



## **Podcast Script**

**Season 1 / Episode 1 - [Shrimp & Grits / Skills not recipes / What it means to be a chef]**

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### **Introduction**

Welcome chefs, cooks and listeners to the incredible discourse, I am your chef... Mark Grigsby and today were talking about shrimp and grits first. I love shrimp and grits. It's a classic comfort food. It originally came out of Charleston, SC and was called shrimps & hominy. Throughout the decades it's been twisted and shaped into many many variations and today we're going to explore the process of yet another variation... mine, so let's dive in.

### **Topic 1 - Shrimp & Grits**

**Yield: 2 portions**

#### **Equipment:**

You're gonna need a few things to complete this recipe. You're gonna need a couple of mixing bowls, a whisk, a lipped frying pan or shallow pot. You're also going to need a smaller sauce pot with a fitting lid with a wooden spoon and then you're going to need measuring equipment... spoons and cups.

If you need any of these things, amazon, target, walmart they have a great selection and they're usually rather inexpensive. Check out some of the links I'll leave in the description for some items that will work for this recipe.

#### **Ingredients:**

So there are quite a few ingredients in this recipe. You don't need all of them if you don't want them, but I like to use them because it creates such a much more flavorful dish. I broke the shopping list, if you will, into 3 parts. The grits. The shrimp and the spice.

For the grits you're going to need:

Stone ground grits - I like to use real, stone ground grits versus instant grits; I like the texture and consistency much better. But if you are more comfortable with using instant grits or you have a time constraint, these will do just fine.

Chicken stock or broth - I like to make my own and I will put up some of my recipes soon, but store bought is just fine as well.

Salt and shredded yellow cheddar. This is going to make those grits nice and creamy.

Alright let's talk about what you're going to need for the shrimp.

Obviously, you need the shrimp. There are so many different types of shrimp out there. Big ones, small ones, jumbo, prawns and you can use any of them to make this recipe. But today, I'm going with 16/20 shrimp, peeled and deveined with the tails on. I like the tails on for the presentation piece and you'll find out why towards the end of the recipe. Now... you're going to need some bell pepper diced, tomato diced, minced garlic, sliced shallot, some chopped scallions, some white wine... and the white wine can be any. You can use cooking wine from the store.. You could crack open a bottle of chardonnay from your wine rack, any will do really. You're also gonna need some more of that chicken stock and some cold cubed butter. You're going to also need a small amount of oil as well.

Now I know you're probably sitting there saying to yourself "This guy didn't give me any measurements to any of these ingredients".. And you're 100% right. I have the exact recipe and method on how to make all of my recipes on [theincrediblediscourse.com](http://theincrediblediscourse.com). I'll also be starting a youtube channel where you can see all of these recipes in action. Coming soon, I'll keep you all updated.

Now.. For the spice you're gonna need some simple ingredients from your spice cabinet. Smoked paprika... I prefer smoked, but any will do. Salt, onion powder, garlic powder, oregano, dried basil, black pepper and white pepper and a small amount of cayenne pepper. Now you could increase or decrease how much cayenne is in there depending on your preference.

If you like the kick, go heavy.

### **Method:**

ok so before I start the actual cooking process let's begin with the cajun spice. Remember this is optional. If you want a little kick and some extra flavor, go nuts here. That's how I like it, so that's what I do.

I start by adding all of the spices into the small mixing bowl and whisking well until they are all incorporated well. I'm gonna set this aside for a couple of minutes while I prepare the shrimp.

You could buy cajun spice from the store, but I prefer to make my own. I like making it because I have more control over the heat and the flavor. If you don't like onion or garlic, you have the ability to change or modify it, if you buy it, you're kinda stuck with what you have.

I add all of the shrimp to the larger bowl. If they are not peeled, this is the time to do so. You could save these peels for stocks or sauces and they can be frozen to save for later. Now I coat the shrimp in about a tablespoon of oil. You can use olive oil, canola oil, vegetable oil, whatever oil you prefer. You just need a little bit, this is going to help your cajun spice stick better to the

meat of the shrimp. I use olive oil. I coat the shrimp in the spice and set these aside for a bit and let those flavors infuse.

Now let's start the grits. They take a little longer and can be set aside warm until you're ready to plate. Take the small sauce pot and boil the stock. Make sure the stock is rolling or you will have to work harder when you put the grits in. Once the stock is rolling, add the grits WHILE whisking. Once the grits are in they're going to seize very quickly. Turn your heat down to medium-low.. like a simmer and continue to whisk. You will notice that as the grits thicken you'll have to whisk a little harder. Put the lid on it and allow it to cook for about 30-40 minutes making sure you whisk it very often. As they thicken they can scorch easily, don't fuck this up or you'll have to start over. Don't no body like some scorched grits. When finished they shouldn't be extra grainy, they should be gritty, but palatable. If they get stuck in your teeth, you didn't cook the shit long enough. That's a pro tip. When they've finished cooking, whisk in the cheddar. This will give them that creamy texture you're looking for. Now top that shit and set it to the side. Shrimp time.

Take out your frying pan. Add the bacon in the pan and set it on medium low heat. You're going to cook this slowly so that you render the fat out. Rendering is the process of converting animal tissue into purified fat. In layman's terms, you're extracting the fucking fat from the bacon. And you're going to do this because this is the fat that you will sear the shrimp in. Flavor baby, that's what it's all about. Now if you're allergic to bacon or you just prefer not to eat it, then substitute this process for a tablespoon of the oil of your choice. Anyhow, where was I so the bacon in the pan on low heat... it will start to sizzle low and slow and you'll notice that it becomes oily, this is good. Move it around from time to time using a wooden spoon or tongs. Over the next 5 minutes or so, the meat will start to turn red and the bottom of the pan begins to pool up with fat. When the bacon is nice and crispy, remove from the pan and set aside on your holding plate. Leave the fat in the pan, you will need this for the next step.

Raise your heat to med-high. The temperature of the grease will rise really fast, you don't need a long time, but we're searing the fucking shrimp right now so you need heat. Add your shrimp, side down. Don't be afraid, it's going to sizzle. If it starts to pop, slightly turn your heat down. And I emphasize slightly, because you need high heat to sear, but don't hurt yourself over some fucking shrimp. You're going to sear these shrimp about 1 1/2 - 2 minutes EACH SIDE. Do not shake the pan, move the shrimp or disturb them while they're searing. You're trying to get a nice little crust on the outside. If you fuck with them too much they will release their juices rapidly and flood the pan and then you're boiling them and they will suck. After 2 minutes on each side, remove them and put on your holding plate to use later. Don't worry if they've cooked all the way through, you're going to add these back to the pan when you've made your sauce.

Now let's make the good part...

You should start to notice some shit sticking to the bottom of the pan; this is good. You are building flavor and this is called fond. Fond is the caramelized bits of food that remain at the bottom of a pan after browning meat or vegetables. You're going to add the wine and deglaze the bottom of the pan. Deglazing is simply the act of adding liquid to a hot pan, which allows all

of the caramelized bits stuck to the bottom to release and add to the flavor. I scrape the bottom of the pan just to be sure I get all of it. It's really an important part of the flavor profile I'm trying to create here. Throw in the bell pepper, garlic, shallot and tomato and raise the heat to medium-high, probably more on the higher side than the medium side. This mixture is going to start to simmer, and that's good. I reduce this down for about 2 minutes or so to get all of the flavor to meld. Reducing is important in recipes and is a term that everyone who cooks should understand. It's the process of thickening, intensifying and concentrating the flavor of a liquid. Doing so and doing it well will result in flavorful sauces that have a great consistency. So now I'm gonna add my cold butter and continue to reduce for about a minute and a half or so. I'm looking for a gravy-ish type consistency, not too thick but not runny by any means. When you reach that point, cut the heat. Now we're ready to plate.

For this dish, I like using a large surface bowl or plate with a lip on it. This way you can see all of the components and get that wow factor of the dish. I start with the grits. I use a plating spoon, but you can use whatever you want. A large chef's spoon, a pop scoop, whatever. I center these grits in the bowl and use the back of my spoon to create a little well of sorts in the middle. Now.. I take the shrimp and I stick them head first into the grits so that the tails are sticking up. I do this around the entire well to create a "crown" effect. Inside this well, I spoon some of the vegetables in and spoon the sauce around this mound of goodness. We're almost done... finishing touches and I'm ready to serve. I like to use scallions, but you could use chive or parsley or whatever green garnish you like. I like scallions so that's what I use and I sprinkle them tastefully all over the dish. You'll notice a pop of color by doing this, and that's a good thing. That's what you're looking for. Now one last thing... the bacon. Remember that bacon that you rendered to get the fat out to sear the shrimp? We're going to add a little bit of that all over as well.

And that's it. We made shrimp & grits. This is my take on it. It's comforting and warm and filling. Enjoy this recipe, let me know in the comments if you made it this way or if you have your way of doing it. I'm always interested in different versions of classics. There really is no right or wrong way to do this, just variations. Anyway send me photos or your recipes to [theincrediblediscourse.com](http://theincrediblediscourse.com) or on any of our social media channels when they come up.

## <SEGUE>

Next I want to talk to my home cooks or my listeners who have an interest in cooking at home. Shit, I guess this could be something a young cook entering the industry could benefit from too. Anyway, I wanna talk about skills over recipes...

### Topic 2 - Skills not recipes

- Skills are abilities that you can apply to recipes. Like:
  - How to use a knife
  - Cooking techniques
  - How to properly mise en place
  - How to control heat

And there are many many skills and techniques that can be mastered in the kitchen. These are not the only 4, but are great examples of starting points. I know you guys at home aren't trying to be professionals. I get it. But everyone has to eat right? And you're going to be alive for a long time I hope... these are cooking skills are abilities that you will take with you all the way to the end my friends. Gotta eat good. Eating good is what it's all about if you ask me. Doesn't matter if I'm in my home kitchen or my pro kitchen, I always want to eat great food.

Great skills create great recipes, not the other way around. Anyone can take a recipe and "recreate" it, but the understanding of skills provide the details within the recipe

Here's an example: Let's say I'm making a recipe that calls for me to cut the vegetables in a certain specific uniform way, but I don't know how to use the knife so I cut them blindly and they all turn out different shapes and sizes. What happens? All of the vegetables cook at different times and I run the risk of having some mushy and some crunchy and then my dish turns out to be average because it lacks consistency in my skills. Not to mention my dish looks a little funny because it looks like ray charles chopped my fucking vegetables for me. Finesse is the word.

Or how about this.. Let's say I'm making fried chicken using the wet hand dry hand method to double bread my chicken and I forget to dredge my bird first before going into my binder or wet, my egg or buttermilk or whatever, and I just go wet to dry. The wet has nothing to stick to because I skipped a crucial step. Then when I drop my chicken into the grease my breading breaks and oil seeps into my crust and ends up burning my fried chicken from the inside out... Did I use all of the ingredients in the recipe? Yes. But did I apply the required skill that the recipe asked for? No. Now my fried chicken is fucked and I'm hungry. The secret to this particular skill is that this is a typical common breading method that many recipes call for. This is something that you more than likely use again and again, so mastering this skill or technique now makes your skill set more versatile.

And believe it not, even how you prep and set up before you start doing a recipe is a skill. Not everyone prepares the same way and their end result often tells that story. And this applies to

any recipe regardless of your setting, whether you're in a professional kitchen working for a chef or you're at home making dinner for your family, preparation is key.

I've seen young chefs trying to do too much, start a recipe and they walk all over the kitchen collecting all of the ingredients. When they start measuring out all of the ingredients they put them all in the same container one after another versus separating all of the measured ingredients into smaller containers. Then they get distracted or walk away to go do something else and then come back to continue and can't remember what they put into the fucking container... more often than not they miss something or they miscount and then you're stuck with that prep. You can't separate or rescale the vinegar in your vinaigrette or take out the mayo in your sauce after you've already added it. I mean you could try, but it's very doubtful that doing so would give you the same result as if you would've exactly measured out everything, had it separated and then focused on making the recipe. This way, allows you to walk away and come back knowing exactly where you left off. Mise en place means "putting in place" or "gathering" and there is most definitely a right way to do it and a dumbass way to do it, and that's what makes this a skill. You have to learn and practice this to get good at it.

It's just like the recipe we talked about earlier in the show, the shrimp and grits. There's a part of the recipe where it asks you to deglaze the pan... and no deglazing is not a super skill that gives you some kind of super chef power, but it's a technique within the skill of sauteing that, if not done correctly could result in a little bit of a disaster. First let's talk about why you're doing it. You do it because it releases the caramelized brown bits of fond from the bottom of the pan, and gives your dish a depth of flavor... makes it more than 1 dimensional. Now where you can fuck this up is... is by not burning out the alcohol from the wine and just throwing in the stock and butter and finishing it. You're going to get this very bitter alcohol-ly flavor that you cannot mask or fix, now you've wasted all the prep and time to get a sub-par dish. But you learn this from practicing and evolving by adding these skills to your repertoire, and paying attention to key words and vocabulary and understanding what they mean. Some of these key words you'll see more and more as you do more and more recipes.

Another thing to think about is controlling your heat, yes another skill for cooks home or pro to think about.

Not everything is cooked on high. As a matter of fact, there are more things cooked on the lower end of the heat spectrum than there are on the higher. Patience has a lot to do with this. Your at home and you're tired from working all day and these kids won't stop running around and they still need to do homework and take showers or whatever... and it's easy to say "I'm gonna put all this shit on full blast because it'll get done faster"; the reality is chances are you're gonna burn something or overcook something because you end up trying to do too much too fast. It's similar to saying well I'm going to go 100mph to work so I'll get there faster, chances are the risk is much greater than the reward. It's probably a smarter idea to leave a little earlier so you can take your time and be patient so it ultimately becomes safer. Again, patience.... Anyway, control the heat... this is a great tip for professional cooks or cooks getting into the industry as well. The more control over everything you have, the more focus you can give to what you're doing, the likelier your food will come out just as it's supposed to.

## <SEGUE>

Now let's speak on what it means to be a chef...

### **Topic 3 - What it means to be a chef**

So I'll start this segment with a little story. I used to work for this lady chef a while back who created amazing dishes and was self made. She owned restaurants all over and she specialized in Caribbean cuisine. Her short story was she was from Jersey and she traveled down here to Miami to get her fishing license and become a boat captain. She had a thing for fish and eventually opened Ortanique on the mile. This place was known for the freshest fish and her creative dishes that more often than not focused on elements from the ocean in this fine dining setting. Anyway, I became her sous chef that was more like an executive sous or maybe even a chef de cuisine. I was running this kitchen, doing the specials and oftentimes designing or modifying the menu, plus all the other things that a chef de cuisine would do.

She was at the restaurant often during her rotations between sites, events and guest spots and she knew I had a passion for the industry but I was young and hungry for knowledge and advancement. I wanted to be like her.. As a matter of fact during my interview she asked me where I saw myself in 5 years and my response was ambitious as hell. I told her I wanted to be like her.. I wanted to have several restaurants and my name all over the place. She had more awards than I had ever seen with my own eyes in any one place ever before, and those were just for that particular restaurant, she had restaurants all over the country.. Could you imagine how many she had just stockpiled away? So one day after I had started and been there a while we had a conversation during lunch service and she said to me " There are two kinds of people in this industry; those who love it and have a passion for it, and those who are born to do this. Which are you?" and I had to pause and think. For the longest time, I knew I had a passion even an obsession for the industry. I worked in different places to learn so many things with a purpose. Yes we all need money and I'm no exception, but the end game was to always be better and to learn everything I could for the betterment of myself. I told myself many times, if I want to be the best, I have to learn it all, do it all and try it all. And that mentality pushed me for many years as a young, single and hungry chef. So what was my answer? I had to give one, she wasn't going to let me off the hook. She knew it puzzled me in the moment and said "Ever since I started doing this, I knew I was born to do this; I don't see myself doing anything else". My response was "I am born to do this chef". It took me a while to really understand the response I gave because I knew I loved what I did, but was I equal in passion as she? Did I live and breathe the industry like she did? This pushed me to even better. I told myself that I was born to do this and I knew I wouldn't be happy or successful doing anything else. I eventually would leave this place to start my own business and this is where I truly started to understand what it meant for me. I found such a joy in being a chef that had complete control over concept, cost and menu. Now, the relevance of this? What it means to be a chef can be different to each and can be answered in probably a few different ways. Google tells us that a chef is an

individual who is trained to understand flavors, cooking techniques, create recipes from scratch with fresh ingredients, and have a high level of responsibility within a kitchen, and while all of those things are true, yes, I feel like there is much more to it than that. That description actually makes it sound like anyone can be a chef, and that my friends is a false narrative to the fullest degree. A chef creates an experience through food. It's a journey, it evokes a feeling within your consumer, through years of training, dedication and passion. And that experience can only be learned by commitment and time. And this type of wholehearted enthusiasm is becoming fewer and farther between. I am born to do this because I feel responsible for every experience that goes out on a plate. That's what it means to be a chef.

### **Outro**

That's all for today, chefs. I hope you enjoyed learning my take on the classic, shrimp and grits, and took a little something from my advice and experience. We'll build on this episode and do some fun stuff as well and talk about some inspirational things to keep chef's minds going. Lately it just feels like the passion for the industry just isn't what it used to be for young chefs and so I want to use this platform to boggle some minds and get some brainwaves working.

If you like what you heard today leave me 5 stars on spotify or a great review wherever you're listening to this and make sure you visit us at [theincrediblediscourse.com](http://theincrediblediscourse.com) and all of our socials when they come up. I appreciate your time as always. I'm Mark Grigsby and you've just been put through The IncrEDIBLE Discourse. Till next time... where my theme music at?