The swap: Heavy cream or cream cheese-based sauce → Nonfat Greek yogurt blended with feta

Mediterranean Breakfast Grits with Turkey Sausage & Whipped Feta

By Angie Hayman

Creamy grits topped with savory turkey sausage, sautéed spinach, blistered tomatoes, and eggs, finished with a tangy lemon-garlic whipped feta sauce. A protein-packed breakfast that brings Southern comfort and Mediterranean flavors together with a few simple calorie hacks.



PREP	COOK	TOTAL	SERVINGS	DIFFICULTY	CALORIES
10 min	15-20	~30 min	2	Easy	~425 est. per serving

Breakfast · Mediterranean-Inspired · High-Protein · Gluten-Free · Calorie-Conscious

Approximate Nutrition

Estimated

Per serving (1 Breakfast Bowl)

~425	~26g	~32g	~21g	~3g	~5g	~650mg
CALORIES	PROTEIN	CARBS	FAT	FIBER	SUGAR	SODIUM

Nutrition information is an approximation and may vary depending on the brands and products used, exact ingredient quantities, and portion sizes.

Ingredients

Makes 2 · 1 Breakfast Bowl

BREAKFAST BOWLS

- [ ] **2** packets plain instant grits
- [ ] **½ cup** fully cooked turkey sausage crumbles
- [ ] **4 large** eggs
- [ ] **2 cups** fresh baby spinach
- [ ] **¾ cup** cherry tomatoes
- [ ] **⅓ cup** leftover sautéed onions
- [ ] **1 clove** garlic, minced
- [ ] **1 tsp** olive oil
- [ ] **⅛ tsp** smoked paprika
- [ ] **⅛ tsp** dried oregano
- [ ] Black pepper, to taste
- [ ] Cooking spray, as needed

LEMON-GARLIC WHIPPED FETA

- [ ] **¼ cup** plain nonfat Greek yogurt
- [ ] **2 tbsp** crumbled feta cheese
- [ ] **1 tsp** fresh lemon juice
- [ ] **1 pinch** garlic powder
- [ ] Black pepper, to taste
- [ ] **3 tbsp** cold water

Ingredient note: We used plain instant grits, fully cooked turkey sausage crumbles, Friendly Farms plain nonfat Greek yogurt, and Emporium Selection feta cheese. Any comparable brands will work, but nutritional values may vary. Leftover sautéed onions were used to save time and reduce food waste. If starting fresh, thinly slice half a medium onion and sauté until golden. For the whipped feta sauce, add water gradually until smooth and pourable. We used approximately 3 tablespoons, but the amount needed may vary depending on the yogurt and feta. Calorie Hacker Tip: Plain nonfat Greek yogurt adds creaminess and protein to the whipped feta sauce without the need for heavy cream or cream cheese.

Instructions

1 Prepare the Lemon-Garlic Whipped Feta

Combine the Greek yogurt, crumbled feta, lemon juice, garlic powder, and black pepper in a small blender or food processor.

Blend until smooth and creamy.

Gradually add cold water, a teaspoon at a time, until the sauce reaches a smooth, pourable consistency. Approximately 3 tablespoons were used during recipe testing.

Taste and adjust the lemon or pepper if needed.

Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Calorie Hacker Tip: Nonfat Greek yogurt creates a creamy, protein-rich sauce without needing heavy cream or cream cheese. Make the sauce first so the flavors have time to develop while you prepare the breakfast.

2 Prepare the Onions

If using leftover sautéed onions, set aside approximately 1/3 cup to reheat with the turkey

sausage.

If starting with fresh onions, thinly slice 1/2 medium onion.

Heat a lightly coated skillet over medium heat and sauté the onions for 8–10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened and golden.

Remove from the skillet and set aside.

Calorie Hacker Tip: Leftover sautéed onions work beautifully in this recipe. Using leftovers saves time, reduces food waste, and adds another layer of flavor.

3 Brown the Turkey Sausage

Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat.

Add the fully cooked turkey sausage crumbles and cook for 3–4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until heated through and lightly browned.

Sprinkle with a pinch of smoked paprika.

If using leftover onions, add them during the final 1–2 minutes to reheat thoroughly.

Transfer the sausage and onions to a plate and set aside.

4 Blister the Cherry Tomatoes

Add 1/2 teaspoon olive oil to the same skillet over medium-high heat.

Add the cherry tomatoes and allow them to cook undisturbed for approximately 2 minutes.

Gently shake the skillet and continue cooking for another 3–4 minutes until the skins begin to wrinkle, blister, and lightly char.

Season with dried oregano and freshly cracked black pepper.

Remove from the skillet and set aside.

Calorie Hacker Tip: Blistering tomatoes brings out their natural sweetness and creates delicious flavor without needing added sugar or heavy sauces.

5 Sauté the Garlic and Spinach

Reduce the skillet heat to medium-low.

Add the remaining 1/2 teaspoon olive oil and the minced garlic.

Cook for approximately 20–30 seconds, stirring until fragrant.

Add the fresh spinach and gently toss for 1–2 minutes until wilted but still bright green.

Season with black pepper.

If using freshly sautéed onions, return them to the skillet and gently combine with the spinach.

Remove from heat and keep warm.

6 Prepare the Creamy Grits

Prepare the instant grits according to the package directions, using water.

Stir until smooth and creamy.

Season with freshly cracked black pepper.

If the grits become too thick, stir in a small amount of hot water until they reach your preferred consistency.

Calorie Hacker Tip: Instant grits are affordable, convenient, and perfectly fine for a balanced breakfast. There's no need to add butter or heavy cream when flavorful toppings and a creamy sauce are doing the work.

7 Cook the Eggs

Lightly coat a nonstick skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium-low heat.

Crack the eggs into the skillet.

Cook sunny-side-up or over-easy until the whites are fully set and the yolks reach your preferred consistency.

Season lightly with black pepper and smoked paprika.

8 Assemble the Breakfast Bowls

Divide the prepared grits evenly between two shallow bowls.

Top each bowl with approximately 1/4 cup browned turkey sausage and half the sautéed onions.

Add half the garlicky spinach and blistered cherry tomatoes to each bowl.

Place two cooked eggs over the toppings.

Drizzle each bowl with half the lemon-garlic whipped feta sauce.

Finish with freshly cracked black pepper and a light sprinkle of smoked paprika.

Serve immediately while warm.

Calorie Hacker Tip: Keep the toppings arranged separately when plating for a beautiful presentation. The creamy grits, savory sausage, vegetables, eggs, and tangy whipped feta come together in every bite.

Big Flavor, Smarter Swaps

The Calorie Hack

A satisfying breakfast doesn't need butter-heavy grits, pork sausage, or a rich cream sauce to taste indulgent. We kept the comfort of a classic Southern breakfast while adding Mediterranean-inspired flavors and a few simple swaps. The real star is our lemon-garlic whipped feta, made with nonfat Greek yogurt for a creamy, protein-rich finish without the extra calories of a traditional cream-based sauce.

Traditional approach	Our Calorie Hack
~~Pork breakfast sausage~~	✓ **Turkey sausage crumbles**
~~Butter-heavy grits~~	✓ **Instant grits prepared with water**

~~Heavy cream or cream cheese sauce~~	✓ **Nonfat Greek yogurt blended with feta**
~~Extra cooking oil or butter~~	✓ **Measured olive oil and nonstick cooking spray**

Why it works

- These simple swaps keep everything we love about a hearty breakfast while making room for more flavor and nutrition. Turkey sausage provides savory flavor and protein, while spinach and blistered tomatoes add color, nutrients, and natural sweetness. Preparing the grits with water keeps the base simple, allowing the toppings to shine.
- The biggest hack is the whipped feta sauce. Blending a small amount of flavorful feta with plain nonfat Greek yogurt creates a creamy, tangy topping that feels indulgent without relying on heavy cream or cream cheese. A little lemon and garlic bring everything together.
- And sometimes the smartest hack has nothing to do with calories. Using leftover sautéed onions saves time, reduces food waste, and makes an already easy breakfast even easier.

Make It a Meal

One serving: ~425 cal

This breakfast bowl is a satisfying meal all on its own, with protein, vegetables, and creamy grits to keep you fueled. But everyone's appetite and calorie needs are different! If you're looking for something a little heartier, try one of these simple additions to round out your breakfast.

- **Fresh berries** +70 cal
  1 cup of strawberries, blueberries, or a mix for natural sweetness and extra fiber.
- **Whole grain toast** +100 cal
  1 slice of toasted whole grain bread for a little extra staying power.
- **Fresh orange** +60 cal
  1 small orange for a refreshing, vitamin C-rich addition.
- **Half an avocado** +120 cal
  About 1/2 of a small avocado for healthy fats and extra creaminess.
- **Extra turkey sausage** +60 cal
  Add another 1/4 cup of Jimmy Dean turkey sausage crumbles for more protein.

Illustrative estimates. Actual calories depend on portions, ingredients, and dressing.

Angie's Kitchen Notes

What we learned making it

1. **The whipped feta makes the difference.**
   This breakfast would be delicious without it, but the lemon-garlic whipped feta added something special. Blending nonfat Greek yogurt with a little feta gave us a creamy, tangy sauce without the need for heavy cream. I ended up adding an extra 1/2 teaspoon of lemon juice and about 3 tablespoons of water to get the consistency just right.

2. **Don't underestimate instant grits.**
   Yes, I used the packets! They're quick, affordable, and make a perfectly good base for a hearty breakfast. Not everything needs to be made from scratch to taste homemade.
3. **Yesterday's leftovers can become today's shortcut.**
   I had sautéed onions left over from our steak dinner the night before, so I used those instead of cooking fresh ones. They added great flavor to the turkey sausage and saved me a little time.
4. **Blister those tomatoes!**
   Letting the cherry tomatoes cook until their skins wrinkle and develop a little char brings out their natural sweetness. They add a bright pop of flavor that balances the savory sausage and creamy sauce.
5. **Sometimes unexpected combinations are the best.**
   Southern grits, turkey sausage, spinach, eggs, and Mediterranean-inspired whipped feta might sound like an unusual combination, but it worked! Curt's exact words were, "It was a really good combo." And I agree!

Storage & Reheating

- **Storage:** For best results, store the grits, turkey sausage, sautéed vegetables, and whipped feta sauce in separate airtight containers in the refrigerator. Refrigerate within 2 hours of cooking. The cooked grits, sausage, and vegetables will keep for 3–4 days. The whipped feta sauce is best enjoyed within 3 days. For the best texture and flavor, prepare fresh eggs when serving leftovers.
- **Reheating:**
- **Grits:** Add a splash of water or milk and microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring between each, until creamy and heated throughout. Grits naturally thicken when refrigerated, so additional liquid may be needed.
- **Turkey Sausage and Vegetables:** Reheat in a nonstick skillet over medium heat for 3–5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until heated thoroughly to 165°F. Alternatively, microwave until steaming hot.
- **Whipped Feta:** Serve cold or allow it to sit at room temperature briefly while reheating the other ingredients. Stir well before serving and add a splash of water if the sauce has thickened.
- **Eggs:** Freshly cooked eggs are recommended, especially if you enjoy a runny yolk.
- **Freezing:** Cooked grits and turkey sausage can be frozen separately for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before reheating. The whipped feta sauce is not recommended for freezing because the yogurt may separate and become grainy.
- **Calorie Hacker Tip:** Making extra turkey sausage and vegetables is a great way to get ahead on breakfast for the next few days. Just prepare fresh grits and eggs, warm your toppings, and finish with a drizzle of whipped feta for a quick, satisfying breakfast.

Leftover safety, the USDA way: Refrigerate within 2 hours · Enjoy within 3–4 days · Freeze for up to 3–4 months · Reheat to 165°F. USDA: Leftovers and Food Safety: fsis.usda.gov

Hack It Again

Cook once, eat twice

Turn the leftovers into tomorrow's lunch. Less waste, less money, less thinking.

- **Mediterranean Breakfast Wrap**
  Stuff leftover turkey sausage, spinach, and sautéed onions into a whole wheat tortilla with scrambled eggs and a drizzle of whipped feta.
- **Whipped Feta Veggie Dip**
  Use leftover lemon-garlic whipped feta as a dip for fresh carrots, cucumbers, bell peppers, or cherry tomatoes.
- **Savory Grit Cakes**
  Refrigerate leftover prepared grits until firm, slice into portions, and crisp in a lightly sprayed nonstick skillet. Top with leftover vegetables and whipped feta.
- **Mediterranean Lunch Bowl**
  Combine leftover turkey sausage, spinach, and blistered tomatoes with cooked rice or quinoa. Finish with a drizzle of whipped feta.

Real Food. Simple Swaps. Healthier Plates.

Rate this recipe and find more simple swaps at thecaloriehacker.com