

What is or was your favorite dish at Commander's Palace that you either helped create or you just love to eat? The Shrimp & Tasso Henican. It was the very first dish I learned to make when I started at Commander's and it remains my favorite. We even make a po-boy version that we eat on our Mardi Gras float – we stop Bacchus on St. Charles and Washington so we can load up on the po-boys during the parade.

In early 2002, Tory was named Executive Chef of the original Commander's Palace in New Orleans. In the years since then, Chef McPhail has been instrumental in rebuilding the dining scene in New Orleans.



Chef Tory McPhail of Commander's Palace

SHRIMP & TASSO HENICAN

INGREDIENTS

1 red onion, thinly sliced	2 tsp finely chopped parsley
1 cup red wine vinegar	2 lb jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails removed
2 tsp kosher salt, plus more	2 oz spicy tasso, cut into matchsticks
1 tsp whole black peppercorns	1 cup flour
1 tsp cumin seeds	2 tbsp Creole seasoning
7 cloves garlic (3 crushed, 4 finely chopped)	1/4 cup canola oil
2 bay leaves	9 tbsp unsalted butter
2 jalapeños, minced	1 small shallot, finely chopped
1 each green, red, and yellow bell pepper, minced	1/3 cup Crystal hot sauce
1/2 tbsp crushed red chile flakes	1/4 cup heavy cream
1 cup light corn syrup	12 pickled okra
1 cup white vinegar	

INSTRUCTIONS

Place sliced onions in a bowl. Bring vinegar, 2 tsp. salt, peppercorns, cumin, crushed garlic, and bay leaves to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan. Pour over onions; cool pickled onions; chill.

Heat a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add peppers and cook until slightly caramelized, 10-12 minutes; transfer to a bowl. Add chile flakes, syrup, and vinegar to the pan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook until reduced by two-thirds, 10-12 minutes. Stir in peppers and parsley; season with salt. Set pepper jelly aside.

Make a 1/4" cut down the back of each shrimp; stuff each shrimp with one strip of tasso and secure with a toothpick. Mix flour and Creole seasoning in a bowl. Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, toss shrimp in flour, shaking off excess; fry until just cooked, 3-5 minutes. Transfer shrimp to a bowl; keep warm. Wipe out pan and add 4 tbsp. butter; return to medium-high heat. Add chopped garlic and shallots; cook until soft, 2 minutes. Add hot sauce and cream; cook until reduced by half. Remove from heat and whisk in remaining butter to make a smooth sauce. Return shrimp to pan; toss with sauce and remove toothpicks.

Divide jelly among 6 plates and arrange shrimp on the plate alternating with pickled okra; garnish with pickled onions.

TORY MCPHAIL

Commander's Palace



CHEF TORY MCPHAIL, Executive Chef
Commander's Palace

A native of Ferndale, Washington, a small agricultural town on the Canadian border, Tory McPhail grew up on his family's farm, eating fresh, locally sourced foods and building an early appreciation for their origin. After attending school in Seattle, Chef McPhail opted for a start in New Orleans. At age 19, he was hired at the lowest level of food preparation, with salads and appetizers, but he moved swiftly through all 12 stages of the kitchen. He gained experience in Florida, London, the Virgin Islands and, after a few years, he demonstrated his talent at the Commander's Palace restaurant in Las Vegas.

Please provide us with a few thoughts on your time at Commander's Palace and specifically with Ella Brennan.

To sum it up in one word – extraordinary, and most of it has nothing to do with cooking. Ella's philosophy of running a business, human behavior, and southern hospitality are unmatched. But she has one hell of a good palate, too.

What years did you work at Commander's and in what positions? I have worked every position in the kitchen since I started at Commander's when I was 19, and have been extremely lucky to be the Executive Chef for the past 12 years. Since the bar is connected to the kitchen, I can even make you a drink.

What was the most important thing or lesson you learned at Commander's or from Ella Brennan? To be a leader in business, you need to be a great person on all levels.

What do you think will be Ella Brennan's legacy on the New Orleans culinary scene? I don't think we have quite realized that yet. Ella is the most influential female restaurateur in American history. Ella paved the way for the rest of us and put New Orleans on the culinary map back in the 50's and she hasn't stopped yet. She has launched thousands of careers and has influenced generations of people both inside AND outside of the hospitality industry.