

Courtesy of Chef Rodney Smith

STARTERS & SIDES Chef Rodney Smith

# Carolina hushpuppies from Chef Rodney Smith

By Beth McKibben · Rough Draft Atlanta, 4/2/2025

## Ingredients

- [ ] 1 cup of cornmeal
- [ ] 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- [ ] 3 Tbsp sugar
- [ ] 1 1/2 Tbsp baking powder
- [ ] 1/2 tsp salt
- [ ] 1 large egg
- [ ] 3/4 cup buttermilk
- [ ] Half an onion minced
- [ ] 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper

### WHITE HORSERADISH DIPPING SAUCE

- [ ] 1/2 cup sour cream
- [ ] 2 Tbsp horseradish
- [ ] 2 Tbsp mayonnaise
- [ ] 1 tsp apple cider vinegar
- [ ] 1/4 tsp of salt
- [ ] 1/8 tsp black pepper

## Directions

1. Mix cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, cayenne pepper, and salt until evenly incorporated.
2. In a separate mixing bowl, mix buttermilk, eggs, and minced onions until the egg is evenly blended.
3. After mixing both dry and wet ingredients separately, combine in a larger mixing bowl until the batter is fully incorporated. Set aside for 10 to 15 minutes until the oil reaches 365 degrees Fahrenheit.
4. Use a small ice cream scoop to drop golf ball-sized rounds (about two tablespoons each) in batches of five or six so as not to crowd the pan.
5. Deep fry for 4 to 6 minutes or until hushpuppies are a deep golden brown.
6. Strain hushpuppies for 3 to 5 minutes.

> Mix sour cream, horseradish, mayonnaise vinegar, salt, black pepper, and chives in a mixing bowl until fully incorporated.

- [ ] 1 Tbsp chives, finely chopped

## The story

This week's spotlight recipe comes from Chef Rodney Smith, who works with Bread & Butterfly chef and co-owner Demetrius Brown and is a founding member of The New South, a supper club highlighting Black chefs in Atlanta.

Hushpuppies are a type of fritter made from a thick, savory batter of cornmeal rolled into dough balls no bigger than a golf ball or ping-pong ball and fried in hot oil, similar to making a doughnut. The origin story of the hushpuppy, however, isn't as straightforward.

"It is said that the hushpuppy got its name from the enslaved. While running away to find freedom, people were placed on the floor to hush the hound dog as they quickly got away," Smith said of the story he was told. "Us Carolina folks pair hushpuppies best with whole hog barbecue. That's just the Carolina way. I remember eating hushpuppies as a little boy, and as I grew, it was always a thing at all family gatherings."

No one really knows how hushpuppies came to be — or how these deep-fried cornmeal balls received the name. Southerners have been frying cornmeal in one way or another for generations, dating back to the colonizing of the region. But in South Carolina, hushpuppies became anchored to the culinary lexicon of the state and a fixture at fish fries, fish houses, and barbecue joints.

If you want to read a fascinating deep dive into hushpuppy history, I highly recommend reading this 2023 feature story from food writer, culinary historian, and barbecue expert Robert F. Moss.

As for how Smith created his recipe for hushpuppies, it came down to family tradition and a lot of trial and error to get these Southern-fried fritters just right. Smith said his hushpuppies are now a staple at holiday dinners.

Check out Chef Rodney Smith's **Carolina hushpuppies** recipe below.

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