

## *Crispy Nashville Hot Popcorn Shrimp and Creamy Grits*



### **Ingredients, Shrimp:**

- 1 pound (31/40) shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails removed
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 quart peanut or vegetable oil
- 5 tablespoons cayenne pepper
- 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon plus ½ tsp Kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon granulated garlic
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

### **Ingredients, Grits:**

- 2 ears fresh corn
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 4 scallions, whites sliced, greens thinly sliced on the bias and reserved for garnish
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 cups water, plus more as needed
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup old-fashioned grits
- 4 ounces sharp Cheddar, grated
- 4 ounces processed pasteurized cheese, such as Velveeta, cubed

### **Method for the Shrimp:**

1. Toss the shrimp in the buttermilk and place in the fridge for 30 minutes to lightly marinate.
2. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees F. Fit a sheet pan with a wire rack and set aside. Heat the oil to 375 degrees F in a deep fryer or Dutch oven.
3. To make the Nashville hot oil, whisk together the cayenne, dark brown sugar, 1 tablespoon of the salt, chili powder, granulated garlic, paprika and black pepper in a glass or metal bowl. Once the oil is up to temperature, add about 1 large ladleful (6 to 8 ounces) to the spice mixture to let it bloom. Be careful, as it will bubble aggressively. Whisk until smooth.
4. Whisk together the flour, cornstarch, baking powder and remaining ½ teaspoon salt. Drain the shrimp, add to the flour mixture, and gently toss to combine. Working in batches, gently place the shrimp into the oil, one at a time, making sure the shrimp are not sticking



together. Alternatively, use a spider to scoop up a bunch of shrimp from the dredge, shake the spider to knock off the excess flour mixture and gently lower into the oil. Fry the shrimp, moving them around constantly, until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer the shrimp to the prepared sheet pan and keep warm in the oven. Repeat with the remaining shrimp.

#### **Method for the Grits:**

1. To milk the cobs, first cut off the kernels and set aside. Then hold the raw cob in a wide shallow bowl or over a plate and drag the sharp edge of a chef's knife along the length to extract all that juice embedded in the cob. Reserve for later
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of the butter in a saucepan until melted. Add the scallion whites and corn kernels and sauté for 4 to 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add the water. Using a blender or immersion blender, blend the scallions, corn, and water until smooth. Add the milk and bring to a simmer.
3. Slowly rain in the grits while whisking vigorously. Keep at a light simmer while stirring constantly until the cornmeal is no longer toothsome, 20 to 30 minutes. If the grits become too thick, add in more water to ensure the grits continue to cook properly while still achieving a creamy consistency.
4. Off the heat, add in the cheeses, reserved "corn cob milk" and remaining 2 tablespoons butter. Whisk until smooth. If the grits are too tight, add a bit more water to loosen up. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
5. To plate: Place a ladleful of grits in a bowl. Whisk the warm oil and bloomed spices until smooth again. Using a pastry brush, dab each shrimp with the spice mixture before placing on the grits. Top the bowls with the sliced scallion greens and serve.