



OUT OF THE WAY EATS

by Heather Berry

Located in the heart of Cape Girardeau's historic district, the nondescript exterior Broussard's

Cajun Cuisine might make you wonder if you've stopped at the right place. But once you step inside, the mouth-watering aromas wafting from the kitchen, along with the colorfully painted New Orleans wall murals and Cajun music tell you you're definitely in the right place for a meal with a little kick.

Originally launched by Louisiana transplants Barron and Kathy Broussard, the restaurant became a hit with locals. Twenty-three years later, Hunter and Stephanie Clark are proud to continue the wonderful tradition of Cajun-Creole cuisine the Broussards brought to the southeastern Missouri town long ago.

"Many of the recipes we use are Barron's originals," says Hunter. "A lot of Cajun people tell us some of our dishes are just like their grandma made. I really don't think we could get a much better compliment."

Hunter, whose background includes opening restaurants for chains such as Shoney's and Captain D's, worked at Broussard's in the early '90s when Dennis Stockard owned the eatery. Hunter says the fact that it's always been locally owned was one reason he and his wife purchased Broussard's in 2004.

"We have people from all across the United States who specifically plan their trips so they can stop here to eat," says Hunter.

If you have an ahnvee (pronounced "auh vee," which is Cajun French for "a craving or hankering") for a little lagniappe (lan yap, meaning "something extra"), Broussard's is the perfect choice for a meal.

If you think you don't have a lot of food choices here, think again. You'll want to take your time to read the entire menu before making a decision.

The appetizer section alone offers 18 delicious options. Start your meal with something as tame as a spinach artichoke dip or an onion blossom, or be a bit more adventurous and try popcorn crawfish, jumbo Cajun hot wings or a dozen Gulf oysters. Got a group with you? Then you might try the Felix Sampler that includes gator tails, golden fried crawfish, fried clams and Broussard's special cocktail sauce.

According to Hunter, people

Broussard's

Some of the best Cajun cuisine north of the bayou



Hunter Clark, owner of Broussard's Cajun Cuisine, holds a plate of peel-and-eat crawfish or "mudbugs" as they're often called. Clark says crawfish are a popular choice with patrons.

who've never tried Cajun cuisine often have to overcome the idea that the food is always spicy.

"Once they try a dish and realize it's not burning their tongues, they usually become repeat customers," says Hunter.

If you've never tried Cajun cookin' before, it's probably best, Hunter says, to order the "1/2 & 1/2." Diners may choose one of Broussard's popular crawfish, shrimp, chicken or alligator étouffées and one fried selection, which is served with French bread and a salad. An étouffée is a dense, rich dish with a meat served in a spicy sauce and poured over white rice — and they're delicious.

Other entrée choices include the tomato-based shrimp creole, seafood gumbo with its smoky roux (a thick sauce made from butter and flour), the well-spiced jambalaya, a plate of slow-cooked red beans and rice or an oyster po' boy sandwich.

Can't stomach your food too spicy? The kitchen can prepare several dishes with little or no spice upon request.

"And if you want it Cajun hot, we can do that, too," says Hunter. "We'll just keep bringing you something to drink."

If you just happen to be along for the ride with a group and don't want Cajun food, there are plenty of other choices for you. Grilled chicken, salmon or swordfish might be a selection. Or absolutely superb boneless catfish fillets that have been lightly breaded in Broussard's own seasoning mix are another tasty choice. Make sure you try the hush puppies, too. And while Broussard's is known for its spicier fare, its steaks have been said to rival any in town.

If you're pinching pennies, Broussard's offers lunch-only specials, with nearly 20 menu options for under \$10. From catfish fillets and fries, baked potatoes stuffed with your choice of étouffée or a chicken, crawfish or shrimp stir-fry, this eatery gives you ample servings for your bucks.

"We don't have lots of dessert options, but what we do have is delicious," says Hunter. "Personally, I'm addicted to chocolate, so my favorite is the Mississippi Mud Cake we make here."

The other two dessert choices are a bread pudding with rum sauce also made at Broussard's and a cheesecake they purchase locally at My Daddy's Cheesecake.

So the next time you're in southeast Missouri, head on over to Broussard's Cajun Cuisine and "laissez le bon temps roulet" — "let the good times roll!"

Broussard's Cajun Cuisine

Specialties: Chicken, shrimp, crawfish or alligator étouffée; spicy jambalaya; shrimp and crabmeat gumbo; and creole-seasoned catfish fillets. Be sure to try the homemade Mississippi mud cake, bread pudding with rum sauce or cheesecake, too.

Price: Appetizers start at \$5.79; entrées, \$5.99 to \$21.99; homemade desserts, \$3.99. Cash and all major credit cards accepted.

Details: Open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Smoking in bar only. Seats 55. Reservations required for eight or more. Catering available.

Directions: Located at 120 N. Main in Cape Girardeau, 100 miles south of St. Louis on Interstate 55.

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