



Grits Breakfast Pie

Recipe from Georgia Grown



Ingredients

GRITS PIE CRUST

7 cups water
2 teaspoons salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons butter
1-1/2 cups stone ground grits

FILLING

1 cup cooked sausage, bacon or ham
2 cups grated cheese
6 eggs
1/2 cup half & half
salt & pepper

Directions

CRUST: In a medium saucepan, bring water, salt, pepper and butter to a boil. Whisk in grits, bring back to a boil then lower to a simmer and cook 45-60 minutes, stirring periodically. Grits should be thick and tender when tasted. You may need to add more water while cooking depending on the grits you are using. The consistency should be very thick. Let cool. Line a deep dish pie plate with foil. Scoop cooled grits into pie plate, pressing up sides to form a crust. As grits begin setting, you can press into shape forming a thick pie-like crust. Refrigerate until completely chilled and firm, several hours or overnight. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

FILLING: Distribute meat and cheese over prepared grits crust. Whisk eggs and half & half in a separate bowl. Season egg mixture with salt & pepper. Pour mixture over meat and cheese. Bake about one hour or until eggs are set. Let rest about 10-15 minutes. Cut in wedges and serve. Serves 8.



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"OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE"

A New Light on Life

Esther Woods retires

"The first thing I'm not going to do is get up at 5:30 a.m. and be driving in the dark," exclaims Esther Woods, retired operations clerk at Okefenokee REMC, as she reflects on her first days of retirement. Early mornings have been her routine since she first came to work at the OREMC Hilliard, Florida, office as a meter reader on March 28, 1994. It was a decision that would shape her future more than she could have ever imagined.

Esther explains, "I was divorced, raising my kids and working at a job that had not given me a cost-of-living pay increase in six years. Things were tight and the cost of insurance was increasing. I got a message from a friend that the OREMC Hilliard office was looking to hire a meter reader. Now you have to remember, I was raised in Callahan and when I was growing up, the REA [OREMC] was some faraway place—the only office was in Nahunta. The district offices in Hilliard and Kingsland were new in 1994. I applied and got called in to interview. There was a room full of people during my interview, but I immediately felt at peace."

She got the job. Back then meters had to be read in person, meaning Esther had to drive from house to house, get out of her vehicle, walk up to the meter and input the reading into her handheld device. Then on June 12, less than three months from the day she started, Esther got the news her son, Scott, had been murdered. She recalls, "God had put me in a place where family was important. The co-op embraced me and my family. I'll never forget the day of the funeral, I walked out of the church and all the OREMC bucket trucks were lined up in honor of Scott."

Soon after, Esther moved from operations to customer service when a new position opened up in the Hilliard office. She remembers how members liked to come to the new office just to meet people, "They could pay their bill in person, ask questions about service and meet people. Before they could only call the Nahunta office where everything was centralized."

From a new office to the introduction of computers, migration from handheld meter reading to automated and paper map books to online digital mapping of OREMC's entire system, Esther has seen a lot of firsts as OREMC has evolved. Building on her own foundation, Esther moved into the position of operations/staking clerk in 2001 and ended her OREMC career as an operations clerk. As she puts it, she worked with builders and new members, managing the workflow from initial inquiry to lights on.

"Technology has changed the whole dynamic of our co-op," Esther says. "With the Partner mapping system anyone can assist a member while looking at the maps online and visualize the service location being discussed. PrePay [when the member manages their account and usage by tracking what they have available in their account] was the very best thing we've done. It has empowered our members to be more responsible, while also for some, unburdening them of undue additional financial hardship. It also streamlines billing and is safer for employees who don't have to go out on collections."

Read more of Esther's story online at oremc.com/news.



New Employee

Esther Johnson has been hired to the position of Meter Reader for our south district office. She has lived most of her life in Nassau County. Esther is a single parent of two teenagers, a son (Scott) and a daughter (Sonya). Esther enjoys spending time with her children, arts & crafts, reading and lots of outside activities. Esther attends Bolougne First Baptist Church.

On the other side of a storm is the strength that comes from having navigated through it. Raise your sail and begin.

—Gregory S. Williams

Statement of Nondiscrimination

Okefenokee Rural Electric Membership Corporation is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U. S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S. W., Washington, D. C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.



Navigating Supply Chain Challenges

Since the start of the pandemic, supply shortages and delays have been making headlines. First it was toilet paper and other paper products, then prices for chicken wings went through the roof before there was concern over a turkey shortage for Thanksgiving. Now it is grocery store shelves in general that are looking a bit bare.

Labor shortages related to manufacturing of critical inventory necessary to maintain and build our distribution system are also affecting OREMC and other utilities across the country. OREMC Operations Manager Travis Page discusses how OREMC is navigating the evolving supply chain disruptions.

Is OREMC being impacted by supply chain issues?

"The short answer is yes. We are getting materials we ordered, but items are not coming all at once and for several items, what used to take days is now taking weeks. Additionally, some items we expected by the end of 2021 won't arrive for another several weeks. And we were told by Altec, who we get our bucket trucks from, that for trucks ordered today, delivery is two years out."

When did OREMC become aware of developing supply issues?

"Unlike the toilet paper shortage of 2020, there wasn't a particular moment in time that indicated there was a lack of pad mount transformers, for example. It was more of our vendors telling us they couldn't fill our complete order now. We can send you this many today, but it is going to be six weeks before we can get you anymore."

Well now eight weeks has been added on to the additional six and, because utilities across the country need the same supplies, when inventory becomes available, it is being rationed so everybody gets some in the short-term.

What are our vendors telling us are the root cause of these supply issues?



"Labor shortages is what we hear consistently across the board, whether it is transformers, bushings or elbows. Manufacturers don't have enough labor to output the

production that meets current demand. Compounding that is new construction has exploded during the pandemic as more people went to remote work and decided to move to warmer weather climates like ours. So demand for new services has increased."

What items are we having the most difficult time getting and how is that impacting operations?

"The biggest delays are on pad mount transformers and related components, used for installing underground service. Therefore, the biggest impact or delays are related to new construction. If we are talking to a new member

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James 5:14-15 King James Version

¹⁴ Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.



Church of the Month

The House of Love Holiness Church

Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Sunday Service 11:30 a.m.
Tuesday Bible Study 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.
Friday Tarry Service 7:00 p.m.

Dixie Lake Rd • Folkston, GA

Dr. Rhonda Brown, Pastor

To nominate your church, contact Dewayne Johns at 1-800-262-5131 Ext. 1143 or email dewayne.johns@oremc.com.



Delegates Wanted!

High School Juniors Invited to Apply for Youth Tour Leadership Experience

Whether it is climbing to new heights and visiting the birthplace of electric cooperatives or taking in the monuments, museums and memorials of our nation's capital, the annual Youth Tour Leadership Experience provides an opportunity for rising high school seniors to gain new insight, perspectives and connections to our past, present and future. Details on the 2022 Youth Tour plans—whether it will be to Washington, D.C. or a Georgia cultural heritage and history tour—are still being decided given the ongoing pandemic. A minimum of four, all-expenses paid, week-long trips scheduled in June will be awarded. All **students who are currently enrolled as a junior in high school** within OREMC's eight county service area—Brantley, Camden, Charlton, Glynn, Ware and Wayne counties in Georgia and Baker and Nassau Counties in Florida—are invited to apply.

Visit oremc.com/youth-tour to check out last year's tour video and to access the application. Interested students must submit a completed application, attach two letters of recommendation and a short essay explaining why they are interested in the Youth Tour experience. Application deadline March 3, 2022. Applications can also be picked up at one of our office locations or mailed to you at your request.



OREMC Donation Helps High School Program Gain STEAM

A weather balloon kit they had been waiting months for arrived the very day Okefenoke REMC presented the Wayne County High School STEAM—science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics—students a \$2,500 check to support their club program and ongoing research. Jessica Oliver (pictured left), Wayne County High School Inspired STEAM Leaders Sponsor, accepts the donation from OREMC Member Services Representative Dewayne Johns, along with the STEAM students and program assistant and Media Specialist LaRae Thornton (picture right). *Read more about Wayne County's STEAM program and this year's weather station project at oremc.com/news.*

Navigating Supply Chain Challenges *continued*

who owns a piece of land and has decided to build their dream home, getting them power is not as much of an issue as a developer who wants to build out 200 lots in a new subdivision. At this time, we cannot put equipment in the field that is just going to sit there. We have to prioritize our existing consumer-members and focus on maintaining service reliability and facilitating storm response to those already on our lines. **Serving current OREMC members is priority number one. Given that, is it appropriate to say managing existing inventory, and the supplies that trickle in, to address outages, complete construction projects, system upgrades and new construction already in-process, have to be accounted for before OREMC commits any large amount of inventory to serve a location that doesn't have a structure on it yet?** "Essentially yes, but the situation is fluid. We understand our developers want to be able to sell lots with all utilities installed, so we take each project on a case-by-case basis, approach them in smaller components and provide construction options either as supplies become available or by offering overhead. It all depends on current inventory, what has come in and what has gone out due to maintenance or outage response."

It seems it all comes down to inventory, so what does OREMC's inventory look like? "As I mentioned earlier our priority is to our existing consumer-members and ensuring system reliability, continuing with scheduled maintenance and construction projects. Back in late summer we brought our accounting, engineering and construction teams together to get a clear picture of what was scheduled, in process and already committed in terms of new services. We started by verifying our entire inventory to make sure what we had on the books and what we had in the yards at each office matched up. From there we determined what we needed to maintain in our SOS—strategic OREMC stockpile—for outage/storm response and set that aside. Then we reserved the necessary inventory that was already on-hand for our current system maintenance and construction projects. Next, we addressed the needs for new services already in-process. What was left, combined with what comes in and is in excess of maintaining our SOS, is what we have to work with and determines how and when we can commit additional inventory." **"We've got you covered is the biggest takeaway" for current OREMC consumer-members. Yes, OREMC is experiencing supply shortages and delivery delays, but these are primarily impacting new construction and service requests. While supply chain shortages and delays need to continually be monitored and planned for, OREMC is confident it can maintain system reliability and welcome new members as inventory permits.** "That about sums it up. Just as the supply chain is fluid right now, how and when we assign jobs will flex to ensure progress moves forward."

Stay Plugged In with OREMC New podcast launched

Adding to our communication channels, OREMC has launched a new monthly podcast **Plugged In** connecting our co-op and community through our shared connections. The first episode is all about Making Sense of Solar. The podcast is available on Spotify, Apple, Google and Amazon. You can **link to it on our website by clicking the podcast tab under oremc.com/publications.**



Need Help Paying Your OREMC Bill?

If you are, or know of, someone who needs help paying their OREMC bill, there are several agencies throughout our service area in both Georgia and Florida that can provide assistance. Please visit oremc.com/energy-assistance for a complete list agencies and their contact information.

OREFENOKE REMC

PAY YOUR BILL WHERE YOU SHOP

You can now make a cash payment on your OREMC bill at the register at participating retailers near you. It is a **FAST** and **CONVENIENT** option for paying your electric bill.

CVS pharmacy **DOLLAR GENERAL** **FAMILY DOLLAR** **Walgreens**

Visit oremc.com for complete details. Service fees apply.