

SHRIMP AND SMOKED CHEDDAR GRITS

For the Shrimp:

- 2 pounds medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 1/2 teaspoons Cajon Seasoning
- 3/4 teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 tablespoons butter, room temperature
- 1 recipe Smoked Cremini Mushrooms and Rendered Bacon, recipe follows
- 1 recipe Abita BBQ Glaze, recipe follows
- 1 recipe Smoked Cheddar Grits, recipe follows
- 1 recipe Citrus Buerre Blanc, recipe follows
- 1 recipe Grilled Green Onions, recipe follows

Directions

In a large bowl, combine the shrimp with the Cajun Seasoning and salt and toss to blend. Set aside as you prepare the skillet. Place a large, 14-inch skillet over high heat and add the olive oil and heat until very hot. Add 1 tablespoon of the butter to the pan. Swirl to melt, and then add the shrimp to the pan, being sure that the shrimp are in 1 layer in the pan. Sear the shrimp until well caramelized on the first side, about 1 minute. Turn the shrimp over and add the Smoked Mushrooms and Bacon and Abita BBQ Glaze to the pan. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the shrimp are well coated with the sauce and just cooked through, about 3 minutes. Add the remaining butter to the pan and swirl until melted into the sauce.

To serve, divide the grits between 8 entree-sized shallow bowls. Drizzle about 2 tablespoons of the Citrus Beurre Blanc around the edge of the grits near the rim of the bowl. Divide the shrimp-mushroom mixture evenly between the bowls, and place a grilled green onion on top of the grits in a circle. Serve immediately.

Smoked Cremini Mushrooms and Rendered Bacon:

- 3/4 pound cremini mushrooms, halved, or quartered if large
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Essence
- 4 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/2 pound bacon, diced

In a medium bowl, combine the mushrooms, Essence and olive oil. Toss to combine and place on the rack of a stovetop smoker. Prepare the smoker over medium-high heat using applewood smoking dust, or the smoke chips of your choice. When the smoker begins to smoke, close the lid. Smoke the mushrooms until cooked through, about 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the smoker and set aside until ready to use.

While the mushrooms smoke, place the bacon in a 10-inch saute pan over medium-low heat and render the fat from them until they are just beginning to get crispy, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove the

bacon from the pan using a slotted spoon and transfer to paper towels to drain. Set aside until ready to use.

BBQ Glaze:

- 1 cup ketchup
- 1 cup amber beer
- 6 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons crushed red pepper

Combine the ketchup, beer, brown sugar and crushed red pepper in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat slightly and continue to cook at a steady simmer until the sauce is translucent and reduces to a consistency thick enough to coat the back of a spoon, 5 to 10 minutes. Set aside. You should have about 1 1/4 cups of glaze.

Smoked Cheddar Grits:

- 6 cups water
- Salt
- 1 1/2 cups quick cooking or old-fashioned grits (not instant!)
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 6 ounces grated smoked white Cheddar
- Freshly ground black pepper

In a large, heavy saucepan bring the water to a boil. Add a generous teaspoon of salt and the grits and stir with a wooden spoon to combine. When grits thicken, add the milk, cream and butter and return to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, partially cover the sauce pan and cook for 45 minutes to 1 hour, until grits are very tender, smooth, and creamy-thick. Add the Cheddar, season with black pepper, and stir until cheese is melted. Serve hot.

Citrus Beurre Blanc:

- 1/2 cup fresh squeezed orange juice
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1/4 cup fresh squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 cup fresh squeezed lime juice
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced shallots
- 1 (2-inch) strip orange zest
- 1 (2-inch) strip lemon zest
- 1 (2-inch) strip lime zest
- 1 garlic clove, smashed
- 1/2 bay leaf
- 1 sprig thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- 2 sticks cold unsalted butter, cubed

Place all the ingredients except the heavy cream and butter in a 1-quart saucepan and place over high heat. Bring to a boil and reduce until the liquid is nearly evaporated, 12 to 14 minutes. Add the heavy cream to the pan and reduce by half, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and reduce the temperature to medium-low. Add a few cubes of the butter to the pan and use a whisk to stir constantly until the butter is melted. Return to the heat and add a few more pieces. Continue to place the pan on and off the heat, adding a few cubes of butter to the pan and whisking until all the butter is used. Remove the sauce from the heat and strain through a fine-mesh strainer. Keep warm until ready to serve - do not allow the sauce to boil or it will separate.

Grilled Green Onions:

- 8 green onions, root end and tips trimmed
- 4 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper

Place a grill pan over medium-high heat. Drizzle the green onions with the olive oil and season with the salt and pepper. Place the green onions on the grill and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, turning occasionally to ensure even browning. Remove the green onions from the heat and set aside as you prepare the rest of the dish.