

GROUNDHOGS AND GRITS

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There are some things in the world which I feel are highly underrated; things that should be held in high esteem but through ignorance and apathy are misunderstood and ignored.



One example is the groundhog, also known as the woodchuck or the whistle-pig, depending on where in the United States you are calling one. The groundhog is, after all, the only animal that has a day named after him on your calendar. As highly regarded as the dog and cat are, there is no dog day or cat day on your calendar. Oh, we refer to the "dog days of summer" but that is simply an expression, and holds no sway on the official calendar. But check Feb. 2, and there it is – the whistle-pig's very own day.

It's not surprising when you think about all the things the little fellow can do. He makes a pretty good dish, baked up with sweet potatoes on each side of him, and that ground hog hide makes the best shoes laces you ever tied in your life. He is a weather forecaster, a hole digger, and is clean as a whistle, why he eats only the best grass and corn from your patch. He even has a son about him:

*Yonder comes Sal with a snigger and a grin
Yonder comes Sal with a snigger and a grin
Yonder comes Sal with a snigger and a grin
Groundhog grease all over her chin.*

*Bring a long pole and twist him out
Bring a long pole and twist him out
Bring a long pole and twist him out
Oh my, ain't a Groundhog stout.*

Grits, well there is just no end to the usefulness of that commodity and most Yankees I met up north didn't have a clue what they were all about.

The fact is though, that grits are the most useful in the North, not the South at all. It was a real good thing to carry a big sack in the back of your car. Not only did they add weight to the back end (of the car) to keep you from sliding around on all that snow and ice, if you really got stuck, you could open that sack, sprinkle some on the ground in front of your tire and they acted just like sand, giving you enough traction to get out of that hole. Grits also make a great cleanser for your hands when the Lava Soap is all gone.

If you had oil and grease on your hands from working on the tractor, Mama would just pour some grits in your hands, all lathered up with regular soap, and those hands would soon be pink and shiny.

Not only did the Yankees not have any clue about the many uses of grits they had no idea how to eat them. They thought they were cream of wheat or something. They would sprinkle sugar on them, pour milk over them, and then complain because they didn't aster good. Well, I guess not, everybody know grits are eaten hot, with a ¼ inch pat of butter in the middle and a little salt and pepper on the top. It doesn't hurt if there is a little red eye gravy to drizzle on top either.

Groundhogs and grits are just a couple of those little things of which people overlook the value; and that is the real point of this story. (You knew there would be one, didn't you?) It is the everyday things that we come to take for granted that make our life the color, taster, and flavor that it is. It is these small things, like rainbows from angry skies, butterflies that light on, and light up, our flowers, and red birds that sit in our Crape Myrtle and look smack in the bay window at us, for which we ought to remember to give God thanks. Oh, and it wouldn't hurt to mention groundhogs and grits now and then eight.

By the way – have a nice Groundhog Day.

*Read more about Robert Rogers Chaffin in the Chaffin files and read more Writer's corner stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>