

DR. NORMAN FRANCIS

President Emeritus, Xavier University



Dr. Norman Francis, recently retired after 46 years as President of Xavier University. He has long been a legend among higher education administrators. Tempered by his early involvement in the civil rights movement, Francis chose education over an early career as a lawyer and became committed to improving schools as a way to equality, opportunity and service to others. He would go on to serve on more than 50 boards and commissions and receive 40 honorary degrees. In 2006, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush.

Long before tourists and other New Orleanians visited the Seventh Ward for dining, I was enjoying Leah Chase's "down home" Creole cooking at Dooky Chase's Restaurant. This special treat started 67 years ago in my first year of college at Xavier University.

A special date was Sunday lunch in the Gold Room at Dooky's. It was comparable to dining at the Blue Room in the Waldorf Astoria, except the eating was superior and the atmosphere more inviting at Dooky's.

The dining under Leah Chase's care has never wavered. It simply grew better with every new year, and, eventually, earned its rightful national acclaim, "that a visit to New Orleans was not complete without a meal at Dooky's." It was something to tell friends about back home!

Over the years, I have had many favorite dishes at Dooky's. One of my fondest memories are of the grits and grillades – a lunch specialty, but also a delicious midnight meal after a late night gala or a Mardi Gras ball!

– Dr. Norman Francis

Grillades

by Leah Chase of Dooky Chase's Restaurant

We only serve grillades for dinner at the restaurant. On special occasions we will serve them with grits in the morning, but that is not the way the old Creoles at home did it. That is maybe the way the Uptown Creoles did it. Grillades were our dinner where I grew up. They were served with rice or jambalaya.

I think the best grillades I ever had were made with veal "seven" steak. Those were common "depression steaks," and were called seven steaks because the bone is a perfect seven if you get into the center of the shoulder where the shoulder blade is.

Most of the time we had vegetables without any meat, but on Sundays, when we got money if Daddy had a job at the Jenke Shipyard and things were good, we got veal round steaks. Otherwise we had seven steaks. Mother would bread those steaks and we would get by.

It is funny to me that everyone wants that depression steak now. It was always a big treat to us back then, too. Here is my recipe, using round steak.

INGREDIENTS

2 medium veal round steaks
Salt and pepper
¼ cup vegetable oil
2 tbsp. flour
1 medium onion, chopped
¼ cup celery, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
1 8-oz. can tomato sauce
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. cayenne pepper
3 cups water
1 whole ripe tomato
2 sprigs thyme
2 tbsp. parsley

DIRECTIONS

Cut veal rounds in to pieces, leaving meat around the bone. Season meat with salt and black pepper. Set aside. In a Magnalite chicken fryer, heat vegetable oil. Add meat and cover pot. Cook over medium heat for 15 minutes. Uncover and remove meat from pot. Set aside.

Add flour to meat drippings, stirring constantly. Cook until flour is brown. Add

onions and celery, stirring until onions are just barely soft. Add green pepper, tomato sauce, garlic, the teaspoon of salt and the cayenne pepper. Stir mixture. Add water. Dip fresh tomato in boiling water; peel off thin outer skin. Cut tomato into six wedges and add to sauce. Add thyme and parsley. Return meat to pot with sauce. Cover and let simmer for 30 minutes. Yield: 4 to 6 servings.

