A Taste of New Orleans - Wining & Dining Your Way through the Crescent City

Day 1:
Start your first morning with a New Orleans traditional Jazz Brunch. Sample some local favorites, such as Eggs Benedict (poached egg & Canadian bacon on an English muffin half, covered with Hollandaise Sauce), Grits & Grillades (tender veal cooked in a spicy sauce and served over grits), Bananas Foster (bananas cooked flambé style with brown sugar, butter, rum & banana liqueur, served over vanilla ice cream!) or a traditional New Orleans style bread pudding with a hard (whiskey) sauce. And, of course, it wouldn’t be a real Jazz Brunch without a live Jazz combo playing Dixieland tunes, accompanied by a cool Mimosa to drink (champagne & orange juice). Now that you have tantalized your taste buds, take the opportunity to get the story behind the food. A New Orleans Culinary History Tour should be on the day’s agenda. Stroll through some of the nation’s oldest neighborhoods and learn about historic cooking techniques. Learn the many reasons as to why food is so celebrated in Louisiana and New Orleans. For lunch, nothing can be compared to the enjoyment & pleasure of a New Orleans Cooking Class. Learn how to make some of our most famous Creole and Cajun dishes, such as Red Beans & Rice, Chicken & Andouille Gumbo, or Jambalaya. And here’s the best part. You get to sample everything at the conclusion of the class! When you return home, you’ll be able to prepare an authentic Cajun or Creole meal and really impress your family & friends with your world-cuisine savvy.

Did you know that Rum is produced from Sugar Cane? And that Sugar Cane has been a staple of the Louisiana economy since 1751? Put those two facts together, and it’s only natural that we have a rum distillery in New Orleans - and it just so happens to be the oldest rum distillery in the mainland USA. Take a tour of Celebration Distillation Company and see where Cane Rum and New Orleans Rum are made. And yes, you will be treated to a tasting of the various types of rum that are distilled at their facility. Also, if you happen to be visiting with a group and during sugar cane harvesting season (October-November), your group may be able tour a sugar cane farm and learn about the harvesting process.

Choosing just the right restaurant in New Orleans for dinner can take hours, considering how many wonderful dining establishments we have to offer. However, on your first night in town, make this a special night and book a “chef’s table” at one of our fine establishments. You will actually be seated in the kitchen and can observe first hand your favorite delicacy being prepared. A true treat! Book early, because this is a rare experience and the tables fill up fast!

Day 2:
Start your day off with another one of many breakfast traditions - Café au Lait and Beignets. Taste the original beignet (a square doughnut without a hole covered in powdered sugar) and café au lait (half coffee with chicory and half hot milk). A true New Orleans experience. After breakfast, venture to the North toward Lake Pontchartrain and cross the longest bridge over water in the world (just under 25 miles long) and experience the New Orleans Northshore. Visit Pontchartrain Vineyards and sip some genuine Louisiana wine in their French Provincial old-world tasting room. Tour the vineyards and winery and learn how fine Louisiana table wines in the classic French tradition are produced on site. (Group tours are available). There are also several breweries located on the Northshore, so you can include one of these in your future itinerary. For lunch, come back to the South Shore of the Lake and enjoy your midday meal at the Crescent City Brewhouse, New Orleans’ own microbrewery right in the French Quarter. Crescent City Brewhouse produces 4 different distinct brews right on site, in a warm & casual atmosphere featuring wonderful foods to compliment each brew. Or, you can venture into the Warehouse District and have lunch at the Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant, the newest microbrewery addition to New Orleans. At Gordon Biersch, you can sample authentic German lagers, brewed fresh on premise, and enjoy eclectic American Cuisine influenced by bold international flavors.

Take the early afternoon at your leisure to window shop along Royal Street or Decatur Street in the French Quarter. Later in the afternoon, finish up a day of spirits with a New Orleans Cocktail Tour. Take a walk through the French Quarter’s famous bars and restaurants and discover the history of the city’s celebrated cocktails. It’s history - with a twist! From the Sazerac and Pimm’s Cup to the Hurricane and Hand Grenade, you’ll enjoy a view of New Orleans through its history of fine dining and drinking.

This evening’s dining experience will take you to an upscale cooking class! Not only will you learn to cook a fancy meal, you will be given advice as to which wines would best complement each dish. Unlike the “Naturally N’Awlins” type of cooking class where you had lunch yesterday, these classes are not exclusive to Cajun & Creole Cooking. You will receive hands-on instruction in the basic cooking fundamentals that would apply to entertaining princes as well as paupers.
Day 3:
Breakfast should never be taken for granted, and is a true dining experience in New Orleans. Try some classic New Orleans home-style cooking at Mother’s Restaurant, located in the CBD. They offer hearty fare with real local ambiance. Afterward, hop on the St. Charles Avenue Streetcar (a rolling historic landmark) and take a ride through the Garden District and the Uptown area of New Orleans, past stately old oak trees and impressive mansions. While you are Uptown, work your way over to Magazine Street, which boasts many small cafes and sandwich shops for today's lunch. Try one of the many well-known casual foods you have learned about: a Po-Boy (crusty French bread piled high with fried oysters, shrimp, or roast beef, and “dressed” with lettuce, tomato & mayonnaise), or Etouffee (shrimp or crawfish in zesty tomato sauce and slathered over fluffy white rice), or any number of wonderful dishes. The possibilities are endless! After lunch, you can take a stroll and visit the numerous eclectic antique and specialty shops that line Magazine Street. After all the amazing dining experiences you have had so far, your tummy will probably need some rest! So.....why not work off some of this rich food and go shopping? “Make groceries” (a ancient phrase that the locals still use when referring to grocery shopping) and shop for the special spices, foods and cookery items that are necessary for preparing authentic Cajun & Creole dishes. Bring home some file (ground sassafras leaves - necessary for Gumbo File), Tabasco Hot Sauce (THE necessary hot sauce), Andouille or Boudin (spicy Cajun sausages made of beef & pork), or any of the many varieties of Zatarain’s boxed mixes (ready to cook Cajun & Creole dishes). Of course, you just can’t go home without a dessert of Pralines (made of butter, brown sugar & pecans), or a King Cake (available year-round in New Orleans, but more abundant during the Mardi Gras season). Also, for international visitors, you can take advantage of tax free shopping. Louisiana is the only state in the USA that offers this perk for international visitors. You are now a New Orleans gastronomic expert! For your final night farewell dinner, take a leisurely stroll or a carriage ride to your restaurant of choice. The options are endless! You may want to consider dining in a restaurant that offers live music, or experience outdoor dining in an eatery that features one of the many luscious and secluded courtyards hidden deep inside the French Quarter. Bon Appetit! Remember, in New Orleans we don’t just eat to live, WE LIVE TO EAT!