

Native New Orleans chef Arthur Douglass By Frank Douglass

Alligator Pie was the dish that got Arthur Douglass accepted into the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. Prior to Chef Arthur's attempt to get into the Fest, the quickest anyone had gotten in was with four tastings before the board of directors and staff. Chef Arthur was accepted on his first tasting in 1990. His booth at the Fest has evolved to include blue crab meat, Italian breadcrumb, *Stuffed Shrimp* and *Fried Green Tomatoes*. The booth is always rated in the top 10 by the Times Picayune daily paper's food critic and has been featured as a cover story.

To get to this professional level one must pay a lot of dues.

Chef Arthur's training started with his family in New Orleans and, like most of us, was greatly influenced by his mother as well as his Italian born grandmother. His professional training started at the American Culinary Federation's program at Delgado Community College. The major direction his cooking skills developed was under the tutorage of Paul Prudhomme's executive chef, George Rhode at the Old New Orleans Cookery. Chef Arthur refined his skills at notable New Orleans restaurants such as Antoine's (the oldest restaurant in the U.S.), Brennan's, Commander's Palace, Riverview Restaurant at the Marriott, Arnolds, Mississippi Queen Steamboat, Natchez Riverboat (head chef) and executive chef at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Coliseum.

While restaurant training with other professionals is the place to learn the craft, the place to learn what the customer likes is in the field at 'neighborhood' festivals. Our neighborhood is South Louisiana where the citizens run the gambit from Cajun farmers & trappers to sophisticated urban connoisseur from a major port city, which is the gateway to the Americas, Europe & Africa. Our neighbors eat well. Cousin Arthur and his assistant, me, have feed folks at local festivals like the Rayne Frog Festival, the La Place Gumbo Fest, Lafayette's Festival International, Bayou LaCombe Crab Fest, Gretna Fest, Mandeville Seafood Fest, Madisonville Wooden Boat Festival and many more. Sometimes I think we have cooked at every festival in South Louisiana over the last three decades.

Chef Arthur has had nation venues at events like Jammin' on the River in Philly, Ft. Lauderdale's Zidico Festival, Hemmingway Day in Key West, Mountainview (California) Taste of New Orleans, etc.

I'm Arthur's Twin Cousin, Frank Douglass, and I came to Asheville to mountain bike, play with friends and eat. The biking is great, the friends are beautiful and Asheville has the best restaurants in the region, but I miss New Orleans cooking. Sooo, I got Arthur to move up here to feed me....and you.

We opened a restaurant called Twin Cousins Kitchen at the Grey Eagle Tavern & Dance Hall on Clingman Av. right between downtown Asheville & West Asheville. The food is like New Orleans, a mixture of Creole, Cajun, soul, Italian and Native American with a pinch of Asheville homegrown from time to time.

See <http://downtownasheville.com/index.php> for a sampling, times & food events.

My Jazz Fest claim-to-fame, other than being Arthur's little helper, is winning best of show at the 25th New Orleans Jazz Fest Arts & Craft Show, when I was the seamstress's little helper. Another story.