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New Orleans restaurant owner to mentor distressed restaurants in Food Network's 'Kitchen Takeover'

BY SUE STRACHAN | STAFF WRITER JUL 27, 2019 - 7:01 AM

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Isaac Toups and his smoked turkey legs at his restaurant, Toups South, 1504 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.

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(Photo by David Grunfeld The Times-Picayune | The New Orleans Advocate)

Sue Strachan

Sue Strachan writes about art, movies, TV, people, parties, fashion and homes. Contact: sstrachan@theadvocate.com.

Isaac Toups is bringing a kinder, albeit no less serious, attitude to helping failing restaurants on “Kitchen Takeover,” premiering at 10 p.m. Saturday (Aug. 3) on the Food Network.

This is Toups' first season on the show in which a chef goes to a troubled restaurant, possibly one on the brink of closing, then puts it through a food and business boot camp in hopes of making it succeed.



Merry multicultural Christmas New Orleans: Tourtiere, torrijas and pickled herring!

What you won't see: A chef yelling at people in a British accent, like Gordon Ramsey of "Kitchen Nightmares" and multiple other TV shows.

“I want to be more of a mentor,” said Toups in a phone interview.

“A lot of them are in over their heads,” he said. “Some can cook, but have no business sense; others have business sense, but can’t cook. Some have no idea what they are doing.”



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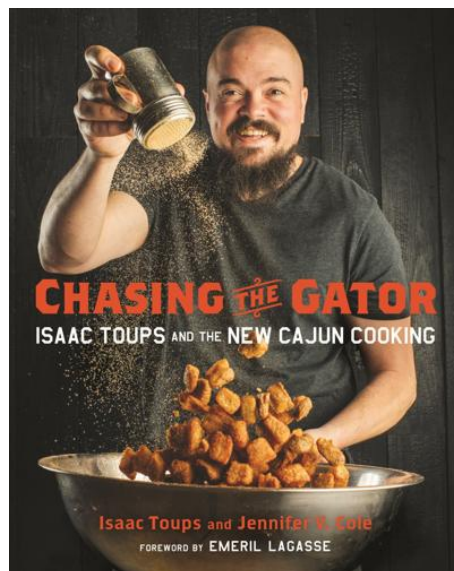
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Toups is well aware of the struggles of owning a restaurant — he owns two in New Orleans, Toups’ Meatery and Toups South — so he brings years of hands-on experience to the show.

“I have been there and seen the failure,” he said, adding that he has worked at restaurants when they shut down.

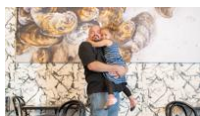
Toups is no stranger to TV and the internet. He has appeared on the Today Show and was on Bravo TV’s “Top Chef,” Season 13. The native of Rayne has also made YouTube videos about how to prepare Cajun food.

Toups' busy year also included publishing a cookbook, "Chasing the Gator — Isaac Toups & the New Cajun Cooking," with co-author Jennifer V. Cole in late 2018. He was nominated in the Best Chef: South category in the 2019 James Beard Awards.



"Chasing the Gator: Isaac Toups and the New Cajun Cooking," by Isaac Toups and Jennifer V. Cole, from Little, Brown & Co.

Contributed image from Little, Brown & Co.



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After the pilot episode of the new show was filmed in Los Angeles, the first half of the season was filmed in the Atlanta area. The inaugural episode on Saturday is "Cajun Crisis," where Toups is sent to help Margarita Momma's Bourbon Street Grille in Fayetteville, Georgia, before it shuts down.

Will the owners take his advice and succeed, or will they ignore it?

Tune in to find out.

SUE STRACHAN WRITES ABOUT ART, ENTERTAINMENT, WEDDINGS, FASHION AND HOMES. CONTACT: SSTRACHAN@THEADVOCATE.COM.

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