SHRIMP & GRITS
(Invented, or at least perfected, at Crook’s Corner in Chapel Hill, NC)

This recipe makes 4 servings—this is on the small side; you’ll need at least salad and bread to make a meal for four people.

1 recipe basic boiled grits & cheese (instant grits mixed with 1.5 C sharp cheddar cheese works well).
1.5 to 2 lb. fresh raw shrimp, in shell
8 slices smoked bacon
peanut oil
2 C sliced mushrooms
1 C finely sliced scallions (or onion)
4 large garlic cloves, peeled
4 T plus 1 t lemon juice
3 T fresh chopped parsley
Tabasco sauce
nutmeg
salt
pepper, black and white, freshly-ground
pinch of ground cayenne pepper (more to taste)
fresh cilantro and lemon slices for garnish

Prepare grits with full amount of cheese; season lightly to taste with Tabasco and a pinch each of nutmeg and white pepper; keep warm. For extra zest, use optional cayenne.

Peel shrimp, rinse, and pat dry.

Dice bacon and sauté lightly in skillet; the edges of the bacon should brown, but the bacon should not become crisp.

Add enough peanut oil to bacon fat in skillet to make a layer of fat about 1/8” deep (I drain more bacon fat if it’s very salty, less if it’s milder); when quite hot, add shrimp in an even layer. Turn shrimp as soon as they start to become opaque. Add mushrooms and sauté about 4 minutes. Turn occasionally and add the scallions. Crush the garlic through a press into the mixture and stir, then season with lemon juice, a dash or two of Tabasco, and parsley. Add salt, pepper and possibly more cayenne to taste.

Divide grits among 4 plates; spoon the shrimp over. Garnish with cilantro and lemon slices. Serve immediately.

Wine: a full-bodied dry white is best. Very cold beer is also recommended.