

↪ CANE RIVER PECAN COMPANY ↪

PECANS

from SOUP *to* NUTS

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from **SOUP** *to* **NUTS**

KEITH COURRÉGÉ *and* MARCELLE BIENVENU

Photography by Sara Essex



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When my grandfather Keith Courrégé published his book Pecans from Soup to Nuts in 1984, he dedicated it to his wife, Betty, and his children, Joe, Dan, and Kay. Sadly, Keith, his wife, and son Dan (my father) are no longer with us.

Because many of Keith's recipes appear in this new publication, I think it is fitting that this book be dedicated in memoriam to Keith, a bon vivant and great cook. This book is also a tribute to his wife, Joe and Kay, and, of course, to my father and our extended family, all of whom enjoy these delicious pecan-based recipes.

—Jady Regard
Keith Courrégé's grandson

This book is also dedicated to the many cooks, especially my parents, who shared their recipes with me and taught me how to appreciate good food.

—Marcelle Bienvenu

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Acknowledgments

Our cookbook would simply not be possible if it were not for a handful of experts that collaborated on this project.

First and foremost, I am very thankful for the privilege to have worked with Marcelle Bienvenu. Marcelle has long been known as one of the most accomplished food writers Louisiana has ever served up. Her list of accomplishments and collaborations reads like a who's who here in the South. Most notably is the fact that she coauthored several cookbooks with celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse and has been a contributing food writer for the *Times-Picayune* in New Orleans since 1984. In addition, she has authored several cookbooks and continues to write and blog for numerous other well-known food publications. We are very fortunate that she could lend her expertise to this project knowing that not only was she famous in her own right, but she also was a personal friend of my late grandfather, Keith Courrégé, and was a great fan of his cooking.

The pages in this book would have never come alive had it not been for the elegant and classic photographs by New Orleanian Sara Essex. I forget now how I discovered Sara and her work, but I am thankful for it. Sara was the photographer I always wanted to meet. Her style is evident throughout the book, and as a result, the pecan never looked so good.

As with all projects, many hands were working behind the scenes and most notably were the hands of food stylist Laura Arrowood. Laura made sure all of our recipes were cooked to perfection, detailed, and styled the Southern way. Her attention to detail allowed the food to do all the talking. I am also thankful to Laura's assistants, Betty DiGiovanni, Barbie Cantwell, and Layla Messkoub, without whom, our days and nights would have been much longer.

Many thanks also to the staff at Pelican Publishing for

their patience and guidance throughout this project.

And finally, thanks to my grandfather Keith Courrégé, or “Taddeus” as we use to lovingly refer to him. He wrote the original version of this cookbook. He was a great cook and known throughout the Acadiana region of south Louisiana for the many dishes he mastered. Like in many Cajun households, his dinner table was located right in the kitchen, and I was lucky enough to enjoy many good meals at the knee of Taddeus. And from time to time, especially in the fall, we enjoyed fresh pecans in some of those great meals.

Jady Regard
CNO (Chief Nut Officer)
Cane River Pecan Company

Introduction

I've been around the pecan industry my entire life.

In 1978, at the tender age of nine, I opened my first bank account. I was in business for the first time, a legitimate operation with two other business partners, my brothers, Danny and Andre. Together, we started The Nutcrackers in the garage of our family home in New Iberia, Louisiana. It was a pecan-cracking operation that remained in business until my younger brother left for college.

Lucky for us, Louisiana is known for having what is referred to as a very large “yard crop.” These are the pecans that are harvested by the locals from trees in their yards, which can provide a bountiful harvest.

Usually a few pounds are kept for roasting with salt and butter (great for snacks), or to make pecan pies, creamy pralines, and other pecan-based delights to serve during the fall and winter seasons. If there is an exceptional harvest, the surplus is bagged and sold to local produce markets to provide a bit of extra holiday spending money.

Growing up in a pecan-rich environment, my brothers and I thought that by offering the service of cracking pecans to families who kept some for their personal consumption, we would have our own small business by which to put some change in our pockets. Our theory was correct!

I can't remember a time when pecans were not a part of my life. My father, Dan, acquired a two thousand-acre pecan orchard along the banks of the Cane River in Natchitoches Parish in 1969, the year I was born. Since that time, my entire family has had their hand in the business at one time or another.

In the mid-1980s, my father opened Cane River Pecan Company on historic Front Street in downtown Natchitoches to sell his pecans directly from the orchard. Years later, my mother, Margie, began a corporate mail-order gift division

of the company, servicing large corporations that choose to give pecans as holiday gifts. My brothers and I worked side-by-side with my father in the orchards removing limbs, picking pecans, sewing sacks, and loading trucks before launching The Nutcrackers. For a brief time, my younger sister joined our corporate sales division where she landed some of our larger and more influential customers.

The last few years, I have been at the helm of our family's pecan company, establishing sales through our mail-order, Internet, and wholesale efforts. Just when we think the company has grown enough or we have a suitable assortment of pecan goods, a new idea begins to take shape.

This book is one of those ideas.

My grandfather, the late Keith Courrégé, was known as a great cook, and in south Louisiana that means a lot. He was as good with the Cajun basics such as gumbos and étouffées as he was with dishes that are more exotic like his award-winning Sweet-and-Sour Pineapple Salad.

In 1984, he penned the first edition of *Pecans from Soup to Nuts* for our Cane River Pecan Company store in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Because of its popularity, the book has been reprinted several times. Now we bring you a completely updated version of that same cookbook, with new recipes contributed by famed south Louisiana cook and author Marcelle Bienvenu and beautiful photography by Louisiana photographer Sara Essex. This book is a rare collaboration of great talent on the sole subject of pecans.

Throughout the United States, the use of pecans is nearly religious. There is hardly a fall or winter celebration that goes by that scores of these sweet nuts are not consumed in the form of pies or pralines, included in casseroles and cakes, or featured simply as a roasted treat. The pecan is America's favorite nut, and it's no wonder that the nut has been touted as God's gift to the South.

I am proud to introduce a collection of simple but delicious recipes, all of which feature pecans. We at Cane River Pecan Company hope that everyone will have the opportunity to enjoy this great nut in the book's featured recipes or, perhaps, naturally right out of the shell.

Jady Regard
CNO (Chief Nut Officer)
Cane River Pecan Company