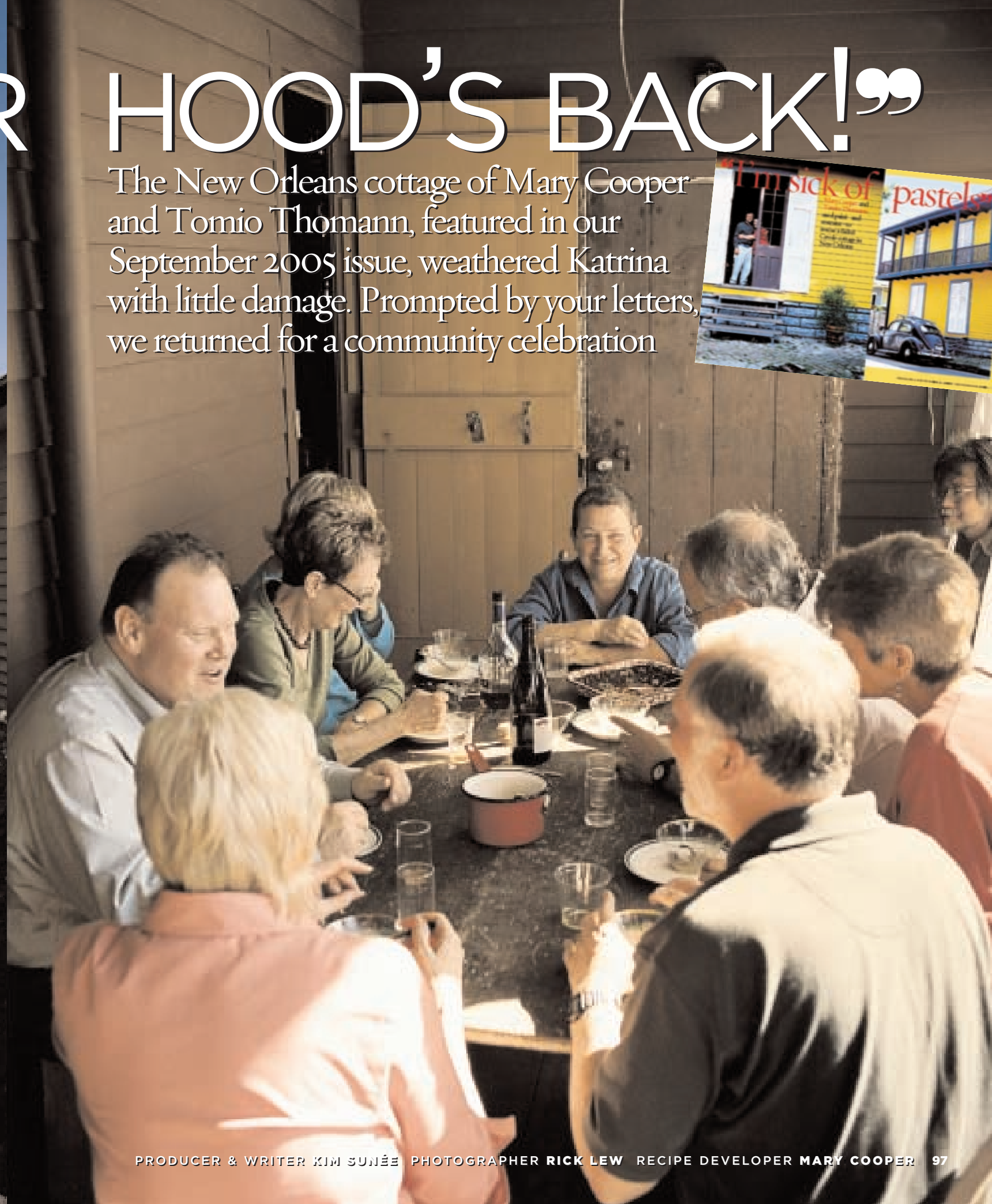


“OUR NEIGHBOR HOOD’S BACK!”

The New Orleans cottage of Mary Cooper and Tomio Thomann, featured in our September 2005 issue, weathered Katrina with little damage. Prompted by your letters, we returned for a community celebration



MARY AND TOMIO WELCOME friends and neighbors to their Bywater cottage. THIS HOLIDAY, they're all thankful for their homes—and one another.



I CAN'T BELIEVE SO MANY PEOPLE ASKED ABOUT US." Mary Cooper's face brightens like a broad magnolia as I tell her why we want to come back and visit her and Tomio Thomann in their Bywater neighborhood, about 20 blocks from the French Quarter. She pauses and places her hand on her chest as if to catch her breath, a moment to take in this overwhelming response by *Cottage Living* readers inquiring after their post-hurricane plight.

Mary shows me through the two-story Creole cottage we featured in our September 2005 issue. It's one of many "old-house projects" dear to her heart, and she points out water damage from Katrina. "When we returned in early October after going back and forth from Jeanerette, Louisiana, we found the back door had been broken into, but it was animal rescuers."

She points proudly to the "tattoos" on her house and those all up and down the street—marks from the National Guardsmen, a secret language that translates into a form of survival. (The zero under an X means no bodies were found inside.) Mary's daughter had to be rescued from the attic of her home. "But we're all safe," she says several times, trying to believe it herself. "As for the cottage, it took about a week for our house to dry out, and, so far, we've had no problems with mold.

"I'm so blessed," she continues. "We had some roof leaks, but other than that we're very lucky."

So what do the lucky do in this post-Katrina city? They gather with loved ones and neighbors to share in a new understanding of what it truly means to give thanks. And in New Orleans, giving thanks has always been about sharing food and drink with family and friends.

In the kitchen, Mary makes the most of holiday leftovers by cooking up another incredible meal fit for kings (aka her friends and neighbors). She saves the turkey carcass for her divine Turkey and Andouille Gumbo; leftover potatoes go into her Creamy Potato Salad, which she serves in the bowl with the gumbo and rice. "There are some parts of Louisiana that will argue about whether you put the potato salad in the middle of the bowl or on the side," she says. "But, of course, we all know that gumbo without rice is a mortal sin."

We also know that you can't have a party in Louisiana without the libations, so Mary and Tomio start their guests off with Champagne Cocktails—bubbly with sugar cubes soaked in traditional Peychaud bitters—a bittersweet symbol of the times.

"We're so fortunate," Tomio says. "Our friends and neighbors are back. It's not perfect, but now we just need the rest of the country to come and support us."

Mary hands me a Champagne Cocktail, and we toast New Orleans, a city of return—a concrete and real place where homes and hearts are on the mend.

Mary and Tomio's cottage was featured in the September 2005 issue of *Cottage Living*. To read the story, visit cottageliving.com.



**MARY AND TOMIO'S
THANKSGIVING
MENU**
CHAMPAGNE COCKTAILS
TURKEY AND
ANDOUILLE GUMBO
CREAMY POTATO SALAD
MARY'S CREOLE
BREAD PUDDING WITH
WHISKEY SAUCE

**TOMIO (RIGHT) AND
FRIENDS chat it
up between courses.
DURING THE PARTY
(left), guests mingle
in the backyard.**

TURKEY AND ANDOUILLE GUMBO

This gumbo is best if made a day ahead of the party. For a shortcut, skip making the stock in Step 1, and use 3 (32-ounce) containers chicken broth.

MAKES: 3 quarts (8 to 10 servings)

PREP: 30 minutes

COOK: 5 hours (mostly unattended)

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 turkey carcass
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 yellow onions, finely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1 bunch green onions, finely chopped
- 3 celery ribs, finely chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 pound andouille sausage, sliced into 1/2-inch pieces
- 3 cups chopped cooked turkey meat
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon Creole seasoning*
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1 bay leaf
- Hot cooked rice
- Creamy Potato Salad (recipe at right)

1. Bring 4 quarts water and salt to a boil in a large pot. Add carcass; simmer 1 hour or until liquid is reduced to 2 1/2 to 3 quarts. Remove and discard carcass; strain stock.

2. Melt butter in a large Dutch oven over medium heat; add flour, and whisk constantly, 15 minutes or until roux is chocolate-colored. Add onions and next 4 ingredients. Cook until tender, stirring constantly. Add andouille, and cook 10 minutes. Stir in turkey meat, 2 quarts turkey stock, chopped parsley, and next 4 ingredients. Reduce heat to low, and let simmer 3 1/2 to 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Remove bay leaf, and serve over rice, topped with a scoop of Creamy Potato Salad.

**For testing purposes only, we used Tony Chachere's Original Creole Seasoning (available at supermarkets or online at tonychachere.com).*

CREAMY POTATO SALAD

Mary suggests cooking potatoes in as little water as possible to retain more flavor.

MAKES: 6 to 8 servings **PREP:** 20 minutes

COOK: 20 minutes

- 6 red potatoes (about 3 pounds), diced
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoons India relish, chow-chow, or Creole mustard*
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning

- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 5 large hard-cooked eggs, chopped
- 3 celery ribs, finely chopped
- 1 bunch green onions, finely chopped
- 1/2 green bell pepper, finely chopped

1. Cook potatoes in boiling water to cover for 20 minutes or until tender. Drain well, and let cool.

2. Stir together parsley and next 6 ingredients in a small bowl. Combine with potato, eggs, and next 3 ingredients. Serve or refrigerate immediately.

**You can find India relish and chow-chow with the relish in most supermarkets. Substitute 2 tablespoons Creole mustard and 1 tablespoon dill pickle relish, if desired.*

MARY'S CREOLE BREAD PUDDING WITH WHISKEY SAUCE

A test kitchen favorite. Left with extra sauce? Spoon it over ice cream or pound cake, or stir it into coffee.

MAKES: 8 to 10 servings **PREP:** 20 minutes

BAKE: 1 hour 10 minutes **COOK:** 8 minutes

- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 4 cups stale French bread, torn into 1-inch pieces
- 4 cups whole milk
- 4 large eggs, lightly beaten



MARY'S BREAD PUDDING

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup raisins or chopped dried apricots
- 1 small Granny Smith apple, peeled and chopped
- Whiskey Sauce

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Grease a 13- x 9-inch baking dish with melted butter, and set aside.

2. Place bread in a large bowl, and cover with milk. Beat eggs, sugar, and vanilla together in a medium bowl. Pour over bread. Stir in raisins and apple. Pour into prepared pan, and bake at 350° for 1 hour 10 minutes or until brown and firm. Let cool. Serve warm with Whiskey Sauce.

WHISKEY SAUCE

- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 cup half-and-half or evaporated milk
- 1 tablespoon whiskey (optional)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Combine first 4 ingredients in a heavy saucepan; cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, 8 to 10 minutes or until thickened. Remove from heat; stir in whiskey, if desired, and vanilla. Serve warm.



CHAMPAGNE COCKTAILS (simple directions, page 98)

IF YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO MISS NEW ORLEANS...

Mail-order picks from food editor and former New Orleans resident Kim Sunée, for those craving a taste of Louisiana

The Best Stop Supermarket

337/233-5805
Boudin, \$2.89/lb.
Beef Jerky, \$17.99/lb.

Chef John Folse

225/644-6000 or www.jfolse.com
Creole Cream Cheese, \$7.99

Comeaux's

800/323-2492 or comeaux.com
Cajun Crawfish Pies, \$27.49/dozen

Deanie's Seafood

800/662-2586 or deanies.com
Stuffed Crab, \$2.95
Stuffed Crawfish, \$2.95

Louisiana Crawfish Company
888/522-7292 or lacrawfish.com
Natchitoches Crawfish and Meat Pies, \$7.95/box of four pies

Mossy Bayou Foods

888/451-0270 or mossybayou.com
Louisiana Popcorn Rice, \$4
Louisiana Swamp Scum Hot Sauce, \$5

Poche's Market

800/376-2437 or pochesmarket.com
Chicken and Sausage Gumbo, \$15/quart
Boudin Balls, \$7.25/lb.
Poché Bridge Hot Sausage, \$20.97/3-lb. package
Andouille, \$8.25/lb.
Tasso, \$8.25/lb.

Robin's Restaurant

337/228-7594
Shrimp and Okra Gumbo, \$15/1.5-lb. can

“gumbo without

rice is a mortal sin”

(MEET THE NEIGHBORS)

What we're thankful for...

Each of Mary and Tomio's neighbors featured here returned to New Orleans as soon as they could, and they're all trying to restore the community that matters so much to them. The one thing they want people to know is that "the city is open and ready for visitors." Just as locals are supporting the neighborhoods they love, they also need the rest of us to support them.

For more on how to help rebuild, visit cottagelivingbuilds.com. And to help folks in the food industry, go to: LRA.org, southernfoodways.com, and slowfoodusa.org/katrina_relief.html.



DAN COGSWELL Cabinetmaker, with Josephine and Ian
"We were with family in Michigan for a little more than four months. We're just thankful we have our very own home."



BLAKE VONDER HAAR
New Orleans Conservation Guild
"I'm embarrassingly lucky. Not only did my home and business survive but so did my neighborhood—we're a strong community that really pulled together."



MATTHEW THOMPSON
Cabinetmaker
"I'm blessed to have been one of the first to move back in the neighborhood. I built everything in this house, and I'm working almost round-the-clock helping reconstruct other houses in this area and those that were harder hit."



KERRY MOODY Lucullus Antiques
"I escaped with four people and a bulldog. As for the house, I had roof damage, but I've always wanted an upstairs so I guess I'll just expand. I'm really thankful that my family and friends are safe. There are always beautiful things in the world, but family and friends are irreplaceable."



MITCHELL GAUDET Studio Inferno
"I'm happy that this working artists studio is back up and running. My building is still standing, and I'm really looking forward to the revitalization of the city."



DR. JULIE JONES University of New Orleans professor, with Thelonious
"I returned October 10, as soon as they opened my zip code. I wanted to kiss the ground here on Louisa Street, I was so happy to be back. We had tons of block parties. We'd meet on the biggest porch. Electricity was spotty, and there was no refrigeration—but lots of cocktails." ■