

Tales of the Cocktail 2006

[Tales of the Cocktail](#) 2006 attracted record attendance celebrating the history of the cocktail New Orleans style.



For the last three years, we have attended the Tales of the Cocktail now in its fourth year, and this year's tales were even sweeter! It was wonderful to be back in New Orleans at the Tales of the Cocktail, (July 19-23, 2006), eleven months after Hurricane Katrina. The city is making a comeback and is ready and waiting, for tourists to visit. Little by little, the city is resuming their daily lives, hotels and restaurants are open, and new restaurants and shops have decided to make New Orleans their home. Several of our friends either lost or had damage to their homes from the aftermath of Katrina, but in typical New Orleans fashion, they are not people to let anything destroy their positive spirits, and they keep marching on and rebuilding their lives. Our hats are off to all of them!

What we enjoy most about Tales of the Cocktail is seeing old friends and meeting new ones, and that there is something for everyone. The five-day celebration encourages guests to soak in the history and culture of the city. There are opportunities to meet star bartenders and learn about cocktails; meet celebrity chefs and attend cocktail and food pairing lunches and dinners; meet authors and other VIP special guests; take The New Orleans Original Cocktail Tour; and attend a host of seminars and parties, that make the Tales of the Cocktail "the" party to attend in New Orleans. Although time (and stamina) did not allow us to attend every event, we tried our hardest to attend a majority of the events.



Tales of the Cocktail began with a **Toast to Tales of the Cocktail** hosted by the [Hotel Monteleone](#), where Ann Rogers, Founder of the Tales of Cocktail toasted the "stars" of the Tales of the Cocktail. We enjoyed mingling with old friends and sampling the Official Cocktail, the Bacardi Baja Martini created by Michael Brewer of Jackson, as well as a Stoli Strawberries and Cream created by Bartender Marvin Allen of the Carousel Bar at the Hotel Monteleone. Tales of the Cocktail had officially begun!

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

In the evening, we attended a **Welcome Dinner** at [Café Giovanni](#) for 140 guests, where Chef /Owner Duke LoCicero greeted guests with "You know the city is back - the Saints are selling even more tickets. Reggie Bush is with us, and the Dome is on its way. We will be the #1 food and cocktail city in the United States. Ann Rogers and I both evacuated to Houston, but we both knew that we would be back. Spread the gospel, we are ready to have people back." Café Giovanni is a unique restaurant that features live opera singers and red-hot New Orleans Italian cuisine.



A definite must on a trip to New Orleans is a stop at the [Jean Lafitte's Old Absinthe House](#), open since 1807, where we joined Laura and Chris McMillan, Dale and Jill DeGross, Phil Greene, and Jack Robertiello to see the classic 1800s absinthe bar and fountain located in the back room.



Remember, this is New Orleans when we describe **Breakfast** at [Brennan's Restaurant](#), which began with an Appetizer of a Southern Baked Apple with Double Cream. We continued with Single Egg Hussarde and Single Egg Sardou Split, which consisted of one poached egg atop a Holland rusk and Canadian bacon with Marchand de Vin sauce, and topped with Hollandaise sauce, and one poached egg on an artichoke bottom nestled in a bed of creamed spinach and covered with Hollandaise sauce. As they say "In for a penny, in for a pound," breakfast ended with Bananas Fosters which originated at Brennan's Restaurant, which consisted of bananas sautéed in butter, brown sugar, cinnamon and banana liqueur, flamed in rum and served over vanilla ice cream. Executive Chef Lazard Randall who has worked at Brennan's for 40 years was also on hand autographing Breakfast at Brennan's and Dinner, Too cookbook.



Barely able to move, we ambled down Royal Street to the Hotel Monteleone to learn about the changing culinary trends and how the kitchen is affecting the bar at **Get the Hot Dish** hosted by Lorin Gaudin (aka The Food Goddess), with Master Mixologist and Author Dale DeGroff (aka King Cocktail), and Chef/Owners Marcus Samuelsson (Aquavit in New York), Frank Stitt (Highlands Bar and Grill in Alabama), and Aaron Sanchez (Paladar in New York). (Read about the **Panels and Seminar** in the **Liquor Cabinet** section.)

The next seminar we attended was Classic New Orleans Cocktails presented by Fee Brothers with Phil Greene and Chris McMillan, which provided an in-depth and often humorous look at New Orleans classic cocktails, where of course, guests had sampled cocktails! (Read about the **Panels and Seminar** in the **Liquor Cabinet** section.)



People have been pairing wine with food since the beginning of time, but the concept of pairing cocktails with food is a bit of a novel idea for many people. Pairing Cocktails and Food with Robert Hess, Audrey Saunders (aka The Libation Goddess), Ryan Magerian, and Authors Andrew Dornenburg and Karen Page, helped to demystify how to pair cocktails with food. (Read about the **Panels and Seminar** in the **Liquor Cabinet** section.)

At last, it was time to meet friends at the **Cocktail Hour** in the ballroom of the Hotel Monteleone! This is where guests have the opportunity to meet celebrity mixologists and cocktail authors, ask questions, purchase autographed books, and of course, taste specially created cocktails for the event paired with great New Orleans food served by the Chefs themselves.





Imagine a ballroom filled with tables where the stars of the bartending world have each created enticing cocktails! Since it is impossible to select which cocktail to try, you usually end up table-hopping and sipping a little of each cocktail. It is so hard to say "no" in New Orleans, especially when you have the opportunity to sample cocktails created by Dale DeGroff, Audrey Saunders, Lucy Brennan, Robert Hess, Anistatia Miller and Jared Brown, David Wondrich, Ted Breaux, Ted Haigh (Dr. Cocktail), James Waller and Ramona Ponce, Beverly Church, Robert Markel, Dalyn Miller, Mittie Helmich, Kim Hasasarud, Simon Difford, Ryan Magarian, and the list just keeps on going!



After the Cocktail Hour, there were **Spirited Dinners** held throughout the city, pairing cocktails with each course of the menu. This year we decided to try two new restaurants, Seven on Fulton and Jackson. Edward went to [Seven on Fulton](#) hosted by Ted Haigh (Dr. Cocktail) and Frank Stitt and enjoyed an excellent dinner, and Debra went to [Jackson](#) and had an excellent dinner hosted by Authors Beverly Church and Robert Markel.

The Seven on Fulton Spirited Dinner Menu: First Course: The Champagne Cocktail featuring Tattinger Champagne paired with Foie Gras Bon Bon with Two-Cherry Salad and Aged Vinegar Reduction; Second Course: The Mamie Taylor featuring Ballantine's Scotch Whiskey paired with House Smoked Trout with Frisee, Peppers, Olives, and Fried Capers; Third Course: The Corpse Reviver #2 featuring Beefeater Gin paired with Slow Roasted Wild Salmon with Fennel Puree and Lemon-Saffron Broth; Fourth Course: Dr. Cocktail's Blinker featuring Wild Turkey Rye Whiskey paired with Crispy Duck Breast with Caramelized Endive, Roasted Local Figs and Orange Sauce; and Dessert: The Golden Monkey featuring Don Pedro Brandy paired with Rum Caramel Banana Crepe with Candied Pecans and Rum Ice Cream.

The Jackson Spirited Dinner Menu: First Course: Stoli Vanilla Pineapple Champagne Martini paired with

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Pan Seared Sea Scallops with Pineapple Beurre Blanc; Second Course: Stoli Citrus Lemon Drop Martini paired with Flash Fried Oysters over Asparagus and Lemon Vinaigrette with Stilton Bleu Cheese; Third Course: Stoli Raz Blue Moon paired with Bronzed Monkfish Medallions over Mixed Greens with Raspberry Chile Gastrique; Fourth Course: Bacardi Baja Martini (2006 Tales of the Cocktail Best of Show) paired with Grilled Shrimp over Jalapeno Grits with Baja Sauce; Dessert: Millionaire Coffee with Kahlua paired with Kahlua Chocolate Mousse.

We decided to make a last stop of the evening at [Harrah's Casino](#), where we tried our luck at the slot machines at Masquerade without much success, but we do love trying, because you just never know, or at least that it how we console our losses.



The next day Debra attended the **Dine and Design** luncheon at Brennan's Restaurant to learn the latest design and entertaining ideas from the Queen of Entertaining, stylish hostess Beverly Church. Dine and Design is the ultimate "ladies who lunch" outing, where guests come each year to mingle, enjoy a fabulous Brennan's lunch, and be inspired by Beverly Church, who dares guests to "just have fun" when it comes to entertaining.

Edward decided it was time to go back to school and attended the **Bourbon Academy** at [Dickie Brennan's Bourbon House](#). Chef Jared Tees created an interesting pairing menu with bourbon, where guests learned about Bourbon Whiskey, as well as sample Buffalo Trace, Eagle Rare Single Barrel 10-Year, Sazerac 6-Year Old, W.L. Weller 12-Year Old, and Blanton's Single Barrel. The Bourbon Academy Lunch at Dickie Brennan's Bourbon House Menu: Assorted Hors d'Oeuvres paired with New Fashioneds & Mint Juleps made with Buffalo Trace; First Course: Pickled Shrimp and Green Tomato Salad paired with Eagle Rare Single Barrel 10 Year; Intermezzo: Lemon Sazerac Sorbet; Second Course: Bourbon and Orange Glazed Short Ribs with Chilled Totsoy Salad paired with Weller 12 Year; Dessert: Blanton Coffee Mousse paired with Wafer Cookies.



What is trendy in bars in one part of the world is either passé or perhaps not even on the radarscope in other parts of the world. Hot Drinks, Cool Bars hosted by Jack Robertiello, with Author Simon Difford, Lucy Brennan (Restaurant and Portland, Oregon Lounge Owner "Mint 820" and Author), and Edward F. Nesta and Debra C. Argen (Luxury Experience Magazine), looked at cocktail trends around the world, and shed light on the "next new trend." (Read about the **Panels and Seminar** in the **Liquor Cabinet** section.)



In the evening, there was a cocktail party called **Sippin' on 7**. Seven designers took over seven suites on the seventh floor of the Hotel Monteleone and created theme parties in each room with cocktails to match the theme. Guests weaved their way through a maze of inspired rooms where the designers let their imaginations to create the Incredible Edible, Cocktails and Cooking, Relax to Rebuild, Outside In, Elegance and Decadence, Mid-Century Night's Dream and Welcome to Our Party.

The next morning we met our friend Eddie McDonough for breakfast and enjoy a few last beignets and chicory coffee, before we said goodbye and he headed to the airport. This was Eddie's first Tales of the Cocktail, but we doubt that it will be his last.



Vodka Classics: All About Vodka with Anistatia Miller and Jared Brown, the celebrated authors and creators of Heavy Water Vodka, certainly know a thing or two about vodka and state that they "drink for a living." They provided an in-depth overview of the history of vodka and guests had the opportunity to sample vodkas and cocktails. (Read about the **Panels and Seminar** in the **Liquor Cabinet** section.)



South of the Border ... Down Mexico Way, a tequila seminar with Dale DeGroff, explored the history and making of tequila, and of course, tasting, which is an integral part of learning about spirits. (Read about the **Panels and Seminar** in the **Liquor Cabinet** section.)

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We attended Chef Duke LoCicero's weekly Saturday Radio Cooking Show (Channel 1350 AM) at Café Giovanni. **Cooking with Comfort** (Southern Comfort, that is) with Chef Duke, his son, Nick (11 years), his brother, Rocky LoCicero, and special radio guests Kevin Jenkins and Chef Fred Genovese, (The Chef and the Fat Man Show on Channel 1160 AM out of Atlanta) entertained the audience as they prepared tasty recipes including Voodoo Shrimp, and Vodka Pasta.

Chef Duke bantered with Kevin and Chef Fred about using spirits in cooking, and added, "Anytime I can eat and get drunk is the kind of party that I want to go to!" Chef Duke ended the show with a White Chocolate Bread Pudding Bananas Foster, and advised, "Don't die healthy; die happy." Everything in moderation, of course, as the audience sampled his creations, we all left "happy."



Do the names **Cake-tails** and **Pie-tinis** intrigue you? It certainly intrigued us, as we attended the seminar hosted by Michael Waterhouse of Dylan Prime, which featured yummy dessert cocktails with names like Apple Pie Ala Mode, German Chocolate Cake, Key Lime Pie, and more. (Read about the **Panels and Seminar** in the **LiquorCabinet** section.)

Our last evening in New Orleans, we attended **Mix it Up on Magazine**, a street block party on Magazine Street, where unique boutiques and art galleries hosted tasty cocktails, and DJs played music in the street. This was a great place to meet friends, enjoy the street entertainment, do a little shopping, and sample more cocktails!



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After shopping and sipping at "Mixing it Up on Magazine", we went to dinner with our friends, Rob Clemenz, owner of [Saints for Sinners](#), and Rick Duplantier, and ended the evening with a nightcap at [Café Adelaide](#) with Ti Brennan and Ted Haigh (Dr. Cocktail). This was definitely another great ending to Tales of the Cocktail! Until next year!

To learn more about attending the **2007 Tales of the Cocktail** (July 18-22, 2007), please visit their website at www.talesofthecocktail.com or contact Ann Rogers at: nolacocktails@yahoo.com.

Read all of the [Tales of the Cocktail](#) articles in the **Liquor Cabinet**, **Restaurants**, **Chefs' Recipes**, and **Music Scene** sections.

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