

Creoles

In Louisiana the food and music are defining experiences for any visitor to this great state. They are much like the culture of New Orleans –a great mixture of ingredients brought together by the contributions of various ethnic groups creating exciting spicy and flavorful foods and new sounds.

The term Creole refers to the people that share a mixed heritage of African and European ethnic groups. The history of the Creoles in Louisiana is a difficult, complex, and richly unique American story. During the period of slavery African people were imported to the Caribbean and the United States. The African women brought across the Atlantic Ocean during what has been called the middle passage were subjected to extreme deprivation and cruelty. Their captures were men of many different ethnic groups and through their brutality forced themselves on these helpless women. The children born were of mixed heritage. Originally the term Creole was used to describe these children of mixed heritage.

Creole was derived from the Portuguese word "criollo" ("cree-o-yo"). It meant "native to the colony" or "born in the new world". Also, Creole was a shipping term that might be used to order slaves. The buyer specified either a Creole slave or an African-born slave.

When the French settled Louisiana they used the term "Creole" to refer to those of French ancestry who were born in the colony of Louisiana, primarily the area around New Orleans. The Spanish also used the word in the same way. Later, the term Creole was used to refer to any of the European groups who had arrived in Louisiana or were born in Louisiana. This was done to distinguish them from Americans who were thought of as crude and uncivilized. Nevertheless, in New Orleans, among those of European ancestry there were people of mixed African ancestry who referred to themselves as Creoles, as well. Others sometimes called this group of people the "Creoles of color".

Today the Creole people in this region have a rich cultural history and are proud of their contributions to American culture. These contributions are evident in the delicious Creole cuisine, beautiful architecture, various forms of music and a unique way of life in this region and throughout the United States.

Source(s):

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