

UNSUNG HERO *at*
MOTHER'S RESTAURANT

Roland Swazy

ROLAND SWAZY

Head Chef

38 YEARS AT MOTHER'S RESTAURANT

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR JOB?

The people I work with; they make the job easy.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY?

Following Hurricane Katrina [in 2005], Jerry Amato [owner of Mother's] brought in ten trailers to the back lot of the restaurant. We lived in those trailers until the hotel across the street finally opened for Jerry to get us rooms there. We had places to live and we kept the restaurant going.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THIS LINE OF WORK?

My uncle was the chef at La Louisiane [a New Orleans restaurant that has since closed and was owned by Jerry Amato], so I started there when I was in my early 20s and moved over to Mother's when Jerry bought it.

WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF NOT THIS?

I wanted to be a football player for the New Orleans Saints. I was a running back/wide receiver for Walter L. Cohen High School.



BREAD PUDDING

with brandy sauce

SERVES: 8 to 12

BAKE TIME: Approximately 1 hour, not including prep time or time for bread pudding mixture to chill and soak (from 1 hour to overnight)

BREAD PUDDING

INGREDIENTS

3 cups half-and-half
 ½ pound unsalted butter
 2 ½ cups sugar, granulated, white
 2 ½ Tbl vanilla extract, imitation
 (less if real vanilla)
 8 whole eggs

DIRECTIONS

1. Pre-heat oven to 350°F
2. In a saucepan, simmer the half-and-half, butter, sugar, and vanilla on low to medium heat until butter and sugar are melted. Stir continuously; do not scorch.
3. Crack the eggs in a separate bowl and whip to mix thoroughly.
4. Slowly pour one ladle of the milk mixture into the eggs in a steady stream and whisk fast to incorporate (if you don't add it slowly and whisk fast, the heat will cook the eggs). Add the second ladle the same way, then combine the rest in a steady, slow stream, whisking the whole time.

8 cups bread (stale), roughly torn or cut into one-inch cubes (approx. 2/3 loaf if using New Orleans French bread)

2 ½ tsp ground cinnamon
 1 pinch ground nutmeg
 2 ½ cups fruit cocktail with syrup, not drained
 (approximately 1 ½ 15-oz cans)

5. In a new bowl, add the bread, cinnamon, and nutmeg; toss well to incorporate. Pour the wet ingredients plus the fruit cocktail with syrup over the dry ingredients and mix well by hand (do not use a machine). Chill and allow to soak for at least one hour (or make ahead and soak overnight).

6. Pour into a lightly buttered 12" x 10" x 2½" pan.

7. Bake until the top is brown and the middle is set, about one hour depending upon your oven.

TO SERVE

Allow to cool somewhat before cutting into pieces and serving with Brandy Sauce (see following).

MOTHER'S RESTAURANT

Mother's Restaurant has been a New Orleans staple since 1938, serving po-boys and hearty comfort food to longshoremen, lawyers, locals, tourists, and Marines alike. It was opened by Simon and Mary (Mother) Landry. In 1986 Jerry and John Amato purchased the restaurant from the Landrys. They expanded the menu while preserving the restaurant's historic character and working-class roots. Today, Mother's continues to flourish as a beloved gathering place where "Everybody gets fed. Everybody comes back."



BRANDY SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

½ pound unsalted butter	½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ cup dark brown sugar	1 pinch ground nutmeg
	2 oz cooking brandy

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix all ingredients in a small saucepan.
2. Bring to a simmer until the butter completely separates. The sauce should look broken, with both a clear layer of clarified butter and a dark layer with spices.

TO SERVE

Either spoon sauce atop individual portions of bread pudding or pour all of it on top of the pan, if serving buffet style.