New Orleans Has Something for Everyone

The food, music, and traditions of New Orleans make NAESP’s host city truly unique.

While taking in all the professional development available during your stay in New Orleans for NAESP’s convention, make sure to also experience the sites, sounds, and tastes that make it one of America’s favorite cities.
Food

Beignets: Little square doughnuts, sprinkled with powdered sugar. Enjoy them with a café au lait at Café Du Monde, located in the heart of the French Quarter.

Gumbo: A stew served over rice. Everyone has his or her own way of making it, from adding seafood instead of chicken, or andouille sausage instead of ham. There are as many variations of gumbo as there are restaurants in New Orleans.

Étouffée: The word étouffée (pronounced eh-too-fey) comes from the French term “to smother.” The best way to describe the dish is a thick stew, seasoned to perfection and full of crawfish (or shrimp, depending on the season). In some ways, it’s similar to gumbo—same types of Creole seasonings, served over rice, but with a lighter color and a very different flavor.

Muffuletta: A massive and delicious Italian cold-cut sandwich invented in 1906 by Sicilian immigrants, it has been a signature New Orleans treat ever since.

Po-Boy: New Orleans’ version of a sub sandwich or hoagie is French bread overstuffed with fried shrimp, oysters, catfish, or soft-shell crab, and topped off with any number of “fix-in’s,” such as pickles, hot sauce, lettuce, or mayonnaise.

King Cake: One of the most popular foods during Mardi Gras (some bakeries bake it year-round), the king cake is a confection made of braided Danish pastry, laced with cinnamon and iced in the Mardi Gras colors of purple (justice), green (faith), and gold (power). Hidden in each king cake is a tiny plastic baby. The person who gets the baby in his or her piece must buy the next king cake or host the next party.

Music

Jazz: New Orleans is known as the birthplace of jazz, a musical form first shaped by Storyville parlor pianists, Italian brass players, Creole musicians, and African drummers. The jazz tradition lives on in the city’s brass bands, which march the streets in funeral processions and carnival parades. You can also hear live jazz at such locales as the Palm Court Jazz Café, Donna’s, Snug Harbor, Sweet Lorraine’s, Tipitina’s, and Preservation Hall.

Cajun: The Cajun music of South Louisiana stems from the 18th century songs of the Acadians. Expelled by the British from Nova Scotia and welcomed to Louisiana, they developed a distinct sound that reflected the influence of their neighbors—Native Americans, British, Germans, French, and Creoles. Traditional Cajun music is usually performed with a fiddle, guitar, and accordion, typically in a two-step or waltz time, and sung with French lyrics. You can hear Cajun music at restaurants like Mulate’s.

Zydeco: A lively blend of Afro-Caribbean rhythms, blues, and Cajun music developed by South Louisiana Creoles, its name comes from the Creole-French pronunciation of les haricots (snap beans).

Traditions

Crawfish Boil: A variation of the backyard barbecue, a crawfish boil includes eating as much of the spicy seafood as you can.

Fais Do Do: A long evening of Cajun dancing and socializing. In the old days, adolescent girls attended under the watchful eyes of chaperones, while young males were often restricted to a holding pen. Children were put to bed at the dance, giving rise to the term fais do do, which means “go to sleep” in Cajun French.

Jazz Funeral: The practice of performing jazz music during funeral processions dates back to Africa. New Orleans brass bands are frequently called on to play slow, mournful music on the way to the cemetery, and rousing songs on their return.

Red Beans and Rice: On Mondays in New Orleans, everybody eats red beans and rice. It’s a throwback to the old Creole days when Monday was the traditional washday—you could just put the beans on the back burner and they cooked themselves while you tended to the laundry.

Second Line: A celebratory dance, accompanied by decorated umbrellas and wavy handkerchiefs. It’s a New Orleans tradition at weddings, funerals, and other festive occasions.

Sources:

NewOrleansInfo.com
NewOrleansOnline.com