

GOURMET RECIPES

Magnolias and True Grits

Have you ever been to Charleston, South Carolina? It's really the epicenter of southernness... gracious young women in hoop skirts showing you around antebellum homes, huge live oak trees dripping with Spanish moss, a perpetual warm, almost decadent climate and sophisticated... and simply wonderful regional food.

Two delicious books from South Carolina chefs that couldn't be more different feature cooking of the South. The belle of this batch is *Magnolias: Authentic Southern Cuisine*, by Donald Barickman; the other is a quirky little spiral bound collection entitled *101 Things To Do With Grits*, authored by Harriss Cottingham.

Needless to say, this displaced Southerner curled up one evening with a bourbon and branch water and savoured every page! Donald Barickman brings his contemporary take on true southern dishes to the table at Magnolias restaurant in Charleston, South Carolina, cited as one of Patricia Schultz's *1000 Places to See Before You Die*. If the cookbook is anything to go by, we just might stop in the middle of the list and never leave Magnolias, expiring happily over such fare as Buttermilk and Beer Batter-Fried Soft-Shell Crabs or his Grilled Filet of Beef Topped with Pimiento Cheese and served with grilled tomatoes, green onions, parsley potatoes and Madeira sauce... and what has to be the ultimate no matter where you were born, Coconut Cream pie with Banana Custard Sauce and Caramelized Bananas.

Barickman's take on classic regional Southern recipes is a culinary evolution of fresh local and regional ingredients combined with a

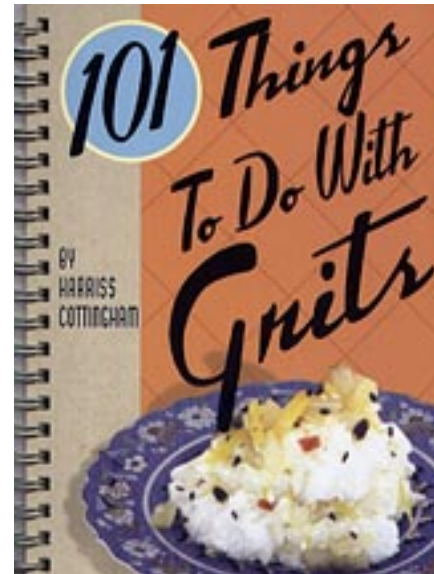


traditional southern style that is at once comfortable and elegant. Barickman is a 1985 graduate of the Culinary Institute of America who began his career in South Carolina inspired by American cuisine in a southern setting. He is a regular guest on the Food Network and his talents have also been recognized by *Gourmet*, the *New York Times*, *Smithsonian Magazine* and *Southern Living* (of course!).

Thank yew, Donald, honey! We love your cookbook and got started in the kitchen right away. Y'all are going to love this one!

While grits figure in *Magnolias: Authentic Southern Cuisine*, the collection any lover of this simple historic staple must have is *101 Things To Do With Grits*. The book assumes you already know what grits are... but just in cas, Wikipedia says:

Grits is a type of corn porridge and a food common in the Southern United States consisting of coarsely ground corn. This is similar to many other thick maize-based porridges from around the world such as polenta. It also has a lesser resemblance to farina, a thinner porridge.



Hominy grits is another term for grits, but explicitly refers to grits made from nixtamalized corn, or hominy.

Whoa... nixtamalized? Reading further we see that

nixtamalization, a Spanish loanword is the process whereby dry maize grain is soaked and cooked in an alkaline solution, usually limewater, to cause the transparent outer hull, the pericarp, to separate and be removed from the grain.

Tell you the truth, I wasn't sure either. Grits by themselves are seriously boring, but are the most perfect base for everything from butter and cheese to truffles and chocolate. They accompany eggs and bacon, they are a base for Cheese Bread, partner perfectly with Farm-Raised Quail with Mushroom Gravy and sign out in a White Chocolate Brûlée. And Harris Cottingham has given us 99 more delectable recipes!

Cottingham is a true southerner living in Greenville, South Carolina. He learned all about grits at his Granddaddy's stove, and went on to Johnson and Wales University Culinary School in Charleston. Now a sales representative for a wine distributor, he owns and operates Catering by Harriss, featuring cooking classes and small-group events... which we know feature grits! Give this book to all your Southern friends, and hey... keep a copy yourself! Warning, grits are addictive!

And be prepared for your next trip south. Smile broadly when grits come as a side dish... or else! One time in Georgia, a New York friend, when served a full breakfast of eggs, ham with red-eye gravy, biscuits and of course grits, said to the proprietor, "Oh, I don't want any grits thank you; I don't like grits!" Bubba, the owner, scooped up the plate, orange juice and coffee, dumped the whole lot into the garbage, and with beefy hands on hips shot back, "You don't eat grits, you don't eat here!"

Another slice of coconut cream pie?

On today's menu:

- [Homemade Potato Chips with Blue Cheese and Scallions](#)
 - [Down South Egg Rolls with Red Pepper Sauce, Spicy Mustard and Peach Chutney](#)
 - [Magnolias' Spicy Shrimp, Sausage, and Tasso Gravy over Creamy White Grits](#)
 - [Grits](#)
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 - [Emeril's Tasso](#)
 - [Velveeta Mexican Dip](#)
 - [Yellow Stone-Ground Grits](#)
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Homemade Potato Chips with Blue Cheese and Scallions

From *Magnolias*, where these are served as a perfect little hors d'oeuvre. We all know

that potato chips were invented up north, but it takes a Southerner to improve on this all-American snack! A little labour intensive but so worth the effort, and after you've tried these, there's no going back to the stuff in a bag...



"Oh, Ron; just a few more please!"

Serves 4 (but only if you tell!)

- ½ gallon peanut or canola oil for frying
- 2 pounds russet potatoes, washed and sliced 1/16 inch thick
- Fine sea salt
- 3 to 4 ounces blue cheese crumbles
- 3 fine sliced scallions

Preheat the frying oil to 340°F.

Using a vegetable slicer or mandoline with an adjustable setting and sharp blade, slice a few chips from a potato to get the thickness correct and consistent. Slice all the potato into chips and place into a bowl of cold water. Agitate the chips lightly with your hand to release some of the starch. Drain. Pat the chips with a dry paper towel to dry off any moisture.

Preheat an oven to 300°F.

Place about 1/3 of the chips in the fryer with oil, without the basket, gently agitating with a skimmer. It is important not to overcrowd the chips in the oil. Watch over the chips so they cook evenly, around 3 to 4 minutes. The moisture of the chips will slowly cook out and the chips will become crispy and golden. Any under-colored chips may be soggy. Remove the chips from the hot oil with a skimmer, shake off the excess oil, and place on paper towels. Season with salt to taste. Spread out the chips so that they can cool. Do not stack them until they have cooled completely. Repeat this process until all of the chips are fried.

Spread the chips on a baking sheet and sprinkle with the blue cheese crumbles. Heat in the oven just until the crumbles are heated through. Stack the chips on a plate or platter, sprinkle with scallions and serve immediately.

Tony's wine recommendation:

A dry sparkling wine – cava from Spain, Australian sparkler

Down South Egg Rolls with Red Pepper Sauce, Spicy Mustard and Peach Chutney

South meets East here, and the results are a mixed marriage made in culinary heaven. *Magnolias'* Chef Barickman told us, "Assembling the evening's specials one day, I knew that I wanted to use chicken, tasso, and collards in some item. As the sous chef arrived for work, I tossed it out for ideas. He quickly suggested an egg roll. After a few adjustments and a lot of egg rolls, it became one of our most popular starters and has been a favorite for all these years."



Y'all are going to love this one!

Makes 8 egg rolls

- 2 Tbsp light olive oil
- 2 cups julienned yellow onions
- 1 Tbsp plus 2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, fat removed and cut into thin strips
- 1 cups small strips [tasso](#) (recipe below)
- 2 cups packed cooked, chopped collard greens, well drained
- 8 egg roll wrappers
- 2 Tbsp cornstarch for dusting
- 2 tsp cold water
- 1 cup cornstarch for dusting
- 12 cups peanut oil or canola oil for frying

Heat the olive oil in a large heavy-bottomed frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the onions, garlic, chicken and tasso. Sauté, stirring for 5

minutes, or until the chicken is fully cooked. Squeeze all of the juice from the collard greens and add them to the frying pan. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes to heat the collards and meld all the flavors. Spread the mixture out onto a pan and let cool. Then squeeze out as much moisture as you can. The drier, the better.

Lay the egg roll wrappers on a clean, dry surface dusted lightly with cornstarch, setting them up in a diamond pattern. Portion $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the filling on the center of each wrapper. Place the cornstarch in a small bowl and slowly add the cold water, stirring until you have a smooth paste that is free of lumps. Lightly brush the edges of each egg roll wrapper with the mixture of cornstarch and water. Fold the bottom quarter of the diamond up toward the top. Fold the two sides inward to form an envelope. Bring the top corner over toward you. Gently press the edges to seal the rolls. Lightly dust the egg rolls with cornstarch to keep them dry.

Put the peanut or canola oil in a deep fryer or deep frying pan. If you are using something smaller, use only enough oil to fill it about three-quarters of the way up the sides. Gradually heat the oil to 340°F by starting to heat it over medium heat and slightly increasing the heat to medium-high. (Never put oil in any frying container and turn the heat on high! Increase heat gradually.)

Put only 4 egg rolls in the hot oil at one time. Too many egg rolls in the oil will bring down the temperature of the oil. Try to keep the temperature as close to 340°F as possible.

Fry the egg rolls, turning frequently until they are golden brown and crispy. Initially, you should try and keep the egg rolls submerged. As they brown, they will float to the top. If the oil is too hot, the egg roll skins will brown before the egg roll becomes warm throughout. Remove the egg rolls from the oil and place on paper towels to absorb any excess oil. Serve at once with Red Pepper Sauce, Spicy Mustard and Peach Chutney. For 8 egg rolls you will need 1½ cups for each accompaniment.

Tony's wine recommendation:

Off-dry Riesling, Viognier, Alsace Gewurztraminer

Magnolias' Spicy Shrimp, Sausage, and Tasso Gravy over Creamy White Grits



The ultimate triumvirate of the south: Shrimp, Tasso and Grits! OK, so it's not a combination you'd have ever thought of putting together, but Chef Barickman does, and the resulting dish is, "Darlin', simply out of this world!" The creamy grits are perfect as a comforting base for the sweet shrimp and spicy sausage, all rounded out with Tasso Gravy. This is not a dish for the fainthearted or novice, but for anyone who is willing to put in the time... "Oh Brother, thou art divine!"

Serves 8

Grits

Makes 12 cups

- 12 cups water
- 3¼ cups coarse stone-ground white grits
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 1 Tbsp salt
- ¼ tsp white pepper

Bring the water to a boil in a heavy-bottomed stockpot or large saucepan. Slowly pour in the grits, stirring constantly. Reduce the heat to low and continue to stir so that the grits do not settle to the bottom and scorch. After 8 to 10 minutes, the grits will plump up. Cook the grits over low heat for 30 to 35 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the cream, butter, salt and white pepper within the last 15 minutes. The grits will have a thick natural creamy consistency and become soft and silky. Keep covered and warm until ready to serve. If the grits become too thick, add warm water to adjust the consistency.

Tasso Gravy

Makes 3½ cups

- 4 Tbsp butter
- ½ cup sliced [tasso](#), cut in 1-inch strips (recipe below)
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp finely chopped fresh parsley
- Salt
- White pepper

Melt the butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over low heat. Add the tasso. Sauté for 1 minute, browning slightly. Make a roux by adding the flour and stirring until well combined. Continue to cook over low heat for 5 minutes, stirring frequently, or until the roux develops a nutty aroma. Turn the heat up to medium and gradually add 2 cups of the chicken broth, whisking vigorously. Keep whisking constantly until the broth begins to thicken and is smooth. Gradually add the remaining chicken broth, whisking constantly until the broth thickens into gravy. Reduce the heat and simmer over low heat for 15 minutes to cook out the starchy flavor of the flour. Add the parsley. Simmer for another 5 minutes.

Shrimp and Sausage

- ½ pound spicy Italian sausage
- 1 Tbsp light olive oil
- 2 pounds medium or large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1½ cups chicken broth
- 1 recipe [Tasso Gravy](#)
- 2 Tbsp finely chopped fresh parsley

Preheat an oven to 400°F.

Place the sausage on a baking sheet with raised sides. Place it on the top rack of the oven and bake for 10 to 15 minutes, or until it is firm and its juices run clear. Cool and cut into small bite-sized pieces. Reserve.

Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed frying pan over medium heat. Add the cooked sausage and sauté for 2 minutes to brown slightly. Add the shrimp and sauté until they just begin to turn pink, no longer than 1 minute. Add 1 cup of chicken broth to de-glaze the pan. Add the Tasso Gravy and 1 Tbsp of the parsley. Bring the mixture up to a gentle boil and simmer for 1 minute, stirring. Use the remaining chicken broth to thin the gravy if needed.

Divide the hot grits between 8 warm bowls. Spoon the shrimp and sausage mixture over the grits. Sprinkle them with the remaining Tbsp of parsley and serve immediately.

Tony's wine recommendation:

Tavel rosé, Australian or Californian Chardonnay

Emeril's Tasso

Who better than Emeril to give us a Tasso recipe!

Chef Lagasse received his first culinary experience from his mother, Hilda, when he was a boy growing up in the small town of Fall River, Massachusetts. As a teenager, he worked at a Portuguese bakery, where he mastered the art of bread and pastry baking. Upon high school graduation, Lagasse was offered a full scholarship to the New England Conservatory of Music, but decided to pursue a career as a professional chef. He earned a degree from the respected culinary fortress, Johnson and Wales University, and later received an honorary Doctorate degree from the university. Lagasse then traveled to Paris and Lyon, where he polished his skills and learned the art of classic French cuisine, then perfected his talent in fine restaurants in New York, Boston and Philadelphia. Lured to New Orleans by Dick and Ella Brennan, Lagasse established his star at their legendary restaurant, Commander's Palace, where he was executive chef for seven and a half years. The rest is history, as they say! (see our column: [The Real Emeril](#), July 6, 2006)

Yield: 2½ pounds

- 2 Tbsp. salt
- 1½ Tbsp. black pepper
- 1¼ Tbsp. cayenne
- 5 Tbsp. paprika
- 1 Tbsp. granulated garlic
- 1½ Tbsp. granulated onion
- 1 Tbsp. onion powder
- 2½ lbs. lean pork butt, cut into 1-inch thick 4- to 5-ounce slices

In a mixing bowl, combine the salt, black pepper, cayenne, paprika, granulated garlic, granulated onion and onion powder. Dredge each piece of pork in the spice mix. Press the spice mix well into each piece. Pack the tasso in the plastic wrap, about four to a pack. Refrigerate for a minimum of 3 days or up to 1 week.

Note: Emeril says, "There is no mention of cooking the meat after it ages. I always put a little curing agent in along with the spices and then smoke/cook the pieces instead of eating them uncooked. I also use some Celery Salt, Minced Garlic and chili powder in my version." BAM!

Tony's wine recommendation:

Riesling Kabinett, chilled Beaujolais-Villages (or a named village)

Velveeta Mexican Dip

From *101 Things To Do With Grits*. This is without doubt the 101st recipe... but we simply had to put it in as the antithesis of the sophistication of *Magnolias'* Charleston cuisine. While the roots are more Texas than South Carolina, it's still completely



authentic with three über Southern ingredients here, Velveeta cheese, Rotel tomatoes and grits. Stop laughing! Serve this at your next BBQ and watch it disappear, it's really great with a lot of drinks!

Makes 4–6 servings

- 1 pound Velveeta Mexican cheese
- 1 can (8 ounces) Rotel tomatoes
- 1 can (4.5 ounces) green chilies
- ¼ cup salsa
- [Yellow Stone-Ground Grits](#) (recipe follows)
- 1 bag tortilla chips

Melt cheese and mix well with tomatoes, chilies and salsa. Add mixture to cooked grits in two additions, mixing well each time. Serve hot with tortilla chips.

Variation: Add 1 jar (12 ounces) roasted red peppers, diced.

Yellow Stone-Ground Grits

Makes 4 servings

- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup yellow stone-ground grits
- 4 Tbsp butter
- 1½ cups heavy cream
- Salt and pepper

In a nonstick pot, combine chicken broth and grits. Bring to a boil and cook for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Turn to medium-low heat, stir in butter and reduce liquid by half. As liquid reduces, add heavy cream in three to four additions, stirring occasionally. Entire process should take 45–60 minutes. When liquid is reduced, season with salt and pepper to taste.

Tony's wine recommendation:

Chianti Classico, Barbera, Beaujolais

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Happily enjoyed by Helen Hatton and Ron Morris.

