

City of Eunice & Surrounding Area Festivals

Eunice Courir De Mardi Gras



On Mardi Gras Day, which is always held the day before Ash Wednesday (usually February or March), Eunice holds a traditional Courir de Mardi Gras. They assemble at the National Guard Armory at the corner of South 9th Street and Maple Avenue starting at 6 a.m. with the run starting at 8 a.m. Costumed participants ride on horseback and on flatbeds through the countryside. They parade along Second Street through downtown Eunice starting about 3 p.m.

The Eunice Courir de Mardi Gras dates back from when the town was first established in the late 19th century. The Courir was abandoned for a few years during World War II, but in 1946 a small band of riders revived the tradition. Today, the Eunice Courir de Mardi Gras has more than 2000 participants (Including both male and female) on the run and it continues to increase each year.

Mardi Gras in rural Southwestern Louisiana draws on traditions that are centuries old. Revelers go from house to house begging to obtain the ingredients for a communal meal. They wear costumes that conceal their identity and that also parody the roles of those in authority. They escape from ordinary life partly through the alcohol many consume in their festive quest, but even more through the roles they portray. As they act out their parts in a wild, gaudy pageant, they are escaping from routine existence, freed from the restraints that confine them every other day in the year.

In all of the Mardi Gras run of today, the capitaine maintains control over the Mardi Gras, as the riders are known. He issues instructions to the riders as they assemble early in the morning and then leads them on their run. When they arrive at a farm house, he obtains permission to enter private property, after which the riders may charge toward the house, where the Mardi Gras

sing, dance, and beg until the owner offers them an ingredient for a gumbo. Often, the owner will throw a live chicken into the air that the Mardi Gras will chase, like football players trying to recover a fumble.

In addition to the Mardi Gras on horseback, some ride on flatbed trailers pulled by trucks or tractors. By mid to late afternoon,



the Courir returns to town and parades down the main street on the way to the location where the evening gumbo will be prepared.

The celebration begins on Saturday with an Interpretive Program at The Jean Lafitte National Historical Park Prairie Acadian Cultural Center in Historic Downtown Eunice from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is a live jam session downtown, two performances at the Liberty Theatre at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., museum and shops are open all day and a Mardi Gras dance sponsored by St. Thomas More Catholic Church is held at the church hall. Marc and Ann Savoy perform the music for the dance.

The celebration continues on Sunday with a children's Courir starting at 9 a.m. from City Hall. The children ride on flatbed trailers or in pickup trucks. The Children's Parade starts about 10 a.m. along Second Street through downtown Eunice. There is a live jam session downtown and the Eunice Museum has films and exhibits on display.

Sunday activities also include a traditional old time boucherie (hog butchering) and cochon de lait (a suckling pig, now often used to refer in general to a pig roast) held downtown. The Boucherie begins in front of City Hall at 10 a.m. Visitors can see and enjoy the products of a Cajun tradition that is still common at many family gatherings: a hog is slaughtered and then made into a variety of dishes: backbone stew, boudin, gratins (cracklings), and other delicacies. By 11:30, the first dishes are ready for tasting.

On Monday, through the day there are live jam sessions downtown, a Lundi Gras Street Dance and a slide show presentation at The Historic Liberty Theatre starting at noon.

Mardi Gras Day in Eunice includes a variety of events that will appeal to the whole family. The main celebration on Mardi Gras Day features a full day of activities downtown while the Eunice Mardi Gras Association's Courir is winding through the countryside. The downtown crowds can listen and dance to continuous music from two stages and eat all of the traditional Cajun foods. Throughout Mardi Gras Day, downtown Eunice features Cajun and Zydeco bands, food vendors, a children's parade and costume contest, plus traditional crafts and cooking demonstrations at The Jean Lafitte National Historical Park Prairie Acadian Cultural Center and displays at the Eunice Museum. When the Courir returns, the riders are joined by Mardi Gras floats in a parade through downtown Eunice that starts about 3 p.m. The emphasis is on family-oriented fun.

Starting in 1997, baking of the world's largest king cake began. Cafeteria workers at Glendale Elementary produced the world's largest king cake, measuring 75 feet in total length at the 1998 Eunice Mardi Gras (11 feet longer than, in 1997). Sold for \$1 a slice Mardi Gras Day, it was all gone by 2 p.m.

For more information, call (337) 457-2565

Click [HERE](#) for the Mardi Gras Past page
Click [HERE](#) for The Eunice Mardi Gras Recipes Go [HERE](#) for more about Mardi Gras in Rural Acadiana from LSUE

World Championship Crawfish Etouffee Cook-off



Held the last Sunday in March, *(the third Sunday if Easter falls on the last Sunday)*. The event is held at the Northwest Community Center on Samuel Drive in Eunice. It is held under a massive pavilion and is free to the public. The Cook-off is an activity for the entire family. About 100 teams compete to see who can cook the best crawfish etouffee *(smothered crawfish usually served with rice)*

. Thousands of visitors come to this annual event to view three categories of cook-off participants. Celebrity judges choose winners in the three categories including Amateur, Professional and Club/Organization.

