

## DINING OUT

# A closer-to-home taste of New Orleans

By Chick Jacobs  
Staff writer

The proof, Joe McGee says, isn't in the folks who come. It's the folks who come back.

And so many folks have been coming back to Straight Outta New Orleans, the restaurant manager and chef have decided to stay open a little longer.

Starting next month, just in time for Mardi Gras, the little bistro tucked in Club International will add savory Creole dinners to their menu. Considering that a year ago head chef Michelle Johnson didn't have a place to live, much less cook, it's quite an accomplishment.

"New Orleans cooking is supposed to be associated with good times and fun," said McGee. "For more than a year, it hasn't been a lot of fun for a lot of people from there. But we're helping them make it back."

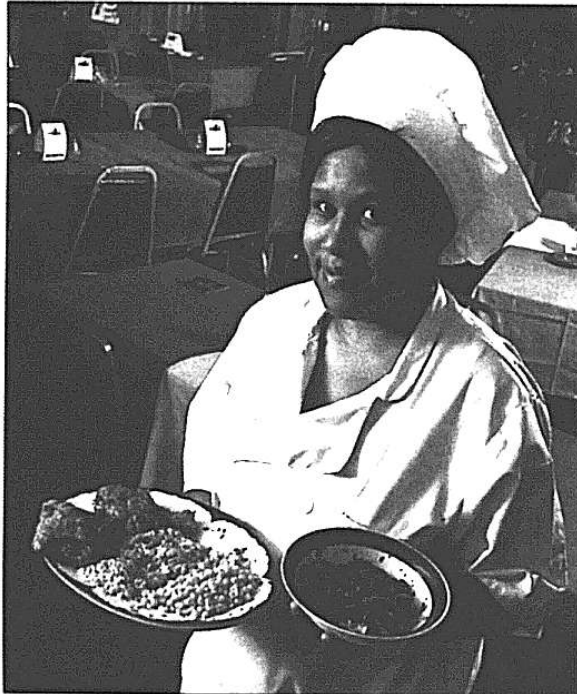
The restaurant has been offering only lunch since opening last fall, and the main advertising has been word of mouth. People who have visited the Bayou country drop by, then keep coming back.

"We've had people say they've been looking for a good New Orleans-style place in Fayetteville forever," McGee said. "I'm glad we are filling that niche."

Johnson's recipes include a lot of traditional ingredients — green pepper, onions, Southern spices.

"Honestly, most of the things in this style of cooking can be found on most grocery shelves," McGee said. "It's knowing what to do with them that makes the difference."

Straight Outta New Orleans



Staff photos by Raul R. Rubiera

Chef Michelle Johnson, left, cooks Bayou dishes such as Down South Fried Chicken, above, with jambalaya, corn and a side of red beans and rice.

makes the most of them, too. In order to keep the lunch crowd moving, the menu is limited. None of the lunch plates cost more than \$5.59 for the regular plate, \$7.39 for the jumbo portions.

The restaurant ambiance adds to the Cajun feel. Located just off Murchison Road, it's tucked to one side of a night spot. Inside, the lighting is dim and the tables are cozy. For those who wandered the non-tourist restaurants of pre-Katrina New Orleans, it feels like home.

The smells coming from the kitchen get your stomach going before the food arrives. Food is served casually, often by Chef Johnson herself, with

plastic utensils and cups.

But you didn't come here for fancy service or silverware, did you? You came for food. And Straight Outta New Orleans delivers that. Each lunch comes with a choice of rice dishes, bread and a vegetable.

Smoked sausage over red beans and rice or jambalaya top the lunch menu. Another good choice is the Creole chicken chunks served smother in rice and gravy.

An interesting choice is curried chicken over rice. Unlike Indian-style curry, it features a slightly different combination of spices.

Johnson laughs when asked about her favorite meal on the menu. It's sort of like

asking a parent to name their favorite child. When pressed, she mentioned the Hurricane Katrina Gumbo.

"We call it Katrina gumbo because a little bit of everything goes into it," McGee said. "It all gets mixed together and something good comes out."

"Some people might say it's not a true Creole gumbo because it doesn't have some of the ingredients like crab," she said. "But we wanted to make good food that people can afford, and we're drawing the line somewhere."

"As it stands this is a great dish, fast and tasty, and perfect for cold days."

Desserts are hand-made and brought to the restaurant.

Early on, a rumor linked the restaurant to an outbreak of food poisoning. McGee stressed that the report was untrue.

Catering is a growing part of the business, and McGee expects it to increase with Mardi Gras on the horizon. He

### STRAIGHT OUTTA NEW ORLEANS

- **Address:** 115 Rosemary St., just off Murchison Road
- **Hours:** Wednesday through Friday 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Phone:** 867-6350. Fax orders to 868-5212
- **Specialty:** New Orleans-style food

says they can handle parties up to 300 people. And when the dinner menu is set, McGee says to expect more seafood dishes.

"It's going to be a busy time, and a good chance for more people to see what we're about," he said. "There's no better way to get folks in here than giving them good food."

Staff writer Chick Jacobs can be reached at [jacobsc@fayobserver.com](mailto:jacobsc@fayobserver.com) or 486-3515.

## Cape BBQ & CHICKEN Fear

### Combination Plate

**Buy One, Get One FREE**

2 sides, 1/2 doz. hushpuppies (2 per coupon)

Bring This Coupon Offer Expires Jan. 18, 2007

523 Grove Street Fayetteville, NC 910-483-1884 | 1552 Sunset Ave. Clinton, NC 910-596-2220

\*Limit 2 Plates Per Coupon

## Lindy's RESTAURANT

The Friendliest Place in Town

Eat In Or Take Out

<p><b>Pizza</b></p> <p>pepperoni, sausage or hamburger</p> <p>small \$4.60 with meat sauce \$3.60</p> <p>medium \$5.70 with meat balls \$4.60</p>	<p><b>Spaghetti</b></p> <p>Locally Owned &amp; Operated For 30 Years</p> <p>3001 RAEFORD RD. 485-6247</p> <p>6-am-3 pm</p>
---	--

Thursdays Only

### The Barbeque Huts

Quality Food At Family Prices

2965 Owen Dr. • 484-1975  
2802 Ft. Bragg Rd. • 485-5390

### Romantic Getaway

910-484-6827

Gloria & Edgar  
Bed & Breakfast  
Massage Therapy Available!

3423 Dunn Rd Fayetteville