



Celebrating with St. Joseph Altars

The History, Recipes, and Symbols of a New Orleans Tradition

SANDRA SCALISE JUNEAU

Every year on March 19, Roman Catholic churches and households in and around New Orleans celebrate St. Joseph’s Day. As centerpieces of these celebrations, the elaborate tiered displays of foods, prayers, and offerings known as St. Joseph Altars represent a centuries-old tradition established in south Louisiana by immigrants from Sicily.

In *Celebrating with St. Joseph Altars*, Sandra Scalise Juneau expertly documents the stories, recipes, and religious symbolism of this rich tradition passed down through multiple generations. While the altars have adapted over time to local ingredients and tastes, most of the customary dishes still follow cooking and baking methods that remain relatively unchanged from over a century ago.

Juneau traces the history and symbols associated with the St. Joseph Altar from its Sicilian origins to its establishment among Louisiana’s celebrations, then its later embrace by multicultural communities across the United States. She also provides a guide for preparing an altar, complete with recommended timelines and suggestions for physical setup. She offers over sixty carefully selected recipes centered on delectable breads, fish, pasta, and spring vegetables. Pastries receive special attention, with detailed instructions for carving the intricate fig cake designs known as *cuccidati*.

Celebrating with St. Joseph Altars chronicles a cultural tradition that continues to draw families and communities together in a generous spirit of hospitality.

A native New Orleanian of Sicilian heritage, **SANDRA SCALISE JUNEAU** has created cultural exhibits for public display at the Hallmark Card Company in New York, the Louisiana World’s Fair, and the Louisiana Folklife Festival. St. Joseph Altars she designed remain on permanent exhibit at the Southern Food and Beverage Museum and the American Italian Cultural Center in New Orleans. She lives in Madisonville, Louisiana.

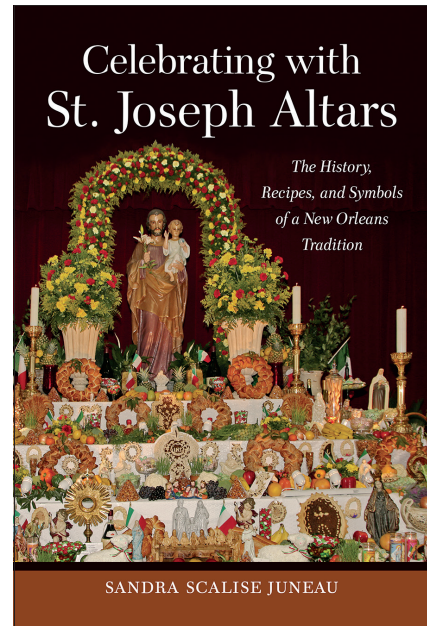
PRAISE FOR *CELEBRATING WITH ST. JOSEPH ALTERS*:

“No one knows more about St. Joseph Altars than Sandra Scalise Juneau—the history, the religious significance, the cultural importance, and, of course, the food.”

— Elizabeth C. Williams, cofounder of the Southern Food and Beverage Museum

“Generations of Sicilian heritage have enriched the culture of New Orleans, and Sandra Scalise Juneau’s book explains the intricacies of these vital traditions, just as she has taught them in my home and at my restaurant.” food.”

— Chef Andrea Apuzzo, owner of Andrea’s Restaurant, Metairie, Louisiana



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