

## **Asheville Seafood Restaurant Serves Up a Southern Classic – Shrimp and Grits**

Fisherman's Quarters II is one of Asheville, North Carolina's most popular places for seafood. Owner George Baxevanis serves up southern, calabash style seafood that keeps people coming back for more. Fisherman's Quarters II serves more than 100 pounds of popcorn shrimp everyday but they also serve broiled shrimp, shrimp cocktail and Baxevanis' personal favorite, shrimp and grits.

"I can't think of a dish that captures the essence of calabash cooking more than shrimp and grits," explains Baxevanis.

### **Shrimp, Grits and Southern History**

Colonists were first introduced to corn by the Native Americans. An important staple food, the Native Americans taught the colonists to thresh corn grind into meal and boil it. Records of the 1584 reconnaissance party sent by Sir Walter Raleigh to what is now Roanoke Island, NC report that colonists were served boiled corn or hominy by the natives.

The preparation of shrimp and grits is believed to have originated in Charleston, SC. Most communities in South Carolina, and throughout the south, had a grist mill for hominy production. Stone ground grits have since become a symbol of southern cooking. In 1976, South Carolina made its love of grits official by declaring grits the official state food. In the low country and coastal regions of South Carolina shrimp and grits became the standard breakfast for fishermen and their family during shrimp season.

Traditionally made with river shrimp, stone ground grits and flavored with bacon fat, shrimp and grits is often called "breakfast shrimp" by the low-country fisherman who made it a southern staple. Like any popular dish, recipes for shrimp and grits have evolved over the years. Once a simple breakfast food, shrimp and grits can now be found on lunch and dinner menus in Dixie's finest restaurants.

Chefs now use cream, butter, spices, spicy sausages, hot sauce, shrimp stock and other ingredients in place of or in addition to the traditional bacon grease flavoring.

### **Fisherman's Quarters style Shrimp and Grits for Four**

George Baxevanis shares his family recipe for shrimp and grits that serves four:

In a 2-quart saucepan, bring two cups of whole milk to a boil and add one cup of grits, ¼ teaspoon of salt and ½ teaspoon of pepper. Reduce to medium heat and continue to cook. Stir constantly.

When the grits thicken and coat the back of the spoon, they are about done – 8 minutes or so. Reduce heat to low and stir every now and then so as not to stick. Remove from heat. Add 1/8 cup heavy cream, ¾ cup shredded white cheddar and ¼ grated parmesan cheese and keep warm.

Next, preheat a cast iron pan with a tablespoon of canola oil and 1 tablespoon butter. Once hot, place one pound of peeled and deveined shrimp, 3 cloves of minced garlic, and one bunch of chopped scallions in the pan and sauté until shrimp start to curl and garlic is toasted. Squeeze half the lemon on shrimp. Top with parsley. Remove from heat.

Bowl the grits and top with shrimp. Serve immediately and garnish with lemon wedge.