

## Shrimp and Grits

**Time:** 40 minutes active, plus one hour to reduce the stock (not counting grits time)

The renaissance of regional Southern fare some two decades ago conspired to land shrimp and grits on every menu from Charleston to Savannah—and on menus in cities where no shrimp ever jumped or spawned. Shrimp and grits is an ethereal dish, guileless and profoundly comforting. You need nothing more than sweet dayboat shrimp (with their shells to make shrimp stock or butter), real country ham or smoked bacon, minced onion or shallots, a knob of butter, and a pot of hot grits to make a memorable dish. *Right*. But collecting these ingredients is not always easy (even if you happen to live on a tidal creek). As a result, shrimp and grits recipes wind up reading like punch lists of random, out-of-place ingredients. Diced tomatoes and heavy cream, for instance, are smooth interlopers, but interlopers nevertheless. Frankly wrong are ingredients like sweet peppers and sausage—save them for the jambalaya. You can, indeed, make an acceptable dish of shrimp and grits with frozen shrimp, but all the other ingredients need to be pristine.

## Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe you will need a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan; a fine, conical strainer; a small (1-quart) saucepan; a large nonstick skillet; a set of tongs; and a whisk.

## Ingredients

- 1 pound medium-sized, shell-on shrimp
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, small dice
- 1 small stalk celery, small dice
- 2 large garlic cloves, sliced
- 4 cups spring or filtered water
- 1 teaspoon tomato paste
- 3 full sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 Turkish bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon whole, cracked black peppercorns
- 1 strip lemon peel
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 2 ounces thick smoked bacon or real country ham, minced (3 tablespoons)
- 2 large shallots, minced (1/4 cup)
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt

# Anson Mills

1922-C Gervais Street • Columbia, South Carolina 29201 • tel. (803) 467-4122 • sales@ansonmills.com

---

1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 scallion, white and green part, thinly sliced

1 recipe hot, freshly prepared Anson Mills Antebellum Coarse or Carolina Quick Grits

## Directions

**1.** Peel and devein the shrimp, reserving the shells. Dry the shrimp between layers of paper towels and refrigerate until ready to use. Heat the olive oil in a medium-sized, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat. Add the shrimp shells, onion, celery, and garlic and sauté until the shells are crisp and the aromatics tender, 10 minutes. Add the water, tomato paste, thyme, bay, peppercorns, and lemon peel. Cover and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat and simmer, partially covered, until the stock is flavorful and reduced, about 1 hour. Strain the stock into a small saucepan (there should be about 1 1/2 cups), and keep hot.

**2.** While the stock is cooking, mash the butter and flour into a smooth paste in a small bowl and set aside.

**3.** Sauté the bacon or ham in a large, nonstick skillet over medium-low heat until crisp, 8 to 10 minutes. Move it to the periphery of the skillet and increase the heat to medium. Arrange the shrimp in a single layer and sear until pink. Sprinkle the shallots over the shrimp, toss, and cook until the shrimp is done, about one minute. Add salt, red pepper flakes, and black pepper. Using tongs, transfer the shrimp to a warm plate. Add the hot stock to the skillet and bring to a boil over high heat. Whisk in the reserved butter and flour mixture. Cook until thickened, about 20 seconds. Return the shrimp to the pan and taste sauce for seasoning.

**4.** To serve, spoon the hot grits into shallow bowls. Top with shrimp and sauce. Sprinkle with chopped scallions.

**Serves 4 to 6**