

# FOODIE'S CORNER

by Simonette Berry

## the *haunted* table

Louisiana is a harbor for lost souls, especially those who are already dead. From Indian burial mounds to Civil War battlegrounds, echoing plantation galleries to bustling French Quarter bistros, the rich history and even richer food of Louisiana has been steeping in a brew of spices and stories for hundreds of years. We are the people that celebrate death with second lines and put Voodoo proudly on our tourism pamphlets. Chances are, if you haven't encountered a ghost yourself, you know someone who has a good ghost story. Ghosts exist because some people don't cross over completely when they die, either because of unfinished business or a deep, burning love that won't release their souls yet. We all know the way to the heart is through the kitchen, so naturally, Louisiana's best and most historic restaurants are haunted.

### MURIEL'S RESTAURANT

Occupying a large corner spot overlooking Jackson Square and just steps away from St Louis Cathedral, Muriel's Restaurant was once a grand New Orleans home in the mid-1800s and is haunted by several spirits. The ghosts of the slaves that lived there were so active at one time that the owners decided to rope off an area of the restaurant to dedicate to them. They have a "ghost table" set with fresh wine and French bread, and as long as they have kept this tradition, the ghosts of the slaves have been appeased. There are three other active ghosts on the property: a little girl named Francis who sings and slams doors; Muriel, the eccentric ghost of a woman who once kept a colorful séance lounge upstairs and now likes to peek out the windows, slide over the wooden floors, and sing Gregorian chants to unsuspecting passersby; and the ghost of Pierre Antoine Lepardi Jourdan, who built the structure in 1789 as his dream home. One night in 1814, Antoine lost his beloved home in a card game. Before moving out, he committed suicide on the top floor. A brooding but benevolent ghost, he can often be seen pacing past the windows of the second floor lounge and will sometimes appear in pictures taken at the restaurant, if the spirit moves him. Come try to snap his photo (he'll appear as a ball of sparkling light), feed the ghosts, and experience Chef Erik Veney's world-class dining (801 Chartres Street; New Orleans, LA; 504-568-1885).



PHOTO BY SARA FISHER

### NASH'S RESTAURANT

Voted the most romantic spot to dine in Lafayette by *The Times of Acadiana*, Nash's restaurant is tucked away in a quaint Victorian home built in 1908...with its own ghost, of course. The ghouldest of months finds Nash Barreca, owner and master chef, whipping up his signature turtle soup as well as a roast maple leaf duck, topped with a beach brandy demiglace. Nash, a third generation restaurateur from New Orleans, has fused his family's ancestral Italian recipes with the many facets of Creole cuisine he grew up with. Made with the freshest Louisiana ingredients available, his exquisitely crafted menu has something for everyone. For the past 13 years, his wife Jenny has run the front of the house and has become well acquainted with the spirit of a fun-loving little dark-haired boy, "Edmund," who haunts the restaurant at all hours. He died in the home of a fever when he was only four, according to his brother Mr. Walter, the previous owner. "He's a mischievous spirit, moving chairs, breaking glassware, running up and down the hallway and laughing," Jenny says. "Both customers and wait staff have encountered him, and a few have even seen him. He sent one of my little angel figurines flying across the room once and broke the head clean in half, much to a customer's surprise. I had a talk with him and he stopped messing with my angels," she chuckles. "He means well. I just wish the little sucker would do windows. There are so many in this big old house, and I know he's there, so he might as well do some cleaning," (101 East 2nd Street; Broussard, LA; 337-839-9333).



#### THE CARRIAGE HOUSE AT THE MYRTLES PLANTATION

Called by many the most haunted plantation in America, the Myrtles (circa 1796) is famous for its antebellum splendor, fine antiques, and record number of haunted visitors. On an overnight stay there a few years ago, I was haunted by strange noises in the night, things from my luggage appearing on the foot of my bed, and a black cat I made friends with, only to find out later he wasn't real. The Carriage House Restaurant at the plantation is also frequented by ghosts: an old man in formal coattails promenading slowly through the dining room, little girls in white dresses calmly watching you dine from the next table, and the murderous spirit of Chloe. After her master punished her by cutting her ear off, this slave retaliated by poisoning the mistress and children with oleander-laced cake. She is said to be one of the most active spirits in the house, and the Pace family, who owns a catering company and manage the Carriage House Restaurant, created the cocktail "Chloe's Black Magic" in her honor. Head Chef Chris Caten, along with the Paces, has created a classic, savory menu that is good for casual dining or a formal affair, with favorites like Feliciana eggplant stackers, dry-aged prime beef, fresh Louisiana seafood, and Kaine Pace's mouthwatering white chocolate bread pudding. Beth Pace and her staff have been haunted regularly by flying glassware, doors opening and closing, voices calling and chanting their names, and even a ghostly serenade during Christmas last year. "We put on some festive music and thought a table of customers were singing along, only to discover the voices were not coming from the customers. The waitress even snuck up on them to make sure they weren't playing around," she says. The loud, boisterous sing-along was coming from an "empty" table next to theirs (Carriage House Restaurant, The Myrtles Plantation; 7747 U.S. 61; St. Francisville, LA; 225-635-6278). ♦

Makes A WEEKEND AT THE SPA a disappointment.



Your dream. Your life. Welcome home.  
A DIVISION OF SOUTHERN PIPE & SUPPLY CO., INC.  
[www.southernbathandkitchen.com](http://www.southernbathandkitchen.com)

Southern Pipe - Lafayette Showroom  
1221 Kaliste Saloom  
Lafayette, LA 70508 · 337.981.2701

Southern Pipe - Baton Rouge Showroom  
14241 Airline Hwy · Suite 106  
Baton Rouge, LA 70817 · 225.755.6010

Southern Pipe - Monroe  
109 South Pavilion Circle  
West Monroe, LA 71292 · 318.387.9184

Southern Pipe - Alexandria  
3012 Broadway Ave  
Alexandria, LA 71307 · 318.487.9626

Southern Pipe - Lake Charles  
2045 East McNeese Street  
Lake Charles, LA 70607 · 337.436.9700