

Louisiana's Creole Culture Extends Far and Wide

今回は、アメリカ南部ルイジアナ州のクレオール文化を紹介する記事です。ヨーロッパやアフリカ、カリブなど多文化が混ざり合って生まれた独自の文化で、料理や音楽、祭りを通じて今も地域の生活に根付いています。記事に出てくる「colonial」は「植民地時代の」という意味で、colonial days（植民地時代）や colonial architecture（植民地時代の建築物）のように使われます。アメリカは多くの人種や文化が交わってできた国であり、ルイジアナのクレオール文化はその象徴のひとつとも言えます。あなたは日常生活で異文化の音楽や料理、祭りなどを体験したことがありますか？そのときどんな印象を受けましたか？講師と話してみましょう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Language experts estimate as many as 10,000 people still speak the French-based language Louisiana Creole.

In addition, many others in New Orleans and across the southern U.S. state consider themselves part of the culture that draws tens of thousands of people to events. The celebrations include autumn's Festival Acadiens et Creoles, summer's Creole Tomato Festival, and spring's Tremé Creole Gumbo & Congo Square Rhythms Festival.

But for locals and visitors alike, everyday evidence shows how strong Creole culture is in Louisiana. The state's performance spaces and airwaves are often filled with the driving, rhythmic sound of zydeco and other Creole and Cajun music. Louisiana's restaurants offer dishes with rich, complex flavors including gumbo, hot sausage, red beans and rice, and shrimp étouffée.

“To celebrate Creole culture is to wake up and live in New Orleans,” said Christina Bragg. She is a member of the Mahogany Blue Babydolls, a parade group for Black and mixed-race women.

“Celebrating Creole is celebrating our day-to-day lives. The food we eat. The music we dance to. The way we gather with friends to parade during Mardi Gras,” she said. “Every day I open my eyes and breathe, it’s a celebration of Creole culture, because that’s who I am.”

Difficult to define

So, what is Creole?

“It’s food, it’s music, it’s [architecture](#), it’s style and it’s traditions,” Mona Lisa Saloy told VOA. “There are millions of Creole people in countries across the world...we are all so much more alike than we are different. We create beautiful cultures everywhere we go, and I think that’s evident here in Louisiana.”

Saloy is the writer of the poetry collection *Black Creole Chronicles* and served as Louisiana’s poet laureate from 2021 to 2023. She said Creole cultures all over the world have similarities to Louisiana’s.

“Architectural styles common in New Orleans like the Creole Cottage or the Shotgun home can be found in other places with Creoles, such as in other parts of the American South and the Caribbean,” she said. “Much of our music derives from the rhythms of Africa and the Caribbean, as does much of our food — elements of gumbo such as the long rice and okra, for example, or the prevalence of beans.”

How the word “Creole” is defined changes from place to place and person to person.

The word “Creole” is believed to have come from the Portuguese word *crioulo*, which developed from the Latin word for “to create.” Some say it was used in the European slave trade to describe a slave born in the New World and not in Africa. The word took on different meanings in different places. Creole in much of Africa and part of the Caribbean, for example, came to mean people of mixed ethnic or racial backgrounds.

In Louisiana, the definition has changed over the years.

“Here, the definition kind of depends on who you ask,” said Vance Vaucresson. He is a New Orleans-based Creole and owner of a local restaurant, the Vaucresson Sausage Company.

“I prefer an [inclusive](#) definition,” he said. “By that definition, anyone born in Louisiana could be Creole. During our [colonial](#) era, it was meant to differentiate people born in the Americas — usually of French, Spanish or African descent — from those born in Europe or Africa.”

Describing his definition, Vaucresson added: “...it doesn’t matter. If you’re born here and embrace the culture, you can be Creole.”

In Louisiana of the 1700s and 1800s, the more inclusive definition was possibly the most accepted. White people with European [ancestry](#) were just as likely to call themselves Creole as mixed-race people of African ancestry.

White Creoles claimed the term because it set them apart from settlers who were coming from Northern states after The Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803. Mixed-race Creoles, too, claimed the term because it differentiated them from enslaved people.

Don Vappie is a Creole jazz musician in New Orleans. He described the idea of Creole before the Civil war as organized into three levels. "It was more of a three-tier racial [hierarchy](#) here, instead of the two-tiered Black-or-white experienced elsewhere in the U.S.," he said.

After the American Civil War, however, many of these differences in New Orleans disappeared.

"Creole or not, white people had more in common with white people and Black people had more in common with Black people," Vappie told VOA.

Saloy believes Creole is firmly connected to African culture and should stay that way.

"The ingredients in our food, the rhythm in our music and dance, the details in our architecture — it's all connected to West African culture," she said, "That's our heritage."

Matt Haines reported this story for VOA News. Caty Weaver adapted it for Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. architecture (n.) the subject of the design of buildings and structures

In university, I studied Greek architecture and culture.

2. inclusive (adj.) including everyone; actively allowing all people to join a group

Public schools in my state have an inclusive policy towards students.

3. colonial (adj.) related to a period in history when countries made colonies, such as the French colonies in Africa

The city was first built during the colonial days of North America.

4. ancestry (n.) the people that you are related to and that came before you

Her ancestry goes back to people living in Denmark and Germany three hundred years ago.

5. hierarchy (n.) a ranking

Hundreds of years ago, there was a social hierarchy made up of four groups of people.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What things are parts of Louisiana's creole culture?

2. Where do many elements of Louisiana's creole culture come from?

3. According to restaurant owner Vance Vaucresson, what is the definition of "creole"?

4. Have you ever had a chance to experience Louisiana creole culture (music, food, celebrations)?

5. What other creole cultures do you know of?