

# COLORADO GREEN CHILE CHICKEN ON CHEESE GRITS with garlicky spinach

serves 4    doubles easily

*Below is first the road map and then the recipe for each component if needed. Simplify or complicate as you wish. (Use rotisserie chicken? Buy sauce?) Do serve it all as hot (temperature) as possible with very cold drinks. If you'd like it hotter (spicier), you can add a little minced jalapeño or you know where you keep the Tabasco and can leave it on the table. You can also buy canned hot green chiles. This is not a difficult or lengthy meal to make, though it has a few different parts. Skip the grits and of course the tortillas for a lower-carb option.*

- **Make or buy the green chile sauce.** You'll need about about 2 cups. Use my recipe (below), your own favorite recipe, or buy a jar at the store. Keep warm or heat on low while you make the chicken, grits, and spinach. (Can be made 3 days ahead and refrigerated until needed.)
- **Make the cheese grits** –use my recipe (below) or your own favorite recipe. Keep covered to stay warm while you make the chicken and spinach.
- **Cook the chicken** (see below), ladle sauce over all, and keep warm while you cook the spinach.
- **Cook the spinach and garlic.** Can be done while chicken cooks. (see below)
- **Layer and serve hot.** For each serving, layer 1/4 of the spinach on the bottom of a large, shallow bowl/plate around the edges to form a ring. At the center of the spinach place a smaller layer of 1/4 of the grits or a good ladle-full. Spread the grits to make sure they touch the spinach. Top each with 2 chicken thighs and sauce. Garnish as desired with thinly sliced green onions, minced ripe tomatoes, cilantro, and a wedge of lime. A bit more cheese if you have it. Serve a remainder of sauce in a pitcher at the table for those who might like more.

**ALYCE'S GREEN CHILE SAUCE** *I learned to make green chile sauce at the [Santa Fe School of Cooking](#) years ago and while my own version is by now somewhat different, it's based on*

*SFSC's. Go see them in Santa Fe whenever you can or order their book [here](#).*

- 2 tablespoons canola or other neutral oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 large red onion, peeled and chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- Generous pinch each kosher salt, pepper, ground cumin (1/8 teaspoon each)
- 3 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 cups chopped, roasted mild green chile
- 3 cups chicken stock
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Heat oil and butter in a four-quart pot over medium heat for a minute or so to melt butter. Add onion and garlic; season with salt, pepper, and cumin. Cook, stirring, until tender—6-8 minutes. Stir in flour and let cook a minute or two. Add green chiles, stir well, and heat through. Slowly stir in chicken stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer and cook another 20 minutes or so, stirring regularly. Taste and adjust seasonings. *You won't need all of the sauce; use leftovers on your huevos (eggs) tomorrow, on grilled pork chops, on a bowl of hot rice, or whatever you choose. I'd choose some more cheese grits!*

### **CHEESE GRITS**

- 4 cups well salted and peppered water
- 1 cup quick grits
- 1 tablespoon salted butter
- 1 cup grated very sharp cheddar cheese such as Vermont Cabot or Dubliner.
- A drop or two of hot sauce

Heat seasoned water over high heat to boiling in a 2-quart sauce pan. Stir in grits; lower temperature to simmer. Cover and let cook until grits are tender—7 or 8 minutes at altitude, stirring occasionally. Stir in butter to melt. Stir in cheese to melt along with the hot sauce. Taste and adjust seasonings. Cover to keep warm. (Clumpy grits? Use a pastry cutter or potato masher to break up clumps.)

### **CHICKEN with Green Chile Sauce:**

- 8 boneless chicken thighs
- Salt and pepper
- Olive oil

Heat heavy skillet over medium-high heat with 3 tablespoons olive oil. Season the chicken thoroughly on both sides with salt and pepper. Cook on one side for 5 minutes; turn and cook on the other side for another 2 minutes. Ladle one cup of the green chile sauce over the chicken and cook until done through. Pour another cup or so of the sauce in a pitcher for the table.

### **SPINACH:**

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 – 1.5 pounds fresh spinach
- salt and pepper
- 3 large garlic cloves, sliced thickly
- Pinch of crushed red pepper

In a very large, deep skillet, sauté fresh spinach seasoned with salt and pepper in 2 tablespoons olive oil for 3 or 4 minutes, stirring, until wilting. Add the thickly-sliced garlic cloves to bottom of the pan. Sprinkle the spinach with the crushed red pepper and cook another minute. Turn off heat. Cover. Stir, taste, adjust seasonings.

### **GARNISHES:**

- 4 green onions and 1 medium tomato (seeded), minced
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1 lime, cut into quarters

**Reader's Note:** My title includes "Colorado" because this dish originated in Colorado Springs at my house—not because it's made with Colorado chiles. Our Colorado chiles—grown down around Pueblo just south of us—are *guajillo chiles* or *mirasol peppers*. I happen to be using [canned Hatch chiles](#) for this recipe—bought in 27-ounce cans at Costco. (above photo courtesy Costco) You could also, of course, roast and chop fresh chiles as available. Some years I freeze enough chiles—bought fresh or roasted on our street corners in the Springs— to last until the following year, but the freezer is now empty. Costco it is!  
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