Masala Shrimp 'n Grits

Shrimp in Tomato Curry over Cheese-y Grits

Yields: 4 to 6 servings

Active time: about 1 hour
Inactive time: 5 plus hours

Yes, there are a few ingredients here. Yes, it might take you a little while to make this. But no, do not flip the page without promising to make this dish for you and the ones you love. Because it is so worth every second! This dish expresses everything I love about my life so far, the melding of my new home (Amritsar) and my old home (India) on one plate. Creamy, cheesy grits. Spicy, sweet shrimp. And what sauce? Oh, that sauce. It's what happens when the Indian South collides with the American one. Chai tea+tomato+ketchup. Get a little masala in yo' grits.

Ingredients

Marinade:
- 1 pound shrimp, fresh or frozen and thawed, peeled, tails on (totally, under 10 count per pound)
- 2 teaspoons turmeric
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

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- 4 cloves garlic, grated (about 2 teaspoons)
- 1-inch piece ginger, grated (about 2 teaspoons)
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon garam masala
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (plus more for frying shrimp)
- 1 large onion, thinly sliced, about 2 cups
- 2 teaspoons pepper
- 1/2 cup plain low-fat yogurt

Grits:
- 1/2 cups water
- 1 cup yellow corn hominy aka grits
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 ounces sharp shredded Cheddar cheese, about 1 cup

Directions

Marinate shrimp: Marinade shrimp in turmeric, lemon juice and 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt for 20 minutes at room temperature while you prep the rest of the ingredients.

Sear shrimp: Once you’re ready to go, warm 2 tablespoons of oil in large heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Drain shrimp of any liquid and carefully place each one in this skillet, ensuring that they don’t touch each other (cook in batches if necessary). Cook until a light charred crust forms on the bottom, a couple of minutes, then flip and repeat on the other side too. Remove the shrimp to a bowl and set aside. Rinse and wipe out the skillet.

Make marinade: Stir together garlic, ginger paprika, coriander, cumin, turmeric and garam masala with 1/2 cup water in a small bowl, let stand.

Warm another 2 tablespoons of oil in the skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering.

Add the onions and_Serrano pepper to the skillet, along with a generous pinch of salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until just brown around the edges, 5 to 7 minutes. Then, cook for another 5 minutes, stirring near constantly, until the onions are more comprehensively browned and sweet smouldered.

Lower the heat to medium.

Now, add the garlic-spice mixture to this pan, along with tomato paste and tomatoes. Stir together well and keep stirring until the whole mixture comes together. Then, cook for another 5 minutes until the tomatoes turn almost mushy, the mixture darken a color and holds together as one mass (ie, it doesn’t spread out to the sides of the pan when you pull it into the center).

Season with honey and 2/4 of teaspoon kosher salt. Add 1/2 cups water, and simmer gently for 5 minutes, semi-covered.

Add this shrimp back in, turn heat down to low, cover and allow to warm through, about 5 minutes. Stir in tamarind and serve over grits.

Make grits: Bring water and 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt to a boil in large saucepan over high heat. Pour in the grits, give them a good stir, and let them come to a boil. At this point, they should have thickened, cover and turn the heat down as low as possible. Cook for 20 minutes, stirring every 5 to 10 minutes to make sure the bottom isn’t burning. Taste them to make sure they’re tender (if they’re not, add a splash more water; cover and cook for another 5 minutes), then best in the butter. Stir in the cheese, season with freshly ground black pepper and serve immediately.