

by Matthew Bramlett January 17, 2019

There's a new restaurant in town, and it's bringing flavorful Creole cuisine to the Claremont village. **The Quarter**, named after the famous New Orleans district, opened its doors on November 4th. The Creole establishment is the brainchild of head chef and owner Norm Theard.

Walking into The Quarter is like being transported to a classic New Orleans restaurant, the kind that only locals know about. The space is adorned with ornate chandeliers, tin ceilings, rustic brick and old portraits that make you feel like you've stumbled into something special off Bourbon Street.

After the Creole Chef, Mr. Theard moved to Laguna Beach, where he helped open Roux, another Creole restaurant. The Quarter is his third restaurant specializing in the Louisiana fare. As for why he decided on opening in the City of Trees, Mr. Theard confessed he wasn't familiar with Claremont, but his fiancée raved about it. They both decided to check the city out, and as they walked around the Village eating at different restaurants, they fell in love with it. "It was just a warm kind of thing. Nothing against our surrounding cities, but it just had a special, warm kind of thing to it," he said.

Not only is Mr. Theard dedicated to Creole cuisine, he also has generations of family cooking behind him. This is apparent with the Quarter's "legacy wall" on the far end of the dining room – the walls shows family pictures of his mother, his grandmother and his great-grandmother. The Quarter truly is a family affair – Mr. Theard is in business with his brothers and sisters, and his mother is a frequent guest at his new Claremont spot.



“These recipes here are my mom’s recipes, my grandmother’s recipes, my great grandmother’s recipes,” he said. “The presentation is more up to date, but the general ingredients are the same.”

Creole food, as Mr. Theard puts it, is a take on French cuisine with Louisiana ingredients. The result is fare that has a more spice and flair.

“I love French food, but it can be a little over heavy and boring,” he said. “This has more pizzazz and is still complex.”

When asked about popular dishes, Mr. Theard centered on the gumbo, a traditional dish that he says is different than any other in California.

“The gumbo is something that people always try and measure you by, which I am happy to take that challenge,” he said.

Another popular dish on the menu are the biscuits — freshly made every day with green onions and garlic. The crawfish with Andouille sausage is also a big hit.

“People are going crazy over it, which is lovely,” he said. He stays away from any sort of fusions in his dishes — nothing that doesn’t truly belong on a Creole menu. He certainly doesn’t want to run afoul with the woman who taught him what he knows.

The Quarter has been open since November, and has received raves from locals so far.

“I’ve been getting hugs from strangers, which is cool,” Mr. Theard said. “People tell me, ‘this reminds me of my mom and my grandmother’s cooking.’”

Those reactions are part of the reason why Mr. Theard loves the restaurant business — seeing patrons enjoying the food he’s passed down from generations of family cooking.

“It’s very moving when they’re happy,” he said. “It’s not just, ‘oh it’s pretty good.’ It takes them somewhere.”

The Quarter is located at 201 north Indian Hill Boulevard. Call them up at (909) 482-2200 or check out their website at thequartercreole.com

— **Matthew Bramlett**



Executive Chef Norm Theard



Sous Chef Kevin Crostic