



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Shrimp and Grits

Building a healthy eating pattern is about eating a variety of nutrient-dense foods, plain and simple. Although some of us have been conditioned to eat certain foods for breakfast while others are more acceptable for dinner, this doesn't need to be the case! For example, there is nothing wrong with having a leafy green salad topped with a lean protein and dried unsweetened fruit for breakfast. Nor is there anything that says that you can't have eggs, or a bowl of oatmeal for dinner. The key is to aim to build most meals with high-quality, nutrient-dense items. Notice, the word "most." This means that every item in a meal doesn't have to be perfect nutritionally.

This can't be stressed enough. Cooking more meals at home, is a key strategy to improve the nutritional quality of the diet, where you are in control of what items you use in your meals and the nutritional quality of the ingredients. However, if aiming for perfection results in meals being bland, boring, and dreaded, then your overall quality of life and well-being may be decreased. Optimal health is more than just the quality of the diet. It is mind, body, and spirit. If your meals are not enjoyable, fitting your family's or your taste preferences, chances are increasing the frequency of meals cooked at home won't be maintained.

A great rule of thumb is to look at family favorites and make substitutions to decrease the saturated fat, and reduce the level of sodium and calories. Another strategy is to still serve your family favorite item (just in a smaller quantity) as part of the meal, but serve other items that are high in nutrition quality to help balance the meal. Good nutrition or healthy meals do not have to be an all or nothing effort. You have to balance taste preferences, time, and budget. In other words, you have to balance mind, body and spirit. Even if meals that you prepare at home aren't perfect nutritionally, chances are they are still of higher quality than most of your runs to a fast food drive-thru or dial-up for pizza delivery!

If adopting a healthier diet is a new goal to you and your family, the key is to ease into it with changes over time. For example, during the first week, aim to not eat out and cook your meals at home. During the second week, consider increasing the amount of vegetables and fruits at meals while reducing the not so healthy entrée. Once you are in the groove, consider trying new recipes from healthy recipe sources, such as our dietitian approved recipes. Finally, change things up and know that it is okay to eat salad for breakfast and eggs for dinner!

This recipe features a Southern favorite served in the finest establishments, as well as by Moms and Grandmas! It is considered a great comfort food, but is typically loaded in fat, sodium and calories. Give this one a try. It likely won't be as good as Gram's or as decadent as from a classy restaurant. However, you might be surprised by how good it is, even with less fat, sodium, and calories. Serve it alongside a large leafy green salad! This is just an example of one small change to get you on your path to a healthier diet.



Ingredients: 4 servings

- 1 lb. medium raw shrimp, peeled, deveined, and tails and head removed
- 2 tsp. garlic/pepper spice blend
- 2 tsp. hot sauce
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- Pinch of salt
- 2 cups quick grits (see note)
- 1 cup evaporated milk
- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/3 cup cheese
- 4 eggs
- 2 slices of precooked bacon (optional)

Directions: (Preheat oven to 400 degrees F)

1. Place the shrimp, spice blend, hot sauce, and olive oil in a large mixing bowl. Toss to coat the shrimp and set aside.
2. In a large sauce pan, bring the water and evaporated milk to a boil over medium-high heat. Stir constantly to prevent the milk from burning, being sure the spoon touches the bottom of the pan when stirring. Slowly stir in the grits and garlic powder. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook for 3 minutes covered. Lift lid to stir occasionally. Quickly pour the cheese on the top of the grits, cover and cook for an additional 1-2 minutes or until the grits are thickened and the cheese is melted. Remove from heat and keep covered to keep the grits warm.
3. Spread the shrimp in a single layer on a baking sheet lined with aluminum foil. Roast the shrimp for 5 to 6 minutes, until just pink and cooked through. Remove from the oven.
4. While the shrimp is cooking, heat a large skillet to medium-high heat. Spray lightly with cooking spray, crack 4 eggs in the pan like you are preparing to fry the eggs. Add 1/4 cup of water and cover. Turn the heat down to medium. Cook for 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat.
5. Serve the grits by evenly distributing between 4 bowls. Top each bowl with an even portion of shrimp, and then gently place one egg on top of the shrimp. If using the bacon, break into small pieces and evenly distribute between the four bowls by sprinkling the pieces on top of the egg. Serve a large green leafy salad with a variety of colorful vegetables and a light dressing on the side to round out the meal.

Notes:

If using regular grits, add an additional 1/4 cup of liquid (either evaporated milk or water) and increase the cooking time to 15-20 minutes.

Tips

- Consider sautéing a handful of diced bell peppers and onions and mixing them into the grits.
- Rather than using water, consider low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.

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