

GOOD 2 GO



*Like you, I have cherished Bill and Marcia Blackwell's culinary adventures in **The Traveling Fork** over the years. From Bill's Blue Ribbon Texas Cornbread to Marcia's Blueberry Almond Pound Cake, they have given us countless reasons to gather around the table. As the Blackwells hang up their aprons for a well-deserved sabbatical, we are launching **Good 2 Go**. This new column is dedicated to bringing you quick, nutritious meals with a distinct Southern flair...because even when we are short on time, we still deserve honest-to-goodness good food!*



Grits are one of the rare foods that have survived because they are genuinely versatile, deeply nourishing, and, when made well, sublimely delicious. From a pre-Columbian fireside to a white-tablecloth restaurant in Charleston, the basic act of slowly cooking ground corn into a warm, comforting porridge has remained essentially unchanged. They're a living piece of American culinary history. The word "grits" itself likely derives from the Old English 'grytt', meaning coarse meal or bran, though it was the Indigenous preparation that gave the dish its form.

Today we are pairing vibrant, fresh vegetables with quick-seared Gulf shrimp. Baking the grits with eggs and cheese after they are prepared, transforms the dish into a sliceable, protein-rich casserole that reheats beautifully for busy mornings. This recipe comes compliments of Big John, the legendary Shipwright-in-Residence at Red Bay Marina here for years, and a favorite among fellow liveaboards here.

***“The 'Good 2 Go' Fast Fact:** Swapping traditional stone-ground grits for quick-cooking grits cuts your stove-top time down to just 5 minutes! Of course, no one in Green Cove Springs will admit to knowing you. That's why we've included the 'slow cook' variant.*

'NO GRITS, NO GLORY'

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups chicken broth (or water)
- 1 cup quick-cooking grits (*not* instant!)
- 1 1/2 cups sharp grated cheddar cheese
- *1/2 cup chopped jalapeño peppers (adjust for heat; canned Mexican jalapeños run hotter than fresh, cross-pollinated varieties.)
- 2 tbsp olive oil or melted butter
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper

In place of jalapeño, substitute Black-Eyed Peas, Sautéed Greens, Caramelized Onions and Mushrooms, Diced Roasted Butternut Squash or Sweet Potato, **or classic proteins, such as crumbled breakfast sausage, diced ham, or crumbled bacon.*

Continued



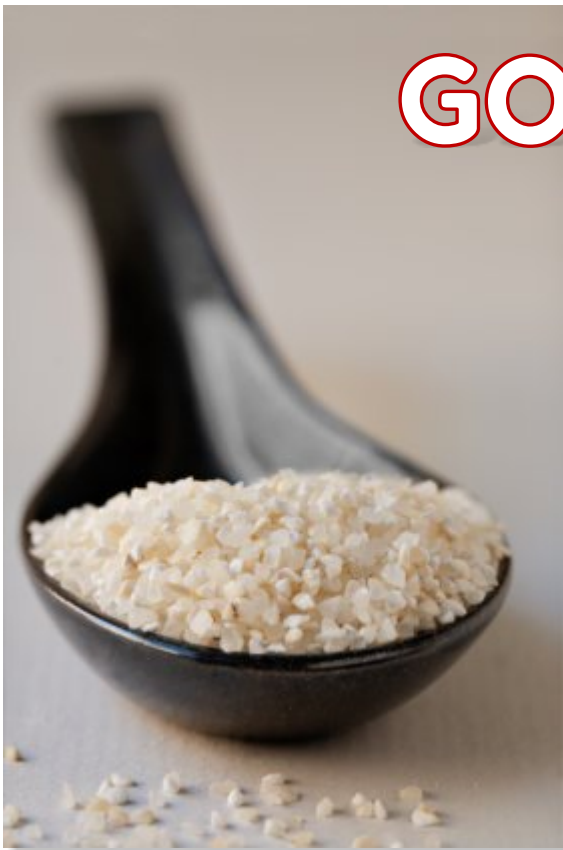
Traditional Grits

DIRECTIONS

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees F. Lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking dish with cooking spray or a little olive oil.

In a large saucepan, bring the chicken broth to a rolling boil over medium-high heat. Slowly whisk in the quick-cooking grits to prevent any lumps from forming. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and let it simmer for about 5 to 7 minutes, stirring occasionally until the grits are thick and have absorbed most of the liquid.

Adjust the Liquid: Increase chicken broth to 5 cups for every 1 cup of 'real' grits.
Increase the Simmer: Bring the broth to a rolling boil and slowly whisk in the stone-ground grits. Cover, simmer, cook for 45 to 60 minutes.
Stir Frequently: Uncover, whisk every 5 to 10 minutes, preventing them sticking to the saucepan & releases the starches that makes them creamy.
Finish and Bake: Once the grits are thick, tender, and have absorbed the liquid, remove from heat. Stir in your cheese, jalapeños, seasonings and eggs exactly as the original recipe states, then proceed to bake the casserole.



Remove the pan from the heat. Quickly stir in the olive oil, salt, black pepper, chopped jalapeños, and one cup of the sharp grated cheddar cheese. Once the cheese is completely melted and the mixture has cooled just slightly, briskly stir in your lightly beaten eggs until everything is perfectly homogenous.

Pour the grits mixture into your prepared baking dish, smoothing the top with a spatula. Sprinkle the remaining half cup of cheddar cheese evenly over the surface. Bake uncovered for 35 to 40 minutes, or until the casserole is set in the middle and the cheese is beautifully golden brown on top. Let it cool for just a few minutes before slicing into warm, comforting squares.



RECIPE, PHOTOS: EDITOR

