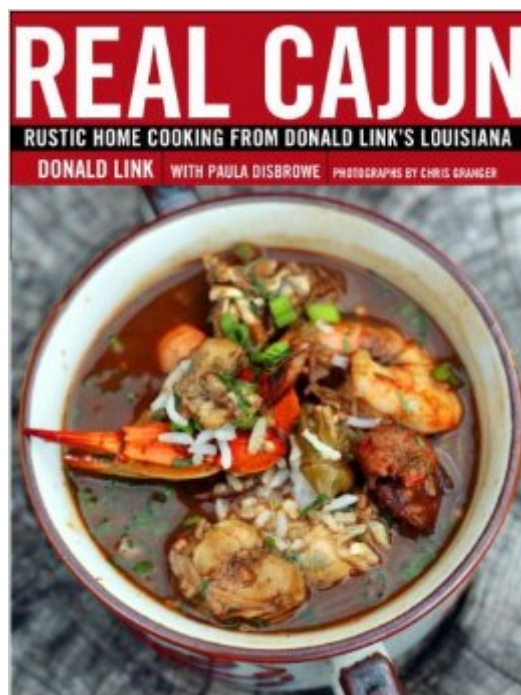


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Real Cajun: Rustic Home Cooking From Donald Link's Louisiana



Synopsis

An untamed region teeming with snakes, alligators, and snapping turtles, with sausage and cracklins sold at every gas station, Cajun Country is a world unto itself. The heart of this area—the Acadiana region of Louisiana—is a tough land that funnels its spirit into the local cuisine. You can't find more delicious, rustic, and satisfying country cooking than the dirty rice, spicy sausage, and fresh crawfish that this area is known for. It takes a homegrown guide to show us around the back roads of this particularly unique region, and in *Real Cajun*, James Beard Award-winning chef Donald Link shares his own rough-and-tumble stories of living, cooking, and eating in Cajun Country. Link takes us on an expedition to the swamps and smokehouses and the music festivals, funerals, and holiday celebrations, but, more important, reveals the fish fries, étouffées, and pots of Granny's seafood gumbo that always accompany them. The food now famous at Link's New Orleans-based restaurants, Cochon and Herbsaint, has roots in the family dishes and traditions that he shares in this book. You'll find recipes for Seafood Gumbo, Smothered Pork Roast over Rice, Baked Oysters with Herbsaint Hollandaise, Louisiana Crawfish Boudin, quick and easy Flaky Buttermilk Biscuits with Fig-Ginger Preserves, Bourbon-Soaked Bread Pudding with White and Dark Chocolate, and Blueberry Ice Cream made with fresh summer berries. Link throws in a few lagniappes to give you an idea of life in the bayou, such as strategies for a great trip to Jazz Fest, a what-not-to-do instructional on catching turtles, and all you ever (or never) wanted to know about boudin sausage. Colorful personal essays enrich every recipe and introduce his grandfather and friends as they fish, shrimp, hunt, and dance. From the backyards where crawfish boils reign as the greatest of outdoor events to the white tablecloths of Link's famed restaurants, *Real Cajun* takes you on a rollicking and inspiring tour of this wild part of America and shares the soulful recipes that capture its irrepressible spirit.

Book Information

Hardcover: 256 pages

Publisher: Clarkson Potter; First Edition edition (April 21, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0307395812

ISBN-13: 978-0307395818

Product Dimensions: 7.7 x 1 x 10.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (105 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #69,353 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Regional & International > U.S. Regional > Cajun & Creole #22 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Baking > Biscuits, Muffins & Scones #52 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking by Ingredient > Meat & Game > Meats

Customer Reviews

My sister wanted "a gumbo cookbook;" knowing a few things about Cajun/Creole cooking, I figured I could cover that one. Visiting a bookstore, I spent a good 20 minutes reading a lot of the recipes and some of the commentary... and I was severely impressed. It makes plain the point that Cajun cooking is far from pretentious, and suggests certain types of paprika and other spices with the assurance that whatever says "paprika" in the grocery store will work fine. There's a lot of very practical advice on basic ideas like roux (and some reasoning for using butter in some cases and oil in others), three really great gumbo recipes, a good jambalaya recipe, even tasso, a simple sausage recipe, and at least three recipes that depend on homemade boudin -- for which he provides what seems to be a pretty good recipe and technique. There is cornbread. The recipes are great, the text is very honest and... earthy... and the whole thing just exudes "this is what works, it's not that complicated, and this is how to do it." I bought my sister a copy for her birthday (didn't leave myself time to wait for shipping), and after wrapping it, used the web browser in my cell phone to hit and buy myself a copy -- as well as a cast iron pan, which I've needed for a while, and of which this book makes excellent use. This is right up there with James Peterson's 'Sauces' in terms of useful culinary references. It's a solid, enthusiastic 5/5.

I won't drag this out, I cook Cajun and Creole foods nearly exclusively. This book is the best in my collection. I met Chef Link in his Butcher establishment and he is quietly friendly, and non-pretentious. So is his book. The recipes are authentic and exciting at the same time. The story of making his grandmother's gumbo, for his family, after her death is indicative of the tone and heart of this book. It is amazing. Chef, you are a culinary treasure. RouxBDo

I love this book. When I read it I really wished that I had a childhood just like Chef Link's, with a grandfather who loved to cook and lots of food-loving extended family. I made several of the recipes over Thanksgiving and Christmas. They all turned out well, but I do have a few comments. The very first recipe is for bacon, which I actually made for Christmas presents. I purchased 30 pounds of Kurobuta pork belly and made the recipe exactly as written. The bacon turned out more a lot more

salty than I expected. It was delicious in flavoring applications, like soup or greens, but on its own it was too salty to eat more than one slice by itself and this is from someone who LOVES salty food. Next time I think I'll cure for half the stated time and see how it turns out. Maybe I just picked the recipes that he seemed the most nostalgic about but the recipes I made for Christmas all required extra elements to be made before starting the main recipe. For instance, the "Chocolate Yummy" requires you to make 1) pecan shortbread, 2) chocolate pudding and 3) whipped cream before you assemble your Chocolate Yummy with softened cream cheese and the other three elements. It was totally delicious and worth the effort, but it took me over two hours to make this. Also, I don't know if Chef Link just has a much hotter stove than I do, but after making two recipes from the book, I automatically started cranking my heat higher than the recipe stated. If he said medium, I went to medium high, if he said medium high, I turned up the gas to full high. Those things aside, I really enjoy making Chef Link's recipes and the love and care you need to expend making this food is obvious to anyone lucky enough to eat it.

I was born and raised in the heart of Cajun Country. St. Martinville, La. This book captures the essence of Real Cajun Cooking just as it's titled. I've been cooking since I was a kid in our commercial kitchen and still do so for a living. Not only a great book, it's a great read!

This book was released coincidental with my last visit to New Orleans. Cochon has become my favourite restaurant there... and since my last visit "Butcher" has opened to compliment the already excellent homestyle fare available at Cochon. Thanks to Chef Link for sharing his excellent heart-warming cuisine with the rest of us! I'm looking forward to digging into this book and creating a little Cajun love up here in Canada! Probably the best souvenir of my visit to New Orleans yet... (The recipes are well-written and look like they are simple enough for the home cook. The background family stories are charming and add a very special southern ambience. I would definitely recommend that this book be added to your culinary library... File it under "comfort")

After visiting Cochon and Butcher and having some of the best charcuterie I've ever eaten, I couldn't resist this book.. Wise decision! REAL CAJUN is not only well-written and charming, it is distinctly empowering. I never expected that I might ever consider making my own bacon. I had no idea that it was at all within the realm of possibility of a nonprofessional. Nor did I ever think that I might make my own sausages. I have now persuaded my local WholeFood to GIVE me sausage casings, and I'm ready to go at it. Thank you, Chef Link! His recipes are rock-solid, and so carefully drawn up that

a whole range of well-prepared dishes can be tackled by even a cook just recently introduced to the kitchen. Simple foods become extraordinary - for example his recipe for Post-Katrina Meatloaf is terrific. While I changed breadcrumbs to pancko crumbs (a real improvement), this recipe worked so well because of the careful simplicity with which it was developed. Precooking the veggies, plus the introduction of his beloved bacon turn this recipe from a tired kitchen warhorse into a glorious act of ...cuisine! For those of us who don't live anywhere near New Orleans, a most useful product availability list turned me into someone who's considering a crawfish feast, possibly even featuring crawfish boudin or crawfish sausage homemade from Link's recipes. I didn't know, before reading his cookbook that crawfish and other local Louisiana products could be successfully ordered and sent cross-country. Chef Link makes his recipes simple, uncluttered and delicious. What a wonderful treat for the whole country! Go for it.

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