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New Orleans**
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NOLA Bred, NOLA Fed

Beyond the food with the Ralph Brennan
Restaurant Group BY PAUL OSWELL

What's the idea behind one of the most respected culinary names in New Orleans? Simple. "Serving Louisiana's bounty gives the soulfulness to every dish."

restaurateur in a town like New Orleans without a nod to some incredible food. Food matters here even more than it does in gastronomic hot spots such as New York or San Francisco.

"Food is ingrained in New Orleans life," says Brennan. "It's in the culture if you live here. And if you visit, it's what you do when you arrive."

**Ralph's on
the Park**
900 City Park Avenue
New Orleans, LA
504.488.1000
ralphsonthepark.com

Red Fish Grill
115 Bourbon Street
New Orleans, LA
504.598.1200
redfishgrill.com

Ralph Brennan knows of what he speaks. For a man with five acclaimed restaurants, culinary prowess that runs in his genes, and a literal lifetime of experience, you'd suspect there's more to the formula. And there is another key aspect that drives his work: pleasing customers.

"I'm in the people business," says Brennan. "I tell every staff member at all of my restaurants that we're there to deliver a total dining experience. It goes beyond the food, and I tell them they should strive for the thrill of making our customers happy."

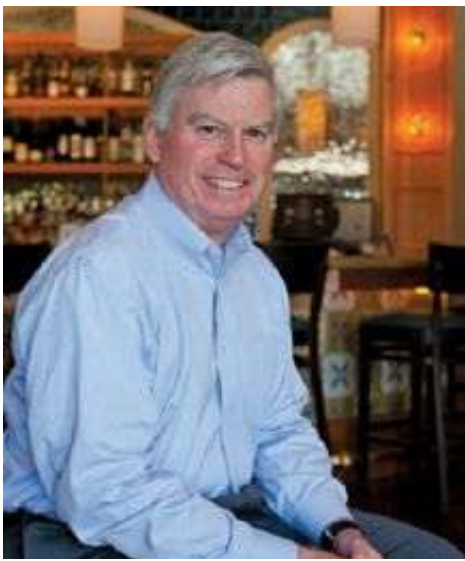
Of course, you don't become a legendary

A Family Tradition

If one knows anything about the culture of food in the Crescent City, it's Brennan. A third-generation patriarch in the family of New Orleans restaurants established more than 60 years ago, Brennan has lived and breathed in local kitchens since he was knee-high.

The original family restaurant still stands on Royal Street, and Brennan remembers having the run of the place. "I was only seven or eight, but I'd explore the wine cellar or talk to the pastry chefs. I'd learn from the sommeliers and the cooks. Happily now, my own son is

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RALPH BRENNAN RESTAURANT GROUP



being inspired by the same experiences.”

Growing up in an environment where hard work, creativity, and customer service were the standard gave Brennan his clarion call of “NOLA bred, NOLA fed.” New Orleans culture now permeates each of his five restaurants.

A signature Ralph Brennan dining experience, Ralph’s on the Park, overlooks the historic City Park with its tall oak trees and sweeping moss. Brennan, with the help of chef Chip Flanagan, presents a fine-dining experience laced with Louisiana flavors, from a simple turtle soup to a playfully innovative foie gras peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

The upbeat energy at Red Fish Grill makes it an incredibly popular casual seafood eatery, right at the foot of Bourbon Street. Casual diners get unfussy yet high-quality dishes, with favorites such as hickory-grilled redfish and Alligator Sausage & Seafood Gumbo served nightly. The proof is in the numbers: Red Fish Grill celebrates serving its three millionth BBQ

oyster this spring.

Rounding out Brennan’s portfolio are Café NOMA (in the New Orleans Museum of Art), Heritage Grill and Café b (both in Metairie), and Ralph Brennan’s Jazz Kitchen, which brings the authentic flavors and music of New Orleans to the Downtown Disney® District of Anaheim, California.

Brennan has been generous in giving back to the community that inspires him, actively supporting local charities. He is the first Louisianan to be appointed to the Board of Trustees for the Culinary Institute of America, representing his home city with aplomb.

As for the future of Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group? “Well, you’re only as good as your last meal. New Orleans has exploded with culinary innovation of late, and while we welcome the energy and creativity, we know that we have to be relentless with customer satisfaction. It’s exciting to see our cuisine evolve and marry local ingredients with a contemporary flair.”

Clockwise from far left: BBQ Oysters at Red Fish Grill; Ralph Brennan at Café b; Ralph’s on the Park; enjoying lunch at Red Fish Grill; Alligator Sausage & Seafood Gumbo at Red Fish Grill