



Dooky Chase's: The Black-Owned Restaurant That Inspired Disney's Princess And The Frog

In Disney's *The Princess And The Frog*, Tiana's father told the young child "A gift this special just got to be shared," referring to a pot of yummy gumbo she'd made for the family. In the next scene, the film goes on to show that the young girl's special talent was indeed shared as neighbors sat around enjoying her gumbo.

But what if we told you that this special moment of creating community one bowl at a time goes beyond the animated film? Turns out Princess Tiana was inspired by [New Orleans](#) Royalty: Chef Leah Chase.





Chef Chase was born on January 6, 1923, and singlehandedly put [Creole cooking](#) on the map. The Queen of Creole Cuisine's first job in The Crescent City was working as a waitress in the 1940s, during a time when it was rare to see people of color, let alone a woman of color, working in the French Quarter.



"That was a no-no," she told [Oprah Magazine](#) during a 2010 interview. "But I loved it. You see, it was segregation, and I had never seen the inside of a restaurant in my life...I loved waiting on people. I loved seeing people eat. And if you like that, you're going to go further."

She later met Edgar Chase, Jr., a well-known jazz trumpeter who went by the nickname "Dooky" in 1945. A few months later, they married.

Dooky's family already owned a restaurant that served sandwiches and lottery tickets. But it was Chef Chase who reportedly pushed her husband and in-laws to transform the restaurant into a fine dining establishment.

Her convincing worked, and Dooky Chase's [reportedly](#) became the only upscale restaurant in New Orleans where Black Americans could eat.



The Princess and the Frog

For a woman who could bring anyone together with her cooking, it's no wonder why [Disney](#) chose to base its first African American princess on a real-life hero.

She's fed both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama, Hank Aaron, Ernest Gaines, Quincy Jones, James Baldwin, Nat Cole, and the list goes on.





Mrs. Chase died in 2019, but you can still feel her presence in the restaurant. The atmosphere is still welcoming, the walls are full of art from [Black artists](#), and the heir to her throne, Stella Chase Reese, is walking around introducing herself and making sure you're either ready to eat or leaving with a happy and full belly.

When a young Tiana shared her gumbo with her neighbors, one of the last things we know her father says before his untimely death in the film is, "The thing about good food is it brings folks together from all aspects of life."

Dooky Chase's is where you find this kind of magic.

