

## GRITS

Last week I talked about hominy, so today's subject is grits. Grits are a porridge made of coarsely ground corn, often ground hominy. It was a traditional Native-American staple, common to the southern United States, and quickly became a staple food in colonial times. They can be served hot or cold, and as the basis for a multitude of dishes, from breakfast to dinner to desserts. You can add butter, cheese, meats, shrimp or even vegetables. Northerners put sugar in their grits, but true Southerners look down on that. You can even fry grits. Pour cooked grits into a pan and let them cool. Then cut the cooled grits into slices and fry them in vegetable oil, butter or bacon grease.

You can find Albers brand quick-cooking grits in the supermarket. I sometimes serve them as part of a weekend breakfast, along with sausage and fried eggs. Cook them according to the package instructions. I often use milk to cook them in, instead of water, and add some hot sauce and grated cheese for extra flavor.

For a wonderful Southern-style grits and shrimp dinner, you'll need 1 cup of grits, 1 pound of peeled and deveined shrimp, 2 cups of shredded sharp Cheddar cheese, six slices of bacon, chopped, 1 cup of thinly sliced green onions, 1 large clove of garlic, peeled and minced, 2 tablespoons of chopped flat-leafed parsley, 4 teaspoons of lemon juice and 3 tablespoons of butter.

Bring four cups of water to the boil, and add a couple of pinches of salt and some freshly ground black pepper. Add the cup of grits to the boiling water in a slow steady stream, stirring constantly. Turn the heat down and cook, partially covered, over low heat, stirring often to prevent the grits from sticking, until they are cooked and thick—about 15 to 20 minutes, or less if you are using the quick-cooking grits. Remove the grits from the heat and stir in 3 tablespoons of butter and 2 cups of grated sharp Cheddar cheese. Set the pan aside while you prepare the shrimp.

Rinse the shrimp and pat them dry. Heat a large frying pan over medium heat and fry the 6 slices of chopped bacon until crispy. Remove the bacon with a slotted spoon and let it drain well on paper towels. Turn the heat up a little bit, and in the bacon grease remaining in the pan, add the shrimp.

Sauté the shrimp for a couple of minutes until they just turn pink, then add the cup of thinly sliced green onions, the clove of minced garlic, the two tablespoons of chopped parsley and the cooked bacon. I like to sprinkle in a little cayenne pepper or Cajun seasoning as well. Sauté this mixture for about three minutes. Spoon the cheesy grits into a serving dish and add the shrimp mixture over the top. This serves four.

One of my favorite weekend breakfasts is a grits, sausage and mushroom mixture. Heat a tablespoon of olive oil in a large frying-pan over medium heat. Add ½ cup of chopped onions and an 8-ounce package of sliced mushrooms. Cook for a few minutes, until the onions and mushrooms start to soften. Add half a pound of turkey sausage links and cook for several minutes, until the sausages start to brown. Add 2 or 3 chopped green onions, a large clove of garlic, peeled and minced, ½ a teaspoon of salt, and ½ teaspoon of Cajun seasoning. If you don't have any Cajun seasoning, add a few shakes of liquid hot pepper seasoning instead.

Add 2 cups of milk and turn the heat up and bring the mixture to the boil. Turn the heat down to medium-low and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring from time to time. Turn the heat back up to medium and add ½ cup of quick-cooking grits. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring often to prevent sticking, until the grits become creamy and tender. Stir in about ¾ of a cup of grated cheddar cheese and stir until the cheese melts and incorporates into the mixture. Serve immediately, accompanied by fried eggs, with some green Tabasco on the side.

Y'all have a good breakfast now, y'hear. This is Steve Muni for the Hometown Kitchen.