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FOOD EDITORS RELEASE

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## Home Cook Inspired by Love at World Food Championships

Love had everything to do with winning a perfect score for her innovative and delicious chowder and cornbread recipes – both featuring wild rice – at World Food Championships last fall, says Lisa Keys, Kennett Square, PA. Keys won an entry ticket to the prestigious international cooking competition through the Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council's "Get Wild with Wild Rice" recipe contest.

With her husband, Bill, as her sous chef, Keys competed with 19 other cooks in the soup category. Their Round One mission: to turn a main meal into a soup. "For example, you could take chicken cordon bleu and make it into a soup," Keys says.

"But I got inspired by the idea of a Southern theme. Although we grew up in the same New Jersey town, Bill and I met in graduate school in North Carolina and fell in love," she said. Because of their fond memories and love of seafood, she came up with a spin on a low-country shrimp boil. "Basically, it's a steamed pot filled with shrimp with Andouille sausage and potatoes and corn on the cob. Everything is thrown on the table and people eat it communally. But I turned it into a soup, and it was really delicious."

"It's like a creamy corn lobster bisque base with my own barbeque seasoning and all the standards – potatoes, shrimp, corn and the Andouille sausage. I used wild rice as a thickener. Wild rice is such a versatile ingredient; it's almost like a blank canvas and adds a nutty flavor to everything. I love it."

Contestants were narrowed down from 20 to seven. Five won through highest scores based on execution, appearance and taste; two others were chosen by master judges based on cooking process, technique or creativity, as determined by the judges.

"The master judges were very interested in my recipes and very appreciative of the ingredients and my cooking style and cleanliness. They later came back because they wanted to see what the cornbread was like. So, I thought, maybe I'm going to get one of the two master judge places because they were seeing things they hadn't seen before."

Instead, she earned a perfect score for her "Low Country Shrimp Boil Chowder with Wild Rice" and "Popped Wild Rice Cornbread" recipes. "I was in shock when I got the perfect score. It was the thrill of a lifetime. It was pretty neat for the two of us – inspired by our love story and then we did the competition together."

Round two of the international competition didn't go as well; the judges said her recipe was delicious, but because part of it was too large to eat with a spoon, they didn't consider it a soup and the recipe placed seventh.

"But like I said to my husband, nothing could top the thrill of the first round," the home cook added.

Keys' love of cooking and entering contests started more than 30 years ago. But her hobby has also become a mission after her son, William, died nearly 14 years ago. Keys mourned but slowly realized that blogging about living with grief while sharing her mouthwatering recipes helped her cope with her loss. The blog, called "Good Grief Cook," has helped others – and Keys – know they aren't alone in their grief journeys. (Visit [www.goodgriefcook.com](http://www.goodgriefcook.com).)

The recipes, as prepared at World Food Championships, are as follows:

**LOW COUNTRY SHRIMP BOIL CHOWDER WITH WILD RICE**

- 1 bag (16 oz) frozen sweet corn, thawed
- 2 cups half & half
- 2 tbsp lobster base
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup cooked wild rice
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 (3 oz each) Andouille sausage links, sliced in bite-sized, half-moon pieces
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup diced red bell pepper
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1½ tsp BBQ seasoning, store-bought or homemade (see Notes)
- 2 medium-sized red potatoes, diced
- ½ lb (31-40 count) fresh shrimp, peeled, deveined, brined (see Notes), cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 fresh ear of corn, kernels sliced off cob

**Garnish:**

- 4 extra-large, tail-on shrimp, brined and cooked (see Notes, Shrimp brine and Extra-large shrimp)
- fresh herbs (optional)

In a high-speed blender, puree corn, half and half, lobster base, water, and wild rice until smooth; strain and set aside. In a Dutch Oven, melt butter over medium-low heat. Sauté Andouille, onion, and bell pepper 4-6 minutes or until onion softens. Stir in salt, thyme, bay leaf, and BBQ seasoning. Add the puree and potatoes; bring to a simmer. Reduce heat and cook, stirring often, 10-15 minutes or until potatoes are just tender. Add shrimp and fresh corn. Cover and turn off heat. Shrimp will be cooked in 5 minutes. Ladle chowder into serving bowls. Garnish with large shrimp, tail up in center (see Notes), and fresh herbs. Serve with cornbread.

**NOTES:**

**Homemade BBQ seasoning, mix:**

- 3 tbsp smoked paprika
- 2½ tbsp each: kosher salt and ground coriander
- 2 tbsp each: ground celery seed and brown sugar
- 1½ tbsp each: ancho chili powder and ground cumin
- 1 tbsp chipotle powder

Store unused in glass container.

**Shrimp brine, mix:**

- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoon salt

Sprinkle evenly over all shrimp, including garnish. Brine 15 minutes, rinse, paper-towel dry.

**Extra-large shrimp:**

- 1 tablespoon each: melted butter and lemon-infused olive oil

Slightly butterfly and skewer to straighten tails. In butter and oil, cook 2-3 minutes or until just cooked through. Remove skewers before plating.

### POPPED WILD RICE CORNBREAD

- nonstick baking spray with flour
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup cornmeal
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1¼ cups milk
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 3 tbsp butter, melted, plus additional for toasting
- ¼ cup popped wild rice (see Notes)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray biscotti baking pan or 9-inch square pan. In a medium bowl, combine flour, sugar, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt. In a small bowl, combine milk, eggs, oil, and butter; mix well. Add to flour mixture; stir until just blended. Pour into prepared pan. Sprinkle top with popped wild rice. Bake 30 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes in pan. Turn out on cooling rack. Cool. Slice into ½-inch slices. Toast, if desired: brush each side with melted butter, place on baking sheet; toast both sides in oven at 350°F.

#### Notes:

##### Popped wild rice:

In a small deep pot, heat grapeseed or canola oil to 425°F. Add ¼ cup uncooked wild rice. As it pops (within seconds), it rises to the top. Skim off popped rice and transfer to paper towel. Immediately sprinkle with pinch of salt.

#### Note to Editor:

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**Readers:** To receive a free copy of the Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council's latest recipe brochure: Minnesota Wild Rice Recipes and Answers to Frequently Asked Questions, featuring 2024 contest-winning recipes, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

### Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council

Newest Recipes  
4630 Churchill St., #1  
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#### Low Country Shrimp Boil Chowder with Wild Rice with Popped Wild Rice Cornbread

Credit: Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council

