



Photos by OFF THE GRID Photography

Jambalaya Festival

The 56th Jambalaya Festival was a Woo Woo of a Year!

By Mike Strong

Jambalaya Festival 2023 was one for the books. The weather couldn't have been better for a Memorial Day in May. Everything ran smooth and the music and jambalaya was great.

Over the 56 years of crowning champions this years winner announcement to the festival crowd erupted in a fanfair never seen before.

When the winning ticket numbers were read, 8 time finalist Todd Breaux was the winner and then an epic celebration ensued. I've never seen so many cajuns empty their beer cans as if it were champagne. It rivaled a dog pile at an LSU World Series victory

and Todd now holds the longest walk up to receive his prize as Jambalaya Festival World Champion.

Once he arrived to the stage phase two of the celebration began. Woo Woo Nation rang out across the festival. Most of the time as a photographer I have to ask the winners to raise the trophy for a photo opt. Not with Todd and his helper Damon. They danced, they lifted, they hugged. Todd animated digging about 50 lbs of jambalaya with the Champions paddle.

I was in the end zone taking photos when Tommy Hodson threw the winning pass to Eddie



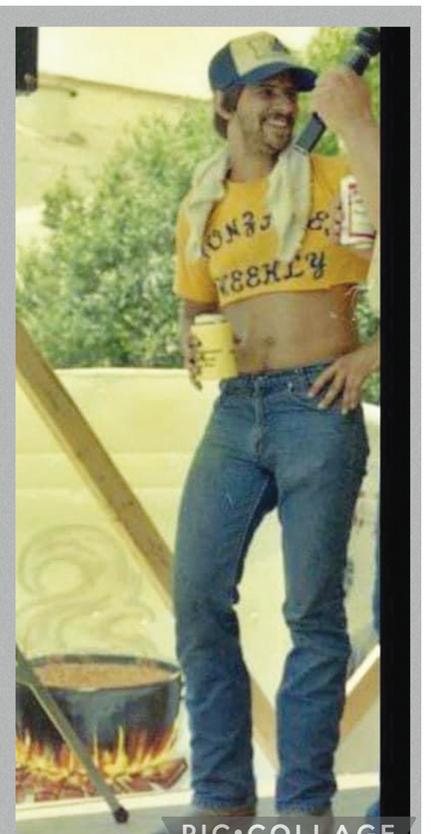
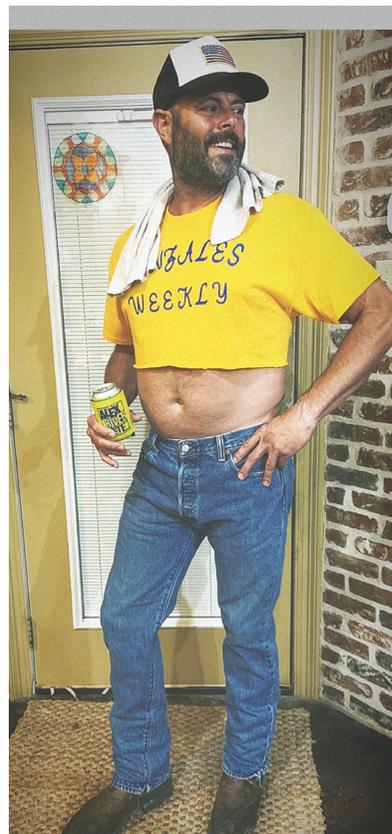
**Todd had more
moves than
Jackie Chan.**



Fuller in the earthquake game. My double wide went to rocking like never before when the Saints won the Super Bowl. I have to admit Todd's victory is so personal it still makes me smile and his crowning celebration will never be matched. Who knew Todd B has more moves than Jackie Chan.

The entire weekend was riddled with hints going Todd's way. First his was on the cover

of the program. Not as Todd but as a background photo representing all the cooks on a hot steamy day. Second his son-in-law, Adam Gautreau, mimiced a photo of Todd from back in the day. Third, Todd B asked Todd Long what is it going to take to win this thing. Todd L. told Todd B. he remembered a country song titled, Sober on Sunday, that would be a good start. Damon Blue a BBQ master and Todd's



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helper this year heard the suggestion and took control of the sobriety while cooking. At each level Todd B. advanced Todd L. reminded him from the stage, Sober on Sunday. Now as the World Champion it's become his rallying cry. Sober on Sunday, heard that and got the t-shirt.

Historically The Breaux family is famous when it comes to cooking jambalaya. Charles

'Black' Breaux Sr. is the Godfather of jambalaya contest. He's won all the JFA has to offer. Ricky Breaux is a 4 time Champion and Champ of Champs winner. Joey Breaux is a former Jambalaya Champion and Champ of Champs winner. Now Todd Breaux has followed in the family footsteps and is the current champ. Roby Breaux is a 3 time Boucherie Champion



and a Champ of Champs winner at the Boucherie. The Breaux family is to jambalaya as what the Manning family is to quarterbacks. A long line of winners. I was touched by Leslie's Facebook post. I've included it here.

A message from Leslie

EPIC! The best word to describe this years Jambalaya Festival. For nearly 40 years my dad has competed and this year I finally got to watch him win! For about the last 10 years he would say "I'm done, I'm not cooking this year" but there is a strong love for it that runs in his blood and I'm so proud that he never gave up. The phone call he got to make to my grandmaw to give her the news will forever be one of my favorite memories.

A big thanks to Damon Blue

for being his helper. It is not a job for the faint of heart and he did amazing taming the beast all weekend. He wanted to knock him out a few times but he stayed positive and focused and got it done!

I woke up this morning still smiling. I'm beyond proud and excited for them. It's been a long time coming and very well deserved. It's gonna be a fun year for the JFA.

Ascension Magazine had a chance to have an open discussion with Todd and I hope I got all the facts right. This was a very gratifying article to write and even better memory to experience. I did discuss the fact that he was wearing an Ascension Magazine hat on the entire festival but unfortunately there will be no royalty check. He looked at me with his sly grin and said, "Woo Woo! Woo Woo Woo Woo! Woo Woo Woo Woo Woo!"

WOO WOO NATION



PHOTO FROM FACEBOOK



Ricky, Roby, Todd and Joey Breaux

PHOTO FROM FACEBOOK



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