

Lovable lingo

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If you hang out in the many diverse areas of this wonderfully wacky city ? including Tulane's campus?chances are 100 percent you're going to hear the city's name pronounced in any number of ways.



Eating an erster po'boy dressed with my-nayz after makin' groceries is a way to pass a good time in New Orleans. (Illustration by Mark Andresen)

Like most Orleanians, I've heard them all and I've been asked a thousand times about the "correct" pronunciation. I usually begin by explaining that there is no correct way, but then I move on to how we don't pronounce it. It's not N'Awlins and it's not New Or-lee-uns. And it's definitely not New Or-LEANS?no matter what you hear on national TV or watch on the big screen from Hollywood.

And no, we don't call each other "cher," like Dennis Quaid's character did in *The Big Easy* when he was referring to other New Orleans policemen. We do not have a syrupy Southern drawl. Depending on what section of Bienville's humid, mosquito-infested settlement you grew up in, some of the more common pronunciations you will hear are New AW-lins, New AWL-yuns and New AWL-yens. (As a side note, New Orleans is not the only city that has pronunciation idiosyncrasies. Another river city, Louisville, home of the Kentucky Derby, has a similar issue. The town's name can be

acceptably pronounced as Looavull. Or Luhvul. Or Looaville. You're definitely not a native if you say Lewisville or Looeyville.)

The way we talk in this quirky city can be confusing, amusing and often inexplicable. If you're looking for standard (boring) American English, you're in the wrong place.

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