Tante Sue, her face framed by a halo of gray curls, took healthy swigs of cinnamon-flavored schnapps from a bottle and squeezed her chest in time to the music as if playing an accordion.

These were not my people. That I knew. But I wanted desperately to be in their number. And I desperately wanted to belong to their place. And that is why I keep going back.

John T. Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance at the University of Mississippi, is the author or editor of a dozen books.



—RAW BAR—
CAPERS BLADES
OTTER ISLANDS
ST. ANNE'S
LADYS ISLAND
HONEYSUCKLES
DAVES CLAMS
PEEL & EAT SHRIMP
MAINE LOBSTER
BLUE CRAB LOUIE
NANTUCKET BAY SCALLOPS

TABLE TO BOOK: **THE ORDINARY** *Charleston, SC*

THE EXPERIENCE

A two-story dining room with an always-packed raw bar where Chef Mike Lata serves some of the South's best seafood.

MUST-TRY DISHES

Smoked oysters with saltines and hot sauce; razor clams with apples, jalapeño, and cilantro; seafood tower.

BEST SEAT

Groups should request the downstairs booths. Solo diners should order the rum drink Royal Bermuda Yacht Club and wait for a seat at the raw bar.

INSIDER TIP

The lobster roll is on the menu only as a Tuesday special, but if you ask for it any other day of the week, the chef will happily make it for you.

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my
favorite

Barbecue

*"Franklin
Barbecue in
Austin may be the
most popular
barbecue joint in the
world. It actually
made the local news
when the line was
short due to crazy
cold temperatures.
They make my
favorite brisket in all
of Texas."*

—DANIEL VAUGHN,
BARBECUE EDITOR OF
TEXAS MONTHLY

➔ For Daniel Vaughn's guide to the best barbecue in Texas, go to afar.com/texasbbq.