

The food of Charleston, South Carolina is a crucial part of Southern heritage and way of life. The food of the Low Country provides more than just a full belly -- it gives way to a warm, inviting environment and a chance to fall in love with Southern hospitality.

Shrimp and Grits

A heaping of shrimp and grits is the best way to start the morning. Grits are a type of cornmeal mush that originated with Native Americans and is still widely consumed across the Southern United States today. In its truest form, grits is a mush made of a softened corn.. Similar to cornmeal, grits are made from dried and ground corn, but are usually a coarser grind, and often flavored with butter or bacon fat.



In the Low Country of South Carolina--particularly around Charleston--shrimp and grits became a staple breakfast for fishermen and their families during shrimping season (May to December) because of the ready availability of the ingredients. In 1976, grits was declared the official state food of South Carolina.

Boiled Peanuts

A midmorning snack (or anytime of day snack) is boiled peanuts, or goobers. Goober is the Gullah adaptation for “nguba” – the African word for peanut. In Charleston, the only way to eat peanuts is boiled. Historians speculate that the Confederate Army ate peanuts as a source of nutrition when other food was scarce during the Civil War. Soldiers would boil the peanuts and add salt in hopes to preserve the cooked peanuts for several days as they marched.



Today, goobers can be found year round in restaurants, markets, and roadside stands just outside of the city. Boiled peanuts may be an acquired taste; but once a person gets used to the soft, salty texture and flavor of boiled peanuts, there is no going back to simply roasted.

Hush Puppies

Hush puppies always hit the spot. Hush puppies did not originate specifically from Charleston, but they did come from the Low Country coasts. Different explanations tell their origin. One story says that slaves working in the kitchens would give the scraps of fried cornmeal to howling puppies, telling them to “hush, puppy.” The same idea is applied to Confederate soldiers listening for approaching Yankee

soldiers. The Confederates would give fried cornmeal to the dogs to get the pups to quiet down.

Either way, the fried cornmeal became a treat for both dogs and people alike, and are enjoyed as a side dish or snack from many Southern kitchens. Hush puppies are simply balls of cornmeal fried in oil, and served hot with butter or ketchup. They are delicious and well-loved all over the South.



Charleston is a city of culinary delight. Food goes beyond something to eat. It is something to be savored and enjoyed. It defines the Southern culture and way of life.

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Southern Food

Charleston, SC Delights

