

Nassau Grits (or Rice!)

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The Coffee Cup Restaurant, Pensacola FL

serves 4

8 slices of bacon

1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped

1 green bell pepper, cored, seeded and finely chopped

1 c. (about 6 oz.) finely chopped smoked ham

14.5 oz. can diced tomatoes, undrained

1 clove garlic, minced

3/4 c. old-fashioned stone-ground white grits *

salt and freshly ground black pepper

Fry the bacon in a large skillet over medium heat, turning once, until crisp, about 10 minutes. Transfer the bacon, leaving the drippings in the skillet, to a paper-towel-lined plate to let drain and cool. Crumble the bacon into small pieces and set aside.

Reserve about 3 T. of the bacon drippings in the skillet and discard the rest. Reheat the skillet over medium heat, add the onions and peppers, and cook until the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the ham and cook, stirring, until the peppers are soft, about 10 minutes. Add the tomatoes (with their juice) along with the garlic. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until most of the moisture has evaporated, about 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring 3 cups water to a boil in a medium pot. Add grits and salt to taste, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, thick, and creamy, about 30 minutes. Stir in the ham-tomato mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve grits sprinkled with reserved bacon.

* If you can't get the old-fashioned stone-ground grits, you can use the quick-cooking grits that only take 5 minutes to cook. If you're a grits "weenie," this would also be great with 3 cups of cooked white rice.