

## NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

### Delectable *Daube*

In a New York Times article dated December 29, 1907, readers learned the secrets behind making *Daube d'Italienne* according to a recipe from the restaurant made famous by Madame Begué in New Orleans. The restaurant's namesake had died the previous year and operations were taken over by her daughter and son-in-law, the Anouilles.

"Lard a nice piece of beef," the recipe stated, "about three inches thick with strips of fat ham and pieces of mashed garlic." Louisiana colonial cooks routinely used hog lard and bear fat for their flour-based thickening agent (or *roux*). Then "brown the meat thoroughly on both sides," adding both "carrots and onions, and enough water to cover the whole." The suggested seasonings were "salt, pepper, cloves, bay leaf and parsley." After putting this over the fire early "in the morning" and cooking "slowly without interruption at least eight hours" (and with a few other steps), one was to serve the meat that evening over macaroni along with "a good sprinkling of grated Italian cheese".

What actually is this *daube* (dəʊb, or dohb) New Orleanians rave about? It is one of the great winter meals in the Crescent City and a superb example of how French and Italian cuisines masterfully merge in this culinary capital. Most food dictionaries describe the dish as a classic French beef stew with vegetables and seasonings braised slowly in red wine for many hours. Every French region has its own unique version, sometimes prepared in a special, very deep, covered pottery casserole called a *daubière*.

*Daube* comes into the language in the early eighteenth century from the French via the Italian *dobba* by way of the Catalan *la adoba* for "stewed" (with a Germanic origin meaning "to strike").

This "larded" roast beef dish can also be stuffed with salt pork slivers and cooked in broth and wine (or sherry) until tender. Inserting garlic proves equally tasty. But very often *daube* in the typical New Orleans household can simply be a beef roast slowly cooked in red gravy until

falling apart and served with spaghetti. And although often utilizing a less tender or inexpensive cut of meat, *daube* is regularly found on Christmas tables in South Louisiana or as an entrée in the *Réveillon* feast. Chef John Folse (in his *daube* recipe) substitutes veal eye-of-the-round roast for beef shoulder roast.

John Besh suggests short ribs. Various cuts of beef work well (including the rump, round, chuck or shoulder), but today "larding" is a contemporary *faux pas* in executing this flavorful recipe. Olive oil seems to be the healthy alternative.

Today's home cooks heat this oil in a Dutch oven or heavy pot and brown the roast well on all sides. In the same oil, they *sauté* the onion, bell pepper and celery ("trinity") to add to their red gravy. This traditionally rustic stew would be wonderful with its slices stacked onto a base of *sautéed* gnocchi, but most homes will opt for spaghetti. Some will simmer, serve and savor leftover *daube* and gravy on a genuine New Orleans po-boy (made with real French bread, New Orleans style or from a Vietnamese bakery).

*Daube* becomes *daube glacée* with the addition of gelatin, a popular form of food preservation in the era before refrigeration. The *daube glacée* is prepared from the round roast (just like *daube*), braised but with the addition of gelatinous substances. This concoction is refrigerated in its stock to form chilled, jellied meat, which (when sliced thin and served on crackers) is an excellent cousin to hogshead cheese. *Daube glacée* was listed on the menu of Corinne Dunbar's, a New Orleans restaurant operated from 1935 to 1987 in a private residence. "Louisiana: A Guide To The State by the Federal Writers' Project" described *daube glacée* as "jellied veal made with pig's and calf's feet."

If one wants a commercial version of this product, Langenstein's has a fine *daube glacée* available in its stores. This all dates back to a New Orleans tradition as early as 1840 with a Creole holiday feast including *daube glacée* accompanied by quail on toast, quince jelly, roast turkey with cornbread dressing, *soufflé* potatoes and a French Burgundy.

## **NED HÉMARD**

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