

**Chapter 1 : [PDF/ePub Download] caribbean without borders eBook**

*Caribbean Without Borders, San Juan, Puerto Rico. likes. 7th Graduate Student Conference: Reframing Perceptions of the Greater Caribbean in Popular.*

But he has already recognized the first of many connections to the cooking of his native Louisiana. An intense chef with an aquiline nose and a taste for B-movie comedies, Link grew up on the water-girded prairies west of New Orleans in Lake Charles, where his family has long farmed rice and crawfish. Today he directs five New Orleans restaurants, including Cochon, famous for boudin sausage gorged with pork and rice, and Herbsaint, his French-inspired flagship, where duck confit with dirty rice is the money dish. Link has traveled to Guadeloupe, a French department in the Lesser Antilles, to untangle the knotted roots and branches of Creole cuisine. Originally used by colonizers to refer to people born in the New World, the term Creole can also be applied to racial identity, language, architecture, and, yes, cooking. Traveling the Caribbean, from the Dominican Republic to St. Lucia, over the past few years, Link has embraced a broader definition of that term that also encompasses the Cajun cooking of his youth and the cooking of Guadeloupe and other Caribbean islands. All are Creole cuisines, Link says, born of the sixteenth century when native, West African, and European cultures first bonded to create a new global system of ingredients and dishes. Peter Frank Edwards

From left: The birth of Creole cuisine was ugly: That truth is at the heart of this beautiful cuisine. Columbus landed in Guadeloupe, among mangrove swamps and bamboo thickets and sugar-sand beaches, on his second trip to the Americas, in Native resistance to colonization was fierce. More than a hundred years passed before France established permanent settlements. During the seventeenth century, the French killed off or drove away natives to plant stands of towering cane and build fire-belching sugar refineries. During the nineteenth century, when colonial powers seasawed and colonized people won freedom, the French fought here to preserve slavery. Public sculptures tell the story, too: Solitude, a pregnant woman of African descent who helped lead the fight against French re-enslavement of these islands, stands tall on a monument-lined avenue. Facing sure defeat in that same struggle, he torched a gunpowder magazine, committing suicide while slaying hundreds of French troops. Lee from high atop a traffic circle along St. Charles Avenue, and Link wants to see how formerly enslaved people here have used their power to remember the past. At the center of the roundabout, the revolutionary leader and his cohort, rendered in marble, lock arms and stare forward, defiant. Much like the cooking of Louisiana, the foods of Guadeloupe reflect the impacts of colonization and cultural exchange. He devours bowls of beans and rice that taste like they were lifted from back-of-town New Orleans. Boudin, piped with minced conch and moist bread crumbs, eaten at a lean-to in the cane fields on our second day of rambling, is reminiscent of recent Cajun variations stuffed with rice and crawfish. Snacks of accras, fritters flecked with salt cod savored at Evelyne, a dockside restaurant on the road to our beach hotel in the community of Le Gosier, suggest Portuguese trade in dried fish and West African skill in frying. As frogs chirp and fireworks light the night sky, he thinks of how much this land, far from Louisiana, sounds and tastes like home. Before enslaved people began to win their freedom in the Caribbean in the early s, the Creole table was easier to define, Link says, and the connections between the Caribbean and Louisiana were easier to make. Signature dishes included callaloo, a stew of greens, in St. And asopao, a gumbo kin, in Puerto Rico. During the middle years of the nineteenth century, sugar growers in the United States recommitted to slavery. Caribbean plantation owners took a different tack, importing indentured laborers from other parts of the world. After the enslavement of Africans ended in Guadeloupe in , workers from India arrived to harvest cane fields and work sugar mills. So does the dress of the female cooks of African descent who sustain the cooking of Guadeloupe. Members of social aid and pleasure clubs in New Orleans, famous for dressing in outlandish costumes and parading the streets, band together in comparable ways. Now the festival centers on a ceremonial August mass, when a Catholic priest confers the blessings of Saint Laurent, patron saint of cooks. Wearing madras tignons on their heads, the women wrap themselves in white skirts. Around their waists, they tie royal-blue aprons, embroidered with rabbits, fish, and other ingredients, accessorized with bright tin trinkets shaped like box graters, trivets, and grills. High heels clicking on tile, the women exit the mass as

video crews crowd the plaza and a trombone shout band bleats. The message embedded in the moment is clear: Women have sustained Guadeloupe. And women have sustained Creole cuisine. Southerners are now awakening to the vital role that female cooks of African descent have played in cultural life. In Guadeloupe, formal recognition of their work spans more than a century. Washing clothes in the early s, Deris bought her freedom and that home. Working the space where she scrubbed the blouses and drawers of the gentry, Magnat cooks dishes that recall the mid-eighteenth-century Paris moment when the first restaurants emerged. Back then, restorative soups were central to menus. Today Magnat serves eight soups. From a battery of hot boxes atop the stove, he ladles out a liver soup, sweetened with squash and spiked with pickled capers. Piebald sea snails float in a clear glass bowl of onion-threaded broth. Head-on shrimp, antennae reaching toward the ceiling, bob in fish stock. Scotch bonnet peppers add a sneaky heat to a vegetable puree. Tight white dumplings drift in an oxtail broth. Outside, a man walks the narrow streets, selling live spiny lobsters from a croker sack. In the back room, a family reunion draws a crowd from Angola and Paris. Coursing Guadeloupe, we try various boudins, eating each nub with a douse of onion and vinegar that locals call sauce chien. Peter Frank Edwards Locals cool off at a roadside waterfall. Boudin is omnipresent here. But even as we begin to worry through our plans for departure, Link has yet to identify his platonic ideal. On Sunday morning, hours before our crew gathers at the airport, we drive east from Le Gosier along a narrow road that hugs the seawall. In the town of Sainte-Anne, we find what Link has been looking for. The scene is idyllic: Down the street, a coconut vendor machetes fruit for customers who squat on stools to spoon creamy white meat from splintered shells. Beneath a tarp strung from a pickup truck cab, a man in a white smock feeds cane into a roller mill as sweet green juice sluices into a bucket and a pile of bagasse masses at his feet. At a stand by the seawall, a woman from Mauritius wearing a madras tignon sells accras and fruit juices and flirts with passersby. His green papaya boudin tastes slightly vegetal. His pumpkin boudin evokes an extruded squash casserole. This is the food, at once traditional and modern, that lured Link to fly south. Creole exchanges made this place and these sausages, just as they made the boudin on which Link built his reputation. Link thought his Creole quest might end here in Guadeloupe, where the French culinary imprint is comparable to Cajun Country. Traveling the Caribbean, he had already tasted his way through marriages of Spanish and West African cookery. That might compel him to expand his definition of Creole to include South America. That might inspire him to travel to Cartagena. Before we drive to the airport, Sunday lunch at La Porte des Indes, an open-air restaurant on the southeastern coast of Grande-Terre, cross-beamed with mahogany and decorated with bejeweled saris, delivers a final taste of the creolized cultures that tether Louisiana and Guadeloupe. But he knows he has to go. As a native of Louisiana, called to cook and speak for his place, Link wants to get this right.

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