

This time of year, we always rent a place at the beach for a family-filled week. Traditionally, I make seafood gumbo to show off my homemade andouille sausage.

My secret ingredient...? Thanks for asking. It's best to use an iron pot and a whisk or wooden spoon, but usually the rental place has only plastic spoons. While making the roux, the spoon gradually melts into the oil, adding a certain body to the dish. ...but not to worry- - four out of five chemical companies swear that their plastic is non-toxic. Hey! It's never hurt me, and I'm as normal as... well... Do the family a favor, and stop on the way and buy a wooden spoon or whisk, just in case, okay?

The following recipe was based on one by the late Paul Prudhomme. Over the years, our family has subjected it to a number of revisions. You can make this in a gluten-free, probably historic way by using corn meal (fine ground, like masa, is best) instead of the usual wheat flour. Watch it carefully- - the color change while cooking is a bit more subtle. Don't over-cook it.

### **Cajun Seafood Gumbo with Andouille Sausage**

*(feeds 10 as a main dish, 20 as an appetizer)*

#### **Ingredients**

- Cajun "Holy Trinity":
  - 2 cups chopped onions
  - 1-1/2 cups chopped green bell peppers
  - 1 cup chopped celery
- Seasoning Mix: Use 2 Tbsp store-bought Cajun gumbo spices or, better, the following:
  - 2 bay leaves
  - 2 tsp salt
  - ½ tsp white pepper
  - ¼ to ½ tsp cayenne pepper
  - ½ tsp black pepper
  - ½ tsp dried thyme leaves
  - ¼ tsp dried oregano leaves
- Roux:
  - ¾ cup vegetable oil (high smoke point oil, such as peanut or safflower is best, butter is worst)
  - ¾ cup fine-ground yellow corn masa harina (or wheat flour)
- 1 Tbsp minced garlic
- 5-1/2 cups seafood stock (make it with shrimp hulls, fish heads, or whatever) In a pinch, you can substitute chicken stock.
- 1 lb andouille sausage (see our SausagesWest.com recipes), sliced thick
- 1 lb medium peeled shrimp (or 1-1/2 lbs shell-on shrimp)
- (optional) 1 dozen oysters wit liquor
- (optional) ¾ lb crabmeat
- 1 lb fish fillets, cubed (your choice, firm-flesh white meat)

- (optional) 1 # cut okra
- Cooked rice

**Method:**

Chop up the “Holy Trinity” ingredients and set aside. Mix up the seasoning and set aside.

Heat the oil in preferably a large iron skillet. When it begins to smoke, gradually sprinkle in the cornmeal or flour, stirring/whisking and scraping the pan constantly. Continue cooking and stirring, five minutes or so, until the roux (a.k.a. Cajun napalm) darkens. (If black flakes form, you’ll need to start over. You didn’t scrape the pan enough.)

Add half the “Trinity,” stirring for a minute. Then add the remaining “Trinity” and stir for another two minutes or so. Stir in the seasoning and stir for another couple of minutes. Add the garlic, stir for a minute, then cut off the heat.

Bring the seafood stock to a boil. Add the roux mixture slowly, stirring and dissolving as you go. Return to a boil, then add the andouille and the okra. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Return to boiling, then add the seafood. As soon as it boils, cut off the heat. Skim any excess oil.

Serve immediately, giving each person ¼ cup cooked rice in a soup bowl, adding a cup of gumbo on top. Many cooks like to thicken the mixture with a bit of gumbo file (powdered sassafras leaves) before dishing out. Most people like to add their own Louisiana hot sauce to taste.