

The More You NOLA: What's on the menu?

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The Louisiana Menu and Restaurant Collection, part of the Louisiana Research Collection at Tulane University, is a major resource for studying the state's cuisine. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

When a team of reporters from [The Times-Picayune](#) decided to find out how much po'boy prices have risen in New Orleans since the 1980s, they knew exactly where to start. Accessing Tulane University's online [Louisiana Menu and Restaurant Collection](#), the journalists had the resources at their fingertips to begin their statistical analysis project.

Part of the [Louisiana Research Collection \(LaRC\)](#), the archive preserves menus and restaurant materials that grant glimpses into the history of Louisiana's cultural foodscape and restaurant industry.

With items ranging in date from the 1870s to the present, the collection includes thousands of original menus, restaurant brochures, bar flyers and banquet programs that are available for online viewing.

“We want people with menu collections to understand that they are actually valuable tools used for research,” said Lee Miller, head of the LaRC.

Scholars can use the materials for a wide range of purposes — from studying seafood distribution in the region to analyzing the arrival of Vietnamese cuisine in New Orleans.

“My favorite item is the flyer for a French Quarter restaurant that was originally something handed to tourists or stuck under windshield wipers in the 1950s. It’s not particularly decorative, but it offers a whole fried chicken po’boy for \$1.75,” said Miller. “Only in New Orleans would someone think of making a sandwich out of a whole fried chicken.”

An advertisement for Victor’s Cafe, which once served up comfort food on Chartres Street, the document also boasts that the eatery offered packaged liquor and neighborhood food delivery. Though only displaying black and white text, the flyer provides a closer look at life in the French Quarter during this period.

“It’s more than just about the food, the piece tells a story,” said Miller.

To donate menus and other materials, please contact larc@tulane.edu or 504-314-7833.

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