



Foreword

When I come to New Orleans I check into my hotel and then go to Arnaud's. If I'm thinking straight, I go to Arnaud's before I check into the hotel and the maître d' hides my bags behind the front desk.

I go because Arnaud's celebrates the classics. Which is why it is one.

My first meal at Arnaud's was during the Louisiana World's Fair in 1984. Lunch was several dozen raw oysters followed by Shrimp Arnaud followed by Crabmeat Imperial—jumbo lumps of it and no filler. Honest food carefully prepared and elegantly presented. I sighed over my Café Brulôt. I was a fan.

Some of the Creole dishes on Arnaud's menu have been there for 85 years. According to proprietor Archie Casbarian, there never was a good reason to remove them. There are new things now too, but change is slow to come at Arnaud's. For which we may all be grateful.

What the Casbarian family has done is taken a grand old lady and returned to her all her joie de vivre. Certainly they gave her a face lift—perhaps more than a polite nip and tuck—but they have preserved what makes Arnaud's a New Orleans institution.

Few restaurants survive the first year. Even fewer make it to the five-year mark. When a restaurant celebrates 85 and is still going strong, there's something right going on. One right thing is that Arnaud's has always been a family affair. Still is. Jane and Archie Casbarian have owned it for the last 25 years. Not surprisingly, a new generation of them is now involved.

I visit Arnaud's as often as I can and have been lucky enough to become friends with Jane and Archie. There are no better reasons to come to New Orleans. Good friends. Good food.

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