

# TABLE TALK AND FOOD FOR THOUGHT: SHRIMP 'N GRITS

By Guest Columnists  
Melanie and Cliff Fortenberry

Few times are food items appreciated as much as during a season of holiday and festivities. This past Christmas season, it was just a "party of three" for the official Christmas breakfast, and Cliff created a pretty spectacular breakfast dish which could be adapted and used for many other different occasions. I recall we had a dish at our daughter's November wedding reception eleven years ago, and it was good. This one was better. Of course, I am just a little partial.



We use yellow grits - a bit harder to find than the white variety, but worth it for the extra flavor. I have found them at smaller or specialty grocery stores.

I like to tear the shrimp in half. You still get a good bite, but it's not too awkward to keep in one's mouth. Otherwise, most ingredients were on hand or readily available.

By the way, leftover grits or polenta taste amazing with either marinara sauce or salsa on the side.

## INGREDIENTS:

- |  |   |                                      |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| 2 pounds Gulf Coast large shrimp           | 4 slices of thick cut bacon   | 1/2 large bell pepper, chopped       |
| Approx. 3 cups yellow grits                | 6 Tblsp of canola oil, olive oil or butter, divided                             | 3-5 Tblsp all-purpose flour          |
| Salt, to taste                             | 1 medium onion, chopped (one cup chopped)                                       | 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes (optional) |
| 2 cups buttermilk or whole milk, divided   | 2 cloves of minced garlic or two-teaspoons garlic in a jar, to taste (optional) | 1 tsp salt                           |
| 16 to 24 oz. shredded sharp cheddar cheese |   | 1/4 cup green onions, chopped        |

## PREPERATION:

- Head, peel and devein the shrimp, reserving the head and shells for stock. Peel and set aside, keeping cold.
- Make shrimp stock. Boil three quarts of water in a large saucepan. Add reserved shells and heads and bring to a boil.
- Reduce heat and simmer for fifteen minutes. Add water to replace that lost by evaporation.
- Strain to remove shells and heads. Set aside. NOTE: Twelve cups of chicken stock may be substituted.
- Set aside two cups of shrimp stock. Bring the remainder of the stock to a boil, then add grits. (For every four cups of stock, add two cups grits.) Stir constantly for the first forty seconds in order to minimize lumps.
- Cover and simmer at lower heat.
- After eight to ten minutes, add one cup buttermilk or whole milk and stir.
- Five minutes before serving, add sixteen to twenty-four ounces shredded sharp cheddar cheese. Stir to incorporate.
- Remove from heat and set aside.
- Fry bacon until crisp. Set aside and reserve bacon "drippings" in a separate bowl. Drain bacon on paper towels.
- Heat oil or butter in clean skillet.
- Sauté chopped bell peppers and set aside.
- Sauté chopped onion for three to five minutes until clear and set aside.
- Heat two tablespoons of oil and two tablespoons of butter.
- Add three to five tablespoons flour. Cook in skillet, stirring constantly. DO NOT BROWN.
- To this cooked flour mixture, add sautéed pepper and onion, red pepper flakes and one teaspoon salt. Stir to incorporate on low heat.
- Add two cups reserved shrimp stock, stirring constantly.
- Add one cup of buttermilk/whole milk, stirring to blend. Add stock or water as needed to make a thin gravy.
- Add reserved raw shrimp, and cook for three to eight minutes until shrimp are done and turn pink.
- Cover skillet and let simmer for three to four minutes.
- Remove from heat, and add green onions for garnish. Plate, serve and eat!

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