



Because I write mysteries set in southern Louisiana and include a few Cajun-inspired recipes, people assume I'm a Cajun cooking expert. I'm not! But way more importantly, I know how to make people *think* I am. I know how to find the best mixes and easiest recipes. So welcome to my Cheat Sheet, where I'll show you how to throw the best Cajun party for the least amount of work!

Ellen ☺

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OYSTER SOUP

(Serves 6-8)

Ingredients:

- 8 Tsp. butter
- 1 bunch scallions, chopped
- ½ cup finely chopped parsley
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 3 Tsp. flour
- 1 cup oyster liquid
- 1 quart milk
- 3 dozen oysters, cut in thirds (you can get them at any grocery store)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

Sauté onions and celery in butter, add parsley, and cook 2 minutes. Blend in flour, stirring constantly. Don't let it brown! Add oyster liquid and milk, and stir, stir, stir. Cook slowly over LOW heat for 30 minutes, and again – stir! Before serving, add the oysters and cook for 5 minutes.

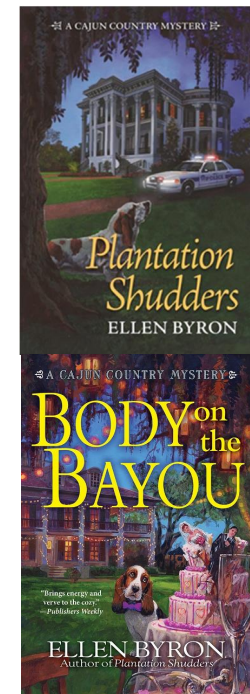
BOURBON PECAN BREAD PUDDING

Unfortunately, I don't have room to include the recipe from my book. So just buy pre-made bread pudding, mix up some butter, brown sugar, bourbon, and pecans, dot the mixture on the pudding, and warm it up!

THE LAISSEZ
GIRL'S GUIDE TO
EASY CAJUN
ENTERTAINING!

From Ellen Byron,
author of

THE CAJUN COUNTRY MYSTERIES



TOP 10 CAJUN ENTERTAINING TIPS

1) **Go to the grocery store and buy a box of jambalaya rice** (I'm partial to Zatarain's) and a pound of anything you want to throw into it: chicken, shrimp, Andouille sausage, or all three. Also buy a jar of Cajun spice; any will do, although Tony Chachere's is a personal favorite. If you want to impress people with my easy oyster soup recipe, make sure you buy the ingredients for that, too. (I've included the recipe.)

2) **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR LOUISIANA-INSPIRED COCKTAILS!** This is in all-caps for a reason. It is by far the most important ingredient for a successful Cajun party. Or any party, for that matter. Here are some go-to "Luzianne" drinks: Sazerac, Brandy Milk Punch, Ramos Gin Fizz, and Hurricane.

3) **Make this three-course meal:** Oyster Soup, Jambalaya, and Bourbon Pecan Bread Pudding. The most effort you will put into the evening is making dessert, which is as it should be.

4) **Greet your guests in a gimmicky apron** - it sells that you're a pro because why else would you be advertising on a ridiculous apron? Exhibit total self-confidence and you'll instill self-doubt in the most skeptical of guests.

5) **Gift your guests** with cheap Mardi Gras bead necklaces (available at Party City and its ilk), and make sure Cajun or Zydeco music is blasting from the Bose speakers. Oh, and say "laissez les bons temps rouler!" a lot. Everyone in Louisiana does, so why not sound like you're a native, or native-adjacent? Commitment to the theme reinforces your fake expertise.

6) **Serve the world's easiest hors d'oeuvres** by adding that Tony Chachere's Cajun Spice to cream cheese, putting a dollop of cheese on half a red potato, and topping it with half a green olive. Finis!

7) **Need more appetizers?** Although Cajun food is not necessarily spicy (you can thank Paul Prudhomme for creating that myth), if you put a little cayenne pepper on anything and *tell* people it's Cajun, they will instantly believe you. So sprinkle a little of the hot stuff on whatever pre-made appetizers you buy from Trader Joe's. And put a bottle of McIlhenny's Tabasco Sauce next to them just to seal the deal.

8) **Remember those drinks? Make them strong!** The stronger the cocktails, the weaker the food can be. Liquor up your guests, and they won't notice that empty box of Zatarain's in the recycle bin!

9) **Cut warmed-up French bread** in diagonal slices, and place on the table. It should be store-bought. Use the time you save making your own bread to test those cocktail recipes.

10) **Finish the night with chicory coffee.** You're on your own with this. I don't drink coffee, so I have no idea how to make it. I do know that this is super bitter, and many non-natives despise it, but that works in your favor. As guests pretend to like the coffee, they'll be thinking, "Wow, for my hostess to serve something this foul means she really knows what she's doing."

RECIPES WORLD'S EASIEST JAMBALAYA (Serves 6-8)

Ingredients:

A box of Zatarain's Jambalaya Rice, Original

2 ½ cups of water

A pound (or more) of whatever you want to throw in, like chicken, shrimp or sausage

Instructions: Follow the instructions on the box to make the rice. Throw in your meat. Stir it up. That's it!

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