

The background of the cover is a photograph of a woman, Julia Reed, standing in a courtyard. She is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved top and light-colored trousers, holding a long piece of bread. To her left is a dining table with a blue and white striped tablecloth, set with plates of food, glasses, and a white pot. The courtyard is filled with lush green plants and vines hanging from above. The building has green-painted wooden doors and shutters.

Julia Reed's New Orleans

Food, Fun, and Field Trips for Letting the Good Times Roll

Photography by
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RIZZOLI
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Seafood Gumbo

Serves 10 to 12

3 pounds medium shrimp
2 1/2 teaspoons salt, plus a generous pinch
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 pounds okra, sliced
1 pound andouille sausage, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 cups finely chopped yellow onion
1 cup finely chopped celery
1 cup finely chopped green bell pepper
1 cup chopped scallions, with tender green parts
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons tomato paste
3 bay leaves
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 teaspoon Tabasco sauce
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon Lea & Perrins Worcestershire sauce
One 16-ounce can whole tomatoes, drained and roughly chopped, liquid reserved
1 pound lump crabmeat
1 pint (2 to 3 dozen) oysters
1/4 cup finely chopped Italian parsley
Cooked white rice

I've been making this gumbo ever since I was in college and found a similar version in a Junior League cookbook, the name of which now escapes me. When I lived in New York in the 1980s and '90s, I served it along with a bucket of Popeyes fried chicken to my Yankee friends, who found both things wildly exotic. The okra added in the beginning gives the soup body, while the okra at the end provides texture. The all-important addition of andouille lends a deep flavor to the broth. If you can't find andouille, Polish sausage will do.

Remove the shrimp shells and heads. Cover and refrigerate the shrimp and place the shells and heads in a large pot. Add 8 cups water and a generous pinch of salt and bring the mixture to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium low and simmer, partially covered, for 1 hour.

Cool slightly, then strain the seafood stock through a fine-mesh strainer. Discard the heads and shells and reserve the stock. (You may skip the latter part of this step and substitute 6 to 7 cups store-bought seafood stock. Either way, you must remove the shrimp shells and heads from the raw shrimp.)

In a large heavy skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium heat and add the okra (if using frozen okra, take it out of the freezer about 15 minutes ahead of time). Sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon salt and sauté, stirring often, for 10 minutes.

Reserve the okra, wipe out the skillet, heat another tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat, and sauté the andouille until browned, about 8 minutes. Set aside.

In a large heavy pot, heat the remaining 3 tablespoons of oil over high heat. Add the flour, lower heat to medium, and stir constantly until the roux is a medium brown. Add the yellow onion, celery, and bell pepper, and sauté, stirring often, until the vegetables begin to soften, 4 to 5 minutes. Add 1/2 cup of the scallions and the garlic and cook for 3 more minutes. Stir in the tomato paste, bay leaves, thyme, Tabasco, cayenne, black pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and 2 tea-

NOTE: This dish can be made up to two days ahead of time up until the last step, in which you add the seafood. When ready to serve, bring to a gentle boil, lower the heat and continue with the final step.

spoons of salt. Stir in the tomatoes with about half their liquid and gradually stir in the reserved seafood stock. Add the sausage and okra. Bring to a boil over high heat and cover. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 30 minutes.

Remove and discard bay leaves. Stir in the shrimp and the remaining scallions and simmer for 2 minutes. Stir in the crabmeat, oysters, and parsley, simmer for 1 minute more, and remove from heat. Taste for salt and serve in bowls over rice.