

Kia Damon's Sweet Potato Grits

Makes: 4 to 6 servings

For as long as I can remember, my grandmother always had a pot of grits on the back of her stove. Sometimes they were fresh, ready to be paired with scrambled eggs and a piece of sausage. Other times, they were from a previous day with the weird film that formed a tint over the now clumpy and dry cornmeal. I've never known a day without grits while I was living with her, especially for breakfast and lunch.

It is a known fact that proper grits need only milk, salt, and a pat of butter. The late Edna Lewis said, "People should really leave grits alone," but I see good grits as a beautiful creamy vehicle that, if handled responsibly, can result in some tempting combinations. The roasted sweet potato adds a sweet and earthy element to these grits and only ups the creamy, custardy mouthfeel.

I would definitely eat these grits with shrimp smothered in a bacon gravy, fried catfish, or mushrooms simmered in a red curry. You can also enjoy them as our ancestors intended, with just a simple pat of butter. — Kia Damon

Ingredients

- 1 sweet potato (about 1 pound)
- 3 cups unsalted chicken stock
- 1 ½ cups whole milk
- 1 cup white stone-ground grits
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- Kosher salt to taste
- Black pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Once the oven is hot, wrap the sweet potato in tinfoil and place it on the middle rack. Cook for about 40 minutes until the sweet potato is completely soft and mushy to the touch. Set aside to cool.
3. Slowly heat the stock and milk in a large pot until the liquid begins to simmer.
4. Add the grits to a medium bowl and cover with cool water. Use your hands to stir around the grits so the chaff separates and rises to the top. Skim the chaff off the top, strain the grits through a fine-mesh strainer, and repeat this process two more times. Drain and discard the water.

5. Stir the grits into the milk mixture and use a whisk to make sure there aren't any clumps. It'll look like too much liquid at first, but the grits will expand into creamy goodness. Cook the grits, whisking them until they begin to thicken. It should take about 30 minutes. They should be thick and creamy with a little bite.

6. At this point, you want to add in your sweet potato. Remove the sweet potato from the skin and place the flesh in a bowl; you should have about 2 cups. I find that an immersion blender for this next part works best. Add the sweet potato to the grits and use the immersion blender to incorporate it all. The blender also yields creamier grits because it breaks up the grains even further.

7. Mix in the butter and season with salt and pepper.

— Recipes from [*Black Food: Stories, Art, and Recipes from Across the African Diaspora*](#)