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THROW ME SOMETHING, MISTER!

Catching More Than Just a Good Time at Mardi Gras

New Orleans, LA – With dozens of parades and thousands of riders taking to the streets throughout metropolitan New Orleans, it's hard to go anywhere during Mardi Gras season without seeing beads hanging from trees, power lines, and rooftops. Mardi Gras “throws”—including beads, cups, doubloons and plastic trinkets—constitute a multi-million dollar industry and many krewe members spend upwards of \$800 each on giveaway items. Revelers have to do little more than raise a hand and shout “Throw me something, mister!” to stuff a bag full of Mardi Gras souvenirs!

According to Mardi Gras expert Arthur Hardy, the tradition of throwing items from floats dates back to at least 1920. In the early days, riders threw handmade glass beads imported from Japan and Czechoslovakia but today's throws are made of plastic and imported from China. Many krewes throw a variety of beads with custom-made pendants bearing the organization's logo or emblem.

Introduced by Rex in 1960, double-sided coins minted with a krewe emblem on one side and the parade theme on the other, are also popular. The coins are starting to lose their appeal with the younger generations but many older New Orleanians cherish doubloon collections from their childhood.

Plastic cups, with a krewe's own logo and artwork, are also popular throws. Other favorites include Frisbees, bobble heads, plastic figurines, swords, hats, and a variety of other trinkets. In recent years, many carnival organizations have distinguished themselves by throwing their own unique items. The king and queen of the Krewe of Carrollton each have their own medallion beads; the Krewe of Chaos has float-specific cups, cards and doubloons; and the Krewe of Muses throws shoe bracelets and light-up strobe beads. The legendary “superkrewe” of Endymion features fiber optic lighted medallion beads, plush elephants and lighted lanyards, while Orpheus throws lighted tambourines, two-inch gold anodized doubloons, and fiber optic lighted hats.

The Zulu coconut or “golden nugget” remains one of the city's most prized catches. As early as 1910, the social aid and pleasure club was giving them in their natural “hairy” state but today's sanded and hand-painted coconuts are the ultimate souvenirs. As decorative items, the coconuts aren't meant to be eaten but those looking to satisfy a sweet tooth at any parade might be lucky enough to catch a Moon Pie, a graham cracker cookie stuffed with a marshmallow center and covered in chocolate. Riders in some krewes also occasionally throw the small, fruit-filled, locally-made Hubig's Pies.

“Throw me something, mister!” is a phrase that always seems to do the trick but visitors that hold up signs stating they are from out of town are guaranteed to stock up on beads, trinkets, cups and wonderful throws.

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