

Modern Creole: A Taste of New Orleans Culture and Cuisine

Eric Cook

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Eric Cook shows off the bold flavors and spirit of multicultural New Orleans and his Gris-Gris and Saint John restaurants in the vibrant cookbook *Modern Creole*.

Cook grew up crabbing, hunting, and fishing in south Louisiana, developing a love for its seafood and game. His attuned version of cooking with the seasons pays attention to the rhythms of Carnival, Jazz Fest, and the running of the crawfish. Indeed, these dishes are at once elegant and homey. They emphasize freshness, quality, and regional pantry staples like sugarcane vinegar and mirlitons. There are inspired concoctions like Macaroni Pie with Creole Red Gravy and Hot Shrimp Remoulade on Fried Green Tomatoes, which is topped with a contemporary chow chow that's packed with roasted corn and pickled okra. Pan-Fried Frog Legs with Garlic Butter appear, as do Chicken Gizzard Grillades with Stone-Ground Grits.

"One of my favorite things about cooking," Cook says, "is the simple joy of the aromas that can perfume the kitchen, and the entire house for that matter." And since some tasty crowd-pleasers with their brown ingredients and gravies can look drab on the plate, the more unphotogenic restaurant favorites are honored via colorful still-life shots of their assembled uncooked ingredients.

Emphasizing hospitality, the book begins with recipes for inventive cocktails flavored with "voodoo nuances" and spicy, unexpected ingredients. The Midnight Sun is a creative brew of orange gin, blueberry shrub, lime juice, prosecco, and blueberries, licked with a rim of black lava sea salt. Cook notes that these potent potables can also be made as mocktails to include sober buddies and designated drivers in the celebration. The beverage chapter also highlights a variety of fun cocktail snacks, including Artichoke Boulettes and Duck Poppers, to get the party rolling.

With heartfelt recipe introductions, *Modern Creole* is an exuberant showcase of a talented chef's vibrant Southern food style.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (September / October 2024)

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