



## INTRODUCTION

“STRESSED SPELLED BACKWARDS IS DESSERTS. COINCIDENCE? I THINK NOT!”

*-Author Unknown*

There's a reason we call it The Big Easy. We don't like stress. We do like desserts. In fact, nothing is more New Orleans than a sweet memory.

We Orleanians celebrate at lunch and dinner—and we crown our celebrations. An important meal isn't complete without the grand finale of a classic dessert. Even an unimportant meal (if there is such a thing) demands some dessert.

Not that you need a meal to celebrate dessert.

During the '50s and '60s, there was a patisserie on Royal Street in the French Quarter. The most delectable array of confections would wink at me through glass cases; it was delicious agony to settle on just one. After I'd make my choice, I'd take it, paired with a cup of hot chocolate or café au lait, to the lush courtyard behind the shop. An exquisite, almost secret sweetness. Under the trees. In the middle of the morning. Or afternoon.

That too is New Orleans.

This book is a collection of some of my favorite dessert recipes from world-renowned New Orleans restaurants and chefs, plus some from cherished, talented friends. They include the simple glory of Sister Mary's Pecan Pralines, Emeril's stunning Banana Cream Pie, Arnaud's Crème Brûlée, Brennan's flaming Bananas Foster, Bread Puddings, or the elegant grace of Crozier's Floating Island.

As you know, New Orleans' culinary heritage is based on its Spanish, French, Italian, Caribbean, African, Indian and German roots. Each group brought something to the party, and we know we are the better for it, which is why I've also included the stories and legends behind the recipes.

In New Orleans, we're so proud of our heritage we eat it every day.

The thing about desserts is this: Not only do they make people happy, they allow cooks to strut their stuff. Jewel-toned fruits, bright glazes and garnishes offer a colorful palette for creativity.

Done right, a New Orleans dessert will bring you to your knees.

Of course, there's a difference between what a professional makes and making your own. Pastry chefs, bakers, confectioners, chocolatières, and pâtisseries are royalty in the culinary world, and, of necessity, a bunch of persnickety perfectionists.

Who else would invest so much talent and time—and so many precious ingredients—in order to create a small masterpiece that might be destined to disappear in a single bite?

No matter. These recipes aren't written for the professional, although they may make you look like one. Each recipe has been home-kitchen tested by real people who are not chefs in real life.

A recipe straight from a chef or restaurant without testing is illegal around here. Chef's have experience, knowledge, and special tricks. We want you to be happy, look good, and duplicate simply and relatively easily a famous recipe.

Dessert-making is much easier when following a few basic rules.

Arrange a time when there are no other distractions. Read the recipe carefully. Read the recipe again. Gather the ingredients. Avoid substitutions. Assemble the equipment and (this is important) take the time to measure everything into separate bowls and containers before cooking anything.

Chefs refer to this procedure as preparing the *mise en place*. The practice—and the phrase—are easy to remember if you think of it as having your mess in place. Sound complicated? It isn't. Trust me on this one.

Stressed? No, desserts.

Now turn on the music, pour yourself a glass of something, and begin making your own sweet New Orleans memories.

*- Kit Wohl*



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