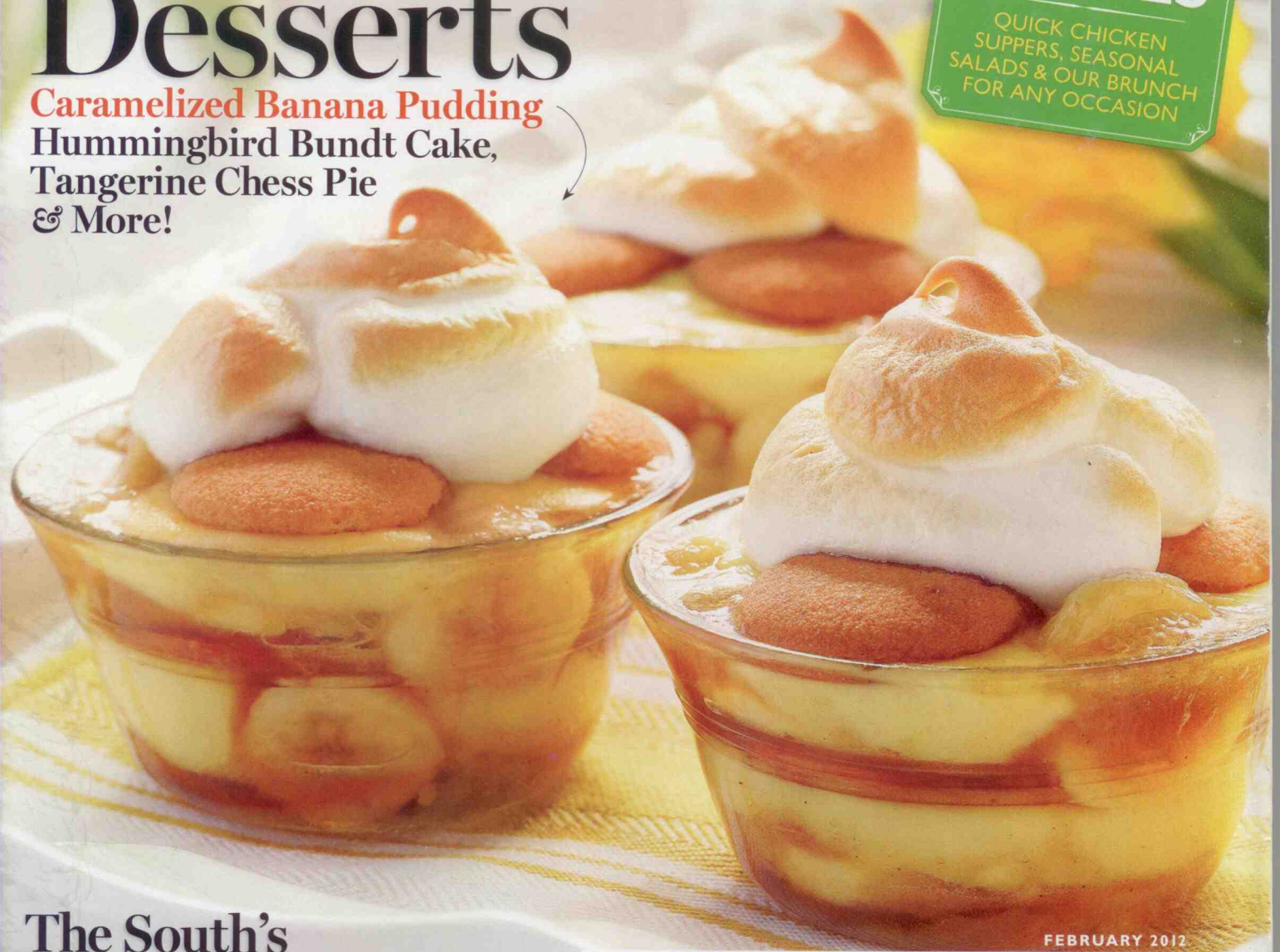


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FEBRUARY 2012

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Early-Spring
Flower Guide





Cypress trees seen from the road beside Lake Martin; BELOW: Popular drinks at Mr. B's Bistro

fields, and oil refineries—to New Iberia. Alex Patout had two restaurants in New Orleans before returning home after Katrina to take the helm at **Landry's Seafood & Steakhouse of New Iberia** (landryscajunrestaurant.com or 337/369-3772). He's pulling local connections to serve truly fresh, wild seafood. Try his brothy, spicy Duck & Oyster Gumbo (\$6).

I was excited to reach Lafayette, where Donald recently opened **Cochon Lafayette** (cochonlafayette.com or 337/993-9935). Tuck into his peerless Andouille Sausage and Chicken Gumbo (\$6), made with roux cooked to the color of a dark penny. His Chocolate and Peanut Butter Pie (\$7) will fuel you for the short drive to **Maison Madeleine** (maisonmadeleine.com or 337/331-4555), a bed-and-breakfast in a restored French-Creole cottage (\$130 with a shared bath, \$170 with a private bath).

DAY
2

Breaux Bridge to New Orleans (157 miles)

After owner Madeleine Cenac's high-country breakfast (hot coffee, buttermilk biscuits, eggs, and local sausage), brave the occasional gator crossing and amble to the bird rookery



perched on **Lake Martin**. Soak in the stillness and birdsong (large numbers of great egrets, little blue herons, and roseate spoonbills nest in the area), then head for a cup of Shrimp and Okra Gumbo (\$5) at **Café Des Amis** (cafedesamis.com or 337/332-5273), served with a scoop of creamy potato salad and steamed rice on the side. Café Des Amis hosts a rowdy zydeco breakfast every Saturday, but on other days it's easy to get a seat at the bar.

It's a short walk from Café Des Amis to the exquisite culinary antiques—think French coupe glasses and turn-of-the-century copper pots—at **Lucullus** (lucullusantiques.com or 337/332-2625), a favorite with locals and movie-set stylists. (Owner Patrick Dunne has another location in the French Quarter.)

Hop on I-10 to Grosse Tete and exit onto State 77 South, then follow it to State 1 South for a two-lane ramble past plantations and massive oaks and across narrow, old bridges. Don't dally because you can still make a late lunch at **Grapevine Café & Gallery** in Donaldsonville (grapevinecafeandgallery.com or 225/473-8463), a restored 1920s building owned by Cynthia and Steve Schneider. A steaming bowl of their ☞