

Fat Tuesday is Mardi Gras



Fat Tuesday is Mardi Gras, the festival New Orleans, Louisiana, is famous for. "Gras" is French for fat and "Mardi" is French for Tuesday.

The annual festivities start on January 6, the Twelfth Night Feast of the Epiphany, when the three kings are supposed to have visited the Christ Child, and build to a climax on Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday. Mardi Gras always occurs on the day before Ash Wednesday. The parties and parades will continue until Lent begins at the stroke of midnight on Tuesday.

Mardi Gras is scheduled to occur 46 days before Easter. Since the actual date Easter occurs changes every year, Mardi Gras can happen on any Tuesday between February 3 and March 9. So check your calendars for when Mardi Gras happen this year. There's no subtlety in Mardi Gras, so the bolder the better.

You can use all or parts of the party box, or even mix and match from other party boxes, to bring a little Mardi Gras fun in your own home!



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Invitations



Who's at the Party?

Themes parties open the door to catchy, inspired invitations.

We're having a Party
There'll be crab cakes and beer
So come on over
It's that time of year

There's a Mardi Gras feeling of joy in the air
There'll be moments to treasure drinks to share!
Beads, Creole food, Cajun music and fun.
It will be a party that is second to none!

Happy Mardi Gras!

Happy Mardi Gras!

However you let people know about your party be sure your invitations include the following information:

1. Date
2. Time
3. Location
4. Dress Code - Let your guests know best costume will be crowned King & Queen
5. RSVP by date (usually 1 week before the party)

Send your invites a month to three weeks before your event so people have plenty of time to get **costumes** and respond. The ideal time for a Mardi Gras party is the evening. There is enough time with drinks, appetizers and the costume contest and then dinner under the lights and lanterns. Who knows, you might just make it until midnight!





Fat Tuesday Mardi Gras

Menu



Cajun flavors are like no other! We have created a menu that is easy to make yet interesting and flavorful, the decorations are simple but fun and you have a step by step plan on how to pull it all together with ease right here in the party plan.

Cocktails

Hurricanes

Mardi Gras Mojito

Beer & Sodas

Appetizers

Jambalaya on a Stick

Entrees

Seafood Gumbo

Muffaletta Sandwiches



Side Dishes

Dirty Rice and Red Beans

Mardi Gras Salad

Dessert

Bananas Foster

King Cake

Café Brulot

Fat Tuesday Mardi Gras

Recipes



Cocktails

The most popular drink for Mardi Gras is the Hurricane, created by New Orleans bar owner Pat O' Brien. During World War II, whiskey was hard to come by, so bar owners substituted easy to obtain light and dark rums for whiskey. This drink is as popular today as it was the 1940's.



Hurricane



Ingredients:

1 oz Bacardi 151 Proof Rum

1 oz White Rum

1 oz Dark Rum

1/2 oz Grenadine

3 oz Orange Juice

3 oz Pineapple Juice

Crushed Ice

Serve in a Hurricane glass filled with crushed ice. Garnish with an orange wheel and a cherry. Decorate with a parasol or a parrot.

Mardi Gras Mojito



Ingredients:

2 leaves fresh mint

1 tablespoon simple syrup

2 cubes ice

1 1/4 fluid ounces rum



2 fluid ounces carbonated water (refreshing) or champagne (the real New Orleans way)
1 sprig fresh mint

Directions:

1. In a tall slender cocktail glass, muddle (crush) mint leaves with simple syrup. Add crushed or cube ice and rum. Top with carbonated water or champagne. Garnish with a sprig of fresh mint or lime wedge.

Appetizers



Jambalaya on a Stick

Inspired by Better Homes & Gardens



Ingredients:

- 18 large fresh or frozen large shrimp in shells (about 12 ounces)
- 18 ounces cooked smoked sausage, cut into 18 pieces
- 8 ounces skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, cut in eighteen 1-inch pieces
- 2 medium green sweet pepper, seeded and cut in 1-inch pieces
- 1 large onion, cut in 1-inch wedges
- 18 cherry tomatoes
- 1/3 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/3 cup tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme, crushed
- 2 teaspoons bottled hot pepper sauce
- 3/4 teaspoon dried minced garlic



Directions:

Thaw shrimp, if frozen. Peel and devein shrimp. Place shrimp, sausage, chicken, green pepper, and onion in a plastic bag set in a large bowl.

In a small bowl combine vinegar, tomato sauce, olive oil, thyme, bottled hot pepper sauce, and garlic. Pour half the mixture over meat and vegetables. Seal bag. Chill 1 to 2 hours, turning occasionally. Cover and chill remaining tomato mixture.

Drain meat and discard marinade. Thread one piece each of meat, shrimp and vegetables on thirty-six 8-inch wooden skewers (use two skewers per kabob to keep shrimp from curling and even grilling).

Grill, uncovered, directly over medium coals for 12 to 14 minutes or until shrimp are opaque and chicken is no longer pink, turning occasionally.

Makes 18 appetizer size servings.

Entrees



Muffaletta Sandwich Recipe



Ingredients:

3 large garlic cloves, crushed
1 cup chopped green olives stuffed with pimientos
1 cup pitted and chopped "black-ripe" olives or Calamatas



1/2 cup roasted sweet red peppers, chopped
1 cup olive oil
3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
1/3 pound salami
1/2 pound provolone cheese
1/2 pound mild cheese
1/3 pound mortadella
1/3 pound prosciutto

Directions:

Take one loaf fresh Italian bread (one big round for a traditional Muffaletta or individual sub loaves for smaller sandwiches). Cut the loaf (or loaves) in half, and scoop out a little of the inside to make some room. Toast bread lightly under broiler to keep from getting soggy from filling. Make the olive salad by combining the olives and roasted pepper, garlic and vinegar. Drizzle some of the olive oil and juice from the olive salad on each side of the open loaf - use plenty. On the bottom, place some salami, olive salad, provolone, mild cheese, and mortadella. Top with the other half loaf. Slice into wedges (or eat the individual loaves). Make ahead a few hours and the flavors will meld with each other.

Makes 6 servings.

Creole Seafood Gumbo



Ingredients:

1/4 cup oil
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 cups onion, chopped
1 cup green bell pepper, chopped
1 cup celery, diced
3 large garlic cloves, minced



4 cups chicken broth
1 tablespoon chicken base
3 cups water
2 bay leaves
1 1/2 teaspoons dried thyme
1 teaspoon dried basil
1/3 cup dried parsley
1 teaspoon lemon pepper
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 teaspoons House Seasoning, recipe follows
2 tablespoons soy sauce or Worcestershire sauce
1 (14 1/2-ounce) can diced tomatoes seasoned with garlic, basil, and oregano or 2 cups fresh diced tomatoes
4 cups sliced Cajun-style fresh link sausage
4 cups cut okra (fresh or frozen)
2 cups oysters and liquor
1/2 pound crabmeat
1 1/2 pounds fresh peeled shrimp
3 cups bay scallops
File powder (optional)
2 cups white rice
1 stick of butter

Directions:

In a large pot combine oil and flour. Cook over medium heat stirring constantly until the roux has browned to a light chocolate color. Add onion, pepper, celery and garlic. Sauté for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Slowly add chicken broth, and chicken base, stirring as you go. Add water, bay leaves, thyme, basil, parsley, lemon pepper, cayenne pepper, House Seasoning, soy sauce and tomatoes. Cut sausage into 1/2-inch pieces. Add to pot along with okra. Cover pot and simmer for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally. Add oysters, crabmeat, shrimp and scallops. Simmer for an additional 15 minutes. Serve over hot buttered rice. Sprinkle with file powder on top of bowl and stir in.

Buttered rice (4 cups water, 2 cups white rice, 1 stick of butter and some salt).

Tip: Add file powder after putting gumbo into individual serving bowls. File added into the pot will make the gumbo too thick as File powder acts as a thickening agent.



House Seasoning:

1 cup salt
1/4 cup black pepper
1/4 cup garlic powder

Mix ingredients together and store in an airtight container for up to 6 months. Yield: 1 1/2 cups

Side Dishes



Dirty Rice and Red Beans

Recipe Courtesy of Tracy Pikhart Ritter



Ingredients:

2 cups brown rice
1-1/2 cups chopped red onion
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup finely diced carrots
1/2 cup finely diced celery
1 small jalapeno pepper, remove seeds and membrane, mince
1 Tbsp ground cumin
1 Tbsp ground coriander
2 tsp chili powder
1/4 tsp fine sea salt
3-3/4 cups vegetable stock or chicken broth
1 bay leaf
1 large can chopped tomatoes



1 large can kidney beans
1/2 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels
3 Tbsp fresh chopped parsley
4 Tbsp fresh chopped cilantro

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350. Spray a large casserole dish, with a lid, and set aside.

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, heat the rice, onion, garlic, carrots, celery, jalapeno, cumin, coriander and chili powder over medium heat, stirring constantly, for about 5 minutes, until lightly browned.

Add the salt, stock, bay leaf and tomatoes, and stir to combine. Cover, lower heat and simmer for 15 minutes.

Add the beans, corn, parsley and cilantro. Turn the mixture into the casserole dish, cover and bake for another 30-40 minutes, until the liquid is absorbed and the rice is cooked. If necessary, add a bit more stock and continue cooking until the rice is sufficiently soft. Garnish with more chopped herbs. Makes 6-8 servings.

MARDI GRAS SALAD

Recipe Courtesy of Holly Clegg



Get into the spirit with this festive salad of oranges, carrots, bacon, red onions, and green spinach, representing the Mardi Gras colors. Make the delicious, slightly sweet dressing ahead of time, and have the salad ingredients ready to mix together; toss with dressing when ready to serve.

Ingredients:

2 teaspoon finely chopped red onion
1/2 cup cider vinegar
1/4 cup sugar



1/4 cup olive oil
1 teaspoon ground dry mustard
1 head red leaf lettuce, washed, drained and torn into pieces
1 (10-ounce) package baby spinach, washed and drained
1/2 cup chopped red onion
2 (11-ounce) cans mandarin oranges, drained
1/3 cup shredded carrots
4 slices center cut bacon, crisply fried and crumbled

Directions:

In a small bowl, whisk together the onion, vinegar, sugar, olive oil and dry mustard. Refrigerate until ready to toss salad.

In a large salad bowl, combine the lettuce, spinach, red onion, mandarin oranges, carrots and bacon. Toss the salad with the dressing when ready to serve. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

Dessert



Bananas Foster



Ingredients:

6 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 cup light brown sugar, packed



6 ripe bananas, peeled, sliced lengthwise and halved
1/4 cup banana liqueur
1/2 cup dark rum
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 pint vanilla ice cream

Directions:

Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add the brown sugar and stir until the sugar completely dissolves, about 2 minutes.

Lay the bananas in the pan and cook on both sides until they become slightly soft and begin to brown, about 3 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and add the banana liqueur and then the rum and cinnamon. Tip the pan slightly and carefully ignite the alcohol with a long kitchen match or kitchen lighter to flambé.

Put the pan back on the heat and shake it back and forth basting the bananas, until the flame dies out.

Divide the ice cream among dessert bowls. Gently lift the bananas from the pan and place 2 pieces on the ice cream. Spoon the sauce over the ice cream and serve immediately.

King Cake

Recipe Courtesy of Megan from BrooklynFarmhouse.com



Ingredients:

For the cake:

2 tablespoons instant yeast
1/2 cup sugar, plus 2 teaspoons (divided)
1/2 cup warm water (110°F)



4 cups all purpose flour (plus potentially more for the dough)
1 teaspoon lemon zest
1 teaspoon nutmeg
2 teaspoons kosher salt
5 egg yolks
1/2 cup milk, warmed slightly
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
2 teaspoons cinnamon

For the egg wash:

1 egg, beaten
1 tablespoon milk

For the icing and topping:

3 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
2 tablespoons lemon juice
3-4 tablespoons water
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Purple, gold, and green colored sugar** See Below

Special Equipment: A stand mixer

Directions:

For the cake:

1. Combine yeast, 2 teaspoons sugar, and warm water in a small bowl. Set bowl in a warm place until the mixture starts to bubble up and doubles in volume, about 10 minutes. (Discard mixture and start over if yeast doesn't bubble. Sorry!)
2. In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, lemon zest, nutmeg, and kosher salt together. Set aside.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine yeast mixture, egg yolks, remaining 1/2 cup of sugar, and warm milk. Using the dough hook, gradually add the flour mixture, then the softened butter until combined. Knead dough, adding flour a tablespoon at a time (if necessary) until the dough is smooth, shiny, elastic, and pulls away from the sides of the mixer bowl – about 10 minutes.
4. Spray a large bowl with cooking spray and transfer dough to bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside in a warm, draft free place until doubled in bulk, about 1 1/2 hours.
5. Butter a large baking sheet, or line the baking sheet with a silpat or parchment paper.



6. Punch down dough. Give it a good punch or two; it feels kind of good. Sprinkle the dough with the cinnamon and form into a cylinder, transfer the cylinder to the baking sheet, then twist the cylinder into a circle. Pinch the ends of the circle together to seal completely.
7. Loosely cover the dough with oiled plastic wrap and set aside in a warm, draft free place to rise again; about 45 minutes.
8. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 375°F. Combine the 1 tablespoon milk and the beaten egg for the egg wash.
9. Brush sides and top of the cake with egg wash. Bake for 25-35 minutes, or until the cake is golden brown on top. If it begins to over brown, cover with tinfoil.
10. Remove from oven and cool completely on a wire rack before icing.

For the icing and topping:

1. Combine the sifted confectioners' sugar, lemon juice, vanilla extract, and water until the mixture is smooth. Add more water or lemon juice if the mixture is too thick.
2. Spread icing on the cake and immediately sprinkle the colored sugar on the cake in alternating rows forming bands of color.

**** Colored Sugars:**

3/4 cup sugar

Green, purple, and yellow food coloring paste

Place 1/4 cup sugar in 3 plastic sandwich bags. Squeeze a dot of each color paste in each bag and rub together until all sugar is colored. Place each color mixture on a separate piece of wax paper to dry. Repeat process for other two colors; set aside.



Café Brulot



Ingredients:

6 inches stick cinnamon, broken
12 whole cloves
8 sugar cubes
2 3x1/4 inch strip orange peel, membrane removed
2 3x1/4 inch strip lemon peel, membrane removed
1 cup brandy
4 cups hot coffee

Directions:

1. In the blazer pan of a chafing dish combine cinnamon, cloves, sugar cubes, orange peel, and lemon peel.
2. In a small saucepan heat brandy until it almost simmers. Remove from heat and ignite. Pour over mixture in blazer pan. Place blazer pan over chafing dish burner. Spoon brandy over sugar until cubes melt. Stir in coffee. Makes 8 (4-ounce) servings.



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Decorations



Creating the Mood

Make your house vibrant with the traditional Mardi Gras colors -- purple (representing justice), green (faith) and gold (power). There's no subtlety in Mardi Gras, so the bolder the better. Hang **metallic fringe curtain** from the top of your front door to cover the entrance in Mardi Gras colors. A 6 foot cardboard cutout of a **Court Jester** will make the statement: The Party Starts Here!



For true Mardi Gras style, decorate with **lots of masks** and if any guests should show up without one, you can offer to help them out. Streamers, **gold doubloons**, and confetti (can be messy) are also what make this feel like New Orleans. Balloons and lots of **throw beads** are essential for this holiday. And even the drinks get decorated with a **Mardi Gras Fleur De Lis swizzle stick!** Fleur-De-Lis is the symbol of New Orleans, and is said to be the symbol of faith, wisdom and chivalry.

Make street signs and put them on the walls at the corners. As you go into another room it is another street. Bourbon Street, Calliope Street, Crescent City Connection, Tchoupitoulas Street (Chop a two' les), St. Charles Avenue, Esplanade Avenue, Chartres Street, Decatur Street, St. Peters Street, Canal Street, Bienville Street, and Basin Street.





Colorful Tablescapes

Vinyl tablecloths are better than paper since moisture from glasses will ruin the tablecloth. Bold color is the theme. If you have multiple tables, set each table with the theme colors of Mardi Gras: purple, green and yellow/gold. If you are using one long table, then the **rich color of purple** is a great base color.

Plates, napkins, drink ware and utensils should all be in the Mardi Gras colors! Wrap the plastic knife, fork and spoon in one of the colors of Mardi Gras and tie the bundle with tri-color curling ribbons. Place all utensil bundles in a basket in the serving area.



In the center of each table place a theme color painted pot planted with bright colored flowers. Get two **Mardi Gras masks on sticks** with feathers and streamers and stab the masks into the potted plants at angles. Make sure the masks are facing opposite directions so the centerpiece looks great from all sides. Scatter gold doubloons and **necklaces of beads** on the table top.

Lights, Ceilings and Balloons

Lighting is a very important part of any party. There is something about twinkling, colorful lights that tells you this is going to be a special party. **String lights** in purple, green and gold and your guests will all ooh and aah!

Hanging streamers and masks from the ceiling is easy and very festive. Staple the hanging decorations to the ceiling and they will be easy to remove and barely leave a mark.

Balloons are an inexpensive way to decorate with the colors of Mardi Gras and balloons always say, It's Party Time!



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Music



Great Music Makes a Mardi Gras Party Pop! What's a Mardi Gras party without Cajun music to get guests in the vibe? This lively music will get everyone in the mood for a party! The music will also inspire dancing, laughter and fun. Target has a selection of Upbeat Festive music CDs to pick from. They are very reasonably priced and we have never been disappointed by their quality. Some other favorites are listed below or you can always check iTunes. Start a playlist on Pandora you can revisit whenever you are in the mood for jazzy evening at home!

Albums

1. [Best of BeauSoleil](#)
2. [Cajun Music: The Essential Collection](#)
3. [New Orleans Party Classics](#)

Singles

1. When the Saints Go Marching In – Louis Armstrong
2. Carnival Time – Al Johnson
3. Street Parade – Earl King
4. Go to the Mardi Gras – Professor Longhair
5. Hey Pocky A-Way - The Meters
6. Mardi Gras Mambo – The Hawkettes



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Activities



A costume contest is a must at Mardi Gras. Crown the best-dressed male and female the king and queen of your party. Have all your guests write down their vote on a piece of paper and then tally the votes. Announce the **King and Queen of Mardi Gras** before dinner. Present them with their crowns and they get to dine first!

Give all the other guests a **Mardi Gras necklace** that lights up the party!

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Favors



Even with the traditional recipe, no two praline makers seem to produce the same candy. Some are flatter with chopped up pecans and some fatter with pecan halves in the sugar. Many other variations have cropped up, including pralines flavored with shredded coconut, rum, vanilla, chocolate and peanut butter. This is a simple recipe for traditional pralines and you can make them with chopped or halved pecans, as you wish.



New Orleans Pralines



Ingredients:

1 cup light brown sugar, packed
1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup light cream
1 1/2 cups pecans, halved
2 tablespoons butter

Directions:

Combine sugars and cream in a heavy 2-quart saucepan and bring to boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon, until mixture forms a thick syrup. Add pecans and butter and continue to cook over medium heat, stirring frequently. Remove sauce pan to a heatproof surface (such as a wire rack) and let cool for 10 minutes.

Use a tablespoon to drop rounded balls of the mixture onto sheet wax paper or foil, leaving about 3 inches between each ball for pralines to spread. Allow to cool. Makes about 12 candies.

Wrap the pralines individually in cellophane and tie with tri-color curling ribbons.



Mardi Gras Lollipops – A great alternative if you are short on time are to have individually wrapped [Mardi Gras Lollipops](#). You can use these as part of the decorating until you give them as favors at the end of the party.

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Ready, Set, Go



The best way to have a stress free party and feel like a guest at your own party is to plan ahead. Here is a step by step party plan that will have you confident and excited about your own party. Remember, you are the Life of the Party and your guests will follow your lead.

One Month Before

1. Choose the date for your party. Make your guest list and send out invitations. Our [Party Planner](#) will help you get all your ideas for the party together.
2. Decide what items you have on hand and what items you will need to purchase. Use our [Party Plan Menu](#) to help you plan. If they are custom items, order them now.
3. Consider the areas for the party and any touch ups that may be needed. Plants for outdoors, a little tidying up indoors.

One Week Before

4. Decide where you will string the lights, hang the streamers and place the balloons. Pot the plants for the centerpieces. Make a list of all accessories, serving pieces and tableware you will need. Special glassware (Hurricanes) or plastic glasses.
5. Make sure your music sound system is in good working order and make your playlist/burn CDs and load iPod.
6. Shop for any non-food type items.



7. Make the New Orleans Street Signs.

1-2 Days Before

Shop for all food items (2 days before). Create a shopping list that will make it so much easier to plan and shop for your party. Our customized **Shopping List** will help you get organized.

9. Make Seafood Gumbo.

10. Make Dirty Rice and Red Beans.

11. Make King Cake.

12. Assemble utensils in napkin rolls. If possible, place the decorations the day before.

Day of the Party

13. Pick a time you must begin getting yourself ready and stick to it.

14. Set up the food area with the plates, utensils, napkins and glasses. Set up bar area for Hurricanes, Mardi Gras Mojitos and Café Brulot (with dessert)

15. Finish decorating. Pick up balloons.

16. Make Hurricanes (like a punch) if serving a larger group. Leave the ice out until ready to serve so that it does not water down the drinks. Chill the beer and sodas in the morning.

17. Make Muffaletta Sandwiches early in day so flavors can meld. Then refrigerate.

18. Make salad and dressing. Dress salad just before serving.

19. Make Jambalaya Sticks. Need to chill 1-2 hours before threading on the skewers.

20. Place Mardi Gras party favors by the dessert so that you remember to give them to the guests. Place the King Cake on an elevated stand so that it is part of the decorations. Great colors!

21. Review lists to make sure everything is ready.

22. Get dressed in your Mardi Gras costume.

23. Begin the festive music and have music playing the entire time.



Once Guests Arrive

24. Greet them with a welcoming cocktail.
25. Turn on grill for the Jambalaya Sticks. Remove Muffaletta Sandwiches from the refrigerator to come to room temperature.
26. Pass out the voting slips for best costumes and crown the King and Queen of Mardi Gras! Remember to mingle with your guests letting them know how much you appreciate them as friends. Don't forget to take pictures!
26. Warm up the Seafood Gumbo and Dirty Rice and Red Beans. Set out Muffaletta Sandwiches and Mardi Gras Salad. Serve your Mardi Gras Dinner.
27. Make Bananas Foster if you are serving this. (or just the King Cake)
28. Serve dessert and party favors.
29. Guests leave knowing that they celebrated Mardi Gras the New Orleans way right at home!

