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## **A Walking Tour of 175-Year-Old Antoine's Restaurant** *New Orleans Culinary Landmark Offers Visitors Museum-like Dining Experience*

NEW ORLEANS (January 7, 2015) – Few restaurants offer patrons a visitor experience like the 175-year-old Antoine's in the French Quarter. Diners can feast on traditional New Orleans French-Creole cuisine and take a journey through history during each visit, discovering something new each time.

“When I was a young man growing up in and around the restaurant my great-great-grandfather founded in 1840, I was fascinated by all of the pictures, artifacts and keepsakes that had become a part of the restaurant over so many years,” said Antoine's CEO Rick Blount, a fifth-century proprietor of the famous New Orleans restaurant. “I still find things on the walls that I've somehow never seen even today, and I hope that visitors get to enjoy some of the history here when they dine at Antoine's.”

Nearly each of Antoine's 14 dining rooms has a story and beholds something for everyone who visits. Here are a few insider tips of things to discover when dining at Antoine's:

Upon entering the historic landmark's front door at 713 St. Louis Street, patrons are in the original dining room, still adorned with the same chandeliers that hung above diners nearly 175 years ago, but converted from oil to electric lamps. The mirrors around the room come from the old St. Louis Hotel and were imported from France.

To the rear left of the original dining room, visitors will enter the Large Annex built by Antoine's son Jules in an Alsatian style, in homage to his mother from that region of France. The room is covered in photos of many famous visitors, including Pope John Paul II, numerous past presidents and Hollywood celebrities. This is a favorite dining room of locals that has served many for generations.

Walking through the rear of the Large Annex, visitors will enter a hallway that brings them to a complex of dining rooms. To the right is the Rex Room, celebrating the King of Carnival. With vivid green walls, the room has cases with antique crowns, scepters and costumes, as well as photos of

royalty from this legendary Mardi Gras krewe. Continuing to the rear of the restaurant, visitors will find the small and cozy Tabasco Room named after the Paul McIlhenny of the famous hot sauce family who was a distinguished customer and community leader. The appropriately red-walled room has just one table and is rumored to be the site of the most engagements in New Orleans.

Just behind the Tabasco Room is the restaurant's fabled wine cellar. Measuring 165 feet long by only seven feet wide, it holds approximately 25,000 bottles when fully stocked. The astute New Orleans traveler might know that a small window around the corner from the restaurant on Royal Street allows people to peer into the wine cellar from outside.

From the wine cellar, pop over into the adjacent dining room known as the Escargot Room. This themed dining room celebrates a secret society of foodies who hold special dining events at Antoine's. Invite and menus from events dating back more than 100 years bedeck the walls, as does a large painting of a snail.

Continuing back toward the front of the restaurant, patrons will find the Proteus Room, another themed dining room celebrating another historic Mardi Gras Krewe.

Next is one of the most interesting rooms in the restaurant – the 1840 Room. This room celebrates the generations of Antoine's. Portraits and photographs of the successive generations of the Alciatore family decorate the room, as does an antique silver duck press that is still in use. Other treasures include a Civil War era sword left by a former patron, an original signed copy of *Dinner at Antoine's* by Francis Parkinson Keyes, and one of the first light bulbs hand delivered by Thomas Edison when he dined at Antoine's. The room is built in the parlor-fashion style of the 1840s.

The 1840 Room has an adjoining hallway toward the front that connects it with a former dungeon that operated during the Spanish occupation of New Orleans. Along the hallway are cases that house the restaurant's vast collection of ashtrays and knick-knacks from around the world, including Groucho Marx's beret. There is also a large safe on display that was once used for holding Beluga caviar imported from Russia.

From the Dungeon's hallway, visitors can visit the Mystery Room, which served as a speakeasy during Prohibition. During the era, patrons would go through a door in the ladies' restroom to a secret room and exit with a coffee cup full of alcohol. When asked where it originated, the protocol phrase was "It's a mystery to me."

Ascending the stairs to the restaurant's second floor, visitors will find four more dining rooms – the Roy Alciatore Room (named after the restaurant's third generation proprietor), formerly the Capitol Room, and its twin, the Maison Verte Room. The wooden panels on the walls were taken from the old state capitol building in Baton Rouge. Both rooms are nearly identical and contain four black marble fireplaces, two in each. Both share a balcony overlooking Rue Saint Louis and the French Quarter.

The Japanese Room features oriental motifs popular at the turn of the century and was closed for 43 years after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. It was reopened in 1984 for the World's Fair in New Orleans, and it is being renovated as a new dining room that will be unveiled in 2015.

The last dining room upstairs is the Twelfth Night Revelers Room that is themed in conjunction with one of the oldest Mardi Gras krewes in New Orleans. Memorabilia from its history is the featured décor.

Descending back to the first floor, visitors can visit another Mardi Gras themed destination in Antoine's – the Hermes Bar – named after the Krewe of Hermes. Believe it or not, Antoine's never had a bar until 2009 when it opened the popular Hermes Bar. Roy Alciatore, the restaurant's third generation proprietor believed drinks and wine should only be served with food, and thus there was no bar at Antoine's. Present CEO Blount searched for an antique bar to outfit the space with, but none would allow for the storage of more than only a handful of bottles, so he commissioned a custom bar be created for the space.

As Antoine's commemorates 175 years of operation, its many spaces tell a history that can intrigue generations of diners and many more to come.

Antoine's, a traditional French Creole fine dining establishment since 1840, is located at 713 St. Louis Street in the historic New Orleans French Quarter. For more information, visit our website at [www.antoines.com](http://www.antoines.com), like us on Facebook [here](#), or make a reservation by calling 504-581-4422.

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