

North Georgia makers of small-batch preserves win big at Jekyll Island Shrimp & Grits Festival

Unicoi Preserves founders Suzy and Clark Neal took home the First Place and Consumer Choice awards at the 10th Annual Jekyll Island Shrimp and Grits Amateur Cooking Competition on Jekyll Island Sept. 19. Their recipe for Good Enough Shrimp and Grits with Candied Bacon included their Georgia Apple Cider Pepper Spread and four



Suzy and Clark Neal

other Georgia Grown ingredients.

“We were proud to be representing Georgia Grown and we featured several of our fellow Georgia Grown companies in our winning recipe,” said Clark Neal Jr.

Other Georgia Grown featured companies and ingredients included Signet wine from Habersham Winery; peanut oil from Oliver Farms; butter and cream from Mountain Fresh Creamery; and, of course, Georgia Apple Cider Pepper Spread from Unicoi Preserves.

This is the second award Unicoi Preserves has received for their Apple Cider Pepper Spread. Earlier this year, they were awarded as a finalist at the Flavor of Georgia, an annual food contest hosted by the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences with the support of the Georgia Department of Agriculture.

Unicoi Preserves products are the Neals’ home recipes, made by hand in small batches. Using locally sourced fruit grown in their mountain region and picked at the peak of ripeness allows all varieties of their products to be flavorful and low in sugar with no artificial ingredients.

Good Enough Shrimp & Grits with Candied Bacon Grits

An original recipe by Unicoi Preserves, Sautee, Ga.

Ingredients:

2 ½ cups Nora Mill Stone Ground Grits
7½ cups water
1 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. kosher salt
1 ½ cups Mountain Fresh Creamery Cream
1 stick (8 Tbsps.) unsalted butter
2 ½ cups Cabot Extra Sharp Cheddar, grated

Preparation:

Combine water, salt, cream and butter in stockpot, stirring in grits over high heat. Stir constantly until boiling to prevent grits from clumping. Lower heat to simmer, cover with lid, stirring occasionally for approximately 30 minutes, adding water if they get too thick. Stir in cheese, cover and keep grits warm over low heat.

Candied Bacon

Ingredients:

1 ½ lbs. Wright’s Thick Cut bacon, diced into approx. ½ inch pieces

Preparation:

Cook over medium heat until browned, drain off grease, return bacon to pan. Add 9 oz. jar Unicoi Preserves Apple Cider Pepper Spread to bacon. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, reducing the liquid until almost evaporated. Remove candied bacon from pan to a Silpat or parchment paper. Spread out to cool.

Shrimp

Ingredients:

3 lbs. Georgia Wild Caught Shrimp
Kosher salt & black pepper to taste

Preparation:

Peel and de-vein shrimp. Rinse and pat dry. Season lightly with kosher salt and black pepper. Heat 2 Tbsps. unsalted butter and 2 Tbsps. Oliver Farm Peanut Oil in a skillet over medium high heat. Add shrimp to hot pan in batches; don’t crowd the pan! Sear one minute per side and remove shrimp from pan.

Pan Sauce

Add 1½ cups Habersham Vineyard Signet Wine, turn up heat, add ½ lb. Mountain Fresh Creamery Butter and cook for 5 -7 minutes, reducing sauce slightly. Taste for salt and adjust if necessary. Return shrimp to pan, toss to coat shrimp and cook over medium heat, approx. 2 minutes. To serve: Ladle grits into bowl, top with shrimp, pan sauce, candied bacon and chopped chives.

Georgia Grown shopping list:

Unicoi Preserves, Sautee
unicoipreserves.com
Georgia Apple Cider Pepper Spread

Habersham Vineyards, Helen
habershamvineyards.com
Signet wine

Mountain Fresh Creamery, Clermont
mountainfreshcreamery.com
Butter
Cream

Oliver Farm Artisan Oil, Pitts
oliverfarm.com
Peanut Oil

Backyard birders get lesson in egg candling, grading

Egg Candling Inspector Lee Lancaster of the Georgia Department of Agriculture leads an Egg Candling class at the Spalding County Extension Office Sept. 3. Lancaster travels middle and South Georgia teaching egg candling and grading to backyard flock owners who sell eggs from their flocks directly to the end user.

“Anybody who sells eggs in the state of Georgia has to have a candling license,” Lancaster explained.

Candling uses a bright light source held close to the egg to determine the condition inside the shell of the air cell, yolk and white of the egg. Classes are taught throughout the year all over the state, and last anywhere from two to four hours. Lancaster said he sees anywhere from 20 to 60 students per session.

“Most people have between 20 and 50 chickens. They won’t be producing but maybe 20 dozen eggs a week and most will be selling them at their community farmers market,” Lancaster said. “I don’t try to take microbiologists out of people. I just give them the basics.”

Check the department’s online agriculture calendar at agr.georgia.gov for a schedule of upcoming Egg Candling classes statewide. Classes are co-sponsored by the University of Georgia Agricultural Extension Service.

-Photos by Sharon Dowdy/UGA News Service



Egg Candling Inspector Lee Lancaster, at right, demonstrates candling technique during a class Sept. 3 in Spalding County.

