

FLORIDA FLAVORS



CELEBRATING AMERICA 250 - FLORIDA STYLE

FLORIDA FLAVORS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Fresh-Squeezed Lemonade	3
Duval Smoked Fish Dip	4
South Florida Sofrito	5
Sunshine State Citrus Ceviche	6
Panhandle Oysters Rockefeller	7
Wanda's Dressing and Gravy	8
Swamp Cabbage Salad	9
Slow Cooker Ham	10
Port Charlotte Brunswick Stew	11
Keralite Fish Curry	12
Sunshine State Gumbo	13
Meyer Lemon Mayonnaise- Crusted Grouper	14
Mayport Shrimp Scampi	15
Alan's Famous Cuban Pork Roast	16
Grits à Ya Ya	18

Mom's Spicy Chicken and Citrus Salsa	20
Lemon Pound Cake	21
Coastal Chocolate Chip Banana Bread	22
Emela Jane's Easy Key Lime Pie	23
Florida Blueberry Cobbler	24
A Final Note	25

*Produced by the Florida Department
of Elder Affairs, June 2026*

INTRODUCTION

Florida's kitchens tell the story of its people. Within these pages, you'll find recipes passed down through generations of Florida families, dishes shaped by the Panhandle's Southern roots, the citrus groves and cattle ranches of Central Florida, and the vibrant Cuban, Caribbean, and Hispanic flavors of South Florida. Each recipe comes from a real kitchen and a real story: a grandmother's Christmas tradition, a mother's Easter pie, or a favorite dish shared between neighbors over a fence line.

This collection was gathered from Floridians across the state. Many of these recipes were shared by seniors who have spent decades perfecting them—and even longer—cherishing the memories they hold. Others have never been written down, preserved instead through memory and lovingly passed from

one generation to the next. Together, they reflect something the Florida Department of Elder Affairs holds dear: that food is one of the most enduring ways we preserve our history, celebrate our culture, and express our love for one another.

As we celebrate America's 250th birthday, we're proud to celebrate the way Floridians have always come together around tables filled with family, friends, and the fresh ingredients that grow in every corner of our beautiful state. We are deeply grateful to every Floridian who opened their heart and recipe box to help make this cookbook possible. May these recipes inspire new traditions, spark cherished memories, and remind us that some of life's greatest moments are shared around the table.

FUN FACT

St. Augustine, founded by the Spanish in 1565, was already 211 years old by the time the Declaration of Independence was signed. This makes it the oldest continuously occupied European-founded city in the nation.



FLORIDA FLAVORS

Fresh-Squeezed Lemonade

INGREDIENTS

- 3-4 large lemons per cup of juice
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup water

INSTRUCTIONS

Squeeze all the lemons into a pitcher (I use a manual juice press).

Then, combine 1 cup of sugar and 1 cup of water. Cook over a medium heat until all the sugar dissolves.

Set this aside, and let it cool for 10-15 minutes.

Combine the cooled syrup and your freshly-squeezed lemon juice in a pitcher.

Add the rest of the water, stir, and pour over ice. Garnish with sliced lemons (optional).



FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Shannon Miller

Winter Springs,
Seminole County

Growing up in the middle of Florida, hot afternoons were a way of life. After hours spent in the backyard by the lake, nothing was more refreshing than coming inside for a glass of Mom's freshly squeezed lemonade. Those simple lemonade treats became one of my favorite memories of growing up in Florida.

I carried on that tradition with my own kiddos, and fortunately, our neighbor has an amazing lemon tree. You'll need 3-4 large lemons for this recipe. I love garnishing each glass with fresh lemon slices to add a special touch when serving guests.

FUN FACT

There are over 30 varieties of lemons worldwide, but Florida's climate and soil only support a handful, which gives Florida-grown lemons their own distinct flavor.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Tannahill Glen Keymer

Jacksonville,
Duval County

Here in Florida we're spoiled for choice when it comes to fresh fish, black drum from our local waters, snapper hauled in by anglers in the Keys, and just about everything in between. That abundance is what makes fish dip such a blast to make! Smoking fish is practically a state pastime, and you'll find smoked fillets everywhere. We serve this dip at parties, as a salty afternoon treat, or piled on crackers for a beachside picnic. For me, fish dip is the perfect mash-up of old Southern comfort and sunny Florida fun!



FUN FACT

Long before refrigeration, Florida fishermen smoked their catch to preserve it. What began as a practical method of storage became a beloved Sunshine State seafood tradition.

Duval Smoked Fish Dip

INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz favorite smoked fish
- 4 oz whipped cream cheese
- 4 oz regular cream cheese
- 4 oz Dukes mayo
- 4 oz sour cream
- Juice from two lemons
- 1 large red onion, chopped
- Fish seasoning (Tony Cesere, Slap Yo Mama, etc.)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Hot sauce to taste
- Two sticks butter
- Seasoning mix (Lawrys, ranch, no salt, etc.)
- One box saltine crackers

INSTRUCTIONS

Pull apart smoked fish. Place it in a food processor with all the remaining ingredients. Blend until combined. Texture should be relatively smooth with chunks. Transfer to bowl and chill for at least an hour.

Heat oven to 300°F.

Melt butter in large Pyrex cup. Add seasoning and blend well.

Lay rows of saltines flat across pan in three rows side by side.

Pour butter mixture over. Some people shake them in a bag but I just soak in poured butter seasoning.

Bake about 10 minutes or until preferred crispiness (they crisp once they are taken out of oven and cooled).

Serve with dip. I love to add some homemade salsa!



FLORIDA FLAVORS

South Florida Sofrito

INGREDIENTS

- Onion
- Garlic
- Cilantro
- Culantro (long-leaf coriander)
- Red peppers
- Green peppers
- Cachucha peppers (sweet peppers)

INSTRUCTIONS

Gather all the ingredients. Finely chop or purée them. This recipe can be used immediately or refrigerated for up to 2 weeks.

Sofrito can also be frozen. Make a big batch, freeze it in cubes, and you have an instant flavor boost for rice, beans, stews, shrimp, or pulled pork. It brings Cuban, Puerto Rican, Haitian, and Caribbean influences into everyday cooking in a simple, familiar way.



FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Judit Serrano

Miami Lakes, Miami-Dade County

Bright, zesty, and endlessly useful, Florida sofrito is the base that shows up in so many of our kitchen favorites. This island-inspired blend of onions, bell peppers, garlic, cilantro, or lime, and a touch of ají or jalapeño tastes like Miami markets and Keys backyard cooking in one spoonful.

In our kitchen, sofrito is less about tradition on paper and more about what it does in the pan. It wakes up seafood, fresh produce, and grilled meats, turning a basic meal into something bright, bold, and ready for a slow Florida evening.

FUN FACT

In Miami and across Florida, sofrito reflects deep Caribbean roots. It is often considered the "heart" of many family recipes.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Charlene Wagner

*The Villages,
Sumter County*

Living in Central Florida, I've always been inspired by the abundance of fresh citrus and tropical flavors available year-round. As someone who follows a whole food plant-based lifestyle, I wanted to recreate the bright, refreshing taste of traditional ceviche in a way that honors both Florida's coastal roots and the healing power of plants.

This dish has become a staple in our home, especially during warm afternoons when something light, hydrating and vibrant just feels right. It celebrates the essence of Florida: sunshine, simplicity, and fresh-from-the-earth ingredients. It's also a recipe I love sharing with friends, and family, because it shows how delicious, and satisfying healthy food can truly be.

FUN FACT

Florida citrus, especially Key limes, add a bright, tangy flavor to coastal ceviche.

Sunshine State Citrus Ceviche

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups hearts of palm, drained and sliced into bite-sized pieces
- Orange juice
- Lime juice
- Lemon juice
- ½ cup of mango or pineapple diced
- ¼ cup red onion, finely chopped
- 1 small jalapeño, minced (optional)
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 ripe avocado, diced

INSTRUCTIONS

In a large bowl, combine hearts of palm, mango, red onion, jalapeño, and cilantro.

In a separate bowl, whisk together orange, lime, and lemon juice. Pour the citrus marinade over the fruit and vegetable mixture and gently toss. Let sit for 15–30 minutes to allow flavors to meld.

Gently fold in diced avocado just before serving. Serve chilled.



FLORIDA FLAVORS

Panhandle Oysters Rockefeller

INGREDIENTS

Oysters

- 12 Fresh Gulf oysters, shucked on the half shell

Rockefeller Topping

- 4 slices thick-cut bacon, chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 small yellow onion, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 10 oz fresh spinach, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

Optional Garnishes

- Meyer Lemon wedges
- Chopped fresh parsley

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cook the bacon in a skillet over medium heat until crisp. Remove the bacon. Leave the bacon drippings in the pan. Add the butter, onion, and garlic. Cook about 3–4 minutes, until softened. Stir in the spinach and cook until wilted.

Remove from the heat. Stir in the cooked bacon, breadcrumbs, Parmesan, Worcestershire sauce, hot sauce, paprika, salt, and pepper. Arrange the oysters on a baking sheet lined with crumpled foil to keep them level. Spoon about a tablespoon of the spinach mixture onto each oyster.

Bake for 10–12 minutes, or until the oysters are cooked through and the topping is lightly browned.

Garnish with chopped parsley and serve immediately with fresh lemon wedges.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Sophie Vega

Pensacola,
Escambia County

Growing up on the coast in Pensacola, Oysters Rockefeller was always a special treat. My sister started working at one of the local restaurants and brought this recipe home to share with us. She said it was what she ate for lunch nearly every day. That came as a shock to our family because she's always hated seafood! We figured that if this recipe was good enough to change her mind about oysters, we had to give it a try!



FUN FACT

Oysters Rockefeller was created at Antoine's in New Orleans in 1889, where it became one of the most iconic American seafood dishes.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Kevin Guthrie

Tallahassee,
Leon County

Growing up in Florida, where families came from every corner of the country, holiday traditions become the threads that tie generations together. While palm trees may sway outside instead of snow falling, our table was continuously filled with the comfort and warmth of Southern hospitality. When I think of my late mother, I think of someone who was always present. She was always there for anyone who needed her. Nothing brings those memories back more than her dressing and gravy. Family gatherings never felt complete without it on the table. She didn't make it simply because it was expected; she made it with love, knowing it would bring everyone together!



FUN FACT

In Florida kitchens, gravy is a classic comfort staple rooted in the state's Southern culinary traditions.

Wanda's Dressing and Gravy

INGREDIENTS

Gravy

- 1 8-10 pound bag of chicken quarters
- 1 canned of cream of chicken soup
- Wondra flour
- 4 tsp chicken bouillon

Dressing

- 2-3 boxes Jiffy corn bread mix
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cream of onion soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 8 boiled eggs, grated (optional)
- 6 raw eggs
- 1 loaf of day-old white bread

INSTRUCTIONS

Boil the chicken quarters with water, bouillon, salt, and pepper. Once cooked, remove chicken from broth and set aside. Refrigerate the broth until it is cool enough to skim off and discard the chicken fat.

Gravy

Add the cream of chicken soup to a large pot. Dilute with the reserved broth. Whisk until warm and blended over low heat. Add the chicken and stir until it begins to boil. Reduce heat and thicken with Wondra flour following the directions on the box. When gravy has reached desired thickness, add salt and pepper to taste.

Dressing

The day before, prepare corn bread according to box directions. Crush the corn bread into fine crumbs in a mixing bowl. Tear the bread into small pieces and mix with corn bread thoroughly. Add 6-8 raw eggs along with all 3 cans of soup and mix. Do not dilute the soup. Add the cooked chicken, and grated eggs. Use the broth as needed to make it very moist. Add salt and pepper to taste. Place in pan and bake at 350°F in your oven until it is lightly brown.



FLORIDA FLAVORS

Swamp Cabbage Salad

INGREDIENTS

- 2 swamp cabbages, sliced thin
- 2-3 cans crushed pineapple, drained well
- 1 package miniature marshmallows
- 3 tbs vinegar
- 3 tbs sugar
- 2 tbs chopped crystallized ginger
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- Mayonnaise to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Mix vinegar and sugar, stirring until sugar dissolves. Add ginger, then add marshmallows. Stir to coat marshmallows. Let sit for at least 20 to 30 minutes to allow marshmallows to soak up liquid. Add sliced cabbage, drained pineapple, mayonnaise, and cinnamon. Refrigerate. It's best served the next day.



FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Evelyn Yearly

*Gulf Hammock,
Levy County*

This salad was first introduced to me in the early 1960s while I was still in high school. Later when I was living on a farm in Gulf Hammock, where my husband was harvesting swamp cabbage, I fortuitously received the recipe from a friend. Originally, it was served to me at Johnson's Restaurant on the pier in Cedar Key, Florida. The story behind the recipe's creation was shared with me by the owners' daughter, Eugenia.

When Marie and Webster Johnson first opened their restaurant, they were in competition with Bessie Gibbs of the well-know Island Hotel. Bessie served a famous cabbage palm salad and Marie felt they needed their own unusual salad to compete with Bessie's dish. Marie developed this Swamp Cabbage Salad. At first, it was served as a small side with dinners, but it wasn't long before people were requesting it on its own.

FUN FACT

Swamp cabbage is not cabbage at all, but the tender inner heart of Florida's state tree, the cabbage palm.

Jacki Muehlenbein*Havana, Gadsden County*

Years ago, I started making ham in the crockpot after visiting my niece for Thanksgiving. My niece had fixed her ham in the crockpot. I thought how convenient and simple it must be! I developed this recipe, as I like the cola and clove flavor. Gadsden county has a long history with Coca-Cola, and how can you go wrong with Florida orange flavor? Every time I make this recipe, I think of my niece, and the impact Coca-Cola has made on Gadsden county.

**FUN FACT**

Florida's Gadsden County is tied to early Coca-Cola history through tobacco used in its original recipes. Coca-Cola remains a popular glaze for slow-cooked ham.

Slow Cooker Ham

INGREDIENTS

- 1 yellow onion cut into ½ inch slices
- 8 lb fully-cooked spiral-sliced ham
- 1 cup light brown sugar

Glaze

- 1 cup Coca-Cola
- ½ cup orange juice
- 2 tsp orange zest
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- 3 whole cloves

INSTRUCTIONS

Place sliced onion over the bottom of the crockpot. Add ham on top of the onion, spiral side up, and push down. Sprinkle brown sugar all over the top of the ham until it is covered. If your ham is above the crockpot top, cover with nonstick aluminum foil to seal, and then put the lid on top of it.

Cook on low (max 140°F) for about 3 to 3 1/2 hours. Crockpots cook differently. You are essentially just warming the ham since it is fully cooked. Do not cook at a high temperature. You do not want to dry it out.

After the first hour, uncover ham and baste with drippings in the crockpot. Baste again after 30-45 minutes. Baste again after another 30 -45 minutes and spread the glaze on top. Sometimes I get busy and only baste once besides glazing. You are trying to keep the ham moist so it does not dry out.

While the ham is warming, make the glaze. Place all the glaze ingredients in a small saucepan. Simmer the mixture in a saucepan until it reduces to a syrupy consistency before spreading over the ham. I usually remove the cloves after about 10-15 minutes of simmering. It depends on how much clove flavor you like. I always remove the cloves before glazing the ham. Once the glaze is finished, I just let it sit on the stove with the burner off until I need to spread the glaze on the ham. The glaze thickens more as it sits.



Port Charlotte Brunswick Stew

INGREDIENTS

- Pork chops
- Beef ribs
- Whole chicken
- Water
- 1 whole onion, chopped
- 1 quart fresh tomatoes
- 1 quart corn, canned or off the cob
- 1 quart canned Lima beans
- 3-4 potatoes, diced
- Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

In a large stew pot, combine pork chops, beef ribs, chicken, salt, and pepper. Cover with water and simmer until tender. Add tomatoes, corn, lima beans, potatoes, and onion. Let simmer for 1-2 hours or until vegetables are cooked.

Serve with a slab of buttered cornbread.



FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Janice Parmelee

*Port Charlotte,
Charlotte County*

In Port Charlotte, my mother lovingly tended a garden filled with tomatoes, sweet corn, and lima beans. At the end of each summer, she carefully canned quart after quart at the peak of freshness, preserving the flavors for the months ahead.

When Florida's first crisp days finally arrived, those jars became the heart of her famous Brunswick Stew. The tomatoes tasted vine-ripened, the corn was as sweet as the day it was picked, and every spoonful brought the flavors of her garden back to our table.

Her Brunswick Stew was more than a family favorite. It reflected her hard work, generosity, and the care she poured into feeding those she loved. Even today, a single bowl brings me back to my mother's kitchen, where every meal was made with home-grown vegetables and love.

FUN FACT

In Florida, Brunswick stew is a beloved one-pot tradition often prepared in large kettles for community gatherings.

Isabella Isaac

Jacksonville,
Duval County

This treasured family recipe has been passed down through generations, nourishing both body and soul. Inspired by Florida's abundance of fresh produce, it is a wholesome, versatile dish that celebrates simple ingredients and the joy of gathering around the table. The way we make it, it is naturally packed with nutritious vegetables and vibrant flavors, and can be enjoyed on its own, served over rice, or alongside warm bread or oatmeal chapatis. Whether prepared without spice, lightly seasoned, or with a bold kick (as we enjoy it), this recipe easily adapts, making it a comforting meal for children, adults, and seniors alike.



FUN FACT

In Florida kitchens, this vibrant curry is often adapted with seasonal vegetables commonly grown in the state.

Keralite Fish Curry

INGREDIENTS

- Any meaty fish like salmon, sardines, king fish, barracuda
- 1-2 dried cambodge, presoaked for 20 minutes
- ½ onion chopped
- ½ inch ginger root chopped fine
- 2 green chillies, cut in half and seeds removed
- 1 tsp black mustard seed
- 2 sprigs curry leaves
- salt to taste
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 2 tsp red chilli powder (adjust to taste)
- 3 tbs coconut oil

INSTRUCTIONS

Clean, cut, and wash fish pieces with vinegar and rock salt. Set aside to drain.

Heat a clay pot (for the best flavor) or any sauté pan. Add coconut oil once the pan is hot. Add mustard seed when the oil is hot. Cook until the seeds sputter. Add curry leaves, chopped onion, green chillies, and ginger. Saute for about 2 minutes. Add salt to taste.

Turn off stove. Add the turmeric, and red chili powder (so they don't get burnt) and stir.

Turn stove on. Add the soaked cambodge pieces. Make sure the pieces are pulled apart into length-wise strips.

Add the fish pieces. Shake the pot to evenly distribute. Cover fish pieces with the seasonings. Leave it on the heat to cook, keeping pan open.

Turn flame off when the fish meat turns opaque white. Cover the pan.



Sunshine State Gumbo

INGREDIENTS

- The "Holy Trinity":
 - » 1 cup green bell peppers
 - » 1 cup onions
 - » 1 cup celery
- 1lb Andouille sausage
- 1lb peeled and deveined shrimp
- 1lb skinless chicken breasts
- 14oz Stewed tomatoes
- 5 tbsp Butter
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 2 cup frozen okra
- 5 Bouillon cubes
- 8 cloves minced garlic
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup All-purpose flour
- 4 cups hot water
- Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

In a heavy bottom pot, brown chicken and andouille sausage in oil. Add salt and pepper to taste. Set to the side.

In same pot, sprinkle flour over the oil. Add 2 tbsp of butter. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until brown. Let roux cool. If it smells burnt, it's burnt. If burnt throw it out and try again. Return pot to low heat, add 3 Tbsp butter. Add the "Holy Trinity" and garlic. Cook for 10 minutes. Add Worcestershire sauce. Cook for 10 minutes. Add 4 cups of hot water and bouillon cubes. Stir constantly until incorporated. Add chicken and sausage back to pot. Bring to boil. Reduce heat. Cook for 45 minutes. Add stewed tomatoes and okra. Cook for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Add shrimp during the final 5–7 minutes of cooking, just until shrimp are pink, tender, and cooked through.

Serve over fluffy white rice, with plenty of green onions, and warm Cuban bread on the side. Every bowl is a celebration of Gulf Coast hospitality.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Leda Kelly

*Tallahassee,
Leon County*

Living in Florida means you are never far from the water. That has always shaped the way I make gumbo. I still honor the Cajun base my family taught me with a dark roux, andouille sausage, and the "Holy Trinity" of onions, celery, and peppers, but I like to fold in what is local when I can.

Around our table, gumbo is not rushed. It is something we make when we want people to stay awhile. It is simple, filling, and best shared.



FUN FACT

Florida shrimp gumbo blends Gulf Coast seafood with Creole and Cajun traditions for a true coastal classic.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Maree Meyers

*Pensacola,
Escambia County*

Seafood has always been a staple in our family for generations. No matter where they lived, my grandparents loved preparing, eating, and sharing seafood with their friends and family. My grandpa was always out fishing, while my grandmother would figure out how to prepare whatever he brought home that day.

This recipe was one of the first dishes I learned to prepare. As a child, I remember stopping by Maria's Fresh Seafood Market to pick up the fillets that would become our dinner. While she prepped the fish we would walk out to our Meyer lemon tree in the backyard to pick a couple of lemons to use as a garnish. We always used the extra lemons to make fresh lemonade as a special treat.

FUN FACT

Florida is the nation's leading grouper producer, making it a true Sunshine State seafood staple.

Meyer Lemon Mayonnaise-Crusted Grouper

INGREDIENTS

- 2 6-8 oz fresh grouper fillets
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 Meyer Lemon: 1 tbsp fresh juice + 1 tsp fresh zest
- ½ tsp paprika
- salt and black pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat your oven to 400°F and lightly oil a shallow baking dish.

Dry the grouper fillets with paper towels, then season both sides with salt and pepper, and place them in the dish.

Mix the mayonnaise, Parmesan cheese, Meyer lemon juice, and Meyer lemon zest together in a small bowl.

Spread the mayonnaise mixture evenly over the top of each grouper fillet (basting brush works best).

Sprinkle the paprika evenly over the mayonnaise layer.

Bake uncovered at 400°F for 10-12 minutes until the fish is cooked through (flakes with a fork).

Add additional Parmesan cheese to the fillets. Broil on high for 2-3 minutes until the cheese topping is golden-brown and bubbly.



FLORIDA FLAVORS

Mayport Shrimp Scampi

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 8 cloves fresh garlic, chopped
- 2 sticks butter
- 2 lbs raw shrimp, peeled and cleaned
- 1 cup white wine
- ¼ cup bread crumbs
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- a few leaves of fresh basil (chopped)
- fresh ground salt & pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

Heat the olive oil in a large pan over low to medium heat.

Add the garlic, and saute for less than a minute (Do NOT overcook, it will burn).

Add butter until melted.

Add the shrimp, and cook while stirring for about two minutes or until they start to change color (Do NOT overcook, they will get tough).

Add the wine, and continue to cook while stirring for another two minutes.

Add the bread crumbs, the Parmesan cheese, and the fresh basil.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

TIPS

- Can be served over linguine.
- Adding too many bread crumbs will solidify your sauce. I use a little less than ¼ cup because my family likes a lot of sauce.
- You can use cooked shrimp, but add them at the end so they are heated and don't get too tough.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Cheryl Lannen

*Middleburg,
Clay County*

There's nothing that says "Florida" quite like fresh shrimp! Whether they're caught in the Gulf or along Florida's Atlantic coast, sweet, tender shrimp have long been the centerpiece of family dinners and waterfront gatherings. This recipe is one I return to again and again because it lets the fresh seafood shine. You can picture serving this aromatic dish, on the lanai, with a slice of warm Cuban bread to bring in some South Florida inspiration. I cook it with freshly chopped basil, but some friends also add just a squeeze of fresh Florida Key lime. It's a simple, elegant dish that tastes like a Florida sunset!



FUN FACT

Mayport shrimp from Florida's Atlantic coast are prized for their sweet, briny flavor.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Alan Rubio

Miami-Dade County

This recipe represents the heart of Cuban culture and the strong traditions shared throughout South Florida. With its crispy pork skin, flavorful congri, and authentic garlic mojo, this meal has become one of the most requested and celebrated dishes among the older adults we proudly serve each day through ILS Meals.

Our recipe reflects not only our Latin heritage, but also the warmth, dignity, and care we bring to the community through our nutrition programs.



FUN FACT

Free-roaming chickens are common in Miami's Little Havana. In 2002, this was celebrated by installing 6-foot rooster statues along Calle Ocho as a tribute to Cuban heritage.

Alan's Famous Cuban Pork Roast

INGREDIENTS

Cuban Pork Roast

- 1 whole pork shoulder or pork roast
- 12 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups sour orange juice
- 2 tbsp oregano
- 1 tbsp cumin
- 2 tbsp salt
- 1 tbsp black pepper
- 1 cup oil

Congrí Rice

- 4 cups white rice
- 2 cups black beans
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 tbsp pork fat
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and pepper to taste

Yuca with Garlic Mojo

- 4 lbs yuca
- 8 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup pork fat
- 1 cup sour orange juice
- Salt to taste



FLORIDA FLAVORS

INSTRUCTIONS

Cuban Pork Roast

Prepare marinade using garlic, sour orange juice, oregano, cumin, salt, pepper, and pork fat. Marinate pork overnight for maximum flavor.

Roast slowly at 325°F until pork becomes tender, and juicy. Increase oven temperature during the final cooking stage to achieve a golden, shiny, crispy skin. Let rest before slicing.

Congrí Rice

Prepare sofrito by sauteing onion, green pepper, and garlic in pork fat.

Add black beans, oregano, cumin, salt, and black pepper. Stir in rice, and cook until tender.

Fluff rice before serving.

Yuca with Garlic Mojo

Peel and boil yuca until tender.

Prepare mojo sauce with garlic, pork fat, sour orange juice, and salt.

Pour mojo over warm yuca before serving.



FUN FACT

Florida's blend of Southern, Spanish, and Caribbean influences has shaped many pork dishes seasoned with citrus, garlic, herbs, and spices.

Hannah Meyers

*Pensacola,
Escambia County*

Grits were a staple at every large potluck, family gathering, and local festival in Pensacola. There always seemed to be a friendly competition amongst the church ladies of who made the best grits.

I wasn't the biggest fan of Gouda grits until I tried my grandmother's version of Grits à Ya Ya. The original recipe and concept came from a local Pensacola restaurant called Fish House. It quickly became a local favorite, and naturally, my grandmother put her own spin on it.

She was determined to make me like grits, so alongside the seafood, she added flavors and vegetables she knew I enjoyed. For example, she knew I loved bell peppers, so she had me chop one up and stir it into the dish, along with a few extra ingredients that weren't part of the original recipe. Those simple additions made all the difference, and I still make her version that way to this day.

Grits à Ya Ya

INGREDIENTS

Smoked Gouda Grits

- 1 cup regular stone-ground or quick grits
- ½ cups water
- ½ cups milk or chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup shredded smoked Gouda cheese
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Ya Ya Shrimp Sauce

- 1-pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 5 slices thick-cut bacon, chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 2 cups fresh spinach leaves
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 dash hot sauce
- ½ cup diced green bell pepper
- 1 rib celery, diced
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 green onions, sliced (for garnish)

INSTRUCTIONS

Cook the Grits

Bring the water, milk, and salt to a boil in a medium pot over high heat.

Whisk in the grits, reduce the heat to low, and cover with a lid.

Simmer until the grits are thick and tender, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking.

Stir in the butter and smoked Gouda cheese until fully melted, then remove from heat.

Sear the Bacon and Vegetables

Place the chopped bacon into a large skillet over medium heat.



Cook the bacon until it is crisp and has released its fat.

Add the chopped onion, minced garlic, sliced mushrooms, celery, and bell pepper directly into the bacon grease.

Sauté the mixture for 5 minutes until the vegetables soften (you start to smell it).

Cook the Shrimp

Add the peeled shrimp into the skillet with the bacon and vegetables.

Sauté for 3 minutes until the shrimp turn pink and curl.

Finish the Sauce

Place the fresh spinach into the skillet and pour the heavy cream over the top.

Simmer the mixture for 3 minutes until the spinach wilts a little (don't overdo it) and the cream thickens into a gravy.

Season the sauce with the black pepper, hot sauce, and Worcestershire to taste.

Assemble the Dish

Scoop a portion of the warm grits into a shallow bowl.

Ladle the creamy shrimp, bacon, and vegetable sauce directly over the grits.

Optional: Serve immediately with a slice of warm French bread to soak up every bit of the sauce.



FUN FACT

Fresh Gulf shrimp and creamy grits, are a classic Florida Gulf Coast pairing that blends seafood with Southern comfort cooking.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Scott Zeidwig

Deland, Volusia County

We grew up in Central Florida and the long summers obviously get pretty hot here. With three kids, my mom liked dinners that were healthy, light, easy and fun for the family. One of my favorite recipes of hers is her shredded chicken, a crowd pleaser for my family. It's great for summer nights, having neighbors over, and for feeding a large group. It's also incredibly easy!



FUN FACT

Florida is one of the top citrus-producing states in the U.S., so fresh-squeezed orange and lemon juices are a natural way to brighten dishes like citrus salsa.

Mom's Spicy Chicken and Citrus Salsa

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Citrus salsa - I love using fresh oranges from our orange tree, Florida kumquats, clementines, (maybe grapefruit for a little bit of sour) lemons, and jalapeños
- Flour or corn tortillas (I do both), warmed
- Optional toppings: shredded cheese, sour cream, shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes (we get these from the garden), diced onions or sliced avocado, cilantro or parsley, and cumin or chili powder

INSTRUCTIONS

Citrus salsa

Combine the citrus and jalapeños. To make it a saucy salsa, I use a little bit of juice from the variety of citrus, and then just a little bit of lime juice. The jalapeño is optional, but I love the spicy flavors against citrus. Add chopped red onions. Finely dice the onions so they don't take over the citrus flavor. Add cilantro or parsley (whichever you prefer). For seasoning, use salt and pepper to taste. If you want more of a kick, use a pinch of cumin or chili powder.

Place chicken in slow cooker. Cover with your home-made citrus salsa. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours or until chicken is tender and no longer pink in the center.

Shred your chicken using two forks and serve with your warmed tortillas and toppings as desired.



FLORIDA FLAVORS

Lemon Pound Cake

INGREDIENTS

- 6 large eggs
- 1 8oz block cream cheese
- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 2 sticks margarine
- 3 cups sifted cake flour
- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp lemon extract

INSTRUCTIONS

Bring eggs, butter, margarine, and cream cheese to room temperature. Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter and lightly flour a Bundt pan or two large loaf pans.

Using an electric mixer, cream together the butter, margarine, and cream cheese at Medium-low speed. Gradually add sugar and mix for 7 minutes (yes, it's a long time, don't skimp!). Add eggs one at a time, mixing just until the yellow disappears.

Fold in the flour and add extracts.

Pour batter into pan(s), and tap on counter a few times to settle it. Bake 45 minutes at 350°F or up to one hour until toothpick inserted comes out clean.

Allow to cool in pan 10 minutes and then remove to cool completely on a wire rack.



FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Kimberly Borsheim

Bradenton,
Manatee County

My grandmother made this pound cake for every person and every occasion. Easter luncheon, pound cake. Funeral, pound cake. Potluck at work, pound cake. It didn't matter the gathering; if people were coming together, her cake was already in the oven.

At Christmastime, she would bake and freeze more than 20 pound cakes throughout December, giving them away to friends, family, and even Dennis, the postman. There was a special deep freezer in the tool shed just for her cakes. Everyone lovingly called it "Ruth's World-Renowned Pound Cake," because once you had a slice, you never forgot it. Though this recipe has traveled across the country through friends and family, somehow none of the versions ever quite matched Grandma Ruth's.

FUN FACT

Florida is a major citrus-producing area and citrus fruits like lemons thrive in many regions of the state.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Jeanette Nuñez

Miami-Dade County

This recipe isn't one that has been passed down through generations but rather a blend of ideas and suggestions I have gathered from friends. While caring for my dad as he battled an illness, I found myself spending more time in the kitchen. Baking became my way to show love, give comfort, and make something he enjoyed, giving this recipe a special place in my heart. I have since tweaked this recipe to fit my family's somewhat demanding tastes. For example, there is an ongoing debate whether to include the chocolate chips. My youngest prefers the bread without them! With or without the chocolate chips, this banana bread reminds me that the simplest recipes often become the ones that bring us the greatest comfort, connection, and most cherished memories.

FUN FACT

Florida was one of the first U.S. states where bananas were widely grown in home gardens, especially in South Florida, thanks to the tropical climate that lets banana plants thrive almost year-round.

Coastal Chocolate Chip Banana Bread Recipe

INGREDIENTS

- 1 stick butter, softened
- ½ cup sugar
- 3 bananas
- 2 eggs
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 ¼ cup flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ bag semi-sweet chocolate chip morsels

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a mixing bowl, cream together 1 stick of softened butter and ½ cup of sugar. Stir in 3 mashed ripe bananas, and 2 beaten eggs. Add ½ a teaspoon of salt, 1 ¼ cup of flour, and 1 teaspoon baking soda. Add semisweet chocolate chip morsels and mix well.

Pour into a loaf pan. Bake for 40 minutes and check with a toothpick. If the banana bread needs more time, lower the temperature to 325°F, and cook for another 10 minutes.



FLORIDA FLAVORS

Emela Jane's Easy Key Lime Pie

INGREDIENTS

- 1 prepared graham cracker pie crust (made ahead and fully cooled)
- 1 8 oz package cream cheese, softened
- 1 20 oz can sweetened condensed milk
- ½ cup fresh Florida Key lime juice

Meringue

- 4 egg whites, room temperature (do not use carton egg whites)
- ¼ tsp cream of tartar
- ¼ cup sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

This recipe is all about simplicity! A good graham cracker crust is one of the simplest and most rewarding foundations in baking. Just crushed graham crackers, a little sugar, and melted butter come together to create a sweet, buttery base that holds everything together. Press the mixture firmly into your pie dish, then let it chill until it sets into a sturdy, golden crust that perfectly complements the bright filling.

With a hand mixer, beat the cream cheese and sweetened condensed milk until smooth and creamy. Add the Key lime juice, and mix until fully combined. Pour the filling into the prepared graham cracker crust.

For the meringue, separate the egg whites into a clean mixing bowl, and ensure they are at room temperature. Beat until glossy, then add cream of tartar and continue mixing. Slowly add sugar, beating after each addition until stiff, shiny peaks form.

Spread the meringue over the pie filling, smoothing it or creating soft peaks with the back of a spoon. Place under a preheated broiler about 4–5 inches from the heat for 8–10 minutes. Watch closely until the meringue is golden brown.

Allow the pie to cool completely, then refrigerate for at least 3 hours so it can fully set. Slice and serve chilled.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF...

Dianne Alborn

Tallahassee,
Leon County

I dedicate this Key lime pie recipe to my late mother, Emela Jane Matthews, who lovingly made it for us while we were growing up in rural Homestead, Florida. She passed away this year, at the age of 96, on Easter Sunday.

A proud native Floridian, she passed down not only this recipe but also a deep appreciation for our state's simple, sun-soaked traditions. I continue to make her key lime pie in her honor, and in celebration of our Florida heritage that she so beautifully carried through her life.



FUN FACT

Key lime pie was inspired by the tiny limes grown in the Florida Keys, known for their tart, tropical flavor.

Carrie Lee

*Orange Heights,
Alachua County*

As blueberry growers here in Florida, we're lucky to work with fruit at its very best sun-ripened, naturally sweet, and full of flavor that speaks to our soil and climate. This cobbler has become one of my favorite ways to celebrate the harvest, especially when the berries are coming in fresh from our own farm.

It's simple, homey, and deeply satisfying, just the kind of dessert that fits a Florida table after a long day outdoors. I also love knowing that fresh blueberries are rich in antioxidants, making this treat feel as nourishing as it is delicious.



FUN FACT

Florida is one of the first states in the nation to harvest fresh blueberries each spring - thanks to our mild winters and abundant sunshine!

Florida Blueberry Cobbler

INGREDIENTS

Filling

- 4 cups fresh Florida blueberries, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup Florida sugar
- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

Topping

- 1 cup self-rising flour
- 1 cup Florida sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup milk

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 375°F. Melt butter, and pour into an 8-inch square baking dish. In a large mixing bowl, combine lemon juice and blueberries. Add sugar, and mix well. Add the blueberry mixture to the baking dish. Do not stir.

Topping

Combine flour, sugar, vanilla, and milk in a small bowl and mix. Pour over the blueberry mixture. Bake for 45 minutes, or until golden brown.



A FINAL NOTE



Putting together **Florida Flavors** has been one of the great privileges of our work at the Florida Department of Elder Affairs.

As we traveled across our beautiful state, we were welcomed into kitchens, community centers, churches, and homes where Floridians generously shared not only their favorite recipes, but the stories that made them special. Those conversations reminded us that some of life's most meaningful moments happen around the table, where traditions are passed down and every family has a dish that feels like home.

Each recipe was offered with generosity, and every story reflected the pride Floridians have in their families, their communities, and our state's rich heritage.

What we'll remember most are the people we met along the way. Their kindness,

hospitality, and willingness to share a piece of their family's story made this cookbook possible, and we are deeply grateful for each one of them!

Thank you for bringing **Florida Flavors** into your home. Because we love seniors, our greatest hope is you'll reach out to a grandmother, grandfather, older friend, or relative and ask to make a recipe together!

If this cookbook inspires even one new memory, then it has accomplished everything we hoped it would!

Happy 250th to our nation and happy cooking to all!

Secretary Michelle Branham
Florida Department of Elder Affairs



NOTES



FLORIDA FLAVORS

NOTES

NOTES



FLORIDA FLAVORS



ELDERAFFAIRS.ORG

Elder  **Affairs**