

NELA Cultural Scene

LOUISIANA SOUL FOOD & HERITAGE FESTIVAL – WORLD'S FINEST SOUL FOOD

August 3, 2024, Lake Providence, La

The sights and sounds of smooth rhythm and blues music, along with children playing and laughing, reverberated across downtown Lake Providence. The aroma of the world's finest soul food cuisine drifted through the air, as the townspeople gathered. A light breeze rolled off the Mississippi River, bringing some relief from the brilliant August sun. With their booths dressed in vibrant multicolors, the vendors sold their wares as they likely did in the 1830s when the Lake Providence area was settled. Intertwined with artists and soul food chefs, they surrounded the historic East Carroll Parish Courthouse, creating a majestic scene against the blue sky and lush green trees. It was a lovely sight, with people from all walks of life enjoying this beautiful Lake Providence day.

The festival began with an opening prayer. East Carroll Police Jury President Kendall Thompson and Vice President Kofi Darden then gave a heartfelt welcome and thanked the festival team and sponsors. The crowd continued to grow, and the music was flowing. I purchased my first Christmas gift of the season from a young Lake Providence artist named "Amethyst." I spoke to her and her proud mom for a few minutes before enjoying some soul food myself. However, they cooked that sausage, that's the way to cook sausage. I spoke with Deputy Millikin from the East Carroll Parish Sheriff's Office and told him how nice everything was. He said, "There are a lot of good things happening in East Carroll Parish, and they want people to know about it, not just the bad."

There was a big crowd under canopies as Pastor Gerald Scott took the stage. Straight out of the Louisiana Delta, he came downtown with a mission. With a voice only God could have created, he serenaded the audience with "I Love Jesus," "It Will Work Out with Faith," "Have You Been Born Again," and "Thank You Lord," evoking cheers and shouts of glory. It was clear to me he intended to save some souls while entertaining. Next up was Big Show & The Quartet Boys. They quickly immersed the audience in what felt like a full-on gospel extravaganza. With throbbing bass lines and infectious beats, the performance was captivating. The crowd responded with cheers and accolades.

The Louisiana Soul Food & Heritage Festival was a complete success. I will be watching for their next festival. I also want to thank all the sponsors for supporting this community event.

Tom M.