



Delfeayo Marsalis, musical director of 'Rhythm Kitchen,' performs with his band.

**BY LESLIE CARDÉ**  
Contributing writer

New Orleans' food and music are renowned the world over. But how many of us have thought about how they work together? A fusion, if you will, between great chefs and great musicians can result in a heightened sense of appreciation for both pursuits.

The notion is explored in a new half-hour program debuting Monday (Jan. 13) on WYES-TV. Titled "Rhythm Kitchen," it's produced by the well-known team of Michael Murphy and Cilista Eberle.



Tocco

In the first episode Tony Tocco, owner of Atchafalaya restaurant, his executive chef Christopher Lynch

(one-time chef de cuisine at both Commander's Palace and Emeril's) and musician Delfeayo Marsalis explore the way food and music can enhance upscale dining.

Trombone player Marsalis has his own thoughts on which musical arrangements best bring out the culinary notes of certain dishes. For example, shrimp and grits and Duke Ellington? Marsalis considers this a perfect combination.

"We have been pairing live music with our Sunday jazz and rock and

roll brunches for some time now," said Atchafalaya owner Tocco. "So, we've been meshing food with the famous musicians who have come through here for many years. And, there's always a thought to what vibe we're getting from the music and how it will interplay with Chris's culinary selections."

### Improvising with flavor, sound

While musicians may have a playlist, so do chefs who carefully cultivate a menu.

And just as jazz musicians often veer from the scripted version of a song, chefs enjoy combining ingredients in new ways.

For chef Lynch, that's pure creative fun.

"We have regulars who love the idea of musicians free-forming and doing their own thing, and likewise these patrons enjoy experimenting with food," Lynch said. "There's a lot of trust involved when diners decide to abandon the menu and ask that I make something special for them, which enhances the musical dining experience. It's a great compliment to me that they are willing to let me freestyle. It keeps the creative juices flowing."

Husband-and-wife team Murphy and Eberle, producers of the fast-paced half-hour show, are no strangers to music programming.

The pair spent 26 years filming Jazz Fest, and Murphy was one of the founding partners of House of Blues. Among other film projects, the two produced "Make It Funky," a history of rhythm and blues in New Orleans, hosted by



PROVIDED PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MURPHY  
Musician Delfeayo Marsalis and executive chef Christopher Lynch toast to an evening of great food and music.

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Art Neville.

"For 'Rhythm Kitchen,' we wanted to focus on New Orleans and what it means to people," Murphy said. "We began by interviewing musician Delfeayo Marsalis and culinary historian Zella Palmer, who happened to have written a cookbook talking about the interplay between food and music — even discussing what songs go with an outdoor barbecue.

"By the time we had transcribed these interviews along with others, gotten our outline together and handed them to Lenny Delbert, editor at WYES, we knew we were onto something. Lenny told us this program looked nothing like any run-of-the-mill cooking show, and that the entertainment value made it so much fun to watch."

The program definitely leaves the viewer wanting more music and more scrumptious-looking food. There is no denying that there is a cadence in the kitchen when things are humming and an intonation amongst musicians when the notes are bouncing in all the right directions. It's this synchronicity that is explored in this smart, fun, and entertaining look at two of New Orleans' signature creative endeavors, food and music.

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### 'RHYTHM KITCHEN'

Debuts at 9 p.m. Jan. 13 on WYES-TV.  
The show will repeat at 10 a.m. Jan. 19,  
10 p.m. Jan. 22 and 5 p.m. Jan. 25.