

**GRILLED
OYSTERS
WITH
LEMON-GARLIC
BUTTER**

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BON TEMPS ON THE BAYOU

In Southwest Louisiana, a fish-camp feast celebrates the
local bounty and the family history of two passionate Cajun cooks

by **PAULA DISBROWE** recipes by **DAVID GUAS** photography by **PETER FRANK EDWARDS**



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You can't get to this party without a boat,

so the fun begins at Don's Boat Landing just outside of Abbeville, where it's never too early for a Bloody Mary and a bag of Zapp's. From this fishing town in Southwest Louisiana, it's a 30-minute ride through Boston Canal, a man-made waterway, past grazing horses, endless cattails, and gators sunning on the banks. After passing various intriguing inlets, you'll cross the Intracoastal Waterway, dotted with massive barges, until a "no wake zone; dead slow" sign and scattering of stilt houses announce that you're close. There, near the mouth of Vermillion Bay, is Camp Peace. It's best to arrive hungry.

Chef David Guas grew up in New Orleans, and the beloved flavors of his childhood inspired Bayou Bakery—his cafés in Arlington, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. Guas trained at several high-end restaurants, but he learned the fundamentals of Cajun cooking from his feisty Aunt Boo, aka Janice Bourgeois Macomber. The daughter of a shrimper father and a Sicilian mother, Boo has always been a force to be reckoned with—especially in the kitchen.

Boo began cooking in the seventies, when she lived in the French Quarter. After she was widowed at 36, she returned to her hometown of Abbeville to raise her two young daughters. These days, when she's not catching flying beads at Mardi Gras or sipping beer at Jazz Fest, she's at home in Abbeville or in a boat pointed toward Camp Peace, her bayou refuge and happy place. The rustic shack was the only one in the area that survived Hurricane Rita, hence its name. (Boo credits this to divine intervention.)

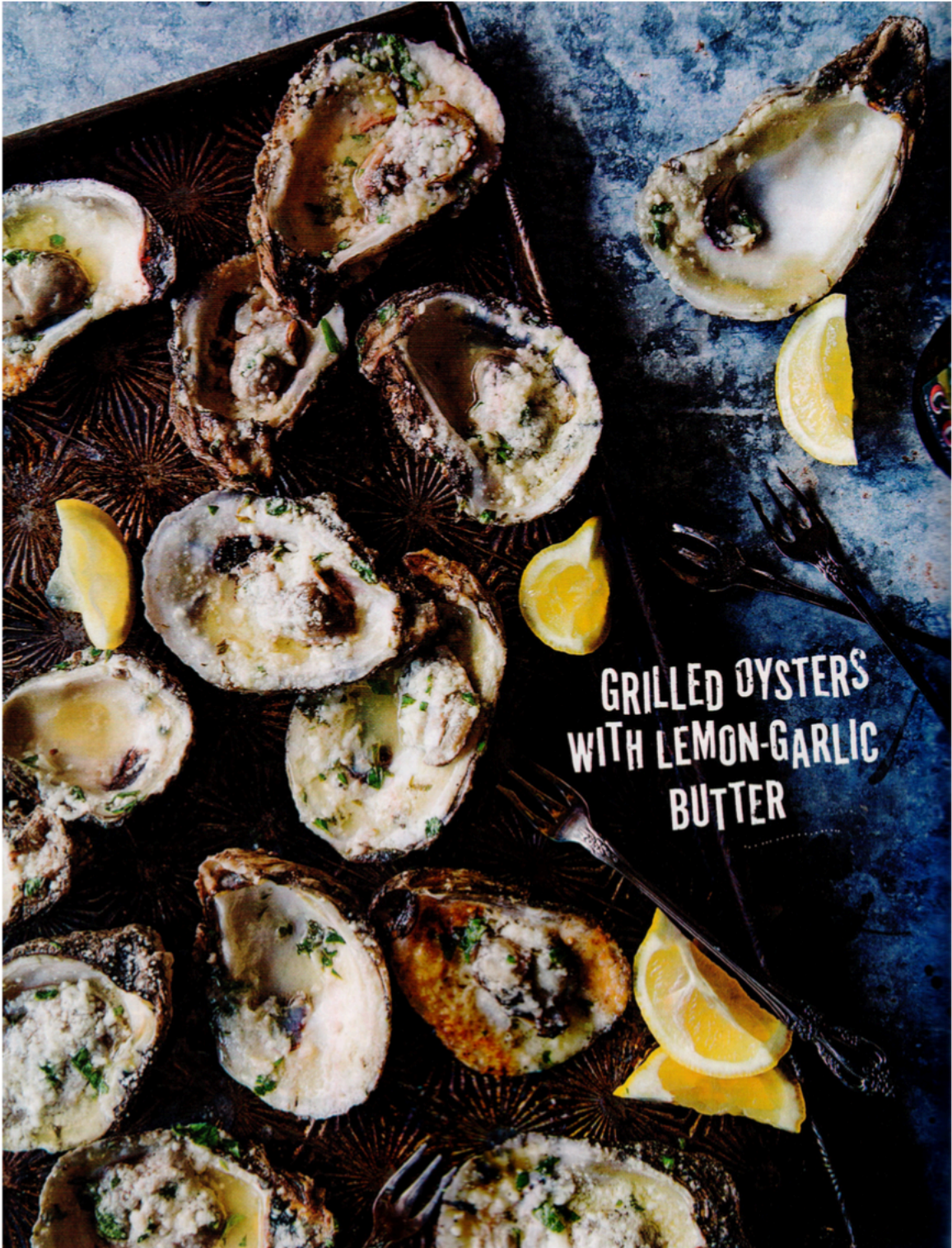
Whenever Guas returns to Louisiana to visit his aunt, they head to Camp Peace to stock crab traps, fish, and do what they do best: cook. "The key to cooking on the Boston Canal with Aunt Boo is to have just the right amount of cold beer and bourbon to make it to the end of the trip," David says, "cause once you're on da canal, *cher*, you out there!" Today is that sort of gathering: friends and family have come together to sip cold beer and feast on the Gulf's bounty as they honor the history that stitches them together. This is the kind of meal that kicks off early (with grilled oysters and spiked sun tea) and lasts through every last drop of daylight.

While Guas may have gone on to run two restaurants, author two cookbooks, and host a television show, when he's at Camp Peace, Boo tells her nephew how it's done: the correct way to score redfish for easy serving, for instance, or how to brown a roux. (In his restaurants, Guas relies on the steady heat of his oven, which prompts Boo to shake her head in disbelief.) Today, Guas has been scolded several times for buying the wrong cut of frozen chicken for the crab traps. "I still want to be the boss in the kitchen," she confesses, although she's clearly pleased with her protégé. "He found his passion at a young age, and I am so proud that he stuck with it."

Guas doesn't mind deferring. "At the end of the day I yield, because there's the deepest amount of love and respect for that woman. If she says it's done a certain way, then that's how it's done."



CRAB FOR A CROWD: Chef David Guas helps his Aunt Boo (aka Janice Bourgeois Macomber) prepare a crab-artichoke spread at her Louisiana fish shack.



**GRILLED OYSTERS
WITH LEMON-GARLIC
BUTTER**

GRILLED OYSTERS WITH LEMON-GARLIC BUTTER

MAKES 24 oysters
ACTIVE 30 min. **TOTAL** 35 min.

This is a great appetizer to kick off a party, because oysters tend to draw a crowd—it's fun to watch (and smell) them sizzling over the heat. Prep the Lemon-Garlic Butter and cheese topping in advance, then shuck and grill the oysters in batches. They're best eaten soon after they come off the grill, with slices of bread to sop up any remaining sauce.

- 1 cup (½ lb.) unsalted butter
- ¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ cup (1 oz.) grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup (1 oz.) grated Romano cheese
- 24 large Gulf oysters
- 1 loaf French bread

1. Melt butter in a small saucepan over medium. Stir in parsley, lemon juice, garlic, and salt. Remove from heat, and place saucepan next to grill to keep butter warm.
2. Heat grill to medium (about 400°F). Stir together Parmesan and Romano cheeses in a bowl.
3. Shuck oysters, and discard top shell. Using an oyster knife, disconnect the oyster from the bottom shell, keeping the oyster in the shell. Place the raw oysters on the half shell on the grill, and top each oyster with about 1 tablespoon of the butter mixture. Grill, uncovered, until juices start to bubble and the edges of the oysters begin to curl, about 2 minutes. Top each oyster with a generous pinch of the cheese mixture. Continue grilling, uncovered, until the edges of the shells start to brown, about 2 minutes. Using tongs, transfer oysters from grill to a serving platter. Top with any remaining butter mixture. Serve with grilled or baked French bread.

Note: Large oysters are important here, because they stand up better on the grill and cradle more of the buttery sauce.

SHRIMP NANA

MAKES 12 ½ cups **ACTIVE** 35 min.
TOTAL 2 days, 35 min., including 2 days marinating

With a tiny, rustic kitchen and any forgotten ingredients a 30-minute boat ride away,



entertaining at Camp Peace requires strategic planning. That's why Nana's Shrimp, a recipe from Boo's Sicilian mother, Theresa Russo, is a party staple. Boo marinates the shrimp a few days in advance so that by the time she arrives, they have become instant appetizers to be eaten in between beers.

- 7 qt. water
- 2 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 5 lb. unpeeled, medium-size or large, raw Gulf shrimp
- 2 medium-size yellow onions, thinly sliced (about 5 cups)
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup brined capers with juice
- 2 Tbsp. prepared horseradish
- 1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 tsp. paprika

- 2 tsp. celery salt
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper
- Hot sauce
- Lemon wedges

1. Bring 7 quarts water and 2 tablespoons of the salt to a rolling boil in a large stockpot over high. Carefully add shrimp, and cook until the shrimp turn pink and are just cooked through, 1 to 2 minutes. Drain shrimp in a colander, and rinse with cold water. When shrimp are cool enough to handle, peel and devein. (Save shells for stock, if desired.)
2. Layer shrimp and onion slices in alternating layers in a large, sealable storage container.
3. Whisk together olive oil, lemon juice, capers, horseradish, Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder, paprika, celery salt, cayenne, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Pour marinade over shrimp; cover and chill 2



hours. Toss mixture (or invert container), and chill 2 to 3 days, tossing occasionally. Taste shrimp before serving, and add salt, heat, or lemon juice as desired. Serve as an appetizer, with toothpicks, hot sauce, and lemon wedges. Shrimp will keep for an additional 3 days in the refrigerator.

Note: This recipe can be enhanced with any fresh herbs you have on hand. Feel free to add a few fresh bay leaves to the marinade, or toss marinated shrimp with chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley just before serving.

REDFISH COURT-BOUILLON

SERVES 6
ACTIVE 25 min. TOTAL 1 hour, 25 min.

Court-bouillon is a classic French broth used for poaching seafood and infusing it with flavor. For the Cajun version (pronounced roughly "KORR-boo-yawn"), a whole Gulf fish such as redfish or catfish is cooked in rich tomato gravy. Spiked with a piquant green olive salad and spicy tomatoes, Boo's long-simmered sauce has plenty of personality. This dish is a fish-camp favorite because it cooks while everyone snacks and sips and enjoys the party down below.

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 medium-size yellow onions, chopped
- 4 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 large green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 cup button mushrooms, stems removed, sliced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 bay leaves

- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 (15-oz.) cans tomato sauce
- 1 (10-oz.) can diced tomatoes and green chiles (such as Rotel), undrained
- 1 cup shrimp stock or water
- 1/2 cup Italian olive salad
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced scallions (green parts only)
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 whole 3- to 5-lb. redfish or similar Gulf fish (such as grouper or drum), scaled, gutted, and trimmed
- 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 lemon, thinly sliced
- 1 lb. raw shrimp, peeled and deveined
- Steamed rice

1. Heat oil in a large, heavy saucepan over medium-high. Add onions, celery, bell pepper, mushrooms, garlic, and bay leaves, and cook until vegetables have softened, about 7 minutes. Add wine, and cook, stirring once or twice, until liquid is slightly reduced, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in tomato sauce, tomatoes and chiles, and shrimp stock, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, about 15 minutes. Stir in olive salad, scallions, and parsley. Remove from heat.

2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Rinse redfish. Make 5 parallel cuts on each side of fish, slicing into the flesh at an angle and down to the bone, to create 6 fairly even portions. Sprinkle salt evenly on fish, rubbing some salt into the cuts. Place fish in a large roasting pan, and pour half of the sauce over fish. Layer lemon slices on fish, and cover with remaining sauce. Cover with aluminum foil, and bake in preheated oven, basting occasionally with pan sauce, until fish is cooked through and flakes easily with a fork, about 45 minutes. Remove pan from oven, and stir shrimp into pan sauce. Cover with foil, and return to oven. Cook until shrimp turn pink, about 15 minutes. Remove from oven, discard foil, and let fish rest 5 to 10 minutes. Serve with steamed rice.

GRILLED BANANA "PIROGUES" WITH PECAN PRALINES

SERVES 8 ACTIVE 30 min. TOTAL 35 min.

When it comes to dessert, Guas can't resist returning to the grill. For this rich, playful, and fun-to-eat preparation, grilled bananas masquerade as pirogues (Cajun flat-bottomed boats). Making the pralines in advance—

they'll keep for 3 days in a sealed container—helps this dessert come together quickly.

- 8 ripe bananas, unpeeled
- Vanilla ice cream
- 2 cups crumbled Pecan Pralines

Heat grill to medium (350°F to 450°F). Grill bananas, uncovered, turning once, until they soften and blacken, 6 to 7 minutes on each side. Remove from heat, and cool 5 minutes. Cut a slit lengthwise through each banana peel from stem to end without cutting through banana. Gently open the slit. Place each banana in a shallow bowl. Top each with ice cream and about 1/4 cup crumbled Pecan Pralines.

Note: To help your "pirogue" sit upright in the bowl, slice a strip of peel off the base to create a flat bottom.

PECAN PRALINES

MAKES about 3 dozen pralines
ACTIVE 20 min. TOTAL 20 min.

- 4 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 1/4 cups packed light brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup plus 2 to 4 Tbsp. heavy cream, divided
- 2 cups chopped pecans

1. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium-low. Add brown sugar, granulated sugar, and 1/2 cup of the cream; stir until sugar dissolves. Increase heat to medium, and simmer, using a heatproof rubber spatula to stir gently occasionally, until a candy thermometer reads 240°F to 250°F. (If mixture begins to crystallize, add 2 tablespoons of the cream, and cook, stirring, until it liquefies.) Stir in chopped pecans. Turn off heat, and give the mixture a final gentle stir, making sure to scrape the bottom and corners of the pan.

2. Using a wooden spoon, scoop about 2 tablespoons of the hot praline mixture onto the prepared baking sheets, leaving at least 1 inch between pralines. If mixture begins to crystallize in pan, add remaining 2 tablespoons of the cream, heat over medium, and stir until mixture looks creamy. Cool pralines on pans until solid, about 30 minutes. Transfer to an airtight container. (Pralines may be kept in the airtight container up to 3 days.) ●