

Carolina Gold Rice Grits

Time: 20 minutes on the stovetop or in an electric rice cooker

More plump and round than the term "grits" suggests, rice grits cook beautifully in an electric rice cooker, finishing like a million little beads with a magnetic attraction to each other. They are made to be sauced. Freshly cooked and plain, rice grits become profoundly comforting with a ladle or two of Sea Island red pea gravy thrown over them. Cooled slightly, sautéed with aromatics, and served with chicken and gravy, they approach a transforming experience.

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe you will need a 5 1/2-cup electric rice cooker or a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan.

Ingredients

1 cup (7 ounces) Carolina Gold Rice Grits

3/4 teaspoon fine sea salt

1 teaspoon butter or oil (for saucepan cookery)

2 cups spring or filtered water

Directions

Place the rice grits, salt, and water in a 5 1/2-cup electric rice cooker. Stir, cover, and flip the rice cooker to the on position. When the light goes off, remove the lid and let the rice cool, undisturbed, for 10 minutes. If you are using a medium saucepan, bring the rice grits, salt, butter, and water to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Cover the pan and reduce the heat to the lowest possible setting. Cook for 20 minutes without stirring or lifting the lid. Remove the saucepan from the heat, lift the lid, and let the rice cool for 10 minutes.

Makes 4 cups, serving 4 to 5

Carolina Gold Rice Grits with Shallots and Celery

Pure simplicity: these aromatics, this rice. The recipe makes about a generous amount on the assumption that leftovers will be welcome. Should you be working with plain rice grits from an earlier meal and have less than 4 cups, break the recipe down accordingly.

Charlestonians were so besotted with Carolina Gold rice that they came to savor its single flaw over its many virtues: the grains fractured like mad in the field and the mill as well. The particular protein and starch profile of Carolina Gold yielded rice of such delicacy that the best colonial hand-pounders (slaves who hulled and polished rice grains) managed to come up with only about 70% whole grains. These were saved for export. The remaining "brokens," also called middlins, round and rolling on the tongue, became the preference across the local population because they accepted flavors with more enthusiasm than whole grains.

Today's advanced milling equipment has yet to surpass the yields achieved by African hand-pounders, and rice aficionados in and around Charleston—who remain legion—are loyal to broken rice and the dishes associated with it to this day. Only the name has changed: middlins are called rice grits these days.

Cooking Remarks

Rice grits will cook sticky and remain sticky if undisturbed by spoon or spatula. But they release into pearly separate grains when they are tossed

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe you will need a large skillet (nonstick works nicely) and a wooden spoon.

Working Ahead

You may cook the rice grits well ahead of the finishing work. Even if the grains are attached to each other, they'll bounce apart when sautéed.

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons (1 1/2 ounces) unsalted butter
- 2 small Turkish bay leaves, broken
- 2 or 3 tablespoons minced shallots
- 2 ribs celery, inner ribs preferred, medium dice (2/3 cup)
- 1 recipe Carolina Gold Rice Grits, cooled slightly or cool
- Fine sea salt to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Directions

Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat until it foams. Add the bay leaves, shallots, and celery and sauté, stirring with a wooden spoon, until the shallots are translucent and the celery tender, about 5 minutes. Add the rice grits, breaking them up with a spoon if they clump, and stir until the grains are coated with butter. Season with salt and pepper. Continue to stir the rice until it is hot and the flavors have melded, a few minutes more.

Serves 8

in a pan with butter and aromatics.