

# White Light, White Sausage

Dave Carnie's quest for Keller's Boudin Blanc

I used to hate Las Vegas. I don't have much interest in gambling, and my hangovers lasted weeks. A few years ago my wife, Tania, showed me another side of Vegas, and I've since come to love the city.

We're food nerds. We watch all the cooking shows, from Emeril to that bald-ass granny, Lydia, on PBS. No Rachel Ray, though. Hate, hate, hate. The food is interesting, but I think the real reason we enjoy them is because they're so soothing. Nothing happens and every show is the same: boil some water, cook some stuff, and at the end it all looks awesome. But what does it taste like?

That's where Vegas comes in. Every celebrity chef in the world has a restaurant somewhere on the strip. Who isn't curious about Emeril's food? Is it actually good? On my first visit to his restaurant, the answer was no. It sucked.

One celebrity chef who is really good is Thomas Keller. His restaurant, Bouchon, at the Venetian, is my favorite restaurant in the world.

"What are you gonna get this time?" I asked Tania as we sat at the bar on our second visit.

"I don't know," she said, "but something good. Last time I biffed it with the chicken."

"Biffed it? How old are you again?"

She did biff it on that first visit. The most amazing dish on the menu—Boudin Blanc sausage—sat on my plate, across the table

from her and her boring-ass chicken.

"Oh my God," I said after my first bite, "you gotta try this. I think this might be the best sausage



I've ever had in my life." Tania, who is not easily impressed, agreed.

I called the waitress over to congratulate her for serving the best sausage ever, and she explained that "boudin blanc" means "white pudding" in French. Presumably because the little baby pigs and turkeys they mush up and cram into the casing have the consistency of pudding—due in part to the milk, cream and brandy they mix in. The flavor is subtle but extremely pleasant, and it has a velvety texture that practically melts in your mouth.

"We get it from a supplier in San Francisco called Marcel et Henri," she told us.

When I got home I visited their website, but there weren't any order buttons. So I called Marcel et Henri and talked to Marcel, or Henri, and he told me they don't ship any of their products because of the cost of dry ice, and Fedex, and because they're French. He was very helpful, though, and put me in touch with a local supplier who turned out to be a crazy Frenchman with an OOOOOUTRAGEOUS FRANCH ACK-SANT! I could barely understand him, but I gathered that he didn't sell to the public.

I had almost given up the quest when I noticed that Mario's, the famous Italian deli in Glendale, Calif., sold Marcel et Henri's blood sausage. A couple "special order" conversations and a few weeks later, I had 15 links of Boudin Blanc in my fridge.

We own Keller's cookbook, *Bouchon*, with the recipe for the Boudin Blanc, so I browned some butter, added a little salt, pepper and sage, and cooked each side for about five minutes. It was identical: sausage heaven.

It kind of made me think I'd never need to go to Vegas again. But I do. We haven't been to Bobby Flay's Mesa Grill and, I hate to admit it, but I need to know what that asshole's food tastes like.

*Dave Carnie was once the editor of Big Brother Skateboarding and a sixteenth-century Spanish admiral and pirate hunter, best known for the destruction of Fort Caroline in 1565. He is fond of French cuisine.*