



Homemade Shrimp and Grits! ...mm-mmm good!

I am a Southerner by birth and food choice. So, when my doctor told me to cut out the butter, I told him I have to eat grits...he told me (again) no butter. Grits without butter just seemed, well, treasonous. However, having a healthy heart is better than the alternative, so I learned how to make grits without butter by substituting Kreta Reserve Extra Virgin Olive Oil. For those cooks who need to precisely measure things, there is a butter to EVOO conversion chart in the recipe section. When I measure for my grits, it is all relative. This is a recipe for two people. Scale accordingly. So here goes!

Ingredient List:

- 2/3 cup Quaker old fashion grits (Jim Dandy is just as good) -- Never use instant!
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup Kreta Reserve Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Sea salt (coarse)
- Freshly cracked black pepper
- Powdered garlic
- Paprika
- Tabasco sauce
- 4 cloves fresh garlic
- 4 green onions (scallions)
- 1 small to medium lemon
- 1/2 cup milk (anything but skim, you have to have some milk fat...I use 1%)
- Romano or Asagio shredded Italian cheese
- 2 dozen jumbo shrimp (fresh is better, but raw frozen will work)
- Fresh bread of your choice (I like Sourdough)

Optional: Veggies of your choice. Here are some suggestions:

- Steamed broccoli
- broiled asparagus
- cucumber and tomatoes with avocado (you will need seasoned vinegar for this)

Directions:

Start the grits by adding the water to a large pan and bring to a boil. Add a couple pinches of salt to the water, then stir in the grits, keeping it at a boil, then reduce to simmer for about 4-5 minutes, stirring to avoid lumps. Add Kreta Reserve EVOO and stir until the green streaks of oil have been emulsified and the top of the grits look like a sauce is forming. Heat the milk in a MW oven for 20 seconds to warm it up, then add the milk while you stir...try to avoid making the grits watery by adding the milk too fast (this is kind of like making risotto at this point). Once you have whisked in the milk, add the cracked pepper to the grits (and a splash or two of Tabasco if you like it hot). Reduce to low simmer and cover. Check and stir every 5 minutes...avoid scorching the bottom grits or creating lumps. At this point, you have the option of adding the cheese or waiting (I wait because I am constantly checking and tasting the grits for consistency), or adding more EVOO, salt, and pepper. When you add the cheese, it will thicken up and increases the chance of scorching, so once my grits are done, I add the cheese and turn off the heat. The cover will keep the grits hot. If the grits start to overcook (i.e., too thick and not creamy), no worries, just add some more milk or water, your choice. I like my grits to enter the bowl hot and smooth pouring, not too thick, not too thin...just right for me!

Options for side dishes:

While the grits are cooking...preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (if you have a convection oven, 325 is perfect). Prep the asparagus by rinsing, drying, and then remove the woody stems to get to the crisp meat of the stalk. Lay out a single layer on a flat pan, drizzle Kreta Reserve EVOO over the stalks (one drizzle line per top, middle, and bottom). Season with coarse sea salt and cracked black pepper. With your hand, slide the stalks around on the pan so these are coated evenly in the seasonings and oil. Create the single layer again and place the pan aside for now. Wash hands (EVOO is good for you skin) in warm water (no harsh soap!) and wipe off with paper towel to keep your skin nice and smooth. It takes 7 minutes for the asparagus to cook. Do not overcook!

Broccoli hint...for bright green broccoli, soak in salty water for 5 minutes prior to cooking. The 7 minute number is magic for steaming or boiling. Do not overcook!

For tomatoes and cucumbers, I use English cukes (seedless) and hothouse tomatoes (medium sized). Slice thin on the cukes and slightly thicker on the tomatoes. Lay out an overlapping ring of cucumber slices on the outside edge of the salad plate, then do the same with the tomatoes on the inside of the cucumber ring. Take a ripe avocado and use one half for each salad. Make 3-4 slices from each half and lay out over the tomatoes. Drizzle seasoned rice wine vinegar on the contents. Sprinkle with coarse salt and cracked black pepper. Drizzle Kreta Reserve EVOO over the rings of cucumber and tomatoes and a splash or two on the avocado. Then add some scallions on top for a garnish. Place in the fridge for 10 minutes to chill.

Back to the main course:

While the oven is pre-heating, clean and prep the scallions to create a couple of handfuls of the green goodness for use as a garnish. Rough chop is fine, but whatever size you want is cool. Set aside in small bowl.

Take the garlic cloves and smash with the flat side of your kitchen knife. Remove the clove and rough chop. Set aside in small bowl.

The shrimp will be sautéed, but could easily be fried or grilled on a skewer. I like sautéed because of the sauce from the sauté pan is drizzled on the grits. To prep the shrimp, they have to be at room temperature. Remove the head, shell, and devein the shrimp. Place in a mixing bowl. Apply liberal amounts of Kreta Reserve EVOO, powdered garlic, and paprika. Mix with your hand, then wash as before. Now add the juice from one half of the lemon, a couple of shakes of Tabasco (you know how hot you like things, so season accordingly for Tabasco). Stir with a large spoon to distribute the last two items. Set aside for later use.

In a large skillet or fry pan, coat the bottom with Kreta Reserve EVOO, bring to medium heat. Add the garlic. Let it sizzle for a minute, then add the shrimp, stir around the pan to create one layer, cover the pan for one minute. Remove the lid and turn over the shrimp. By the time you get the last shrimp turned over, the first one will be close to ready so keep an eye on it. After about 30 seconds, the shrimp will be ready for exercise! Move those little buggers around in the pan like sauté was your first cousin...after about 30 seconds, these should all be nice and pink, but not too rubbery. I always add a couple of "test shrimp" from the bag to make sure I can taste one of these for perfection.

During the minute of "lid" time while the shrimp are cooking, check the grits and adjust with liquids as needed. Fill two bowls with grits. When the shrimp are done, place them on top of the grits, add some of the liquid, and garnish with the scallions. Serve with your optional veggie of choice, fresh bread, and a nice light wine of your choice.

BON APPÉTIT!!