

Cool and Hot

“Awesome” may come and go, but “cool” will always be fashionable. It is the word that never seems to go out of style. As Goldilocks discovered, it’s the temperature that’s “just right”.



CAC's White Linen Night Cool Down Lounge at the Lighthouse on Camp

But what it actually means to be cool is not always that easy to pin down. Researchers have discovered that “being cool” isn’t just about having social desirability. There are a number of positive adjectives that enhance a person’s social desirability but don’t necessarily make them “cool” (competence, for example).

They also found that what people consider “coolness” in certain individuals comes in two categories:

- 1) “cachet coolness” which can be described as the level of “flair” in one’s life. Those who help others, are adventurous, ambitious and charismatic – they possess “cachet cool”.
- 2) “contrarian coolness” which is the type of coolness of someone who lives on the edge, like James Dean. It describes a person

who's not that easy to read and has an air of mystery. Also, he probably doesn't care what the rest of society thinks about him. Morgus was "cool" and watching him even cooler.

The word "cool" can also be used to convey the feeling of dislike, unfriendliness or indifference, as in: "a cool greeting" or "I've cooled to that idea".

Sometimes it can be used to describe both temperature and hipness.



Sno-balls, always a "cool" and refreshing favorite in New Orleans, but these are from Tchoupitoulas Street Snoballs, Franklin, Tennessee.

As New Orleans' 2010 Whitney White Linen Night was approaching, *The Dallas Morning News* spread the word:

"About 20,000 people are expected to don white clothing Aug. 7 to stay cool during the White Linen Night block party in the Warehouse Arts District of New Orleans."

The headline explains why (while most New Orleanians are secluded in cool air-conditioned comfort), thousands of intrepid creative souls don

“cool” linen and venture out to support the city's arts scene. It states, “Too warm is cool in New Orleans.”



Cool and Hot in New Orleans: "Coolinary" and Manuel's Hot Tamales

“Cool”, after all, relates to more than just the temperature. It’s all locally logical. In the years before air conditioning, the natives did what they could to lessen the effects of the summer heat and humidity. There were hats, light fabrics, parasols, and (of course) the wearing of white linen clothing.

Just to confuse matters, “hot” can be “cool”, too. In 2010, *The Real World* reality television program was back on location in New Orleans with a houseful of hedonism, hormones and hard partying, billed as “Hot Days, Sultry Nights”. Or was it really cool?

So how did locals cope with the sweltering heat and humidity in the Crescent City over 150 years ago?

The New Orleans *Daily Picayune* on November 21, 1855, paints a picture of what it was like for a fictional Cockney gentleman from the British Isles visiting New Orleans in summer. Mr. Fitzflunkey is the name the paper gives for “the newly arrived John Bull,” who “after sweltering a few hours about the streets, puffing and blowing” exclaims, “Ow `Orrid `Ot!”

He is "continually wiping from his big, round flushed face the streams of perspiration, and no doubt fully appreciating Hamlet's exclamation: 'Oh! that this too solid flesh would melt!' Iced water, iced porter, iced ale, iced 'aff-an-aff can't assuage Fitzflunkey's thirst. He burns; he swelters, he gasps. He prays in vain for relief; his sighs and pantings do not cool the burning air; his oft-recurring reminiscences of the moist, cool, clammy, foggy Lunnun atmosphere but serve to increase his torments."



Sipping and supping al fresco at Bacchanal is always cool.

As Mr. Fitzflunkey "waddles along, larding the lean earth," he envies "the Creole who saunters by, dressed all in loose, white garments, his neat patent leather pumps, his white socks, his light cravat, his little cane, his *cigarrito*, his Panama-looking hat with the white sack and pants, and irreproachable shirt-front, as cool as the wearer is calm - just as if both wearer and garments had stepped out of a refrigerator kind of a bandbox to take a whiff of air and a gleam of sunshine.

The sight is striking and amusing, and is almost of daily occurrence just now in our streets. The freshly imported Englishman wonders how any civilized being can live in such 'a dom-d bloody ot climate';

the Creole takes another whiff at his *cigarrito*, twirls his *moustache* and mutters:

Quel beau temps!"

That, of course, translates as "What nice weather!"



Those "Dog Days of Summer" at Dat Dog will put a smile on your face.



"Cool Zone" at Six Flags ruins in New Orleans East – maybe cool once!

As for keeping cool this summer, we can always look back to advice that was given in the *Picayune* over a century ago. An article from June 16, 1895, suggested:

“If you want for keep cool,” put in an old Creole grandma, looking provokingly fresh in a big, old-fashioned white ‘blouse volante,’ if you Americaines want to keep from git too hot, Mon Dieu, you just keep from eat too much hot food.” She continued, “You drink one good glass lemonade tree, four time day, and some orange, some pineap’ and some orgeat syro’, and you go’ne feel nice, good, ah! fresh, like some nice spring chick.”

When asked in 1986, the late, great New Orleans clarinetist Pete Fountain said “staying cool” meant heading to the “ocean breezes in Bay St. Louis”. Ocean, what ocean?

But remember, “staying cool” isn’t the same as “being cool,” even though Pete most assuredly was. A 1988 article by the late Ronnie Virgets proclaimed that a ride on the Zephyr at Pontchartrain Beach “defined cool”. He described it as a “rite of passage between being a kid and being cool.”

What’s “cool” today is different for different people. And what’s “cool” may also be what’s “hot”.



Cool view from the Hot Tin Roof Bar, atop the Pontchartrain

Up in our nation's Capitol, things can get "hot" in more ways than one. Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi brought a little "Southern charm" to the institution in 1996 by creating a tradition called "Seersucker Thursday". It was discontinued in 2012 due to political gridlock, but Louisiana's own Senator Bill Cassidy restarted the tradition in 2014. He had this to say about the return of this wonderful Southern custom:

"Seersucker is a part of American culture — born in New Orleans, but celebrated across the country."



Dr. Cassidy (center) and other senators at 2014 seersucker photo-op

Senator Cassidy entered these words into the Congressional Record on May 7, 2018:

"This uniquely American fashion has a storied history dating back to 1909. The first seersucker suit was designed by Joseph Haspel at his Broad Street facility in New Orleans, LA ... Mr. Haspel said it best, 'hot is hot, no matter what you do for a living.'"

Now that's "cool"!

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Cool and Hot"
Ned Hémard
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