

Madame Begue's Breakfast Menus for a Week.

MONDAY

Toast Bread Omelet
Broiled Ham *Potatoes with White Sauce*
Jambalaya of Chicken and Ham
Roast Turkey
Mayonaise of Celery and Shrimps
Fruit *Coffee*

TUESDAY

Chicken a la Creole
Kidney with Tomato Sauce *Veal Omelet*
Mayonaise of Fish *Stuffed Tomatoes*
Pineapple with Port Wine *Coffee*

WEDNESDAY

Blanquette of Veal
Spaghetti with Shrimps *Ham Omelet*
Liver a la Begue *Roast Duck*
Strawberries with Madeira Wine *Coffee*

THURSDAY

Broiled Beefsteak *Sweetbread Omelet*
Court Bouillon *Fried Eggplant*
Broiled Sausage *Anchovy Salad*
Fruit *Coffee*

FRIDAY

Turtle Soup *Fish with Tomato Sauce*
Potato Omelet *Stuffed Eggs*
Jambalaya of Rice and Shrimps
Fruit *Coffee*

SATURDAY

Mutton Feet with Creole Sauce
Oyster Omelet *Snails*
Liver a la Begue *Egg Salad*
Fruit *Coffee*

SUNDAY

Bouchées a la Reine *Creamed Cauliflower*
Veal Omelet *Eggs with Tomato Sauce*
Eggplant with Rice and Ham
Roast Turkey stuffed with Truffles
Fruit *Nuts* *Coffee*

MADAME BÉGUÉ'S CREOLE

❧ COOK BOOK ❧

WHILE it has been claimed that Paris is the only rival to New Orleans in the art of preparing food for the table, certain gourmets, those who have literally eaten their way around the world, vehemently declare that the talented chefs of the Crescent City are superior in many ways to those of the famous French city—that the old-time cooks of old New Orleans prepared viands in such a manner as to merit the name Art in cookery.

Cooking in New Orleans has always had a cachet all its own: “C'est la cuisine Créole.” Although the delicacy and artistry of the French school predominates through it, New Orleans cookery is also noted for the peppery piquancy and tang that reveals a Spanish influence, and the use of certain oils gives a hint of Italian influence. Graduates of French cooking schools of Paris and Marseilles, those who learned their art in the Spanish schools of Madrid and Barcelona, and those of the Italian cooking schools, after coming to the Franco-American city on the banks of the Mississippi joined the native natural

cooks in making viands served at restaurants in the Vieux Carré known throughout the world. In such fashion did the native cook absorb the precepts of the Old World chefs and, as a consequence, we had, and have, Creole Cookery.

From kitchens to dining rooms, from stove to table, culinary creations were born with suitable reverence. Many names are revered in New Orleans for the tempting dishes they have served a discriminating clientele for generations. Their dishes became of world-wide importance, and the restaurants where they were concocted became quiet shrines to Epicurus—temples consecrated to the Art of cooking, where sauces were blended with the same deftness with which a poet blends words to produce a perfect sonnet.

Consequently, revered through the years have been the names of Antoine Alciatore, la Louisiane Lecourt, Astrido, Moreau, Victor Bero, Galatoire, Arnaud, Broussard, and Hippolyte Bégué and his talented wife—she who is still gratefully remembered as “Madame Bégué.” Many of these distinguished names have disappeared, a few still remain over entrance ways where descendants carry on the traditions, and the good food, of the past. Unfortunately many of these wizards of the kitchen took their prize recipes with them, a few passed them on to children and grandchildren, in a few instances such recipes of old Creole cookery have been lost for years and only lately recovered.

Opposite the famous French Market of old New Orleans, and only a block away from where General Andrew Jackson in the old Place d’Armes sits in eternal politeness on his rearing battle charger, is a modest brick building occupying

the downtown corner of Decatur and Madison Streets. It was here, many years ago in a low ceilinged room in its second story, that visitors to New Orleans flocked to partake of one of the restaurant's celebrated "breakfasts." A gargantuan feast that began at 11:00 o'clock in the morning and never ended until about 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

This was "Madame Bégue's" and it was here that her name became famous—it was here that Mme. Bégue cooked meals that could be procured nowhere else—even in old New Orleans.

A BREAKFAST AT MADAME BÉGUÉ'S

THIRTY years ago the passing of the animating spirit, and the goddess of the kitchen, of this celebrated and unique restaurant was bewailed not only in New Orleans but throughout the nation; even the "Boston Cooking School Magazine" devoted pages to this calamity. In it Felix J. Koch wrote:

Madame Bégue is dead. No more Epicurean breakfasts in the Quartier Latin for the bon-vivants of the nation. No more snails à la Creole, or artichokes à la Bégue, or the thousand-and-one curious palate-ticklers that one could get nowhere else west of Paris. Madame Bégue is dead, and the queer little two-story structure on the French market-place, with concrete over the bricks, and painted on that, in Creole fashion, the single word "Bégue's" is silent and desolate.

Back, however, from memory's treasure-house you are

recalling your breakfast at Bégué's. Bégué's was more than a restaurant, more than a cabaret; it was an institution of New Orleans. Everybody went, at least once, on each visit to the city, to dine there. Such was the fame of the place that one had to engage places long in advance or run the risk of a refusal.

Five minutes to eleven you ascended the steep little stair, where a darky mammy was cleaning the landing, and entered a low-ceilinged room. You took your place, and they passed about an autograph and sentiment book in which others had written. Then old man Bégué, a typical Frenchman, bald, fat, and jolly, passed the bread. It was cut the thickness of three ordinary slices, and one broke it, never cut it. Somehow or other he reminded you of a Chinaman in his antics as he explained.

When you were not watching him, you surveyed the tables. It had a thick linen cloth, of plain pattern. At each place there were a black-handled knife and fork, a glass into which he put the ice, and a finger-bowl.

Then came the first course, shrimps you believed they were. The guests wondered just how to eat them. Mr. Bégué showed you. You break them open, and eat the tail only. They were not shrimps; they were crayfish. It was now 11:15 A.M.

You finished these, and took observations. On the table there was a bottle of wine for each guest, and the bottles were passing constantly. There were platters of butter, to which one helped himself. Down at the rear end of the room you could see the hat rack and a little side table. There sat Madame Bégué.

You hadn't noticed her before, much as you had heard of her. She was talking back and forth with her husband. She was a German by birth, and he, the Frenchman, was evidently

the boss. Nevertheless, she knew just how to get back at him. Meantime, while the tit-for-tat went on, she prepared things for the next meal. She was getting old—she was seventy-five or six when she died—so she sat throughout your breakfast, with her crutch at her side, and just before a shelf with specimens of her glassware. Above and behind her opened a room where cooking was in progress. Your eyes wandered thence, while you waited or took more white rock; for your companions were principally tourists, and conversation languished. Then came the second course, an omelette, with parsley, steaming hot and fine. The waiter was a plain French garçon, in the usual cabaret apron. In the omelette you noticed odd bits of black spice, and detected a curious flavor. You questioned old Madame Bégué, as she ate hers at the side table, but she shrugged her shoulders and laughed. Her husband, who ate at table with you, laughed likewise. You noticed she was dressed in French fashion—white skirt, black waist, black shawl, and the hair parted off from a heavy shell comb. Again she called to her husband, and he rose to count the guests, that there be not thirteen at the table. Then they passed celery and radishes.

Some one wanted her to come and sit next to them. No, she preferred her place at the fireside, where it was warm. There, too, she could hold the confab with her husband in the long wait between courses. Around the table, set now for ten, the wine then went, to distract you. Then came the next course.

Some said it was tripe, others snails. It was a yellow, rather ridged,—a long slice of something, in a yellow peppered sauce. It really proved to be tripe. What the spices that gave the gamey taste might be, no one could guess.

The sun came out on the hitherto silent assemblage, and provoked them to conversation. One lady asked for water, and the astonished garçon says: "Plain water? Yes, ma'am!" Then with the fried chicken and the fried boiled potatoes, and the cigars of some of the gentlemen, a running chat begins.

It is 12:10 when the next course enters. Half a tomato, with parsley on top, steaming; a piece of beefsteak, and, on the rim of the plate, some cress. After that Roquefort and Swiss cheese, which Mr. Bégué cuts for each. With it go apples. There is café noir, into which he pours brandy, and then burns it. The meal is at an end.

THE STORY OF MADAME BÉGUÉ

SHORTLY before the end of the War between the States, in 1863, a two-story brick building at the downtown corner of Madison and Decatur Streets became a distinctive dining place, according to researches made by Stanley C. Arthur, author of *Old New Orleans*. It was called then, as was the custom, a "Coffee House", and the proprietor was a Creole named Louis Dutrey. He attended the bar, saw to the proper mixing of the beverages, and to meeting all guests. The presiding genius of the kitchen, where was prepared the delectable dishes that lured the husky butchers of the French Market to Louis Dutrey's Coffee House for their "second breakfast," was the proprietor's wife, she who had been Elizabeth Kettenring when she landed in New Orleans

in 1853, a strapping German girl, born in 1831 in Bavaria. To her solid foundation of the art of German cooking the 22-year-old girl added what she soon learned of the cooking art in Old New Orleans. She became adept at wielding a long-handled skillet over a hot stove.

Philip Kettenring, her brother, was a butcher and wielded his cleaver in the meat stalls of the French Market. The Dutrey family also followed the art of cutting a juicy porterhouse from well-fatted beeves, or the slicing of chops from off the side of a piece of mutton. Small wonder, therefore, that when Louis Dutrey asked the Fraulein Elizabeth Kettenring to marry him, she did. Later, according to Mr. Arthur's investigations, the couple decided to take over the Coffee House, formerly conducted by Louis Dutreuil, at 207 Old Levee (as Decatur Street was then called), and make the serving of distinctive food their mission in life.

Their first trade was largely confined to butchers and others engaged in business about the Halles, as the Creoles called the French Market. Mme. Dutrey ruled the kitchen, her throne being the stove, her scepter a long-handled skillet. Her breakfasts became famous—to be more accurate, her “second breakfasts” made the bid for gastronomic fame. The hardy butchers of the French Market had acquired the Latin habit of taking an early cup of coffee, or a glass of wine, with a large chunk of French loaf before leaving home at daybreak for their duties at the market place. At 11:00 a. m. when business slackened and the housewives had finished their marketing, the butchers would troop over to Mme. Dutrey's for their “second breakfast.”

In 1875 Louis Dutrey died but his widow kept the business going and as she became more and more identified with the place her fame as a cook increased, and more and more the butchers found they could not do without a “second breakfast.”

In 1868, at stall 156 in the Old French Market, a young man who had left his native France at the age of 16 began his career as a butcher under his uncle’s tuition, and in the years that followed, learned not only much about the carving of meats, but how to tell choice cuts from those not so choice. His name was Hypolite Bégué. Being a butcher, many of his meals were taken at Louis Dutrey’s Coffee House opposite the market. He liked the “second breakfasts”—in fact he liked the place so well that in 1877 he gave up the butcher business to tend bar for the Widow Dutrey.

In 1880 the coffee house changed its name to “Bégué’s,” for as you may have guessed, Hypolite married the widow who was eight years his senior, the widow who could perform such miracles upon the cook stove. Consequently, as “Madame Bégué’s,” the place began its march to culinary fame. It was not until 1884 that Madame Bégué’s breakfasts became famous outside of the French Market trade. During the Cotton Centennial Exposition in 1884, tourists doing the Vieux Carré “discovered” Madame Bégué’s “second breakfasts,” and gave all credit for them to Elizabeth Kettenring, the woman from Germany, for the success the place attained. In a few years the “breakfasts” attained a reputation outside of New Orleans—for visitors to the Crescent City spread her fame far and wide.

October 19, 1906, the place was closed for the first time

in 31 years, for Madame Bégué had laid down her pots and her pans and had passed on to solve the silent mystery of death. However, the doors were not closed for good and all, as Hypolite Bégué carried on and, as is so frequently the case, the traditional breakfasts which had become established in the thirty-odd years Elizabeth Kettenring had presided over the kitchen. Hypolite's second wife was Françoise Lafforgue, widow of Jean Pierre Laporte, a butcher in the French Market and, as she had served an apprenticeship under the first Madame Bégué, the famed breakfasts continued.

"Bégué's" and the Bégué breakfasts remained an institution in New Orleans' colorful and tasteful history of cookery through the years until finally, on April 4, 1917, Hypolite Bégué passed on to join the first Madame Bégué in a plot in Metairie Cemetery.

In 1900, six years before her death, the recipes of the dishes that made Bégué's so famous were set to paper by Elizabeth Kettenring. In spite of her German birth she spoke French fluently, but she never became proficient in the English tongue, so when she set down in words the secrets of her cookery they were written in the language of France.

For years these prized recipes for Creole cookery have been out of print and an original copy of Madame Bégué's Cook Book has become a collector's item. The demand for Madame Bégué's recipes has become insistent and it is to meet this demand that they have been reproduced by the present publisher.

The sturdy brick building, built in 1826 on the site of the Old French, Spanish, and United States Arsenal, still stands at



the self-same corner, although the name Bégué is now missing. Today it is called “Tujagues Restaurant,” and here John Castet, who worked for years for Hypolite Bégué, serves many of the dishes that made the place a dining shrine. The celebrated “breakfasts” of Madame Bégué, however, are memories of the past. They live only in the remembrance of thousands who climbed the narrow stairway to do homage to Old New Orleans’ queen of the kitchen—Elizabeth Kettenring Dutrey Bégué.

For those puzzled by names in New Orleans of French flavor: Bégué can best be pronounced “bay-gay.” Tujagues may be called “two jacks.”