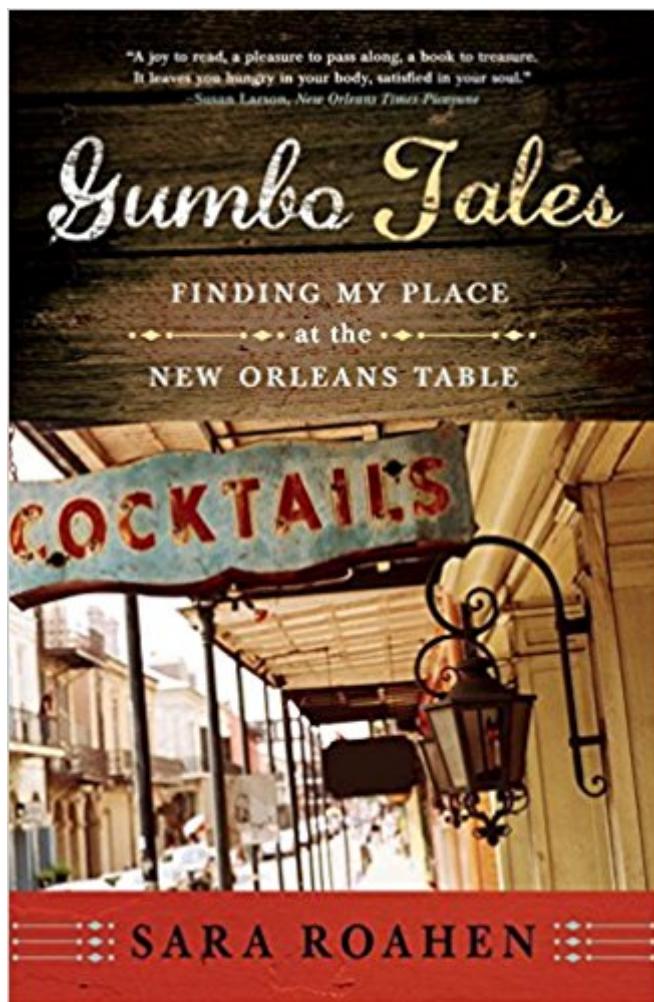


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# Gumbo Tales: Finding My Place At The New Orleans Table



## Synopsis

“Makes you want to spend a week •immediately• in New Orleans.” •Jeffrey A. Trachtenberg, Wall Street Journal A cocktail is more than a segue to dinner when it’s a Sazerac, an anise-laced drink of rye whiskey and bitters indigenous to New Orleans. For Wisconsin native Sara Roahen, a Sazerac is also a fine accompaniment to raw oysters, a looking glass into the cocktail culture of her own family •and one more way to gain a foothold in her beloved adopted city. Roahen’s stories of personal discovery introduce readers to New Orleans’ well-known signatures •gumbo, po-boys, red beans and rice •and its lesser-known gems: the pho of its Vietnamese immigrants, the braciolone of its Sicilians, and the ya-ka-mein of its street culture. By eating and cooking her way through a place as unique and unexpected as its infamous turducken, Roahen finds a home. And then Katrina. With humor, poignancy, and hope, she conjures up a city that reveled in its food traditions before the storm •and in many ways has been saved by them since.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In this gratifying love letter to her adopted home, food writer Roahen takes the French idea of terroir—the effect of a region’s climate and geography on its wine grapes—as a jumping-off point, locating New Orleans’ “emotional terroir” in its food. Though it’s a nebulous concept, this culinary tour succeeds repeatedly in defining the indefinable with grace, wit and passion—especially in regards to the city’s alluring, complex flavors and aromas. Beginning with gumbo, Roahen examines the Crescent City’s signature dishes, offering a history of the cuisine, the

people who shaped it and those who keep it alive. Readers will meet Ernest and Mary Hansen, crafters of "artisan" shaved-ice sno-balls; take a seat at Luizza's by the Track for transcendental BBQ shrimp po-boys; sample Miss Lovie's phenomenal Big Mama's Seafood Gumbo; and marvel at the ravenous characters populating Hawk's crawfish boil. An accomplished cook herself, Roahan periodically ushers readers into her kitchen for experiments like the daunting, superindulgent Turducken: a chicken stuffed inside a duck that is then stuffed inside a turkey. Hurricane Katrina is treated as a kind of recurring character, dogging the city and its inhabitants, and Roahan honors their struggle and loss. Those familiar with the city will smile and nod along; readers who've never had the pleasure may find themselves making travel arrangements long before the last page.

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[This] deeply informed and plainly heartfelt investigation into New Orleans finest food traditions taps into a cornucopia of cultural riches. "An endearing collection of stories from the seven years [Sara Roahan] spent in the Crescent City, learning to embrace its unapologetically decadent cuisine. It is part culinary history, part memoir and part homage to places that have since been erased.

"Informative, engaging and amusing . . . Gumbo Tales has the not-surprising effect of leaving the reader's mouth watering. --Jonathan Yardley "This is the book to lead you, rejoicing, to your favorite restaurant, or fire up that kitchen stove to make a batch of gumbo for your mama n' dem. This book is a joy to read, a pleasure to pass along, a book to treasure. It leaves you hungry in your body, satisfied in your soul. "

for those of you who want one book about nola and its food, forget it. you must read several including cookbooks. there are many. sarah wrote this book the way she saw fit. i am from louisiana and lived in nola over 4 years and was an eager and early foodie during the reign of richard and rima collin and the new orleans underground gourmet in the local paper there; subsequently underground became a paperback guide book, and i believe, the first of its kind. . i love this book sarah has written. she lives in nola in the uptown area and knows what she is talking about. other books i would recommend are rima and me by richard collin, a confederacy of dunces by o'toole, new orleans cookbook by rima and richard collin, encyclopedia of cajun and creole cuisine by john folse, ny new orleans by john besh, new orleans food by tom fitzmorris, creole feast by nathaniel burton, uglesich's restaurant cookbook. get to ordering and reading. i can tell you that after living in new orleans, san fran, washington, d.c., denver, nashville, and travelling all over france, there is no

tastier, better quality food at a better price than in new orleans; and there are more restaurants per sq. mile than anywhere i know except maybe the left bank of paris. d.gremillion

Not getting through the book as fast as I would like. Great detail and info

I thoroughly enjoyed Gumbo Tales; it made me miss New Orleans all the more. Although I've never had a Sno-Ball in that city, the chapter about Hansen's, "The Bittersweet of Summertime" was probably my favorite. And in the next segment about Red Gravy, "Pray for Us", her comparison of the reception a customer experiences at Central Grocery versus that by Ashley Hansen had me rolling on the floor. There were several reading moments that required a hankie, too....particularly those that described the effects of Hurricane Katrina on families and the beliefs and traditions they hold so dearly. Roahen doesn't make this a book about the hurricane, but she subtly infuses the devastating impact of it as she weaves her food tales. And the food tales are delicious! I highly recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in New Orleans and its cuisine. Sara Roahen serves up large portions of humanity as well.

In Gumbo Tales, Sara Roahen attempts to bring the reader in to New Orleans food, including the mix of cultures, weird ingredients, neighborhoods etc. In my opinion, the self-professed newcomer author succeeds way beyond my expectations. For example, her findings from her mirliton week are humorous, somewhat familiar and somehow new -- all at the same time. In fact, I "knew" plenty of the things I found in the book, yet I had never thought about them or perhaps not read about them or maybe I had forgotten them (braciola/braciolini/bruccialone, anyone?). I would easily give the book five stars except that the material is familiar to me and I don't know how it will work for a reader for whom Gumbo is *jamais vu*. If you are not in that number, a book about the food of New Orleans really can be a special treat.

Going on my first trip this month to NOLA in almost 20 years and found this book absolutely fascinating. Everything I had wondered about with the origins of New Orleans cuisine was in there, including cajun food vs creole food. Did not understand that until now. There is an absolute passion for food in New Orleans and the author brings this all to light in a very entertaining way. Thank you Sara for taking me on a food journey through New Orleans before I even get there.

Fantastic and lovely reading here. Can't say enough about this book. Sara Roahen writes

beautifully; every essay makes you curious and hungry! NOLA is a town with so much culture and food to discover. I'm there at least once a year to visit friends and in-laws. After 8 years of visits, there's still so much to discover. I turn to Sara's book often, for good reading and for suggestions on what to eat next and where to eat it! Thanks for a gorgeous book, Sara. I've loved every word, and have enjoyed, too, giving your book as a gift.

At my restaurant, I wanted to throw a salute to New Orleansbrunch. The main feature of the event was crab gumbo. I hadto prepare myself for questions about the history of gumbo andthis book was filled with everything gumbo and more. Excellentbook.

This proved the most insightful -- and unexpectedly useful -- book I read prior to going to New Orleans. In fact, you could say it provided a springboard for my exploration of the city.See, I always need a focus when I travel. For New Orleans, it was food and music. (A no-brainer, I admit, but I ain't proud... sometimes the obvious is the also the best.) This book made me seek out muffalettes at Central Grocery, po'boys, mudbugs, bread pudding, sezeracs, and (of course) gumbo. Oh, and a "lucky bean" at a St. Joseph's day feast. (Read the book and find out what that is.)Okay, 'nuff about me. About the book. What a banquet! There's so much here beyond the food -- it's a stew of rich experiences, well seasoned with humor, and garnished with verve and wit. Roahen's food writer's gift for vivid description extends to people and places as well. There's history here, too, to give it all perspective. And tragedy: Katrina.I'll definitely be re-reading this one before my next trip to New Orleans. And, oh yes, there will be another trip.

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