Cajun Shrimp and Grits
August 23, 2020
COOKING TECHNIQUES FOR KIDS

How can kids help in the kitchen?

If you're cooking with kids, you know best what they're ready for based on their level of maturity and motor control. The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends the following:

Ages 2-3 might be ready for stirring, shaking, spreading, tearing, dipping, kneading and using basic kitchen implements like whisks, spatulas, strainers, or cookie cutters. Kids age 3-4 might be ready for more complex tasks like pouring, rolling or measuring, and with supervision they might try using small non-electric appliances. Kids older than five can do just about anything with supervision -- grating, mashing, peeling, even cutting with a knife.

SAFETY FIRST!

- Supervision is key! Don't leave little ones unattended while cooking.
- Keep potentially dangerous equipment stored until you're ready to use it.
- Sharp knives are safer because they are easier to control -- keep your knives sharp, but out of reach until needed and supervise carefully!
- Make sure you have plenty of potholders around; keep them dry and away from burners.
- Be careful with electric appliances, cords, and electrical outlets.
- In case of a stove top fire, use a fire extinguisher or baking soda, NOT WATER as it can spread a grease fire quickly. You can also use a lid to smother flames.
- Make sure your helpers know what's hot -- lids, handles, and utensils all heat up when the stove is in use, and releasing steam can cause severe burns.
- Prevent food-borne illness: wash hands frequently, keep hot food hot and cold food cold; wash fruits and vegetable thoroughly, and cook meat, poultry, eggs and fish to the appropriate temperature.

Circle Food Tour is part of Circle Connects, University Circle Incorporated's dynamic interactive and online programming powered by PNC. Visit www.universitycircle.org/circle-connects for more information.
LET'S TALK ABOUT FOOD!

FIVE SENSES OF FOOD

A way to explore new foods with picky eaters! Prepare and sample a new food and describe it using your five senses.

This activity works with individual foods, or two-three foods at a time to make comparisons, like:

- Different foods from the same food group, like three nuts or three fruits
- Things that look similar but taste different, like papaya and sweet potato
- The same vegetable, served raw and cooked in different ways, like roasted, steamed, or sauteed

**Sight:** What color is it? Is big or small? Does it look different after you cook it? How so? Is there something about the way it looks that makes you want to eat it? Does it look like other foods that you've tried?

**Sound:** What does it sound like when you cut it? When you cook it? When you chew it?

**Smell:** What does it smell like? Does it smell like it tastes? Does it smell like other foods that you've tried?

**Touch:** What does it feel like when you touch it? Is it dry or greasy or slimy? Rough or smooth? What does it feel like in your mouth? Is it squishy or crunchy? Does it stick to the roof of your mouth or get stuck in your teeth?

**Taste:** Does it taste like you expected? Is it sweet? Spicy? Sour? Salty? Does the flavor remind you of something else?

COOKING CONVERSATIONS

Ask open-ended questions about what's happening in the kitchen:

Make comparisons between ingredients: "Dried basil and dried oregano look the same, but how are they different?"

Apply past knowledge: "What happened when we boiled noodles? Will the same happen with rice?"

Make predictions: "What will happen to the cheese when we put it in the microwave?"

Look for creative solutions: "What can we do with this leftover sauce?"

Solve problems: "How can we pour this without spilling?"

Information adapted from *The Cooking Book: Fostering young children's learning and delight*, published by The National Association for the Education of Young Children.
COOKING JOURNAL
For each stop on the Circle Food Tour, we'll give you a few things to write or talk about for each dish.

WHILE YOU'RE COOKING

- What do the grits look like before and after they're cooked? What do you think caused the change?
- Where does the water go when it disappears?
- Taste a little bit of each of the seasoning mix before you add it. Do you think it will anything more than flavor?
- Describe the shrimp before cooking (color, smell, touch; raw seafood sometimes carries bacteria that go away when you cook it, so don't eat it before it's cooked, and be sure to wash your hands well after you touch it). What does it look like afterwards? What do you think happens to the shrimp to change it?

HOW’S IT BROWN?
Cooking is all about chemical reactions, and one of the most important of these is called the Maillard reaction. It's what happens when the natural sugars and proteins in our food are heated, like in a pan or oven. It's responsible for browning, and it makes bread taste toasty and malty, burgers taste charred, and coffee taste dark and robust, but it also transforms meat and vegetables. It's also what makes a roux turn from white to brown.

WHILE YOU'RE EATING

- How does it look? Is it pretty? What colors do you see? Does the way it looks make you want to eat it, or not?
- How does it smell? Does the way it smells make you want to eat it, or not?
- Now take a bite. What individual ingredients can you identify by smell or taste? What do you like or not like like about the way it tastes?

Grown-ups: Read more about the Maillard Reaction in this post from Serious Eats: https://tinyurl.com/browning-reaction
WHAT'S COOKING?

GRITS

Grits are made from ground dried corn cooked in liquid to make a porridge. Sometimes sweet and sometimes savory, they’re found at breakfast, lunch, and dinner all over the American South.

There are many types of grits that vary mostly by how they are ground. This gives them different textures -- the way they feel in your mouth when you eat them. Hominy grits (far left, below) are made from corn that has been treated to remove the outer layer of the corn kernel.

Corn has been a part of the human diet going back almost 10,000 years to where it was first cultivated in Mexico. For almost as long, humans have made tools to grind corn for corn meal and corn grits.

Corn was introduced to West Africa -- home to many Africans enslaved in the Americas -- by the Portuguese, so the ingredient was familiar to enslaved Africans in the American South. These enslaved Africans introduced grits to their white owners, and grits became a part of Southern cuisine.

Adapted from the article, available from Essence Magazine at https://tinyurl.com/Essence-grits

ANDOUILLE

Andouille is a smoked pork sausage that is very popular in Cajun cuisine. Like many Louisiana traditions, Andouille originated in France; Cajun Andouille is a blend of French, German, and American sausage-making traditions, and can be found in both jambalaya and gumbo.
Cajun culture represents the people and customs of Southern Louisiana. The area was settled by French Canadians -- French-speaking people whose customs blended with the local to create a unique identity. Although they make up less than 5% of the population today, Cajuns have had an important influence on Louisiana’s culture, especially its cuisine and its music. Cajun cuisine is known for it's highly seasoned (and sometimes spicy) flavors, showcased in dishes like jambalaya and gumbo.

WHAT’S A ROUX?

Roux (pronounced "roo") is a very important part of traditional cooking from all over Europe and the Americas, and is central to Southern American and Cajun cooking. It's used to thicken all kinds of sauces and gravies. It has two elements-- fat (like oil or butter) and flour. When liquid is added, it becomes a sauce.

First, the flour is cooked in the fat. The fat coats the flour particles, and keeps them from clumping together. That way, each flour particle can absorb its own liquid. When the liquid is added, the pasty roux absorbs more liquid than plain flour. This makes the sauce thicker because there's more starchy grain surface to soak up the liquid. At first, the sauce thickens VERY quickly, because of there's so much more flour than liquid.

Stirring is important to keep the starch granules suspended in the fat and moving around, otherwise you'll see lumps of flour form in your sauce. Stirring also keeps the temperature of the sauce uniform so the sauce stays smooth as each starch granule takes up its share of water.

Once the flour particles are dampened and the mixture continues to cook, they can absorb EVEN MORE liquid and they swell up (so the sauce is still thick, even though more liquid has been added). This is called "gelatinization". The longer you cook a roux, the darker and more flavorful it will become. Check out this video from the food network to watch the process: https://tinyurl.com/make-a-roux

Adapted from "The Science of Cooking," a resource available from The Exploratorium in San Francisco. Find more food science at https://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/index.html
MEASURING CUP FRACTIONS CHALLENGE

Use water to practice with measuring cups and learn about fractions!

Fill a dish tub or bucket with water, and try to create the amounts given below using your measuring cups at home. Have kids measure various amounts using different combinations of their measuring cups. They can keep track of their work by writing fraction addition equations in the space below each question.

Fill a clear liquid measuring cup like the one shown below to see your progress! Suggestion: Have kids record their solutions on a piece of paper.

MEASURING CUP CHALLENGE: QUESTIONS

1. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/4 and 1/2 measuring cups?
2. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/3 and 1/2 measuring cups?
3. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/4 and 1/3 measuring cups?
4. How could you make 2 cups using any of the other measuring cups? Find as many ways as possible.
5. Find two ways of making 3/4 cup.
6. Bonus challenge: How is the 1/3 cup measure different from the others?

Check out these short videos from Kahn Academy: introduction to fractions and equivalent fractions!
MEASURING CUP FRACTIONS CHALLENGE

ANSWERS

1. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/4 and 1/2 measuring cups?
   1/2 + 1/2 = 1 cup
   1/2 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 1 cup
   1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 1 cup

2. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/3 and 1/2 measuring cups?
   1/2 + 1/2 = 1 cup
   1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3 = 1 cup

3. How could you make 1 cup using the 1/4 and 1/3 measuring cups?
   1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 1 cup
   1/2 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 1 cup

4. How could you make 2 cups using any of the other measuring cups? Find as many ways as possible.
   1 + 1 = 2 cups
   1 + 1/2 + 1/2 = 2 cups
   1 + 1/2 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 2 cups
   1/2 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 2 cups
   1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 2 cups
   1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3 = 2 cups

   1/2 + 1/4 = 3/4 cup
   1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 3/4 cup
Focus on variety, amount, and nutrition.
Choose foods and beverages with less saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
Start with small changes to build healthier eating styles.
Support healthy eating for everyone.

Eating healthy is a journey shaped by many factors, including our stage of life, situations, preferences, access to food, culture, traditions, and the personal decisions we make over time. All your food and beverage choices count. MyPlate offers ideas and tips to help you create a healthier eating style that meets your individual needs and improves your health. Go to choosemyplate.gov for more information, activities and worksheets on healthy eating.

**WHAT'S ON MYPLATE?**

- Any fruit or 100% fruit juice counts as part of the Fruit Group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried, and may be whole, cut-up, or pureed.
- Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as a member of the Vegetable Group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed.
- Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product. Bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits are examples of grain products. Grains are divided into 2 subgroups, Whole Grains and Refined Grains.
- All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are considered part of this food group. Foods made from milk that retain their calcium content (like cheese and yogurt) are part of the group. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not. Calcium-fortified soymilk (soy beverage) is also part of the Dairy Group.
- All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the Protein Foods Group.
Use the space below to draw your favorites from each of the MyPlate groups!

For more information on healthy eating, visit www.choosemyplate.gov