

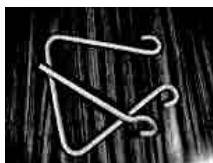
What sets the Cajuns apart from the rest of America?

Their language and culture

After about 400 years of having only each other to rely upon, family and community ties in Cajun culture are very strong. Families are large, rarely with fewer than four children, and often live in their own communities. Sarah is from a village called Savoy, where she grew up with her parents, brothers, and sister surrounded by the families of her aunts, uncles, and cousins. It is very common for whole families to get together at least monthly to have a party around the preparation of a feast.

While Sarah's father, and others of his generation, were once punished for speaking French at school, children in Louisiana today are taught Cajun French classes today and some families make a point of raising their children speaking Cajun French in order to preserve the language.

Their music



A Cajun band normally includes at least a small, wooden, diatonic accordion; a violin (called a "fiddle"); and a guitar strummed to provide a steady rhythm. Songs are often two-steps or waltzes, though other rhythms occasionally provide a different dance beat. Sometimes a triangle (**"tit fer tee fare"**) is used for percussion.



Another kind of music that comes from Louisiana is called Zydeco, which has a heavy bass line and a strong blues influence. Zydeco was originally played by the African-American Creole-speaking Louisianians, but today many people enjoy making, as well as dancing to, this music. A washboard (**frottoir frah-twah**) is often used as a percussion instrument in Zydeco music and gives it a special sound. Zydeco music also includes waltzes and two-steps, but there are many more songs with blues rhythms in Zydeco today than there were many years ago.

Their food

Cajun food is known for its simple ingredients cooked in one pot with a spicy sauce and served over rice. Beef, chicken, or fish is simmered with onions and sweet peppers and lots of cayenne pepper, but it's no surprise to find crawfish (**écrevisses ay-cruh-VEES**), squirrel (**écureuil ay-cur-O-E**), raccoon (**chaoui sha-WEE**), frog (**ouaouaron wah-wah-ROHN**) or even alligator (**cocodril co-co-DREE**) on the menu!



More popular Cajun dishes, however, include "jambalaya" (like Spanish paella, made with chicken, pork sausage, and rice) and "gumbo" (a thick, brown soup with chicken and sausage or shrimp and okra, served in a bowl with rice).

But as for everyday life, Cajun children are much like you and enjoy running around outside, playing PS3 games, chatting on the Internet, and hanging out with their friends, mostly speaking English.