



# NEW ORLEANS LAGNIAPPE

## “A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA” Y’ALL!

### GENERAL TERMINOLOGY

*New Orleans’ unique culture comes with a language all its own. As a port city, New Orleans has served as a fertile home and gateway to the Americas, from the original Choctaw inhabitants of the region to the French, Spanish and African settlers that melded to create Creole culture and food. The cultures that comprise modern New Orleans have all brought their own language and colloquialisms to the table, and the city has shaped them to form new catch-phrases. From mistranslations to mispronunciations, learn to speak like a local!*



**Banquette:** Sidewalk or elevated pathway.

**Bayou:** Choctaw for “small stream.” It’s a creek with a slow current that flows from a river or lowland lake, often through swamp areas and delta regions.

**Cajun:** Nickname for Acadians, the French-speaking people who migrated to Western Louisiana from Nova Scotia starting in 1755.

**Cities of the Dead:** New Orleans cemeteries. Because of the high water table, we spend the afterlife buried above ground instead of six feet under it. Elaborate monuments cluster together like small communities.

**Directions:** There’s no West, East, North or South in New Orleans. We head Uptown, Downtown, Riverside and Lakeside.

**Fais-do-do** (*fay-doe-doe*): Literally “Put the kids to sleep.” When Cajuns would celebrate, they brought the kids with their blankets so that the little ones could snooze while adults ate, drank and danced through the night.

**Faubourg** (*Fah-bahg* or *foe-burg*): As in “Faubourg Marigny.” Originally suburbs, they are now neighborhoods near the French Quarter.

**Gris-gris** (*gree-gree*): A voodoo good luck charm that protects the wearer from evil.

**Gumbo ya-ya:** “Everybody talking at once.”

**Isleños** (*iz-lay-nyos* or *eye-len-yos*): Literally “islanders.” In this case, Spanish settlers from the Canary Islands who began migrating to south Louisiana in 1799. Most are now fishermen, trappers and master boat builders in St. Bernard Parish.





**Jazz:** A mixture of African and Creole rhythms with European styles and instruments. Some say it was local barber Buddy Bolden who invented it in 1891.

**Krewe:** A carnival organization, as in Krewe of Rex and variation of the word “crew.” Members privately put on the balls and parades that make up Mardi Gras.

**Lagniappe** (*lan-yap*): A little something extra, like a free coffee or dessert or a few extra ounces of boudin.

**Laissez les bons temps rouler!** (*lay-zay lay bon tohn roo-lay*): “Let the good times roll.”

**Makin’ groceries:** Shopping from groceries. Its origins are a mistranslation of the French phrase for the same action.

**Neutral Ground:** A median. When Americans settled in New Orleans after the Louisiana Purchase, the Europeans and Creoles in the French Quarter were not thrilled. The Americans settled across Canal Street on the side opposite the Quarter, and the street became the “neutral ground.”

**New Orleans:** Pronounced “New or-lins” or “new or-lee-yuns” but not “naw-lins” or “new orl-eens.” Both the parish and the avenue are, however, pronounced “orl-eens.”

**Parish:** Equivalent of a county in the other 49 states.

**Pass a good time:** To live it up or party.

**Picayune:** An old Spanish coin that was 1/8 of a dollar. Connotes something small or petty.

**Pirogue:** A shallow canoe used in the bayous.

**Pro bono publico:** “For the common good,” motto of Rex, King of Carnival.

**Secondline:** The people who follow a brass band on the street while waving handkerchiefs in a circle above their heads. The second-liners also have a special shuffle step they do when following a band that is called “secondlining.”

**Streetcar:** The world’s oldest continuously operating electric street railway and now a National Historic Landmark. In 1835, a steam engine

train ran from the Vieux Carré along St. Charles Avenue to the riverbend. Eventually, the line became electric and now locals ride the lines to work on the original electric cars.

**Street names:** We’ve got some strange pronunciation. A sampling:

- Burgundy (*bur-GUN-dee*)
- Conti (*kahn-TIE*)
- Calliope (*kal-ee-OPE*)
- Melpomene (*mel-pu-MEEN*)
- Tchopitoulas (*CHOP-ih-too-liss*)
- Clio (*clee-oh* but often misread as C-L-10)

**Swamp:** A low, marshy wetland that is heavily forested and subject to flooding.

**Vieux Carré:** Literally “Old Square” or “Old Quarter.” It refers to the French Quarter, the 90 city blocks that hold about 2,700 European and Creole buildings.

**Voodoo:** From voodoo, meaning “god,” “spirit” or “insight” in the Fon language of Dahomey. Voodoo came from the West African Yoruba religion via Haiti, where African practices mingled with the Catholicism of French colonists.

**Yat:** A local denizen, so named for the Ninth Ward greeting “Where y’at?”





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## DELECTABLE TIDBITS

### CULINARY TERMINOLOGY

*When it comes to food, there's nowhere like New Orleans. Just as a melting pot of cultures created a vocabulary specific to the city, the melding of influences has created a unique cuisine. As a culinary capital of the world, New Orleans is famous for its local flavors, from gumbo to beignets. School yourself in our specialties, and be prepared to eat like a local.*



**Andouille** (anh-doo-ee): Spicy Cajun pork sausage.

**Angelo Brocato:** Home of the city's finest ice creams, gelatos and Italian pastries.

**Bananas Foster:** Brennan's first whipped up this flaming ambrosia of bananas and rum, spooned over vanilla ice cream.

**Barq's:** A great local root beer, best served in glass bottles or frosty mugs.

**Beignet** (ben-yay): Creole pastries carrés (square, like the Vieux Carré), fried to crusty perfection and generously sprinkled with powdered sugar.

**Blackened Redfish:** Highly seasoned redfish filets sizzled in a hot skillet and made famous by Cajun chef Paul Prudhomme.

**Boudin** (boo-dehn): a Cajun spicy pork sausage stuffed with onions, herbs and rice.

**Cajun vs. Creole:** Cajun food is the earthy, robust creation of Acadian (or French Canadian) fishermen and farmers in southwest Louisiana bayou country. Creole is the cosmopolitan cuisine of New Orleans, a mixture of French, African and Spanish flavors along with fresh imports.

**Chicory** (chick-or-ee): Endive roots that are roasted and ground into Louisiana coffee, including Community, French Market, Union and Luzianne. The bitter addition to our brew began during a Civil War coffee shortage as a way to stretch the supply until the blockade on the city was lifted.

**Courtbouillon** (coo-boo-yawn or coo-bee-yon): Cajun for "short soup," it is fish simmered in spicy tomato sauce.



**Crab boil** (or shrimp or crawfish boil): The aromatic blends of spice and seasonings that give local seafood their jolt. The standard brands are Zatarain's and Rex.

**Crawfish** (aka mudbugs or crawdads): Cooked with lots of crawfish boil, these succulent cousins to shrimp hold their flavor in the heads and the meat in their tails. Crawfish pies and Crawfish Monica, a creamy pasta dish, draw raves at Jazz Fest.

**Creole Cream Cheese:** Similar to France's light crème fraîche. Add a little sugar or fruit, and breakfast is served.

**Creole mustard:** More pungent than American mustard, the mustard seeds are ground coarsely into piquant nuggets rather than a bland dust.

**Dressed:** A po-boy with lettuce, tomato, pickles and mayonnaise.

**Etoufée** (*ay-too-fay*): Shrimp and crawfish "suffocated" in spicy tomato sauce and served over rice.

**French bread:** New Orleans' version of a baguette served in just about every local restaurant. The humidity creates a much spongier texture than the crusty European version.

**Gumbo:** New Orleans' and South Louisiana's signature Creole dish. Gumbo begins with okra, a vegetable of African origin, or file, Native American ground sassafras leaves) and is made with a dark roux, shellfish, sausage and is served over rice.

**Jambalaya** (*jahm-ba-lie-ya*): New Orleans' answer to Spain's paella, this rice dish makes a clean sweep of the kitchen, full of sausage, seafood and local spices.

**King Cake:** These racetrack-shaped cakes are served only between Twelfth Night (January 6, the Feast of the three Kings) and Mardi Gras, the day before Ash Wednesday. Originally a version of French brioche, they are typically decorated in purple green and gold icing or sugar. Whoever gets the piece with the tiny plastic baby or bean must throw the next party and serve the next cake.

**Mirliton** (*mer-lih-tawn* or *mil-ih-tawn*): A tropical, pear-shaped squash. Louisianans love to stuff them with seafood, meats and cheese. Elsewhere, they're called vegetable pears, chayotes, chochos or christophines.

**Muffuletta:** It's not a sandwich – it's a meal packed into a pizza-sized Italian bun that includes salami, ham and provolone topped with olive relish. Central Grocery, a Sicilian import store, invented it a century ago to satisfy hungry Italians at the docks.

**Oysters:** Eating them raw on the halfshell still separates the natives from the tourists. However, Oysters Rockefeller was invented at Antoine's Restaurant here in New Orleans, and charbroiled oysters at Drago's are also favorite preparations.

**Po-boy:** Like a submarine sandwich but on French bread and usually involving roast beef debris or fried seafood. They were created when streetcar workers went on strike and local bakers provided sandwiches for those "poor boys."

**Roux:** Gravy base for gumbo made by browning flour in fat (either oil or butter).

**Zapp's:** Local potato chips in that pair perfectly with a Barq's and a po-boy.