

## Shrimp and Grits

Shrimp and grits is one of those comforting homestyle dishes that everyone in Low country has their own special way of making. And when you eat it with fresh-caught shrimp, you'll instantly know why. Ingredients and techniques may vary from place to place and family to family, but everyone agrees it's great for breakfast, lunch, dinner, whatever. Save the shrimp shells to make stock for an extra layer of flavor, you won't be disappointed. The right way to cook grits is also a matter of taste. We like ours creamy, but feel free to stop whenever yours looks done. Top it off with fresh scallions, parsley and a Southern dose of Tabasco.

See Cook's Note for another (very Southern) method for making grits.

### Ingredients

#### stock

1 tablespoon canola oil, or enough to coat pan  
Shells from 1½ pounds of shrimp, rinsed under cold running water  
1 tablespoon tomato paste  
6 cups water  
2 celery ribs, trimmed and cut in half  
1 onion, quartered  
5 black peppercorns  
3 stems fresh flat leaf parsley  
3 sprigs fresh thyme  
1 bay leaf

#### grits

3 cups water  
3 cups milk  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1 cup grits (not instant or quick-cooking)

#### shrimp

1 tablespoon canola oil, or enough to coat pan  
1 ounce pancetta, cut into 1/4-inch cubes  
2 celery ribs, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch slices  
1 large onion, cut into 1/2-inch pieces  
1 bell pepper, stemmed, cored, and cut into 1/2-inch pieces (about 1 cup)  
2 large cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
1/4 cup dry white wine  
3 cups shrimp stock  
2 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves only  
1 teaspoon paprika  
Cayenne pepper  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1½ pounds medium shrimp with shells (31-40 per pound) cleaned, (shells used in stock)

### **garnish**

1/4 cup roughly chopped fresh parsley  
1/4 cup scallions thinly sliced on the bias (about 1½ scallions)  
4 to 6 lemon wedges  
A bottle of vinegared Southern hot sauce, such as Tabasco, optional

### **Directions**

#### **for the stock**

Place a Dutch oven over medium heat and add canola oil. Sauté shrimp shells until they are fragrant, pink, opaque and lightly browned in places, about 10 minutes. Add tomato paste, stirring and spreading it across the bottom of the pan until it browns. This is where you build flavor, so take your time. If it starts to turn burn, pull the pan from heat to cool it down a bit. Once everything has caramelized, add water. Stir, scraping from the bottom, and add celery, onion, peppercorns, parsley, thyme and bay leaf and bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 1 hour. Strain stock into a clean saucepan, pressing on the solids, and bring to a boil over high heat. Continue to boil until stock is reduced to 3 cups, about 25 minutes.

#### **for the grits**

Bring water, milk and 1/4 teaspoon salt to a boil in a large saucepan over high heat and whisk in grits in a stream. While whisking, bring almost to a boil, and then reduce heat to low. Whisk for 2 minutes, then continue cooking at a slow boil, bubbles barely breaking the surface, whisking once in awhile to prevent sticking or scorching. Each time you whisk, use a spatula to scrape down the side of the pot. Simmer for 15 to 20 minutes until the grits are creamy and no longer crunchy. If it's too thick, add a little water. If it's too thin, simmer a little longer. It's a personal choice. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Cover to keep warm while you prepare shrimp.

#### **for the shrimp**

Place oil in 4-quart sauté pan over medium heat. When oil shimmers, add pancetta and brown for a few minutes. Add celery, onion, pepper and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are translucent and edges begin to brown, about 8 minutes. Stir in tomato paste, coat vegetables and brown it on the bottom of the pan. Sprinkle flour, stir and cook until browned, another 2 minutes. Pour wine into pan and stir until most of it cooks off. Add stock and stir in the thyme and paprika, and cayenne and black pepper to taste. Start with a pinch of cayenne and add more a little at a time, tasting as you go. Stir well, scraping the bottom of the pan. Stir the shrimp into the simmering mixture and cook until they were cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes. Then remove the pan from the heat. Stir, taste and add salt, pepper or cayenne as desired.

### **to plate**

Spoon a generous helping of grits into the center of a shallow bowl. Top with the shrimp and some of the gravy. Sprinkle scallions and parsley on top and tuck a wedge of lemon on the side. If you like it spicy, serve with a bottle hot sauce.

### **Cook's Note**

Another way to make the grits is to soak them overnight in 6 cups of water. Rehydrating grits reduces simmer time by a few minutes and helps them absorb liquid more evenly. In the morning, skim off the chaff that floats to the top and bring them to a boil, whisking once or twice so they don't stick to the bottom. Once they reach a vigorous boil, turn heat to low and whisk for 2 minutes to release the starch. Follow the rest of the cooking instructions from there. When they are done, fold in a knob of butter and add salt and pepper to taste.

**total time:** 3 hours, 25 minutes

**active prep:** 2 hours

**serves:** 4 to 6

**difficulty:** *easy*