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# Sausage, Pepper and Grits Casserole

*The Essential Southern Living Cookbook*

Preparation Time: 50 minutes

Start to Finish Time: 1 hour 25 minutes

## **CHEESE GRITS CRUST**

**1 cup milk**

**1/2 cup uncooked quick-cooking grits**

**8 ounces (2 cups) sharp cheddar cheese, shredded**

**1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves**

**3/4 teaspoon Kosher salt**

**1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

**2 large eggs, lightly beaten**

## **SAUSAGE FILLING**

**1 package (19 ounce) mild Italian sausage with casings**

**1 tablespoon canola oil**

**2 large red bell peppers, sliced**

**1 medium red onion, sliced**

**3 cloves garlic, minced**

**1 can (14.5 ounce) diced tomatoes with onion and garlic, drained**

**1/4 cup butter**

**1/4 cup all-purpose flour**

**1 1/2 cups chicken broth**

**1 1/2 tablespoons grape jelly**

**1 teaspoon red wine vinegar**

**1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

**1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt**

Prepare the Cheese Grits Crust: In a large saucepan over medium heat, bring the milk and one cup of water to a boil. Add the grits. Cook, stirring often, for 5 minutes or until thickened. Stir in the cheese, thyme, salt and pepper. Remove from the heat.

Gradually stir about one-fourth of the hot grits mixture into the eggs. Add the egg mixture to the remaining hot grits mixture, stirring until blended.

Prepare the sausage filling: Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. In a Dutch oven over medium heat, cook the sausage in hot oil for 7 to 8 minutes on each side or until browned. Remove the sausage from the Dutch oven, reserving one tablespoon of the drippings.

Cook the bell pepper and onion in the hot drippings over medium-high, stirring often, until tender, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 2 minutes. Cut the sausage into 1/2-inch slices. In a large bowl, stir together the tomatoes, bell pepper mixture and sausage.

In a Dutch oven over medium heat, melt the butter. Whisk in the flour and cook, whisking constantly, for 4 to 5 minutes or until smooth and medium brown. Gradually whisk in the broth. Bring to a boil, whisking constantly.

Reduce the heat to medium-low. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until thickened. Stir in the jelly, vinegar, black pepper and Kosher salt. Stir into the sausage mixture. Spoon into a lightly greased 11 x 7-inch baking dish. Gently spread the Cheese Grits Crust over the top.

Bake in the preheated oven until lightly browned, 20 to 25 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

## **Breakfast**

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*Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 5162 Calories; 382g Fat (66.4% calories from fat); 269g Protein; 166g Carbohydrate; 11g Dietary Fiber; 1533mg Cholesterol; 9406mg Sodium. Exchanges: 6 Grain(Starch); 34 Lean Meat; 5 1/2 Vegetable; 1 Non-Fat Milk; 54 Fat; 1 1/2 Other Carbohydrates.*