

Few dishes capture the soul of coastal Florida quite like Shrimp and Grits, but when you infuse it with the distinct, fruity fire of St. Augustine's native Datil pepper, this Southern staple reaches an entirely new level. Inspired by beachside Minorcan traditions and local award-winning recipes, this version brings together sweet Mayport shrimp, rich cheddar grits, and a tangy, spicy pan sauce.

The 'Good 2 Go' Fast Fact: Pan-toasting dry stone-ground grits in a skillet before adding liquid toasts the natural starches in the corn. This unlocks a fine, roasted flavor note and helps prevent clumping as they simmer. Paired with the Datil pepper, a chili that packs a fiery punch balanced by sweet, citrus-like fruitiness, this dish delivers gourmet flavor in under 30 minutes. **FULL DISCLOSURE:** this hack will have you hooked! The flavor this imparts to this recipe elevates grits to an entirely new place, and will find its way into all your recipes!

DATIL SHRIMP & GRITS!

Ingredients

For the Pan-Toasted Cheese Grits:

- 1 cup stone-ground corn grits
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 2 cups milk (whole or 1%)
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- ½ cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter

For the Datil Pepper Shrimp & Sauce:

- 1 pound large fresh Mayport shrimp, peeled & deveined
- 1 to 2 tsp Datil pepper sauce (to taste)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter (or 1 tbsp butter + 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil)
- 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp fresh chopped parsley garnish

Continued





Preparation

Pan-Toast the Grits (The Game-Changer Step):

Place a dry skillet over medium heat. Add the 1 cup of dry stone-ground grits. Toast, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon or spatula, for 3 to 4 minutes until the grits smell *lightly* fragrant; **don't expect a big browning effect!** It's very subtle! Again, keep them stirring, and remove from heat immediately so they do not scorch!

Simmer to Creamy Perfection:

In a medium saucepan, bring the broth, milk, and salt to a gentle simmer over medium-high heat. Slowly whisk in the pan-toasted grits in a steady stream to prevent lumps. Reduce heat to low, cover, and cook for 15 to 20 minutes (stirring occasionally) until thick, creamy, and tender. Remove from heat and fold in the shredded sharp cheddar cheese and 1 tablespoon of butter until melted and smooth.

Sauté the Garlic (Yes, that's a thing!):

With one careful eye on the grits as they simmer, melt the remaining butter (or butter and olive oil mix) in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the minced garlic and sauté for about 1 minute until fragrant and lightly golden.

The Datil Kick & Shrimp Sear:

Add the peeled shrimp to the skillet in a single layer. Turn once, then pour in the fresh lemon juice and Datil pepper sauce. Cook for just 2 to 3 minutes, tossing gently, until the shrimp turn opaque and pink and are thoroughly coated in the glossy, spicy pan sauce.

Assemble & Serve:

Spoon generous portions of hot, creamy pan-toasted cheese grits into shallow bowls. Top generously with the spicy Datil shrimp and spoon the warm garlic-lemon pan sauce over the top. Garnish with freshly chopped parsley and serve immediately!

- **Add Green Crunch:** Toss a handful of fresh baby spinach, diced green bell peppers, or sliced green onions into the skillet during the last minute of sautéing the shrimp for extra color and nutrient power.
- **Extra Tang:** Keep a bottle of local St. Augustine Datil pepper vinegar at the table for a splash of bright acidity right before digging in.

RECIPE, PHOTOS: EDITOR



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