

Memphis Flyer WELCOME TO GRIZZ SEASON

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October 23, 2014

Southern Pantry Author Jennifer Chandler on the Beauty of Canned Tomatoes

by JUSTIN FOX BURKS AND SUSAN ELLIS

Jennifer Chandler's latest cookbook *The Southern Pantry Cookbook: 105 Recipes Already Hiding in Your Kitchen* is a handy guide for anyone who's stood before their fully stocked pantry and thought: What's for dinner? And it's particularly good for those who don't know what it means to have a fully stocked pantry. Chandler offers a list of what every kitchen should have on hand in the pantry as well as the fridge and freezer — goods and produce that lead to such dishes as Tamale Pie, Creamy Vidalia Onion Soup, and Mississippi Mud Brownies. There's nothing exotic in Chandler's list — all ingredients are available at your neighborhood Kroger.

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We asked Chandler to name what she considers her most essential pantry items. "Chicken stock. Salt and pepper — salt and pepper is underrated," she says. "And butter. And chocolate, but that's another story."



Justin Fox Burks and Amy Lawrence

We also asked her to come up with a list of the most versatile pantry items. Among them are frozen vegetables, ground beef, Creole seasoning, frozen shrimp, and pimentos.

And then there's canned tomatoes. Chandler says she keeps cans of whole tomatoes and diced tomatoes in her pantry at all times.

"There's nothing worse than a tomato that has no flavor," Chandler says. "Tomatoes are good really only two or three months of the year. Canned tomatoes are picked at their peak. I would be lost without them."

Dishes using canned tomatoes from *The Southern Pantry*, clockwise from top: Shrimp Creole, Chicken Fricassee, Freezer Veggie Soup, Jambalaya Pasta, Creamy Tomato Soup, Tamale Pie, Frogmore Stew, Lucky Black-Eyed Pea and Collard Green Soup, Grillades



Justin Fox Burks

Shrimp Creole
from *The Southern Pantry Cookbook*

- 1 1/2 pounds large shrimp (16/20 count), peeled and deveined, thawed if using frozen
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika

- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1/2 cup finely diced yellow onion (1 small onion)
- 1/2 cup finely diced green bell pepper (1 small pepper)
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced celery (1 stalk)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can (28-ounce) whole tomatoes with juice
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1/2 cup chicken stock or water
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 cups cooked white rice, warm

Place the shrimp in a large mixing bowl and toss with cayenne pepper and paprika. In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, warm 2 tablespoons of the oil until a few droplets of water sizzle when carefully sprinkled in the pan. Add the shrimp and cook, stirring occasionally, until the shrimp are lightly browned, about 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer the cooked shrimp to a plate and reserve.

In the same pan over medium-high heat, warm the remaining oil until a few droplets of water sizzle when carefully sprinkled in the pan. Add the onion, bell pepper, and celery and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, 1 minute more. Add the whole tomatoes, breaking them up with a spoon or fork. Add the tomato paste and stock. Stir to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Bring the mixture to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the sauce thickens, about 20 to 25 minutes.

Return the shrimp to the pan and stir to combine. Cook until the shrimp are warmed through, about 2 to 3 more minutes. Adjust seasonings as needed. Serve warm over white rice. Serves 6.

Cooking Tip: I find that canned whole tomatoes melt into a sauce better than canned diced tomatoes. To break them up, I like to cut them with my kitchen scissors while they are still in the can before adding them to the pot.

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