

MiLa

817 Common Street
504-412-2580
www.milaneorleans.com

The restaurant business is hard. Often a chef's social life takes place within the four walls of his or her establishment. Mornings begin at 5 o'clock and occasionally end just shy of midnight. If one is going to meet and have friends, those friendships are usually made and grown inside the restaurant. Romances are commonplace.

Chef Slade Rushing from Tylertown, Mississippi, and Chef Allison Vines from West Monroe, Louisiana, met and fell in love in the kitchen of Gerard's Downtown restaurant in 2000. They then moved to New York and began working their way up the nation's toughest culinary ladder. They married in 2003. The couple grew homesick for the South and moved to the North Shore area of New Orleans, opening the highly acclaimed restaurant, Longbranch, in Abita Springs. That was May 2005.

Just three months later, Hurricane Katrina blew through town, and although the couple reopened their restaurant just two weeks after the storm, the complexion of the area had changed drastically. After a critically celebrated two-year run, the Rushings closed shop and moved back into New Orleans to open MiLa at the Renaissance Pere Marquette Hotel one block off Canal Street.

MiLa is a highly refined restaurant with a New York feel and a heart for all things locally grown. The name is a tribute to the two home states of the chefs. It is the culmination of two journeyman chefs with extensive knowledge, love, and devotion for the garden-to-the-table movement, the restaurant business, and each other. MiLa would be a success in any major restaurant market. Fortunately, it's in New Orleans.

mila's chicory salad

Recipe courtesy of MiLa
Yield: 6 servings
Preparation: 1 hour
Cook: 12 minutes
Bake: 13 minutes

- 1 cup pecan halves
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 9 ounces French chevre (goat's milk cheese)
- ½ butternut squash, peeled and bottom round section removed
- 3 tablespoons turbinado sugar
- 6 heads frisée lettuce, washed well and dried
- Salt to taste
- Ground black pepper to taste
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup fig balsamic vinegar
- Garnish: fresh herbs such as chervil sprigs or chive batons

PREHEAT oven to 350°.

TOAST pecans on a baking sheet for 7 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool.

IN A MEDIUM SAUTÉ PAN, melt sugar carefully over medium heat for 10 to 12 minutes, or until it reaches caramel stage. Add butter and pecan halves, stirring with a wooden spoon until incorporated. Immediately pour onto a baking sheet, spread out evenly, and let cool. When pralines have

cooled, break into pieces and pulse in a food processor until they are a fine powder. Set aside.

USING YOUR HANDS, roll chevre into 1-inch balls, approximately ½ ounce each. Place praline powder in a bowl and roll goat-cheese balls in powder one at a time. Coat well with praline powder and reserve until ready to serve.

PREHEAT broiler.

USING A MANDOLIN ON THE THINNEST SETTING, cut butternut squash into thin strips. Using a knife, square off squash slices until they are perfect rectangles. Line about 5 strips of squash side by side for each salad on a small foil-covered broiler pan. Coat squash strips lightly with turbinado sugar.

PLACE squash strips about 6 inches from the broiler and roast for 5 to 6 minutes, or until sugar is melted and squash is brown around the edges. Transfer 5 strips to each of six serving plates.

TO ASSEMBLE SALAD, toss frisée in a bowl, seasoning well with salt and pepper and lightly dressing with olive oil and fig balsamic. Place a small mound of lettuce in the center of each plate. Place 3 goat-cheese balls on each plate around lettuce, and drizzle salad with fig balsamic.

GARNISH with chervil sprigs or chive batons, if desired.

**MR. B'S BISTRO**

201 Royal Street
504-523-2078
www.mrbsbistro.com

In the 30 years Mr. B's Bistro has been in business, it has moved from newcomer to mainstay and, now, to institution. Mr. B's, operated by managing partner Cindy Brennan, is unapologetically New Orleans—pure New Orleans. The menu is filled with time-proven Creole dishes and French Quarter classics. And the execution from the kitchen to the table is flawless. If someone were entertaining out-of-town guests and wanted to treat them to the quintessential New Orleans meal, it could be done in one three-course sitting at Mr. B's.

Start with the Gumbo Ya-Ya, made with pulled chicken, a hearty and rich chicken stock, and locally made andouille sausage. My wife and I have been eating Sunday brunch at Mr. B's for 20 years, and she has yet to order another soup or gumbo. It's that good.

For the second course, go with the barbecued shrimp. It's full of flavor and spice, and it's messy—but a good messy. Your server will bring a bib, but you'll have to ask for more napkins. Unfortunately, you can't ask for seconds.

The bread pudding at Mr. B's is classic New Orleans—warm, not too sweet, rich but not too filling, just moist enough to not be too dry, and served with an amazingly rich Irish-whiskey sauce.

Brunch or lunch at Mr. B's is the perfect start to a great day in the French Quarter.

**gumbo ya-ya**

Recipe courtesy of Chef Michele McRaney, Mr. B's Bistro
Yield: approximately 6 quarts
Preparation: 30 minutes
Cook: 2 hours

- 1 pound unsalted butter
- 3 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 2 red bell peppers, seeded and diced
- 2 green bell peppers, seeded and diced
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 5 quarts chicken stock
- 1 pound andouille sausage, cut into ¼-inch slices
- 2 tablespoons Creole seasoning
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt plus additional to taste
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried hot red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 (3½-pound) chicken, roasted and boned
- Hot pepper sauce to taste
- Hot cooked rice

IN A 12-QUART STOCKPOT, melt butter over low heat (medium heat on an electric range). Gradually add 1 cup flour, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Cook, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds. Add another 1 cup flour and stir constantly for 30 seconds. Add remaining 1 cup flour and stir constantly for 30 seconds. Continue to cook roux, stirring constantly, for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until it is the color of dark mahogany. **ADD** bell peppers and stir constantly for 30 seconds. Add onions and celery and stir constantly for 30 seconds. Gradually add stock to roux, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon to prevent lumps. Add andouille, Creole seasoning, salt, black pepper, red pepper flakes, chili powder, thyme, garlic, and bay leaves and bring to a boil. **SIMMER** gumbo, uncovered, for 45 minutes, skimming off any fat and stirring occasionally. **ADD** chicken meat and simmer for 15 minutes. Adjust seasoning with salt and hot sauce. Serve with hot rice.

in the kitchen with Michelle McRaney

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH DUNLAP
FOOD STYLING BY LOREN WOOD



Executive Chef Michelle McRaney has been at the helm of the kitchen at Mr. B's Bistro in New Orleans, Louisiana, since 1995. We caught up with her there to find out how her duties at the restaurant have impacted the food she and her family eat.

I wish I could have a wonderful meal with my grandparents so my grandmother could watch me cook instead of me spending so many hours watching her.

—Chef Michelle McRaney

► **Who does the cooking at home?** I do. I'm a chef!

► **How did you learn to cook?** By watching my grandmother cook. My mother worked, so my grandmother did the cooking.

► **What is your favorite comfort food?** I do love mashed potatoes. Also, macaroni and cheese. And, of course, I love M&M's.

► **Do you have a special memory of that comfort food?** My grandparents were very "meat and potatoes" people. When my grandmother would cook dinner, she would save potatoes on the side (not mashed) for me to mash and prepare on my own. She spoiled me.

► **How often do you prepare them?** We don't prepare them as often now, but when my son, Ethan, comes home from college at Ole Miss, we always have them because that's something that he and I share—our love of mashed potatoes.

► **What would a typical meal at home consist of?** During the summer, we cook outside, no matter what it is. We love chicken, so we grill it during the summer and roast it with satsumas and onions during the winter.

► **What are your favorite ingredients to keep on hand in the refrigerator?** We keep a lot of cheese. Right now, we have pepper Jack, Monterey Jack, blue cheese—we always have blue cheese and ricotta. Sometimes, if I come home late, my husband, Jerry, and I will just have cheese and crackers for supper.

► **How about in the pantry?** Salt! Jerry and I were cleaning out the pantry the other day and discovered that we had 12 different types of salt. To name a few, we have fleur de sel, black sea salt from Hawaii, red sea salt from the Himalayan Mountains, pink sea salt from Australia, and Morton kosher salt.

► **What are some of your favorite herbs?** I have two favorites: basil and

thyme. They are good herbs that fit in our regular ingredients. There is nothing better than a Creole tomato with fresh basil.

► **Which spices do you tend to use a lot?** I do like fresh-ground black pepper, and right now, I am preparing Steak Au Poivre and Pepper-Crusted Duck. As for others, it really depends on the dish. I try not to overspice food because I really like to taste the freshness of the dish.

► **Do you ever use convenience products at home?** I use a prepared jarred sauce for my meat sauce to serve with spaghetti. Of course, we enhance this with fresh tomatoes, basil, and black pepper.

► **Has your professional cooking affected how you cook at home?** How could it not? I cook all day long, so there are tricks and shortcuts that I learn in the Mr. B's kitchen that I do at home. Tricks that most people don't know.

► **For example?** One shortcut is to preheat your oven. My mother doesn't believe in preheating an oven, but it really does save time and allows your food to cook more evenly.

Another shortcut is to prep items that you will need—not just for that meal but for other meals that you will be preparing—ahead of time. Anything that will keep, of course. For example, if several of the dishes you'll be preparing call for chopped onions, do all the onion chopping at once, measure out what you'll need for each dish, and store those portions in the refrigerator.

It's also important to clean as you go. If you don't, it can be hard to clean up at the end when you really don't feel like it.

► **If you could share a meal with the person you admire most, who would it be?** I wish I could have a wonderful meal with my grandparents so my grandmother could watch me cook instead of me spending so many hours watching her.

in the kitchen with Michelle McRaney

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH DUNLAP
FOOD STYLING BY LOREN WOOD



Executive Chef Michelle McRaney has been at the helm of the kitchen at Mr. B's Bistro in New Orleans, Louisiana, since 1995. We caught up with her there to find out how her duties at the restaurant have impacted the food she and her family eat.

I wish I could have a wonderful meal with my grandparents so my grandmother could watch me cook instead of me spending so many hours watching her.

—Chef Michelle McRaney

► **Who does the cooking at home?** I do. I'm a chef!

► **How did you learn to cook?** By watching my grandmother cook. My mother worked, so my grandmother did the cooking.

► **What is your favorite comfort food?** I do love mashed potatoes. Also, macaroni and cheese. And, of course, I love M&M's.

► **Do you have a special memory of that comfort food?** My grandparents were very "meat and potatoes" people. When my grandmother would cook dinner, she would save potatoes on the side (not mashed) for me to mash and prepare on my own. She spoiled me.

► **How often do you prepare them?** We don't prepare them as often now, but when my son, Ethan, comes home from college at Ole Miss, we always have them because that's something that he and I share—our love of mashed potatoes.

► **What would a typical meal at home consist of?** During the summer, we cook outside, no matter what it is. We love chicken, so we grill it during the summer and roast it with satsumas and onions during the winter.

► **What are your favorite ingredients to keep on hand in the refrigerator?** We keep a lot of cheese. Right now, we have pepper Jack, Monterey Jack, blue cheese—we always have blue cheese and ricotta. Sometimes, if I come home late, my husband, Jerry, and I will just have cheese and crackers for supper.

► **How about in the pantry?** Salt! Jerry and I were cleaning out the pantry the other day and discovered that we had 12 different types of salt. To name a few, we have fleur de sel, black sea salt from Hawaii, red sea salt from the Himalayan Mountains, pink sea salt from Australia, and Morton kosher salt.

► **What are some of your favorite herbs?** I have two favorites: basil and

thyme. They are good herbs that fit in our regular ingredients. There is nothing better than a Creole tomato with fresh basil.

► **Which spices do you tend to use a lot?** I do like fresh-ground black pepper, and right now, I am preparing Steak Au Poivre and Pepper-Crusted Duck. As for others, it really depends on the dish. I try not to overspice food because I really like to taste the freshness of the dish.

► **Do you ever use convenience products at home?** I use a prepared jarred sauce for my meat sauce to serve with spaghetti. Of course, we enhance this with fresh tomatoes, basil, and black pepper.

► **Has your professional cooking affected how you cook at home?** How could it not? I cook all day long, so there are tricks and shortcuts that I learn in the Mr. B's kitchen that I do at home. Tricks that most people don't know.

► **For example?** One shortcut is to preheat your oven. My mother doesn't believe in preheating an oven, but it really does save time and allows your food to cook more evenly.

Another shortcut is to prep items that you will need—not just for that meal but for other meals that you will be preparing—ahead of time. Anything that will keep, of course. For example, if several of the dishes you'll be preparing call for chopped onions, do all the onion chopping at once, measure out what you'll need for each dish, and store those portions in the refrigerator.

It's also important to clean as you go. If you don't, it can be hard to clean up at the end when you really don't feel like it.

► **If you could share a meal with the person you admire most, who would it be?** I wish I could have a wonderful meal with my grandparents so my grandmother could watch me cook instead of me spending so many hours watching her.



Michelle's marinated shrimp

Recipe courtesy of Chef Michelle McRaney

Yield: 4 servings

Preparation: 15 minutes

Cook: less than 2 minutes

- 1 lemon, halved
- 2 tablespoons liquid crab boil, preferably Zatarain's
- 1 teaspoon granulated garlic
- 1 teaspoon granulated onion
- 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
- 1 1/4 pounds large shrimp (16 to 20 shrimp per pound), peeled with tail left intact
- 1/4 cup seasoned rice-wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons Creole-style mustard
- 10 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 8 cups ice
- 1 cup roasted red bell pepper strips
- 1 red onion, halved, center removed, and cut into 1/8-inch-thick slices
- 1/4 cup chopped chives

TO A LARGE SAUCEPAN, add 5 cups water. Squeeze lemon into water and add lemon halves along with crab boil, granulated garlic, granulated onion, and peppercorns. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat.

ADD shrimp and boil for 1 1/2 minutes, or just until they turn pink. Remove pan from heat and strain shrimp, placing them in a bowl. Add ice to shrimp mixture. Let shrimp sit, covered by ice, for 10 minutes. Drain.

IN A LARGE BOWL, whisk together vinegar and mustard. Slowly add oils, whisking to combine, and season with salt and pepper. Add shrimp, bell pepper, onion, and chives and toss.