



Media Contact:

Amy Wood, Harvest PR
503.274.0086, ext. 102

JAZZ UP YOUR MARDI GRAS PARTY WITH PIPING HOT BEIGNETS

Legendary Café du Monde shares its secrets to this sweet southern treat

CORDOVA, Tenn. – (January 19, 2010) – This February, revelers around the world will turn to the Mardi Gras headquarters of New Orleans for party inspiration. Whether celebrating in the streets of the historic French Quarter or throwing a small party at home, one Mardi Gras “must” is piping hot beignets, piled high with powdered sugar.

The powdery pillow-shaped donuts, made famous by the French Market’s Café du Monde, are as synonymous with a New Orleans-style Mardi Gras as jazz and beads. Serving homemade beignets is a delicious way to incorporate traditional Mardi Gras ‘flavor’ into your party.

The secret to this southern treat, according to Café du Monde, is simple.

“It’s all about the oil,” says Burt Benrud, vice president of Café du Monde. “We use only 100 percent cottonseed oil, which is very neutral in flavor, and won’t overpower the simple sweetness of the beignet. We’ve used the same family recipe, and the same oil, for generations.”

Cottonseed oil is America’s original vegetable oil. It is naturally *trans* free and a popular oil for many southern fried foods. Consumers can purchase the oil at Target and various sporting goods stores, including Bass Pro Shops, Dick’s Sporting Goods and Sportsman’s Warehouse.

According to Benrud, cottonseed oil is ideal for preparing beignets because it is capable of reaching very high temperatures without burning.

“Arriving at a high temperature, around 370 degrees, is a crucial step,” he says. “Use the count test to determine if the cottonseed oil is hot enough. If the dough rises to the top of the oil within eight seconds, it’s ready.”

To achieve the desired billowy effect, Benrud offers this advice: scale back the beignet size.

“Café du Monde uses giant fryers and gallons of oil,” he explains. “At home, most cooks use a smaller skillet and a smaller quantity of oil, which together hold less heat. With smaller beignets, the heat reaches the inside more easily, making them perfectly light and puffy.”

For additional beignet tips and recipes, and party ideas, visit www.cottonseedoil.com.

About National Cottonseed Products Association

NCPA is the national trade association for the cottonseed processing industry. For more information, visit www.cottonseed.com.

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