

# ON THE TOWN *New Orleans*



## INSIDER'S LOOK

### Rita Benson LeBlanc

ON MOST fall Sundays, Rita Benson LeBlanc prefers to view New Orleans from a suite at the Superdome, where she watches the Saints, this year's NFL Super Bowl champions, wage football war—naturally, since she's the team's co-owner. But year-round, the thirty-three-year-old LeBlanc likes to experience the city from its wrought-iron balconies. "I have been twirled by dance partners. I have tossed beads. And

I've simply observed in silence," she says. "From the balconies, which you find throughout New Orleans, I get a different view of my city and its people. And apart from those perches, it's a wonderful city to enjoy at your own pace." Here are LeBlanc's favorite places.

**COCKTAILS:** "Though the sign for **Capdeville** [520 Capdeville Street; 504-371-5161; [capdeville.nola.com](http://capdeville.nola.com)] is barely visible on the street, the young NOLA crowd knows to gravitate there for strong cocktails and local pints. It has a speakeasy feel and lots of '70s-retro energy. **Loa Bar**, at the International House Hotel [221 Camp Street; 504-200-6525; [ihhotel.com](http://ihhotel.com)], has a delightful red decor, with banquettes and love seats. It connects to **Rambla** [217 Camp



Street; 504-587-7720], where the tapas are amazing. **Cure** [4905 Freret Street; 504-302-2357; [curenola.com](http://curenola.com)], in the Uptown area, employs mixologists whose concoctions are thoroughly creative."

**RESTAURANTS:** "Chef John Besh's **Domenica** [Roosevelt hotel, 123 Baronne Street; 504-648-6020; [domenicarestaurant.com](http://domenicarestaurant.com)] is where I go for bresaola salad, monkfish and heirloom-tomato soup. In New Orleans, most of the food is heavy, and Domenica has fresher, lighter fare, Italian in feel and flavor. It's becoming something of a power-lunch place as well. **Baru Bistro & Tapas** [3700 Magazine Street; 504-895-2225] is for empanadas and tuna tartare. It's my favorite place to go and relax on the weekends. You can sit inside or outside



**▲ SHOPPING:** "**Hazelnut** [5515 Magazine Street; 504-891-2424; [hazelnutneworleans.com](http://hazelnutneworleans.com)], owned by Mad Men's Bryan Batt [above], has New Orleans-themed toile accessories. **Angelique** and **Victoria's** boutiques [7725 Maple Street; 504-866-1092; [angeliqueboutiques.com](http://angeliqueboutiques.com)] sell funky women's shoes and clothes."

and listen to Caribbean music. **Galatoire's** [209 Bourbon Street; 504-525-2021; [galatoires.com](http://galatoires.com)] remains the institution for Friday fun, for lunch that lasts until dinner. There are certain days when you see all the movers and shakers in New Orleans. And even though **Antoine's** [713 St. Louis Street; 504-581-4422; [antoines.com](http://antoines.com)] is full of memorabilia and photographs from carnival, the new Hermes Bar keeps it charming and fresh."

**GALLERIES:** "My favorite gallery in the Arts District is **Arthur Roger** [432 Julia Street; 504-522-1999; [arthurrogergallery.com](http://arthurrogergallery.com)]. He'll have John Alexander there, and in the back some artists who are young and truly original. He

maintains a really good range of works. **A Gallery for Fine Photography** [241 Chartres Street; 504-568-1313; [agallery.com](http://agallery.com)], in the French Quarter, manages to display the history of photography in one location."

**RETREATS:** "There's something calming, even oasislike, about **Bamboo Apothecary** spa [4112 Magazine Street; 504-895-1664], and the teak and bamboo materials make you feel as if you've left the city behind. Every visit I make to **Longue Vue House and Gardens** [7 Bamboo Road; 504-488-5488; [longuevue.com](http://longuevue.com)], in nearby Metairie—with a Classical Revival-style home built in the 1930s—feels special to me because of its secret garden." J.S.