



For Immediate Release
September 29th, 2022

Contact:

Laci Laperouse
St. Martin Parish Tourism Commission
337.442.1597
laci@stmartinparish.net

Laura Cating
Louisiana Travel Association
225.772.3620
laura@louisianatravelassociation.org

CHEF JOHNNIE GALE BRINGS A TASTE OF LOUISIANA TO CHARLOTTE

Local Chef is One of 14 Louisiana Chefs Selected to Participate in Culinary Event in November

September 29th, 2022– Chef Johnnie Gale is one of 14 top Louisiana chefs heading to Charlotte to feature the state’s unique flavors in several of the area’s top restaurants. St. Martin Parish Tourism Commission, the Louisiana Travel Association, the Louisiana Office of Tourism, and the Louisiana Seafood Promotion & Marketing Board have partnered to present the [“Louisiana X Charlotte Restaurant Night”](#) on Thursday, November 3, 2022, as part of the Louisiana Culinary Trails tourism marketing campaign.

This extraordinary event combines the culinary expertise of chefs in Louisiana and Charlotte to spice things up in the kitchen and offer Charlotteans a taste of the Bayou State’s vibrant culture and flavorful cuisine. The Louisiana X Charlotte Restaurant Night will feature 28 chefs total at 14 restaurants, each offering a one-of-a-kind experience available at various price points presented as a private ticketed dinner, a prix fixe menu, or special featured dishes.

“Food is a way of life in Louisiana, and our culinary heritage and flavors are unlike anything else in the country,” says Louisiana Travel Association Executive Vice President Laura Cating. “With multiple direct flights to Louisiana, we’re excited to give Charlotte residents a sample of the flavors of Louisiana, inspiring them to make Louisiana their next travel destination.”

Prior to the restaurant night, St. Martin Parish Tourism Commission will also be attending the Restaurant Night Media Preview reception, where the Louisiana chefs will prepare the state’s delicious cuisine with our fresh seafood featured for key influencers, encouraging media to write about the Louisiana culinary experience.

- **Chef Johnnie Gale, Crawfish Town USA, St. Martin Parish**

Born and raised in South Carolina, Chef Johnnie Gale spent her formative years being influenced by both of her grandmothers. Her summers were spent with her maternal Cajun grandmother down the bayou, in Bell River, who taught her how to cook their old Seafood Cajun Dishes. When Johnnie was not on the bayou, she could be found with her paternal grandmother learning how to can fresh vegetables and cook country-style comfort food. Whether one of Johnnie’s grandmothers was pulling fresh crabs out of the traps or pulling fresh snap beans off the vine, Johnnie learned at an early age how to make the best use of Louisiana’s Treasures for her seafood and vegetable dishes.

Other participating chefs include:

- **Chef Ryan Trahan, Vestal, Lafayette**

Chef and Louisiana native Ryan Trahan has found success in his ability to modernize Southern ingredients and dishes. Inspired by elevated hospitality and modern cooking techniques, Trahan's cuisine features fresh approaches to regional cuisine with global accents. A self-trained chef, Trahan has lent his expertise to multiple acclaimed restaurants throughout South Louisiana. In the Spring of 2021, Trahan opened Vestal, a vibrant, live-fire restaurant, in the heart of Lafayette's downtown district.

- **Chef Madonna Broussard, Laura's II Café, Lafayette**

Madonna Broussard's grandmother, Laura Williams Broussard, started her first restaurant in her home kitchen in 1968, which was likely Lafayette's first soul food plate lunch restaurant. A second location was eventually built and run by Laura's daughter in law, Madonna's mother. When the time came, Madonna decided to pursue the family business and cook things "the Laura's way," and in 2000, Laura's II was born. Today, Madonna keeps many of Grandma's original recipes intact, and continues the family tradition of passing on her culinary knowledge to her children.

- **Chef Amanda Cusey, Louisiana Seafood Queen 2022 and The Villa Harlequin, Lake Charles**

Amanda Cusey, executive chef at Lake Charles' The Villa Harlequin, began developing her passion for food while growing up in the Southwest United States. Traveling extensively throughout the US and Europe, Chef Amanda received her Cordon Bleu training at the Tante' Marie Culinary Academy in Surrey, England. After working her way up through the ranks at several restaurants in England and Ireland, Chef Amanda has been embracing her new home and bringing her twist on Italian cuisine to downtown Lake Charles at the Villa Restaurant for the past 5 years. In June 2022, Chef Amanda Cusey became the second ever Queen of Louisiana Seafood, besting 11 other chefs to win the 15th Annual Louisiana Seafood Cook-Off presented by the Louisiana Seafood Promotion & Marketing Board.

- **Chef Lyle Broussard, Barstool Sportsbook inside L'Auberge Casino Resort, Lake Charles**

Chef Lyle Broussard is known for his Cajun and Creole flavors and his passion for Southwest Louisiana culture and cuisine, dating back to time spent perched next to his grandmother's stovetop where he developed a passion for food. Chef Broussard's love of his local heritage carries over to the menu with authenticity, deep flavors and a simplicity that allows the ingredients to do the talking.

- **Chef Ross Dover, Palmettos on the Bayou, Louisiana Northshore**

Chef Ross Dover joined Palmettos on the Bayou from Restaurant August in New Orleans, where he was executive chef for three years after having the role of executive sous chef for a couple of years. Prior he worked at Johnny Sanchez Restaurant in New Orleans, working directly with Aarón Sánchez, award-winning chef, TV personality, and cookbook author. Chef Ross is a Louisiana native, born and raised in Houma. He attended Nicholls State University where he studied Culinary Arts at the John Folse Culinary Institute

- Chef Amanda Songbird, Cured. On Columbia, Louisiana Northshore**

Chef Amanda Birdsong and her partner, Anna Watkins, opened Cured. On Columbia in October 2020. Before opening Cured, Chef Amanda cooked as a way to escape the stress of working in the medical field. A self-trained chef, Chef Amanda shared her passion for food at dinner parties while living in Baton Rouge before moving to St. Tammany Parish. Together, Chef Amanda and Anna created a space everyone can relax, enjoy great food and feel at home. That place is Cured. On Columbia.
- Chef Cory Bahr, Parish Restaurant & Standard Coffee Co., Monroe-West Monroe**

Cory Bahr is the owner & founder of Parish Restaurant, Standard Coffee Co. and Heritage Catering in Monroe, Louisiana, where he was born and raised. Cory inherited a passion for the great outdoors and cooking—spending weekends at the family hunting camp, running fishing lines, and hunting whatever was in season. Parish, an homage to what is most important to Cory—community, culture, and culinary heritage—presents an inventive take on classic Southern dishes utilizing live fire cooking that makes use of all the flavors, technique and heritage of his beloved Delta region. He offers honest dishes with a strong sense of place, for which he has earned national recognition.
- Chef Celeste Gill, Chef Celeste Bistro, Baton Rouge**

At the tender age of 11, Detroit native Chef Celeste fell in love with Louisiana cuisine when she discovered Justin Wilson on public television. Determined to follow her early calling to become a chef, she received her culinary training in Hawaii. That exposure to Pan Asian cuisine, combined with her love of fresh, “farm to table” ingredients, shaped the unique, enlivened interpretation of Louisiana cuisine that she shares today. Chef Celeste shares her love of Louisiana cuisine through her two locations of Chef Celeste Bistro, catering, through podcasts and webinars, and her Louisiana Honey Mustard and new line of Senior Seasonings.
- Chef Jeremy Langlois, Latil’s Landing at Houmas House, Ascension Parish**

Chef Jeremy Langlois began his culinary career the day after his 16th birthday in May of 1995, when he joined Chef John Folse’s White Oak Plantation Team. Chef Folse saw the enthusiasm and the potential in the young protégé and within 7 months he was promoted, and. Chef Jeremy excelled early in his career, becoming the youngest executive chef of any restaurant in DiRONA (Distinguished, Restaurants, of North America), an organization of 750 premiere restaurants in three countries. As executive chef of Houmas House Plantation’s Latil’s Landing Restaurant - named by Esquire Magazine as one of the top twenty best new restaurants in America, he masterfully creates wonderful dishes in a style that he calls “Nouvelle Louisiane.”
- Chef KJ Townsend, Quizine Quarters, Houma**

Chef Kenneth “KJ” Townsend is a Houma native that discovered his passion for cooking at an early age while learning from his grandmother. After high school, he moved to Atlanta to hone his cooking skills, later returning home to cook at local restaurants. Following a shopping cart accident in 2015, Chef KJ suffered a fractured heel bone that became infected, ultimately resulting in a lower leg amputation. His health journey didn’t stop his passion for cooking, and with the support of his family, he was motivated to open his own restaurant in 2020. Quizine Quarters serves up an assortment of

southern Cajun dishes. In addition to serving the community hearty meals, the local food enthusiast had a dream of starting a local support group for amputees in the area.

- **Chef Ben Fidelak, Mariner's, Natchitoches**

Chef Ben Fidelak's passion for cooking started at an early age while working as a line cook in his father's restaurant in Northern Ontario, Canada. His skills were honed years later when he opened Maison Louisiana Catering in 2001 and then The Levee Restaurant in 2016 with his wife and business partner Keri. They along with their children, Lauren & Graeme, have spent many years traveling the globe in search of adventure and unique dining experiences. Mariner's Restaurant is the culmination of 20 years of the Fidelaks' adventures to over 40 unique and amazing countries.

- **Chef Tootie Morrison, Earnestly Tootie's Chef Services, Shreveport-Bossier**

Chef Ernestine "Tootie" Morrison is an award-winning, critically acclaimed chef and entrepreneur. She is the chef and owner of Earnestly Tootie's Chef Services, a private chef and catering company established in 2017 in honor of her father, Ernest Scott Jr. Her career experiences include receiving a culinary scholarship to travel to Northern Africa where she lived and worked in the village of Zwaiya Ahansal, Morocco for 14 days. She can often be found in the community at local festivals, pop-ups, private events and supper club dinners.

- **Chef Isaac Toups, Toups' Meatery, New Orleans**

Cooking the food that's closest to his heart has earned Chef Isaac Toups rave reviews. A three-time James Beard Best Chef of the South Semi-finalist & finalist, Isaac represents the new guard of Cajun chefs and is widely recognized for his updated sophisticated approach to a cuisine that's best known for deep rustic flavors. His culinary style is the direct result of his New Orleans fine dining experience and Cajun upbringing in a family that has lived in South Louisiana for more than 300 years. Growing up, he developed a deep appreciation for nature, which fuels his steadfast commitment to protecting America's wetlands today.

Reservations are available now for what's sure to be a memorable meal and can be made by contacting the participating restaurants directly. For more information on the event, chefs and restaurants, visit the event website www.louisianaxcharlotte.com.

ABOUT LOUISIANA CULINARY TRAILS

Since 2008, the Louisiana Travel Association and its partners have promoted the unique culinary scene throughout the Bayou State with the Louisiana Culinary Trails campaign. In addition to providing foodies and travelers from around the globe with mouthwatering road trip ideas, it also takes the program on the road to major cities throughout the country to inspire travel throughout the state of Louisiana. With several direct flights from Charlotte to Louisiana cities and with the exciting food scene in Charlotte, the Queen City is an important market for Louisiana tourism. American Airlines offers direct daily flights to New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Shreveport. For more information about the Louisiana Culinary Trails program, visit www.louisianatravel.com/culinary and follow Louisiana Culinary Trails on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).