

Volume 7 / Issue 3

Movie Review by Jason Olivier | Book Review by Liz Williams Restaurant review by Brett Thomas

August 2025

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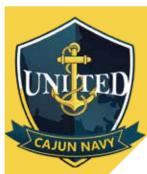




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# Letters from Mombasa - Birger

Page 19:

17-12-49

The sailors say the officers have taken 3 cases of beer from the cargo hold. Have just finished the book 'Pride and Prejudice' by the English author Jane Austen. Good book. Plan on seeing a dentist in Mombasa, there is an Indian dentist I saw last time I was there.

They have rigged a tarpaulin for our passengers now. Food awful, tastes rotten.

Fine weather, wind behind us. Will reach Mombasa Tuesday. Have been told we're also going to Madagascar. It will be nice to come ashore

### Page 20

---as everyone are on edge onboard. I reached boiling point today and got into an argument with one of the donkeymen, he's a slow person in my opinion.

Our four Indian deck passengers are decent and intelligent people. They sit on the hatch all day long playing cards with their supplies, like us. They supply their own food, but their tickets from Aden to Mombasa are 190 Danish Kroner as opposed to 2400 Kroner from Denmark or Sweden for the other passengers. So if they've made 2400 Kroner for themselves that's not bad at all.

### Page 21:

Day ended with a love scene between the 2nd ship's mate and a married English lady on her way to see her husband with her 3-year-old son. The mate is a Norwegian from all the way up near Lapland and definitely looks like a Laplander, small and bowlegged. Poor husband in Africa who's awaiting his wife, but that's the way of life, I guess. What you don't know can't hurt you. I would definitely not be any better myself. What are morals and character anyway, but faith in another person during the time you spend in each other's company. That's about it.

### Page 22:

Likewise with camaraderie amongst men, that's why I never maintain a connection. Life is lived in the now, at least out in the world. Less so in the local community on land, where you're more considerate of your fellow citizens and what they might think. But these rules simply don't apply out here. As it is said is the song: "Come out here, towards the east where the last man is the first where the 10 commandments don't apply and where people can feel thirst" It is so true that I don't think the song's writer knows how true it is!

Page 23:

18-12-49

Today is awfully hot, but we are almost at the Equator. We'll be passing it tonight, so the passengers will probably be "christened". I feel imprisoned onboard, cannot feel at ease at all even though I have a good cabin, the best here astern. I also have a good "boss" who never complains about my work, so I can't be dissatisfied there. In other areas, however, such as the 1st engineer and the 2nd mate, I see red every time we cross paths. Luckily, I have very little to do with them, but it still annoys me when they constantly boss people around.

### Page 24:

We're in Mombasa now, 6 degrees southern latitude. We dropped anchor at 2pm. Our passengers were well received, indeed there were several touching scenes, including the English lady, who was welcomed by her husband. Not a dry eye in sight, so to speak, so happy was their reunion.



# La Vie et la Passion de Dodin **Bouffant, gourmet**

# by Marcel Rouff | Reviewed by Liz Williams

I have been reading a translation of La Vie et la Passion de Dodin Bouffant, gourmet by Swiss author, Marcel Rouff. It is a short book, written in 1924, set in 1889. It tells the story of Dodin Bouffant, who lives in the French countryside. His character is loosely based on Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, the author of La Physiologie du Gout (The Physiology of Taste). Brillat-Savarin was a lawyer and a judge, who is best known today for his writings on food. He spent several years in America before returning to France after his escape from the Reign of Terror. (He taught violin lessons to earn his keep while living in America.) He is the author of the saying, "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are."

But Rouff's book is truly a work of fiction with references to other French figures such as Grimod de La Reyniere, who was the first person in France to review restaurants and report on his findings. Rouff mixes timelines and just uses these references to make Dodin seem to be an important gourmet. His cook, who is pivotal to the story, has died in the early part of the book, and this is indeed a tragedy to him. He must find a new cook. When the Prince of Eurasia threatens to steal her by paying her more money than Dodin can match, he marries her so that she remains with him producing glorious food. A servant in marriage and without pay.

She provides a glorious display of peasant food – pot au feu – for this Prince for a meal that is reciprocal. This meal is described with loving detail. It makes one wonder whether Dodin merely loves his cooks because of their talent.

Dodin lives in a world in which he and a small band of friends eat together regularly meals having been prepared by his cook - and speak of the philosophy of food. It is quite a paeon to the French belief that food is as much an art form as painting, literature, or music. Each of these art forms requires a sensuous relationship with some sense, whether hearing or vision or taste. And it is approached by the French without the Puritanical notion that enjoying food is somehow inappropriate or even sinful. He regularly meets with is philosophical fellows who enjoy meals with him.

Toward the end of the book Dodin suffers a mighty attack of gout, obviously caused by his excesses at the table.

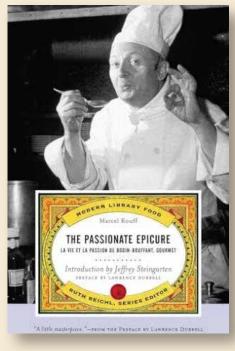
I do not speak French, so I cannot read the book in its original form. It is a worthy book, however, even in translation. It is one which tells us much about French attitudes toward food. The book inspired the French movie, which in America goes by the English title, "The Taste of Things". The French version translates to "The Passion of Dodin Bouffant". The film is from 2023. The director, Trần Anh Hùng, was nominated for an Oscar for his directing. Eugenie, the cook in the moview, is played by Juliette Binoche.

Having seen the film, it is difficult to get the sensuous images of food and the feelings generated by the film out of my head to enjoy the book for itself. But I can say that the book is worth reading. It would be especially interesting to chefs and others in the food industry, but also to those interested in French culture and French attitudes. And if you like food, any reader would be happy with the descriptions of preparing food for the table. The book is not long. But it is an important book about customs and cultural attitudes that have made it into the future.

The book brings to mind Karen Blixen's (Isak Dinesen) short story, "Babette's Feast," (also made into a film) which also deals with a society which is Puritanical and denies the pleasures of food, and the results a truly remarkable meal could have in breaking down long-standing barriers and grudges. Reading a number of these books or short stories should inspire each of us to throw a dinner party to share this experience of pleasure at the table and with each other. If we could only eat together regularly we might find ourselves living in a very loving world.

### **Reviewed by Liz Williams**

Read Liz's newsletter, Tip of the Tongue on Substack and her memoir and cookbook, Nana's Creole Italian Table. Listen to Tip of the Tongue, Liz' podcast about food, drink, and culture on Substack and the Heritage Radio Network, and wherever you listen to your podcasts.



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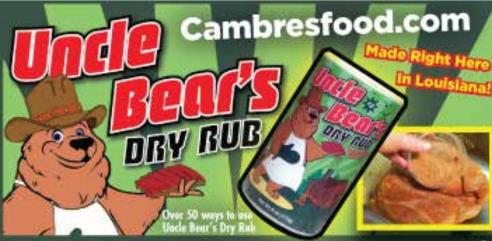
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### **Jaeger's Seafood & Oyster House**

**Reviewed by Brett Thomas** 

5 out of 5 Top Hats

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If you grew up anywhere near New Orleans, chances are you've got a seafood spot you swear by. Your spot. The place you go to when you're hungry for fried shrimp and memories. For me, Jaeger's Seafood and Oyster House in Metairie checks every box. It's not just a restaurant — it's a snapshot of what South Louisiana used to taste like before the food scene got Instagrammed to death.

You'll find Jaeger's sitting humbly on South Clearview Parkway, right around the corner from Elmwood. It doesn't call attention to itself, and that's part of the appeal. No neon signs trying to look like Bourbon Street, no valet parking, and definitely no "fusion." The front of the place looks like it hasn't changed in 30 years — probably because it hasn't. And why would it? It works.

Walk inside, and you'll see what I mean. No polished concrete floors or exposed brick walls here. This isn't a vibe — it's a neighborhood institution. A few sports jerseys on the walls, a handful of families packed into booths, and regulars bellied up to the oyster bar knocking back raw ones like they've got nowhere to be. The smell is exactly what you want: fried seafood, garlic, butter, and just a hint of whatever's boiling in the back.

I've eaten here more times than I can count, and the Seafood Platter still blows me away. It's a monster. Fried catfish fillets, perfectly golden shrimp, fat oysters that don't get lost in the breading, a stuffed crab that actually tastes like crab, crispy onion rings, seasoned jambalaya, French fries, and that slab of garlic bread that's more oil than bread by the time it hits the plate. It's not a meal — it's a Gulf Coast declaration of war on your arteries, and I love every bite of it.

You can go grilled if you want to pretend you're eating light, but let's not kid ourselves. This is the kind of food that sticks with you...not just in your stomach, but in your memory. It tastes like fishing trips with your old man, like Friday nights at Grandma's, like high school dates when you thought fried oysters and a Barg's in a glass bottle counted as fine dining.

Let's talk oysters - because Jaeger's doesn't just serve them, they nail them. Whether you want them raw on the half shell or fried up golden, they deliver every time. But the real showstopper? The chargrilled oysters. I've had chargrilled oysters all over New Orleans - from the French Quarter to the lakefront - and I'm telling you right now, Jaeger's makes the best in town. No contest. They come out sizzling, loaded with garlic butter, parmesan, and just enough char to give them that smoky kiss without drying them out. Each one is like a bite-sized bowl of heaven. Sit at the bar, order a dozen, and watch them disappear before you even realize you're halfway through. They're rich, indulgent, and perfectly done...every single time.

And then there's the crawfish, when they're in season. They come out hot, spicy, and soaked in that good buttery boil that gets under your fingernails and makes you crave beer like you've been working in the sun all day. They don't skimp on the flavor or the portion. If you're not elbow-deep in shells and napkins by the end of it, you didn't do it right.

Now if you really want to throw down like it's your last meal, order the Boiled Seafood Platter with Lobster. This thing is a full-on spectacle. You've got a whole split lobster tail sitting center stage—bright red, steaming, soaked in buttery Cajun boil...surrounded by boiled shrimp, snow crab legs, hot potatoes, corn on the cob, and sausage links that soak up every ounce of spice from the pot. The lobster is sweet and tender, not overcooked like some places that rush the boil. Everything's seasoned straight through - no dry corn, no bland shrimp. It's the kind of plate that demands both hands, a roll of paper towels, and zero shame. You'll sweat, you'll sniffle, and you'll still go back for more.

If you're anywhere near Metairie on a Thursday, do yourself a favor and hit Jaeger's for their Lobster Special. For just \$24.95, you get a full lobster boiled to perfection, dripping in seasoned butter and surrounded by all the fixin's...corn, potatoes, garlic bread, a crisp side salad, and a cup of their rich, dark gumbo that tastes like somebody's grandma stirred it for hours. It's not just a meal...it's an event. And at that price, it feels like highway robbery in the best way possible. Word to the wise: get there early, because once the lobster's gone, it's gone. And you'll be kicking yourself all week if you miss it.

What I love most about Jaeger's is that it doesn't apologize for what it is. It's not trying to keep up with downtown trends or out-of-towner expectations. The staff treats you like family in the way only old-school Louisiana joints can. They'll hustle, they'll smile, and if you become a regular, they'll know your name and your order. And they won't make a big deal out of it... they'll just get it right.

In a city that keeps reinventing itself every six months, Jaeger's stays the same...and we're better off for it. If you're from around here, this place reminds you of what "home" tastes like. If you're just visiting, it gives you a crash course in what real Gulf Coast seafood is supposed to be.

Bottom line? Jaeger's isn't trying to impress anybody. It's just doing what it's always done...frying, boiling, shucking, and feeding people with love, flavor, and no-nonsense portions. And in my book, that's exactly what makes it great.

Brett Thomas Owner of Rhino Web Studios











# **Movie Review:**

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE DEAD RECKONING

by Jason T. Olivier



Mission Impossible Dead Reckoning fittingly takes on a seemingly impossible mission- to wrap up several character arcs in one movie. The action is as pulse pounding as we have come to expect. But the plot line can be blurry at times. The villain again is the unknown Al called "The Entity" which is hell bent on causing global chaos. Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) and the gang are the only ones who seemingly can stand in its way. The story starts with Luther Stickwell, so calmly played by Ving Rhames, hospitalized in his final days with an unknown illness. I found this start so jolting that I thought I had missed some scenes in the previous movie. But the story takes off with lush cinematography in many beautiful locals, which is a feast for the eyes. Still the franchise's desire to wrap up as much as possible in one movie does leave it feeling slightly disjointed and forced. Also of note, perhaps because we are of a similar age, is the fact that Cruise seems to age inconsistently throughout the movie. It turns out some scenes were shot all the way back around COVID, and the reshoots had occurred without any desire or truly need to de-age Cruise for continuity. I also think the action sequences labor under the weight of their own success, requiring an implausible decision near the apex of the movie for villains to escape via an older method of transportation just to jam move and perhaps Cruise age-appropriate stunts in one last time. Still throughout the movie which runs almost three quick hours the franchise does make time to take shots at its own expense (the character Grace guips during an elaborate street escape scene "Is anyone" NOT chasing us?"). All in all, it manages to wrap up the plot line sufficiently, though there are some inexplicably leaps of logic. It's a movie worth the time, and a great send off to one of the most successful movie franchise's. Rated PG-13 for violence and intense scenes. 3.5 of 5

Jason T Olivier is an attorney, actor and former review columnist.



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