

MOSQUITO SUPPER CLUB DISHES UP CAJUN CULTURE TO PRESERVE IT

SEPTEMBER 3, 2014 | LESLIE ALMEIDA

Cajun culture is the main course at dining pop-up Mosquito Supper Club. Founder and Chef Melissa M. Martin talks culture and cuisine.

Turning off a cobblestone sidewalk, you enter a parlor of unfinished wood floors, rustic wood walls and floor-to-ceiling French doors. Long stretches of tables paired with mix-and-match chairs fill the space, while Cajun music and a bouquet of enticing aromas penetrate the air. No, you're not in Acadiana; you're in Bywater for the [Mosquito Supper Club](#).

Friends Melissa M. Martin and Effie Jeanne Marie Michot are your hosts and chefs at the Mosquito Supper Club, a pop-up dinner and brunch experience that calls [The Tigermen Den](#) home. "The Tigermen Den is an amazing space. It is the perfect ambiance and setting for our suppers," says Chef Martin. "Everyone congregates then takes a seat where they like. Courses are served family-style, so you may be asked to pass the butter."

This sense of family is the foundation on which the organizers have built the dining events and is where much of their inspiration is borrowed. "Effie and I are both from South Louisiana and have always loved sharing our culture with others. We get so much pleasure out of bringing people into this world that we grew up in." Participants are indeed hungry for more than just the food. "As we get older, I suppose we are returning to our roots and wanting to immerse ourselves in Cajun food and culture, partly because we see it falling away in a lot of places. As my friend says, 'It is important to take back what is ours.' The only way to keep our folkways and traditions alive is to keep it alive."

Martin and Michot create the menus based on family recipes, utilizing ingredients purchased from local vendors and foraging excursions. Says Martin, "Sourcing ingredients is very important to me; I am adamant about supporting our community of farmers and fishermen. Sometimes we go a step further and catch some stuff ourselves. We have crab traps that we run in Cypremont Point, and this last supper club we went out with my family and skimmed in Lake Boudreaux, catching over four hundred pounds of shrimp. One thing you can always trust is that we will never put commodity meat on your plate and will always be sourcing from local farms. We buy from Two Run Farms, Gonsoulin, Hollywood Livestock, Chappapeela Farms, and we love supporting Cleaver & Company."

As Louisiana — especially New Orleans — continues to see a boom in cultural curiosity from outsiders, Melissa and Effie have found the job of "curators of Cajun culture" to be fulfilling as natives and entrepreneurs. Seating for a supper is limited to thirty guests and tickets tend to go quickly. "Mosquito Supper Club allows us to share our food, stories and music with people in New Orleans. Each event is a finely curated Cajun experience," says Martin. When asked what

lies ahead for MSC, Chef Martin envisions more events for a wider audience. “We absolutely want to expand. We are not interested in ever being a brick and mortar restaurant but we want to do more events throughout the year. We want it to be accessible at all price points and we want everyone to have the chance to experience one of our events. One day we want to take our Supper Club on the road to other places. A Cajun road show of food, music, storytelling and Boudreaux jokes.”

What goes into preparing for a Mosquito Supper Club event? Enjoy the visual story below featuring images by photographer [Rush Jagoe](#).