

CREAMY STONE-GROUND GRITS

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 1 HR START TO FINISH: 1 1/4 HR

"Grits love salt," says Peacock, and his creamy-white, almost milky grits, with yellow and black flecks of coarsely ground corn, demonstrate that it's not saltiness he's after, just perfectly balanced seasoning. Grits usually function as an accompaniment, like polenta or rice, but it's certainly easy to imagine eating a bowl of these on their own, with no more than a pat of butter.

4 cups water
4 cups whole milk
2 cups white stone-ground grits (see cooks' note, below)
1/2 cup heavy cream
1/2 stick unsalted butter (optional), cut into pieces
2 teaspoons kosher salt

- Bring water and milk just to a simmer in a 4- to 5-quart heavy saucepan. Meanwhile, cover grits with water in a large bowl and whisk vigorously. Let stand 30 seconds, then skim any chaff that has floated to surface with a fine-mesh sieve. Drain grits well in a fine-mesh sieve and whisk into simmering milk mixture.
- Reduce heat to low and simmer grits, partially covered, stirring often with a heatproof rubber spatula, until grits are tender and thickened to the consistency of loose oatmeal, about 1 1/4 hours (stir more toward end of cooking to avoid scorching). If grits become too thick before they are tender and creamy, thin with hot water (about 1/2 cup).
- Stir in cream, butter (if using), and salt. Remove from heat and keep warm, covered, up to 20 minutes.

COOKS' NOTES: If you can't find stone-ground grits, use regular grits (but not quick-cooking). Regular grits will take less than half the time to cook.

• Grits are at their creamiest right after they are made but can be made up to 2 days ahead. Chill, uncovered, until cool, then cover. To reheat, break congealed grits into pieces and whisk in enough boiling water to loosen (up to about 1 cup). Heat over low heat, stirring constantly.