



Photos by Kenny Morrison

# Oysters St. Claude

Acclaimed cookbook author and food writer Yotam Ottolenghi, just one of many famous guests who joined JoAnn at Upperline, had this to say about one of Upperline's beloved appetizers on his website: "The oysters were sublime, but the punchy sauce—an ingenious combination of sweet, sour, savory, and spice—stood out even more." JoAnn and Chef Ken Smith named the sauce after one of their favorite neighborhood spots, Restaurant Mandich on St. Claude Avenue. The two had lunch there shortly before it was lost to Hurricane Katrina.



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Visiting Upperline was always a feast for the senses, even before your dinner arrived. But the most evocative experience I had at the restaurant was on my last visit. It was empty except for JoAnn herself, who met me for an interview about her decision to retire and not reopen.

The dining room did not feel empty for long. As she told stories of her customers, of the subjects and artists behind the paintings on the walls, of the chefs and waiters and dishwashers who worked

together here, she re-animated the room with her vivid gratitude for it all.

That's when I fully realized just how much Upperline represented, not just as her vocation but as her life's work, a manifestation of her journey through New Orleans culture expressed through hospitality. It made me yearn for one more evening here, but I also left so very thankful to have experienced it through the years.

## Oysters St. Claude

1 ½ to 2 hours, plus prep

Serves 5 to 6 appetizer portions

### Plating

Plate on a small round: Put 5 or 6 oysters on the plate in a circle pattern with a tiny space between each one. Use a coffee spoon to put a dollop of sauce on each oyster. Sprinkle with minced parsley if desired.

Spicy or a touch too hot is hard to predict; your judgment is required at serving time. Use smaller dollops if considered too spicy.

## Fried Oysters

24 to 30 fresh oysters, shucked

2 cups corn flour

½ cup all-purpose flour

Pour oil to a depth of 2 inches in a large saucepan or Dutch oven, then heat oil to 350°F.

Mix corn flour, all-purpose flour, salt, and pepper in a bowl.

Working in batches with a small colander, toss oysters in flour mixture and shake off excess.

1 Tbl Kosher salt

1 tsp fine grind black pepper

Vegetable oil

Drop carefully into oil, as they may splatter. Do not crowd the oysters.

Fry until crisp and lightly browned, 1 to 2 minutes.

Transfer to paper towels to drain

## St. Claude Sauce

2 Meyer lemons, seeded and sliced (do not peel), or 1 ½ lemons if extra large

1 ½ cups peeled garlic cloves

1 large bunch parsley, rough chopped (if stems are very thick or long, chop off some of them), or two small bunches

2 ½ Tbl Worcestershire sauce

2 Tbl Spanish paprika (non-smoked)

Purée lemons, garlic, the chopped bunch of parsley, Worcestershire sauce, paprika, sugar, hot sauce, Tabasco®, white pepper, and salt in a food processor until fairly smooth. The texture will be similar to mayo but not as smooth or silky.

Heat melted butter in a medium-large saucepan over medium heat. Add the purée to the butter, heat to a low simmer, then turn heat to very low. Using a wooden spoon, stir

¾ tsp sugar

2 Tbl Crystal Hot Sauce

2 tsp Tabasco®

½ tsp white pepper

1 tsp Kosher salt

12 oz unsalted butter, melted

often to avoid the sauce burning. The sauce will turn dark red and thicken. Cooking time varies, approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours, so keep a close watch on the sauce.

Add salt to taste, if needed.

Keep at room temperature if using it within 3 to 4 hours. Mix the sauce well if it begins to separate.

