



**MARDI GRAS**



## OUR MARDI GRAS

When we say we were “Born to Celebrate,” those are truly words Mobilians live by. In fact, our big bragging right is [Mardi Gras](#): we are the birthplace of America’s very first Mardi Gras.

Originating in our Port City in 1703, Mardi Gras was brought back to life after the Civil War, when a man named Joe Cain, fed up with post-war misery, led an impromptu parade down city streets ... and we’ve been doing it ever since! On “Joe Cain Day,” which the city celebrates on the Sunday before Fat Tuesday, we come together downtown to honor the local hero who started our modern-day Mardi Gras tradition.

Our Carnival is a family-friendly season of parties, balls, majestic parades and revelry. During the Mardi Gras season, which lasts from January 6 (the end of the Christmas season) until Ash Wednesday (the start of the Easter season), more than 40 parades roll through the streets of downtown Mobile. Elaborate themed floats escorted by masked mystic societies, mounted police and marching bands wind through Mobile and its surrounding areas, entertaining nearly a million revelers each year. We consider it a challenge to see just how many beads we can wear around our necks. (Hint: it’s never too many!)

To fully appreciate Mardi Gras in Mobile, from past to present, we highly recommend beginning your Mardi Gras adventure at the [Mobile Carnival Museum](#). Set in a historic mansion, the museum is a perfect way to learn more about Mardi Gras in its true U.S. birthplace. The museum features 14 galleries, video presentations, a pictorial hallway and an interactive float area. Here you’ll discover the arts of costume design and float construction, witness the pomp and pageantry of past coronations, and even experience what it’s like to be on the parade route by climbing aboard a rocking float.

Don’t leave the museum without a peek at its gift shop, which is home to a small location of [Toomey’s Mardi Gras](#), which boasts one of the largest inventories of Mardi Gras supplies anywhere in the world.

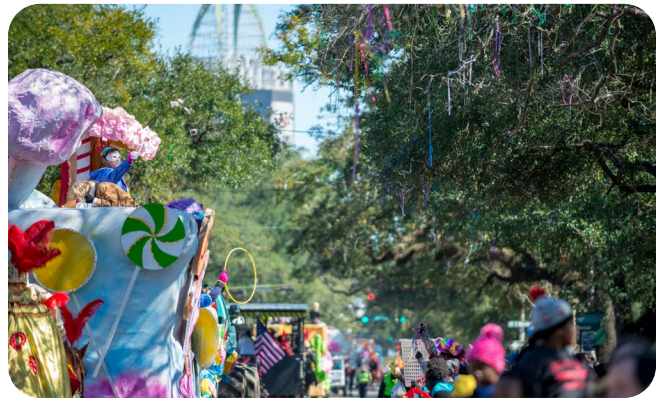


In addition to the museum location, Toomey's is headquartered in a 70,000-square-foot facility stuffed to the brim with beads, costumes, masks, decorations, and so much more. Yes, they ship ... so you can use them for your at-home Mardi Gras celebrations. But we sure hope you'll come to Mobile and check things out in person, because some of our other Mardi Gras traditions don't ship quite as well. For example ...

Banana, chocolate, peanut butter, mint, double-decker or the precious mini. We're talking about Moon Pies, which aren't made in Mobile (props to you, Chattanooga!), but they've helped make Mobile an especially memorable place during Carnival season. They're the most coveted "catch" during Mardi Gras parades ... and boy, do they fly! Revelers along the parade routes yell "Moon Pie" as if these packaged treats were pure gold, so keep your eyes open, because they come at you fast! (Pro tip: they taste like soft, marshmallow HEAVEN when heated up in the microwave for exactly 8 seconds.)

It's not all about marshmallowy "pies" here, though. You're probably familiar with king cake as the traditional dessert associated with Mardi Gras, so we'd be remiss if we didn't include this special part of the Mobile Mardi Gras tradition. Our friends at the *Mobile Mask* - an annual guide to Mardi Gras in Mobile - describe it more like a brioche than an actual cake, with the perfect amount of cinnamon. And bite cautiously: there may be a tiny baby figurine in your piece. If you get it, the next king cake is on you! Mobilians like to put a twist on tradition, so here, you'll also find the beloved Mardi Gras delicacy in such forms as cake balls, cocktails (yes, we said cocktails), ice cream and more.

The next time you consider Mardi Gras, we encourage you to think about where it all began in the United States, here in Mobile. And we'll make you a deal: You come visit us for a future Mardi Gras and we'll provide the Moon Pies.





BORN TO CELEBRATE



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