

**Restaurant Review**

# Jambalaya: Is It Authentic?

by Rick Shapiro  
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Park City's newest dining experience boasts that it is a Louisiana restaurant specializing in authentic Cajun, Creole and New Orleans cuisine. We went to find out last week and I invited a friend who was born in New Orleans and has spent a significant amount of time in that area so we could determine how authentic Jambalaya is. We were not disappointed.

First, finding Jambalaya can be a small task if you are not familiar with the new portion of lower Main Street. Jambalaya lies at the very end of the Marriott Summit Watch Plaza, tucked between lower Main Street and Deer Valley Drive. Highly visible from Deer Valley Drive it's impossible to see from Main Street. Parking is easy and free. Simply park in the underground parking lot of the Marriott Summit Watch and have your ticket validated at Jambalaya.

Jambalaya is not a huge restaurant nor is it small. The decor is as New Orleans as you can get in Park City. It is actually quite simple---Jambalaya features plain wood tables and chairs, bare back and stucco walls and a sound system featuring music of New Orleans, from blues to Dixieland Jazz. If the snow falling down outside had not been so visible, one could almost imagine being in a small in New Orleans on a Saturday night. It was crowded and reservations were necessary.

First, a bit of history on the cuisines of Louisiana. The food from Louisiana derives its unique flavors from two important influences. Creole and Cajun.

Creole---The Creoles came from the Caribbean islands that had been settled by the French. The line evolved as a mix of the slaves that the French had brought from Africa with the French settlers and the Spanish mariners and traders. Their cuisine can represent a riot of textures and flavors as an effect of African and Caribbean herbs and spices.

One of the older of the "New World" cultures benefiting from both the agrarian and urban French, the Creoles developed a cuisine that is often spicy while remaining refined, sometimes to the point of sophistication.

Cajun---The Cajuns was the nickname given to the Acadians; French and Belgian Immigrants that followed the trail of Evangeline from Canada down to Louisiana. Largely farmers and fishermen, their cuisine reflected their passion for unique tastes and

combinations of spices and herbs, animals and crustaceans to be found in the swamps and bayous of Louisiana. Among the most renowned are the cayenne peppers and file', made from grinding the leaves of sassafras trees. Because Louisiana is one of the nation's largest producers of rice, it will be found as an integral part of many Cajun and Creole dishes.

We started with hot appetizers after a short argument about the absolute necessity for cold boiled crawfish (they will teach you how to pinch the tails and suck the heads) but opted for hot instead. The Popcorn Shrimp (\$6.95) were hot (not spicy) and crusty, served with a sherry sauce. The sauce was a bit piquant and more like a remoulade with a bit of sherry. Pretty good. We also tried the Deep Fried Alligator Tail (\$8.95) also served with the same sauce. This was quite tasty and if you have never tried alligator, go ahead. The hot Cajun Boudin (\$6.95) is a traditional sausage stuffed with dirty rice. While we thought it was pretty authentic (flown in from New Orleans) it was a bit bland.

On the hot (temperature) side, we sampled the Louisiana Seafood and Andouille Gumbo (\$3.95-small cup). Now this is what I remember as authentic and so did my ringer from New Orleans. Spiced just right and garnished with a cooked crawfish. Gumbo is derived from an African Congo word for okra---"Quingombo"---and in Louisiana has become to be known as a thick stew made with either okra or file' (ground sassafras root). This gumbo appeared to be made with file' as I couldn't find any okra in it. At any rate, it is very good.

## Jambalaya: Unique Cuisine

For our main course, we tried the Vegetarian Creole (\$10.95), the Cajun Angel (\$15.95), the Crawfish Etouf'ee (\$18.95) and the Seafood Platter (\$21.95). The Vegetarian Creole is a very substantial serving of large whole mushrooms and fettuccine served with a creole sauce. It was spicy but not overpowering. The Cajun Angel was an interesting blend of very spicy blackened shrimp served over angel hair pasta with a garlic cream sauce. We all agreed that the flavors were a great mix. The Crawfish Etouf'ee was about as good as it gets. The roux used to make the sauce was just about perfect and the spicing was great. Served with rice this is a fairly large dish and there was no scrimping on the crawfish. Finally, the Seafood Platter was a good sampling of catfish, crawfish, shrimp oysters and stuffed crab, all fried and served with Cajun fries and coleslaw. At this point we had sampled each other's dishes (most being on the fairly spicy side) and as a result the stuffed crab seemed a bit bland (which it really wasn't). The Catfish was great.

We found that the seasonings used for all the dishes are kept separate and unique, giving each dish its own distinctive flavor.

For dessert we tried the Bread Pudding with hot bourbon sauce, the Praline Cheesecake and the Flan was good too. All this with coffee and we spent about \$30 each including beer and soft drinks.

Don't look for artistic presentation and be aware that the spicy flavors are not on the totally fiery side but tend to grow on you. If you don't like real spicy food but want to try this unique cuisine, ask your server for less spicy recommendations.

Overall, we loved it, it's authentic and Jambalaya merits another visit.

***Jainbalaya***  
***900 .Maier Street***  
***Reservations Recommended***  
***658-2828***  
*Major Credit Cards accepted*