

FOOD

# Rebecca Lang's Southern brunch is full of flavor

Southern cooking is associated with long-simmered vegetables and labor-intensive biscuits and fried chicken. But Athens, Ga., chef Rebecca Lang has come up with shortcuts to the standard Southern fare in her new book, *Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less*.

The recipes are flavor-packed Southern classics, and this week I'm sharing some of her recipes for a Southern-style brunch that is perfect for a leisurely weekend or for entertaining Masters guests. Lang's sister is Augusta attorney Natalie Schweers, and I met Lang on several occasions when she and her sister planned cooking-school fundraisers for Safe Homes of Augusta. I emceed the events, and Rebecca booked the chefs and was the culinary producer for the on-stage cooking demonstrations.

Lang has an impressive culinary resume. She is a contributing editor to *Southern Living* magazine and myrecipes.com. After completing an apprenticeship with Nathalie Dupree, she was formally trained in culinary arts at Johnson & Wales University.

I've prepared Lang's shrimp and grits bake, which is part of this week's brunch menu, and it received rave reviews from my family.

Down the road, I plan to prepare a menu of Lang's ribeyes with bourbon pecan butter, spicy mustard greens, sweet potato biscuits and double chocolate scoop pie for dessert. This sounds like the ultimate low-key, Southern-style supper club menu.

Lang's book is available in local bookstores and online. To learn more about Lang, read her blog or find more of her recipes go to [www.rebeccalangcooks.com](http://www.rebeccalangcooks.com)

Rebecca Lang's Southern-style brunch menu:

### HERBED BLOODY MARY

**NOTE:** This recipe calls for a muddler, a tool used to crush drink ingredients to release their flavors. If you don't have one, you can use the handle of a wooden spoon.

¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice  
½ cup chopped fresh chives  
1 teaspoon chopped fresh basil  
½ cup tomato juice  
3 tablespoons vodka  
½ to 1 teaspoon hot sauce  
½ teaspoon prepared horseradish  
½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
¾ cup ice for shaking, plus more for

## Some gardens can grow in small spaces

*Food Network Kitchens*

Don't let space stop you from starting your own garden.

Small crops such as lettuce, strawberries, herbs and tomatoes grow well in containers on your deck, patio, windowsill or even a fire escape.

Talk to other gardeners in your area before getting started.

Because you share similar sun and soil conditions, often what works for them is likely to work for you.

Get your garden started early by planting seed indoors in a warm room with plenty of sunlight.

Transplant your seedlings outdoors as soon as danger of frost is gone.

Plant early vegetables such as greens, lettuces and radishes every couple of weeks for a continuous spring (or early summer) harvest.

You'll see sprouts in five to 14 days, a signal to plant another row of seeds to enjoy your harvest week after week.

Fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables need little help in the kitchen to become a flavorful meal.

Always start with the freshest ingredients. The freshest ingredients of all are the ones you grow yourself.



A shrimp and grits bake is perfect for a Southern brunch.

ZACH BOYDEN/HOLMES/STAFF

1 serving  
1 pickled okra pod

Place a small wedge of the juiced lemon, chives and basil in a cocktail shaker and muddle until the herbs are crushed.

Add the tomato juice, vodka, lemon juice, hot sauce, horseradish and Worcestershire sauce. Add ¼ cup of ice. Shake and strain over ice in a highball glass. Cut a slice through the okra, cutting about ¼ way up the larger end. Place the okra on the rim of the glass before serving.

Makes 1 cocktail.

### SHRIMP AND GRITS BAKE

4 cups chicken broth  
1 cup quick grits  
4 ounces cream cheese  
1 cup pre-shredded Monterey Jack cheese  
1 pound medium shrimp  
½ medium red onion  
1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
1 garlic clove, minced  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley  
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

½ teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
½ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly spray a 7-by-11-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.

Combine the broth and grits in a large stockpot. Turn heat to medium-high and cook for 20 minutes, stirring very often. Remove from the heat and stir in the cream cheese and Monterey Jack.

While the grits are cooking, peel and chop the shrimp. Set aside.

Finely chop the red onion.

Heat the butter in a small skillet. Add the red onion and garlic. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes, or until softened. Stir into the grits. Add the shrimp, parsley, lemon juice, salt and pepper to the grits. Stir to combine. Spoon into the prepared dish. Top with the cheddar cheese.

Bake for 25 minutes.

Makes 6 servings.

### BABY VIDALIA FRITTATA

**NOTE:** Baby Vidalia onions appear in the produce section for a short time

during the late winter and early spring. If you wish to prepare the frittata when they are out of season, substitute 1 ¼ cups of sliced green onions.

2 tablespoons olive oil  
4 baby Vidalia onions, thinly sliced (white and green parts)  
8 large eggs, beaten  
¼ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese  
Fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped

Move the oven rack to a position about 5 inches from the broiler. Heat the broiler.

Heat the olive oil in an ovenproof, nonstick 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the sliced onions and cook, stirring often, for 6 minutes or until soft. Arrange the onions evenly over the bottom of the skillet.

Combine the eggs, salt and pepper in a medium bowl. Pour over the onions. Cook, uncovered, over low heat for 9 minutes.

Sprinkle the cheese over the top of the frittata and broil until the cheese is melted and the eggs are cooked, about 1 minute.



Athens, Ga., chef Rebecca Lang's new book is *Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less*.

### WHAT'S COOKING?

We're looking for your best kitchen creation, whether it's a simple chili or an elaborate continental concoction. Our food writer, Karin Calloway, will re-create your dish, and we'll feature it on the Wednesday food page of The Augusta Chronicle. Send your recipe and contact information to [karin.calloway@comcast.net](mailto:karin.calloway@comcast.net) or write to Recipe Favorites, Newsroom, The Augusta Chronicle, P.O. Box 1928, Augusta, GA 30903-1928.

Sprinkle with the parsley before serving.  
Makes 6 servings.

### ASPARAGUS BUNDLES WITH BACON

2 pounds medium asparagus (2 bunches)  
½ cup balsamic vinegar  
1 clove garlic, minced  
½ teaspoon dried thyme leaves  
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
8 slices thick-cut bacon

Heat the grill to medium heat (about 350 degrees).

Remove the tough ends of the asparagus.

Combine the balsamic vinegar, garlic, thyme and pepper in a large shallow dish. Add the asparagus and toss to coat. Marinate at room temperature for 15 minutes. Reserve the marinade.

Bundle about 8 or 9 spears together and wrap in bacon. The bacon will hold the spears together without any toothpicks or skewers.

Continue with the remaining asparagus and bacon. You should have 8 bundles.

Grill the bundles for 8 minutes, turning 3 times, or until bacon is done and the asparagus is tender.

Transfer the bundles to a platter and drizzle with the reserved marinade.

Makes 8 servings.

**NOTE:** The bundles also can be roasted in a 350-degree oven for 8 to 10 minutes, or until bacon is done.

### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

The *Augusta Chronicle* is considering whether to add the cooking illustration *Cheep Thrills Cuisine* by Bill Lombardo and Thach But to its weekly food page.

It will run throughout March, giving you a chance to try some of

the recipes.

Tell us how they turned out. You can give your opinion by emailing the food page editor, Tim Rausch, at [tim.rausch@augustachronicle.com](mailto:tim.rausch@augustachronicle.com).

**Rice Pudding with Currants** **CHEAP THRILLS** **CUISINE** BY LOMBARDO & BUI

**Cover** 1/2 c dried currants with boiling water for 5 minutes. Drain.

**Set aside.**

**In a large bowl, beat** 1 egg & 1/2 c sugar until fluffy.

**Add:** the currants  
2 c cooked short grain rice  
2 c evaporated milk  
1/2 c 2% milk  
1/2 tsp nutmeg  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
2 Tbsp melted butter  
1 Tbsp finely grated orange zest

**Blend well.**

**Pour contents** into casserole. Sprinkle with tsp cinnamon.

**Bake 15 more minutes.**

**Grease a 6-cup** casserole dish with butter.

**Set aside.**

**Bake uncovered,** at 325°F for 30 minutes stirring frequently.

**Serves 6-8** with whipped cream.

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