

WADING IN: THE SPREAD

FLORIDA-FRESH BITES & BEVS

By Christina Cush • Photography by Stefanie Keeler

Against *the Grain*

SIMMER A FLORIDA CURRY IN THE HOT SUMMER?
WHY NOT! SERVE IT ON A BED OF THE FRESHEST MILLED RICE AROUND

Fifteen miles from Jacksonville's urban core, blacktop highways turn into dusty country roads that lead to five one-acre rectangular rice paddies on a 220-acre farm called Congaree and Penn.

This sprawling slice of rural heaven, lined with Spanish moss-covered live oaks and hopping with feisty, multicolored chickens, has been lovingly tended since January 2014 by Scott and Lindsay Meyer, college sweethearts who met at Texas Christian University. After graduating with degrees in field biology and printmaking, respectively, Scott went back to school in Wyoming to learn about food production. Though he was born and raised in Jacksonville, he was surprised “a thousand percent” to end up back there as a farmer. But it was time to put that education to work to help his dad, who had bought this promising farmland years ago to grow landscape trees and then wanted to do something different with it. “We knew that the soil was rich, and that the soil held water well, and that rice had once been grown in Northeast Florida back in the 1700s, so we figured why not give it a shot,” Scott recalls.

Congaree and Penn—named to honor Scott's grandfather, who captained the USS Congaree in World War II and Scott's mother, who went by Anne Penn—grows medium-grain Jupiter rice. “We mill it fresh every week, so it is superior. All the rice you buy in the grocery store is stale. We have so many chefs and farmers market shoppers in Florida who use our rice, taste the difference and are repeat customers,” Scott says. Though

Above:
A one-pound bag of fresh-milled grainy goodness from Congaree and Penn



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it's not certified organic yet, Scott is striving toward that goal. "We don't use herbicides or pesticides." Many of Congaree and Penn's employees are passionate about the integrity of the products. "We have a UNF student who helps out on the farm and at markets occasionally. He tells people to 'Have a rice day' when they buy from us at farm stands and such," Scott explains.

Married since June 2014, the Meyers just remodeled their house, situated under an oak on the property, originally built in the 1930s as the

CONGAREE AND PENN

— LOCATION —
11830 OLD KINGS RD., JACKSONVILLE

— SHOPPING INFO —
AVAILABLE AT SELECT FARMERS MARKETS IN NORTH FLORIDA AND IN GROCERY STORES, RESTAURANTS, AND HOTELS ACROSS FLORIDA

congarceandpenn.com

farm's dairy operation. The Meyers are excited to entertain friends in their new kitchen, where they whip up all sorts of creative meals that incorporate their rice products.

At the end of a long summer's day in the rice paddies, Scott says, the couple makes his Florida curry dish "to do something different than grilling outside and making a side of grits or fish frying with our rice flour. Shrimp and coconut, that's tasty stuff and easy to make, even for dinner on a Tuesday."





Above:
A tasty bowl of
Congaree and
Penn's Florida
curry with Mayport
shrimp and Jupiter
white rice

Florida Curry *with* Mayport Shrimp and Congaree and Penn Jupiter White Rice

SERVES 5

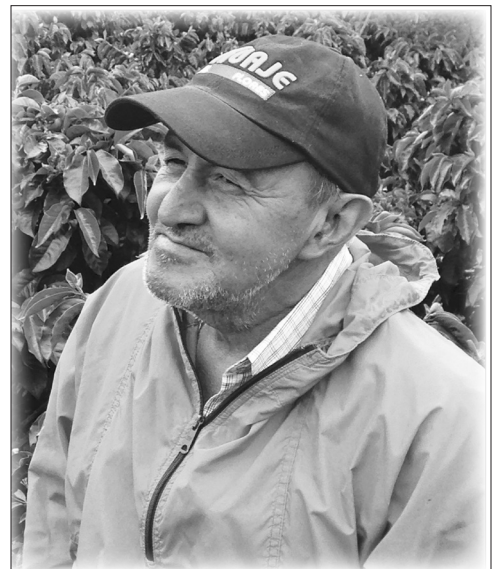
- 2 roasted red peppers, peeled, seeds and stems removed
- 4 cloves of garlic, peeled and smashed
- 1/2 shallot
- 1 can Florida coconut milk
- 1 small can Florida coconut cream
- 1/2 inch segment of ginger, peeled
- 10 sprigs thyme, washed and stripped, leaves only
- 4 ounces sour cream
- 1 tablespoon high quality fish sauce
- 3 2/3 cups water
- 4 tablespoon coconut shavings
- 3 limes, juice and zest
- 1 pound bag of Congaree and Penn Jupiter White Rice
Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 pound or 12 to 15 head-on Mayport shrimp, legs and middle shell removed, and deveined
- 4 tablespoon Congaree and Penn pecan oil
- 1 potato, peeled and cut into 1/2" dice
- 2 carrots, peeled, and cut into 1/2" dice
- 1 leek, trimmed of dark green top, and cut into 1/2" dice

PREPARE THE SAUCE: In a blender, add roasted peppers, garlic, shallot, coconut milk, coconut cream, ginger, thyme, sour cream and fish sauce, and blend smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and reserve, covered at room temperature.

PREPARE THE RICE: Add water, coconut shavings, and lime zest in a sauce pot, no smaller than 4 quarts. Bring liquid to a boil, add the rice, and stir. Once liquid comes back to a boil, stir rice once more, then cover and let simmer over low heat for 15 minutes. Turn off heat, remove lid and fluff rice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Reserve, covered and warm, until plating.

PREPARE THE SHRIMP: Warm a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Season shrimp with salt and pepper, and add 2 tablespoons pecan oil to pan. In batches, sear shrimp in the hot pan, without cooking them through. Remove from pan, and keep at room temp until plating. Keep drippings in pan to finish the sauce.

FINISH THE SAUCE: Add 2 tablespoons pecan oil to the shrimp pan, and return to medium-high heat. Put the diced potato, carrot and leek into the pan, and caramelize over medium-high heat for a few minutes. Lower the heat, add the sauce base and lime juice. Gently simmer until the vegetables are slightly soft. Add shrimp to sauce to finish cooking. Serve over the rice.



Jorge Antonio Falla
{El Amparo, Huila, Colombia}

THE FACES OF BOLD BEAN

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Jorge's Finca La Candela is indeed a glowing example of what can be accomplished when one is powered by passion and an unyielding determination to make the best better. By embracing new technologies and innovative farming practices, coupled with his strong and life-long commitment to environmental stewardship, Jorge is demonstrating daily that great coffee doesn't just happen.



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Vintage Fruit Cocktail!

WET YOUR SUMMER WHISTLE WITH A UNIQUE MAYHAW PALOMA, MADE WITH CLUB SODA, TART JUICE FROM A FLORIDA BERRY AND TEQUILA

Fruit pioneers Scott and Lindsay Meyer are bringing mayhaw back in a big way—in addition to being successful rice croppers at Congaree and Penn in Jacksonville. The fruit, with pinkish to deep red skin, looks like a tiny little apple or a big berry—the biggest one, less than an inch in diameter.

“Mayhaw, from the hawthorn tree, is one of the only native fruit trees in the Southeast,” says Scott. “We’re trying to pioneer more mayhaw trees, fruit and juice in the marketplace,” he says. But don’t bite into the teensy fruit expecting a sweet treat.

“It’s very, very tart,” says Scott.

Native Americans ate it to settle their stomachs, as the berry is more acidic than vinegar. Once the right amount of sugar was added to the juice, Scott says, “a unique flavor of cranberry with a grape finish became sought after in rural areas.”

Since Scott put his first hawthorn in the ground in February 2015, he’s sprouted 1,800 trees and plans to start selling them to the public in the fall. For now, you can buy Congaree and Penn’s mayhaw juice, jelly and shrub, a vinegar-based syrup made from the juice. Scott has even bigger plans for the shrub.

“We’re experimenting with a sorbet,” Scott says. “The shrub is so versatile. It’s the easiest way to get mayhaw flavor into

all sorts of things, like a salad dressing or a cocktail.” Hey, did somebody say cocktail? Great idea! Since the Meyers met in Texas, they’ve been tequila fans. “It’s hot on the farm in the summer and tequila seems to be a good choice,” Scott says.



Mayhaw Paloma

SERVES 1

- 1/2 ounces tequila
- 1 ounce mayhaw shrub
- 1/2 ounce fresh grapefruit juice

PREPARATION: Shaken and poured over ice, topped with club soda.