

*NALWO presents
a Cooking Demonstration*

Cooking of the American South

*Chez Leon
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10:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.*

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Grits

Grits are broken grains of corn, first produced by Native Americans centuries ago. There are both “corn” grits, and “hominy” grits, and the “grits” most often seen now on Southern menus are hominy grits. Hominy is field corn that is soaked in lye water then dried (the same sort of processing as for the corn in Mexican masa). This makes the grains swell up, and increases their nutritive value.

The most common grits you can buy and prepare are “quick” grits, which are not the same as “instant” grits. Quick grits (which have a preferable texture to the instant variety) need to be cooked in water for about 5 minutes (as compared to the 20 minutes for “regular” grits). Proportions are on the package, but generally you use 1/4 cup grits to 3/4 water for one serving. You can adjust this proportion if you like your grits thicker or thinner. Grits need a dash of salt in the water to taste best.

To cook quick grits on top of the stove:

In a heavy saucepan, slowly stir grits and salt into briskly boiling water. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover. Cook 5 to 7 minutes or until thickened, stirring occasionally (they can stick if they get too stiff).

To cook quick grits in a microwave oven:

Combine water, grits and salt in 2 cup microwavable bowl; stir. Microwave at HIGH 3 to 4 minutes or until thickened when stirred.

Grits are usually served with (lots of) margarine or butter melted on top, with salt and pepper to taste (and sometimes – if you have my tastes -- with Tabasco sauce and grated cheese) or with sausage gravy and eggs on the side; they can also be eaten as a hot cereal with milk and sugar.

Grits casserole

This is one of many variants of a casserole of grits flavored with cheese, and is a very popular Southern dish for potluck meals.

Ingredients:

2 cups water
2/3 cup uncooked quick grits
2 tablespoons butter
2 cloves fresh garlic (or 1 teaspoon garlic powder)
1 1/2 cups shredded cheese (cheddar is the most usual)
1 cup milk
4 eggs
1 teaspoon salt
freshly ground pepper

Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Cook the grits in the water as directed above, on stovetop or microwave. Add the butter and let cool slightly. Squeeze the garlic through a press and add. Beat the milk with the eggs and stir into the grits, along with the cheese, salt and pepper. Turn into a greased casserole dish or rectangular glass pan. Bake for about an hour until no longer liquid and puffed in the middle.

--- Mady Newfield

Southern-style Cornbread

In contrast to other cornbread, this type does not contain any wheat flour or any sweetener. It more like polenta or cornmeal mush. The following recipe is how my daughter's in-laws make it. It is traditionally made with bacon drippings, and perhaps tastes best that way, but it is also very good if made with oil.

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups cornmeal (N.B. Do not use the self-rising type. It can be yellow or white)

boiling water (about 1 cup)

1/2 tsp salt

1 heaping teaspoon baking powder

1 egg

3 tablespoons bacon drippings, or shortening, or butter, or even olive oil

milk – about 1 cup

Preheat the oven to 350°F. If baking the cornbread in a black iron skillet, preheat it in the warm oven for a few minutes.

Place the cornmeal in a bowl and add enough boiling water to moisten it. It should be moist but not runny. Let cool slightly. Add salt, baking powder, bacon drippings or other fat. Mix the egg with the milk and stir in well, adding more milk if needed. Oil or grease the hot skillet (or use the one you cooked the bacon in!), or grease a cake pan. Pour the batter into the pan. Bake for 25-30 minutes until solid and starting to brown on top.

---- Mady Newfield

Spoonbread

Recipe is from "Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine" by Norma Jean and Carole Darden.

Makes 8 servings.

Ingredients:

1 cup yellow cornmeal

2 cups boiling water

3 tablespoons butter

1 teaspoon salt

3 large eggs, well beaten

1 cup milk

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 375° F. Slowly add cornmeal to the boiling water, stirring constantly until thick and smooth. Add butter and salt and cool to lukewarm. Then add eggs and milk. Beat for 2 minutes. Pour into a greased casserole dish and bake for 35 minutes or until golden brown. Spoon out while piping hot and pass more butter.

--- Mady Newfield

Southern-Style Buttermilk Biscuits

Makes 10 to 12 biscuits, depending on size.

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 cup (= 4 tablespoons or 1/2 stick) margarine, lard, or vegetable shortening, chilled

7/8 cup buttermilk

1 to 2 tablespoons butter, melted

Preparation:

Pre-heat oven to 450°F. Adjust oven rack to center position.

In a large bowl, combine flour, baking powder, soda, and salt. Cut in chilled fat until you have pieces the size of small peas. With a wooden spoon or large fork, gently blend dry ingredients into the buttermilk, just until mixture is clumping together. If necessary, add a few more teaspoons of buttermilk.

If you prefer to use a food processor, place dry ingredients in the food processor bowl fitted with the steel blade. Process until the fat is well dispersed. Pour in buttermilk and pulse to process briefly, just barely until the dough comes together. . If necessary, add a few more teaspoons of buttermilk. Do not overprocess!

Transfer dough to a lightly floured board. Pat out in a circle about 8 inches in diameter and 1/2-inch thick. Using a 2 1/2 to 3-inch biscuit cutter, cut out and place on an ungreased baking sheet. Brush tops with melted butter. Bake on center oven rack for about 10 to 12 minutes, until tops are browned.

--- Mady Newfield

Sausage Gravy

Serve this Southern-style gravy over hot split buttermilk biscuits. Biscuits with gravy are a traditional breakfast, served along with eggs, grits, and fresh or spiced fruit.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Ingredients:

8 ounces bulk pork breakfast sausage
2 tablespoons oil, butter, margarine, shortening, or lard
3 tablespoons flour
1 1/2 to 1 3/4 cups milk
salt and pepper, to taste
dash cayenne pepper, optional

Preparation:

Cook sausage in a medium skillet over medium-low heat, stirring and breaking up with a spatula. With a slotted spoon, remove the browned crumbled sausage to a paper towel-lined plate. Add 2 tablespoons oil or fat to the drippings in the skillet. Add flour, stirring until blended and bubbling. Gradually add 1 1/2 cups milk (which may be preheated in the microwave, if desired) ; continue stirring and cooking until thickened and bubbly. Add the crumbled sausage. If too thick, add a little more milk. Taste and add salt and pepper. Stir in a dash of cayenne pepper, if desired. Serve over hot biscuits, split in half.

--- Mady Newfield

Black-Eyed Peas

As prepared by my daughter's Tennessee in-laws, the Bowmans.

Preparation:

Wash and soak dry black-eyed peas overnight in plenty of water. Or place peas in a pot with water, bring to a full boil then let soak for 1 -2 hours. Drain the soaked beans. Put in a large pot and cover with water. If desired, add ham bones, a ham hock, pieces of ham, or a chunk of bacon. Bring to a boil and simmer till peas are tender -- 1 to 2 hours. These can also be cooked faster in a pressure cooker. Add salt after cooking, and if desired, season further with black or red pepper, a little dried thyme. Serve in bowl with some juice, with cornbread alongside.

Garnish with: ketchup

sweet pickle relish

chopped onions

(and our own Newfield addition to the Bowman tradition: prepared horseradish).

Mississippi Caviar

Recipe is from "Nathalie Dupree's Southern Memories" cookbook.

Serves 10 to 12.

Ingredients:

3 16-ounce cans black-eyed peas, drained

1/2 cup finely chopped green bell pepper

1/2 cup finely chopped red bell pepper

3/4 cup finely chopped hot peppers

3/4 cup finely chopped onion

1/4 cup drained and finely chopped pimiento

1 garlic clove, chopped

1/3 cup red wine vinegar

2/3 cup olive oil

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

Salt

Tabasco sauce

Tortilla chips

Preparation:

In a large mixing bowl, combine the peas, bell peppers, hot peppers, onion, pimiento, and garlic. In a separate bowl, whisk together the vinegar, oil, and mustard and pour over the bean mixture; mix well. Season to taste with salt and Tabasco. With a wooden spoon or potato masher, mash the bean mixture slightly. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Drain the caviar well and serve with tortilla chips. This can be refrigerated for 4 to 5 days and can easily be doubled for large parties.

--- Mady Newfield

Smothered Chicken

Makes 6 servings.

Ingredients:

1 chicken or several legs/breasts, split
2/3 cup sifted all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) butter
2 medium size-onions, sliced
2 1/2 cups water

Preparation:

- 1) Shake chicken parts in a paper bag to coat evenly with mixture of 1/3 cup flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt.
- 2) Brown chicken pieces in butter in a large frying pan; place in a single layer in a roasting pan or glass oven dish.
- 3) Saute onion until soft in drippings in frying pan; stir in 1 1/2 cups of water and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly, then pour over chicken and cover with foil.
- 4) Bake in moderate oven (350°) 1 hour or until chicken is tender. Remove to serving dish and keep warm while making gravy.
- 5) Blend remaining 1/3 cup flour and 1 cup water until smooth. Heat liquid in roasting pan to boiling; slowly stir in flour mixture. Cook, stirring constantly, until gravy thickens and boils 1 minute. Spoon over chicken.

--- Rose Moore

Country Captain Chicken

Makes 8 servings.

Ingredients:

2 chickens (about 3 pounds each)
1/4 cup unsifted flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 large onion, chopped
1 large green pepper, halved, seeded, and chopped
1 large clove of garlic, crushed
1 tablespoon curry powder
1 can (1 pound) tomatoes
1/2 cup raisins

Preparation:

- 1) Cut chicken into serving-size pieces
- 2) Combine flour with salt/pepper in a plastic bag. Shake chicken, a few pieces at a time, in flour mixture to coat.
- 3) Brown chicken in oil in a heavy pan or Dutch oven. Keep warm.
- 4) Add onion, green pepper, garlic, and curry powder to drippings remaining in pan; saute until soft. Add tomatoes (breaking up with a spoon), raisins, and reserved chicken and cover. Simmer 1 hour or until chicken is tender. Arrange chicken on serving platter, over rice or potatoes if desired. Spoon sauce over top.

--- Rose Moore

Sausage and Red Bean Stew

Ingredients:

- 1 large can of red or white beans
- 1 thick (1/2") slice of cooked ham-cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 large bay leaf
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon Tabasco
- Salt and pepper
- 1 lb. lean smoked sausage, cut into slices 1/2" thick
- 1 can broth (chicken or beef)
- Chopped green onions, including the tender green parts, for garnish

Preparation:

- 1) Drain and rinse beans and add to chopped ham.
- 2) Place onion, celery, garlic, bay leaf, thyme, Tabasco in cooking pot with broth and simmer until vegetables are tender.
- 3) Add ham and beans to cooking pot. Saute sausage until brown (about 2 minutes per side) in separate pan.
- 4) Combine all ingredients in cooking pot and heat to serving temperature and place in serving dish.
- 5) Sprinkle green onions over serving dish.

--- Rose Moore

Southern-style greens

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Ingredients:

1 ham hock or other ham bone with meat, or a chunk of bacon
2 to 3 pounds mustard greens, turnip greens, collard greens or kale or a mixture of these
1 hot red pepper
Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation:

Wash the greens well by submerging them in several changes of water. Use scissors or a knife to cut out the central stem. If possible, blanch the leaves by pouring boiling water over them and draining them. Then cut them into strips about 1" wide. Put these into a large pot, along with the ham hock, the whole hot pepper pod, and just enough water to cover the greens. Let these simmer, covered, for an hour or more, making sure they do not cook too dry. If there is too much liquid, uncover and let the liquid reduce before serving. If you are using good enough meat, remove the meat, pull the good pieces of meat off the bone, cut them up and return them to the pot.

Serve the greens with a slotted spoon, but pass cornbread to soak up the juice, which is sometimes known as "pot likker" and is very full of vitamins.

Seven-Layer Salad

Makes 8 servings.

Family recipes for this vary. You can substitute chopped cucumber, sliced or chopped green bell pepper, or sliced celery, for the tomatoes or mushrooms. Chopped hard boiled eggs may also be added.

Ingredients:

6 cups shredded lettuce
2 cups chopped tomatoes
2 cups mushrooms, sliced
10 ounces frozen peas, thawed and drained
4 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
1 cup red onion, sliced into rings
1 to 2 cups mayonnaise (enough to cover top, amount may depend on shape of bowl)
2 slices bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled (optional)

Preparation:

Layer lettuce, tomatoes, mushrooms, peas, cheese and onions in 2-quart serving bowl. Spread dressing over onions, sealing to edge of bowl; cover. Refrigerate several hours or overnight. Do not toss. Garnish with crisply cooked bacon slices, crumbled, and/or additional cheddar cheese, if desired.

--- Mady Newfield

Lima Beans and Tomatoes

This is something my husband remembers fondly from his childhood. It's best made with fresh vegetables, he notes, but still good in this version.

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

1 one pound bag frozen baby lima beans
1 large or 2 small onions, chopped
1 tablespoon bacon grease, butter, or olive oil
1 large can whole peeled tomatoes, roughly chopped
1 teaspoon sugar
Salt and pepper to taste
Herbs if desired (though they are not traditional)

Preparation:

Fry the chopped onion in the fat until it is golden. Add the beans and the chopped tomatoes with all their juice. Let this stew for 45 minutes or longer. (Add herbs if desired – a sprig of rosemary works well.) Season to taste with salt and pepper.

--- Mady Newfield

Melba's Slow-roasted Tomatoes

Southerners enjoy tomatoes in many ways. My son-in-law's aunt, a talented artist who lives in North Carolina, served us these with grits and eggs for a wonderful breakfast. They are a great way to enliven tasteless off-season tomatoes.

Ingredients:

Plum tomatoes, preferably smallish ones
Olive oil
Salt

Preparation:

Wash the tomatoes and cut them in half vertically. Lay them skin down in a flat glass casserole pan smeared with a little olive oil. Drizzle a little more olive oil over the top of the tomatoes and sprinkle with salt. Roast them in a low oven – between 250 and 300 degrees. When they begin to brown a little (after a couple of hours), turn them over and roast another hour or two longer, loosening them with a spatula if they seem to be sticking. The slower you roast them the more they become like sun-dried tomatoes, and the more concentrated their flavor and sweetness. However they are also fine if cooked less time at a slightly higher temperature.

Refrigerate any that are left to have a tasty side dish/condiment on hand.

---- Mady Newfield

Squash Casserole

This is a Thanksgiving tradition with our in-laws the Bowmans. It is made with yellow “summer” squash – the long yellow version of zucchini, sometimes with a crook-neck, sometimes straight. Do not use “winter” squash, such as butternut.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Ingredients:

2 pounds yellow squash, cut in 3/4-inch cubes

1 large yellow onion, chopped

salt and pepper to taste

water

1 bag saltine crackers, crumbled before opening the package

1 egg, beaten

2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Preparation:

Place the squash, onion, salt, and pepper in a large saucepan. Add water to barely cover. Cover and cook the squash until tender, stirring occasionally. Drain the squash and onions slightly, retaining some liquid. Mash the vegetables up – you can use a food processor for this, but don’t over process. Taste and adjust seasonings.

Stir in the beaten egg, the crumbled crackers and 1 cup of the shredded cheese. Butter a 1 1/2-quart baking dish well and turn the mixture into the buttered casserole. Spread the rest of the cheese on top. Bake at 350°, uncovered, for 20 minutes, until the cheese is melted and the squash casserole is bubbly. Serve hot.

Although not traditional for the Bowmans, some versions of this recipe also suggest a topping of 1/2 cup pecans, finely chopped, or buttered bread crumbs.

--- Mady Newfield

Coca Cola Cake

Recipe is from “Nathalie Dupree’s Southern Memories” cookbook. Coca-Cola is a very popular drink that originated in the south. I’ve known several Southern friends who drank Coke for breakfast each day instead of coffee to get their morning kick.

Ingredients:

Cake:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter
- 1 cup Coca-Cola
- 1 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 ½ cups miniature marshmallows

Frosting:

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
- 3 tablespoons coca powder
- 6 tablespoons Coca-Cola
- 1 1-pound box confectioners’ sugar, sifted
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter a 9 X 11 inch oblong pan.

Sift the flour and sugar together into a large mixing bowl. Combine the butter, Coke, cocoa and buttermilk in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Pour the Coke mixture over the flour mixture; add the baking soda, eggs, vanilla and marshmallows and mix well.

Pour the batter into the buttered pan and bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 45 minutes. Let the cake cool for 10 minutes or so.

To make the frosting, combine the butter, cocoa, and Coke in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from the heat, and fold in the sugar, pecans and vanilla. Spread the frosting on the still warm cake.

Note: for more servings, the cake can be baked in a 9 x 13 inch sheet cake pan, decreasing the baking time by 10 to 12 minutes. However, you will need to increase your frosting by at least half to compensate for the extra surface.

Pecan Pie

This recipe is from “Nathalie Dupree’s Southern Memories” cookbook. The orange flavoring here is only one of a number of options. Pecan pie can be flavored with bourbon, or dark rum (1 to 2 tablespoons), and sometimes has chocolate added.

Makes 8 servings.

Ingredients:

4 eggs
2/3 cup brown sugar, packed
3 tablespoons butter, melted
3/4 cup dark corn syrup
grated peel of 1 orange (no white attached)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 cups pecan halves, chopped
1 1/2 cups pecan halves, left whole
1 unbaked pie crust

Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 325°F. In a large bowl, combine the eggs, brown sugar, butter, corn syrup, orange peel, vanilla, and salt. Whisk together by hand. Stir in the chopped pecans. Pour into the unbaked piecrust. Neatly arrange the perfect pecan halves in spirals or in rows over the top of the filling. Bake until the filling is set and the pastry is nicely browned, 45 to 50 minutes. Serve slightly warm or at room temperature. Note: This pie freezes well.

Benne Seed Wafers

Recipe is from “Nathalie Dupree’s Southern Memories” cookbook. These are a tradition in Savannah, Georgia, where they are baked by Girl Scouts in the ancestral home of Juliette Gordon Low, the founder of the Girl Scouts. Benne is the African word for sesame seeds.

Makes 3 dozen.

6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) butter, at room temperature
3/4 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
1 egg
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/4 cup toasted benne seeds
1/8 teaspoon baking powder

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

Beat together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the egg and vanilla and beat to combine. Add the flour, benne seeds, and baking powder and mix thoroughly. Line a pan with wax paper, parchment paper, or foil, and drop or pipe the cookie dough onto the paper by 1/2 teaspoons, spacing them 2 inches apart. Bake 10 to 15 minutes. Cool on a rack until the cookies release from the paper. Store in a tightly sealed tin or freeze.