



Dining by  
Design



By Becky McKinley  
beckymckinley@gmail.com

# Hooked for Life

My Shrimp-Fueled  
Journey from the  
Panhandle to the  
World Table

**Growing up** in the Texas Panhandle, with no ocean in sight, seafood was more fantasy than reality. Greenbelt Lake was our only “seafood” source—and let’s just say Pike, that grumpy, prehistoric-looking fish, never made it onto my dream menu. On rare occasions, a kind-hearted rancher would let my dad and me fish in his private ponds, where I quickly became a bass-catching machine.

My first real fishing memory? I was 8 years old when I hooked a 5-pound bass. When it got tangled in the weeds, I didn’t think twice—I dove in and hauled him out myself. I wasn’t going home empty-handed. My dad’s famous line from that day on? “Never marry a woman who can’t catch, clean, and cook a fish.” Challenge accepted. And achieved.

My early culinary experiences with fish were, like many kids of my era, humble: Friday fish sticks on a melamine tray at school, washed down with a warm half-pint of chocolate milk. Gourmet? Hardly. Memorable? Absolutely.

Things changed forever when I was 12. My brother-in-law opened a Zuider Zee seafood restaurant near the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. There, I discovered the wonder of hand-dipped, deep-fried shrimp-and I was hooked. My sister, ever the pro, taught me to eat the tails so no one could count how many I'd devoured. At the time, shrimp was considered a luxury item-pricey, scarce, and completely worth it.

Food has that magical way of anchoring us to memory. And for me, shrimp has always been the flavor of celebration, adventure, and indulgence. Today, shrimp remains a mainstay in my kitchen. It's affordable, fast, and wildly versatile. Sweet and succulent, shrimp pairs beautifully with butter, garlic, citrus, spice, and herbs-making it a global passport to flavor.

## Why Cook with Shrimp?



**Price:** With farm-raised options readily available (often \$3/lb at United when on sale-buy two pounds, get two free!), shrimp has never been more budget-friendly.

**Ease:** Most shrimp comes peeled and deveined, so you're paying for what you eat-no bones, no fuss.

**Flavor:** Whether you're going bold with Cajun spices, creamy with coconut curry, or fresh with lime and avocado, shrimp adapts beautifully to cuisines around the world.

Of course, some purists insist on wild-caught only-but I'm mad about farm-raised. They're affordable, delicious, and easy to find.

One of my favorite dinner club themes ever was a "Shrimp Around the World" party. Guests enjoyed shrimp in many international styles: Shrimp Curry for India, Shrimp and Grits for the U.S., Shrimp Ceviche for Mexico, and Shrimp Tempura for Japan. It was a culinary passport-no TSA line required. So, grab your skillet-or your passport-and join me on this global shrimp adventure. These are my go-to recipes for celebrating that sweet, savory gift from the sea.

## SHRIMP AND GRITS

This recipe has been in my repertoire for 20 years. For the longest time I would not share it but since I am no longer catering, I decided I would freely share it. It is beautifully served in a martini glass at a fancy party. You will love this recipe.

### GREEN CHILE CHEESE GRITS

2 C. grits	4 eggs
6 C. water	1 C. milk
1 tsp. salt	¼ tsp. cayenne (to taste)
2 sticks butter	2 C. shredded jalapeño jack
1 lb. white cheese (I use Velveeta with green chiles)	cheese (this is the hard cheese, not Velveeta)
Any Velveeta will work	

Bring salt and water to a rapid boil.

Remove from the stove and whisk in grits, reduce heat and cook until grits are thickened. This will take about 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in butter and Velveeta. Stir until the cheese melts. Mix eggs, milk and cayenne together. Add to the grits, whisking until incorporated. Stir in the additional Monterey Jack cheese.

Pour into a PAM sprayed 9 X 13 pan. The grits can be frozen at this point. Add additional grated cheese on top if you want. When ready to bake, place in 325 degrees uncovered for about 45 minutes to 1 hour or until bubbling throughout. Lay a piece of foil over the top if it begins to brown too much. Do not crimp the foil, just lightly lay it over the top.

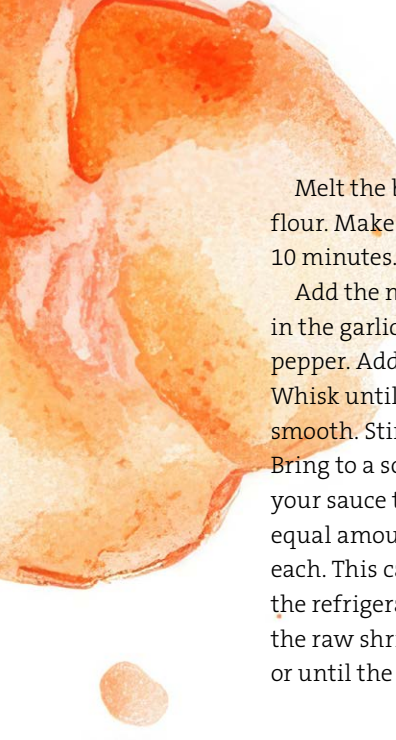
If frozen, thaw before cooking. The grits may seem a bit thin to you. Stir them well, they need to be thin to serve. I serve them in a Martini glass topped with the shrimp Aaron sauce.

### SPICY SHRIMP AARON SAUCE

This is the sauce I serve over the grits. It is yummy! It is also great with pork tenderloin, or chicken and the dirty rice in the next recipe.

½ C. butter	2 C. chicken stock
½ C. flour	4 oz. cream cheese
¼ C. minced onion	½ C. grated Parmesan cheese
½ tsp. garlic salt	2 C. half-and-half
1-½ tsp. Cajun seasoning	3 C. raw crawfish or shrimp
1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)	that is shelled.





Melt the butter in a medium saucepan; add the flour. Make a rich brown roux. This will take about 10 minutes.

Add the minced onions and incorporate. Stir in the garlic salt, Cajun seasoning and cayenne pepper. Add the chicken stock and cream cheese. Whisk until cream cheese is incorporated and smooth. Stir in Parmesan cheese and half-and-half. Bring to a soft boil or until thickened. If you want your sauce thicker add Cornstarch mixed with an equal amount of water. I start with 1 tablespoon of each. This can be made ahead of time and kept in the refrigerator. When ready to serve, heat and add the raw shrimp. It will need to cook for 4 minutes or until the shrimp is cooked through.

## BECKY'S DIRTY RICE

I've added this recipe because it is so good with the shrimp and grits sauce. Serve with pork tenderloin. It is yummy!

1 C. celery, chopped  
1 onion, chopped  
4 T. minced garlic  
1/3 C. red, yellow and green bell peppers  
4 T. bacon drippings  
½ stick butter

1 lb. Owens sausage (hot) cooked and drained  
1 T. Cajun seasoning  
2 C. Uncle Ben's Rice  
4 C. chicken stock  
Salt to taste

Sauté celery, onion, garlic and peppers in the bacon drippings and butter. Add the cooked and drained sausage. Stir in the remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for about 20 minutes or until the liquid has reduced and the rice is soft. Spoon dirty rice onto a large platter and sprinkle with green onions and chopped tomatoes.

## SHRIMP CEVICHE FROM MEXICO

Ceviche is best enjoyed the day it's served, but if you manage to have any leftovers, store them in an airtight container in the fridge for up to two days. The shrimp will continue to cook in the lime juice mixture, so be prepared for the texture to change the longer it sits! I do recommend eating the first day.

### Large pot of water

1 T. salt

1 lb. shrimp, peeled and deveined, the 26 - 30 count works well for this recipe

Bring the pot to a boil, turn it off and remove it from the stove. Add the shrimp and poach until the shrimp is pink and cooked through. This takes between 3 to 4 minutes.

Drain the shrimp and let it cool. Place shrimp on a cutting board and cut into pieces about the size of a quarter. Set to the side to cool.

½ C. red onion finely chopped

3 jalapeños, finely chopped

Juice of 7 limes or 3/4 to 1 C.

Juice of 1 orange

1 C. of English cucumber

cut lengthwise in 1/2 and

the 1/2 again, then in

small pieces

1 C. quartered cherry

tomatoes, I use the

different colored ones

2 large avocado, semi-soft, diced

¼ C. fresh chopped cilantro

Kosher salt to taste - not much

Fresh ground black pepper to taste

Bring the pot to a boil, turn it off and remove it. In a large bowl, combine shrimp, onion, jalapeños, lime juice, and orange juice. Refrigerate until cold and 20 minutes.

Stir in the remaining cucumber, tomatoes, avocado and cilantro. Season with the salt and pepper.

To serve or assemble the ceviche I recommend a fresh, fried corn tortilla spread with Sriracha mayo and topped with chilled ceviche. Other options are served with tortilla chips.

## SHRIMP TEMPURA

There are many different methods for making shrimp tempura, and after trying most of them I believe this is the simplest, easiest way to achieve what I consider the ultimate result – a perfectly cooked shrimp encased in a light, airy, very thin, but extremely crispy shell.

One of the keys here is using large, very dry shrimp, and prepping them properly so they don't curl up in the hot oil. Besides that, you need to make your batter with ice cold sparkling water right before you're going to fry. A cold batter is a crispy batter, so plan accordingly.

Finally, the freshly fried shrimp should be eaten almost as soon as they come out of the oil. Don't burn your mouth, but letting these sit around getting cold is a crime against nature.

I like to share a rather fun fact that tempura isn't actually a Japanese invention. Apparently, the Portuguese introduced the technique in the 16th century. Who knew?

My favorite condiment to serve with these is sriracha mayonnaise and drizzled quickly with balsamic reduction. It is the bomb!

*12 large shrimp, peeled and deveined*

*Canola oil for frying*

*¼ C. self-rising flour*

*¼ C. cornstarch*

*½ tsp. kosher salt*

*1 pinch cayenne pepper*

*½ C. cold sparkling water*

Dry the peeled and deveined shrimp on paper towels. Flip each shrimp over and make shallow cuts through to make sure they won't curl up when frying. Refrigerate until needed.

Heat oil to 375 degrees in a stock pot or deep fryer.

Combine self-rising flour, cornstarch, salt, and cayenne in a bowl with a whisk. Add cold water and whisk until flour disappears and a crepe-like batter is achieved. Coat shrimp in batter.

Fry shrimp in small batches, no more than six at a time, making sure they don't stick together, until golden brown and crisp, about 3 minutes. Drain on paper towels.

Drizzle with balsamic and serve with dipping sauce.

## SPICY SHRIMP CURRY BOWL

*1 lb. large shrimp, cleaned, peeled and deveined*

### Sauce:

*1 T. fresh ginger (peeled & chopped)*

*½ C. green onions (cut on the diagonal)*

*1 T. oil*

*2 T. Thai Green or Red curry paste*

*1 can "Lite" or regular coconut milk*

*2 T. soy sauce*

*2 T. brown sugar*

*2 T. fish sauce*

To make the sauce, heat the oil in your skillet or wok. Add the green onions and ginger, stir fry for 3 to 5 minutes. Add the curry paste and stir to incorporate. Add the coconut milk, soy sauce, brown sugar and fish sauce. Simmer for about 15 minutes to thicken a bit.

### Vegetables:

*2 T. oil or more as needed*

*1 C. broccoli (cut into florets)*

*1 carrots (julienne cut)*

*½ C. red peppers (julienne cut)*

In a large skillet or wok, heat the oil to high heat and add the vegetables. Stir fry until cooked to your preference. I like mine very crunchy. About 5 minutes usually works well. Add the sauce and simmer for a few minutes, about 3 minutes. Stir in the raw prepared shrimp. Cook for 4 minutes or until the shrimp is opaque. Pour over the sticky rice and top with sesame seeds, crushed peanuts, cilantro and fresh lime wedges.

Serve with sticky rice. *AW*



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