

# HISTORY OF KING CAKE

The season of Carnival begins on Jan. 6, known as the Epiphany or Twelfth Night, the day the Christ Child was visited by the three kings. And with this date comes an old Louisiana tradition – King Cakes!

The creation of “King Cakes” began in 12th century France when a cake was baked on the eve of Jan. 6 with a small token hidden inside. Whoever got the token in his or her slice became the royalty of the night.

The king cake tradition made its way to Louisiana, but like all good things we tend to keep it going as long as we can. Cakes are enjoyed on Jan. 6, usually with a small baby inside and whoever gets the token must buy the next cake and so on it goes.

Louisiana king cakes come plain, with decoration on top, or filled with wonderful things like cream cheese, fruit preserves and pecan praline or created in other unique and wonderful ways. We enjoy our King Cakes, decorated in the Carnival colors of purple for justice, green for faith and gold for power, until Ash Wednesday, the day following Mardi Gras.

Ask anyone in town who makes their favorite king cake and you'll get a dozen answers. You can find king cakes in mini marts, grocery stores and coffee shops as well as bakeries. Visit [LafayetteTravel.com/KingCake](http://LafayetteTravel.com/KingCake) for more details on where to get King Cake in Lafayette.

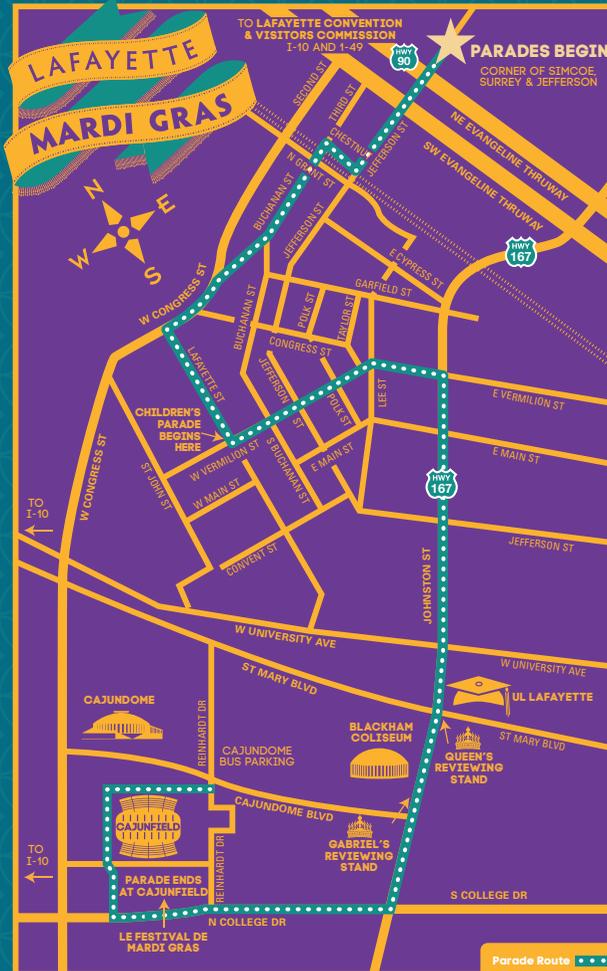


## VISIT OUR INFORMATION CENTER

Intersection of I-10 & I-49 | I-10 Exit 103-A  
1400 N.W. Evangeline Thruway | I-49 South of I-10

### HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
Saturday-Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.



\*Schedule subject to change. For information on dining, lodging and attractions:

**Lafayette**  
LOUISIANA  
Convention and Visitors Commission  
[LafayetteTravel.com](http://LafayetteTravel.com)

# HISTORY OF MARDI GRAS

## When is Mardi Gras?

The fluctuating date of Mardi Gras was established by the Catholic Church that designed the Gregorian calendar with a fixed date for Christmas and moveable dates for other religious holidays. Easter, which can fall on any Sunday from March 23 to April 25, is set to happen with the first Sunday after the full moon that follows the Spring Equinox. Mardi Gras is always scheduled 46 days preceding Easter (the 40 days of Lent plus six Sundays). The carnival season officially opens on the Epiphany 12 days after Christmas and ends on Mardi Gras Day, the day before Ash Wednesday.

## The Colors of Mardi Gras

In 1872, King Rex, the king of New Orleans' carnival, selected the official colors of Mardi Gras (purple, gold and green). Rex assigned a meaning to the colors in 1892 for his parade entitled Symbolism of Colors: purple represents justice, green represents faith and gold signifies power.

## Mardi Gras Krewes

A Mardi Gras Krewe is the membership organization for a parade. Krewes also get together throughout the year for the Coronation Ball (where the Maids, Dukes and King are announced) and Mardi Gras Ball or Tableau (where the Krewe usually appears in their parade costumes). Undisputed as the favorite event of the Krewes is the parade itself, where riders throw trinkets to throngs of people calling, “Throw me something, mister!”

## Throw Me Something Mister/Sister

“Throw Me Something Mister” (or sister) is a shout that can be heard as the parade floats roll past. Parade-goers will use any technique to get the attention of the float riders so they can go home with more “throws” than anyone else. Throws are inexpensive trinkets tossed from floats by costumed and masked krewe members. The most popular throws include doubloons (a coin-like souvenir of a carnival krewe, usually with the name and crest of the krewe on one side and its theme of the year on the other), plastic cups, Mardi Gras beads (necklaces) and even stuffed toys. The throwing of trinkets to the crowds was started in the early 1870s by the Twelfth Night Revelers and is a time-honored expectation for young and old alike.

## Lafayette's Mardi Gras

The first formal Mardi Gras ball and parade in Lafayette dates back to 1869. In 1897, King Attakapas, the first Mardi Gras king, was crowned and the first organized parade was held in Lafayette. Formal Mardi Gras balls and parades after 1897 seemed to come and go until 1934 when the Southwest Louisiana Mardi Gras Association was created. Today as in 1934, Queen Evangeline and King Gabriel, who symbolize the Acadian sweethearts separated during the expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia in Longfellow's Evangeline, are reunited each year at Mardi Gras to rule over the Mardi Gras festivities.

## Courir de Mardi Gras

The rural Mardi Gras celebration, the Courir de Mardi Gras, dates back to the earliest days of the area's settlement and is still considered a rite of passage for many in the area. With its roots firmly in the medieval tradition of ceremonial begging, bands of masked and costumed horseback riders roam the countryside “begging” for ingredients for their communal gumbo. “Le Capitaine,” a caped but unmasked captain, stops his revelers at a distance while he approaches with a white flag and asks permission for his riders to enter the owners' property. If permission is granted, the captain lowers his white flag and the riders charge towards the house. There, they dismount and proceed to dance and sing for live chickens and other donations such as rice, onions and flour to be used in the gumbo. The captain and his group of masked riders return to town in the late afternoon with their loot. The day's festivities usually end with a fais-do-do and lots of gumbo for Mardi Gras revelers.



