

# La Trace du Boudin

by Paddy Bowman

*Some visitors to Louisiana may be afraid to try boudin, but once they do, this succulent mixture of rice, pork, and seasonings excites their taste buds. Boudin is best when taken right from the wrapper and eaten in the parking lot or in your car. People also eat it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.*

**T**hus begins the “Guide to Acadiana Stores and Meat Markets That Sell Boudin,” a bilingual French and English tourism brochure that students of Acadiana High School and Lafayette High School in Lafayette, Louisiana, published last year. Boudin is a Cajun sausage made and sold in small family-owned markets all over South Louisiana. Inspired by the idea of the White House Millennium Council’s Millennium Trails project, French teachers Caroline Ancelet of AHS and Cindy Barry of LHS led students on an enterprise that eventually affected many people in Lafayette Parish: documenting the “boudin trail.”

Food is one of the key markers of place, and through documenting the production and consumption of boudin, students not only investigated this regional food tradition, they improved their French and learned new skills in videography, photography, visual arts, history, geography, design, keyboarding, public relations, and marketing.

Ancelet noted that the concept of a cultural trail provided context for responding to the foreign language curriculum standard addressing community. In addition to French and English teachers’ involvement, the vocational education instructor helped obtain School to Work funds.

Once they began researching boudin origins, recipes, and vendors, students realized how much more they needed to know. They practiced interviewing techniques, sought equipment and editing

assistance, painted a banner for their fieldwork bus (“*Le Bus Magique du Boudin*”), silk screened project T-shirts, and set off on interviews throughout the parish. “Although the students came from rival schools, they had a blast together on our all-day bus ride to visit 10 boudin establishments. At the end, we were green, exhausted, but still voted our last stop, The Best Stop, as the best stop, indeed,” said Ancelet.

Back in the classroom, students composed boudin haiku. “This remains one of my favorite memories,” Ancelet said. “It combined practicing a poetic form, refining language, condensing thoughts, and laughing hard. We practiced filming and speaking in front of a camera during our poetry reading.”

Students produced a video that aired on the local access channel, and pre-

## Document a Trail

In Pittsburgh it’s the Pierogi Path. In Milwaukee, Bratwurst Way. What foods are indigenous to your community? What kinds of markets can students identify? What foods are special to them and their families? Find out through a foodways documentation project and map a trail of a local specialty. Share students’ findings on the CARTS Web site by emailing [cartsnetwork@citylore.org](mailto:cartsnetwork@citylore.org).

## Boudin Haiku

Viande épicée  
fait venir l'eau à la bouche  
Donne-moi un Pepsi

Spicy meat  
Makes my mouth water  
Give me a Pepsi  
—Stephanie DeMoore

Viande succulente  
Je te lève à ma bouche  
ma langue joyeuse

Succulent meat  
I raise you to my mouth  
my tongue joyous  
—Nancy McDonald

Lafayette High School  
French students

miered at the Bayou Bijou Theater on the University of Louisiana-Lafayette campus. Ancelet notes, “The students were amazed at how much their parents and grandparents laughed because they understood all the people their grandchildren and children had interviewed. The film had a great effect on the community. Many people wanted a copy because they loved seeing young people speak French with the older people. The video won a local Viddy Award.” In addition, students wrote and published a bilingual tourism brochure, distributed and funded through the Lafayette Convention and Visitors Commission and local businesses.

Like the sausage, the names of the stores where hundreds of people daily seek out their favorite boudin bespeak the place: Comeaux’s, Poppa T’s, Guidroz’s. French culture, language, food, and names dominate South Louisiana’s cultural mix of French, Spanish, African American, Native American, and German people and traditions that have come together over generations. The final honor for this endeavor came with designation of The Boudin Trail / *La Trace du Boudin* as a National Millennium Community Trail (see [www.altrec.com/features/ontheamericantrail](http://www.altrec.com/features/ontheamericantrail)).

*Paddy Bowman coedits the CARTS newsletter and coordinates the National Network for Folk Arts in Education.*

*Acadiana and Lafayette High School students prepare to hit the boudin (sausage) trail in their Le Bus Magique du Boudin.*



Photo by Caroline Ancelet