

Okra

HOW TO CHOOSE AND STORE

Okra pods should be firm and green, not mushy or brown. They can last around 4 days in the vegetable drawer of the fridge, wrapped in a loose cloth. For long-term storage, okra can be easily frozen or canned. To freeze, blanch the okra by submerging them in boiling water for about a minute before transferring to an ice bath for a few minutes. (Optional step: chop into bite-sized pieces) and then transfer to a single-layer baking sheet lined with parchment paper in the freezer. After a few hours, gather the okra into an air-tight, freezer-safe container.



HOW TO USE AND EAT

Okra can be cooked many ways, but one of its unique qualities is that it contains mucilage, which allows okra to act as a thickening agent in soups and gumbo. It can also cause the vegetable to take on a slimy texture in the mouth, especially noticeable when eaten raw. It's popular to fry the vegetable, but it can also be grilled, roasted, sautéed, or cooked in various other ways. Okra is also an important ingredient in cultural dishes from the Caribbean, South America, South Asia, the Middle East, the Southeastern US, and West Africa.

FRIED OKRA

- Bite-sized pieces of frozen okra (about a pound)
- 1-2 cups flour
- 1-2 cups cornmeal
- About 5 eggs
- Cooking oil, salt, and pepper

Heat about ¼" of cooking oil in a frying pan. Rinse okra and pat dry. Season flour/cornmeal with salt and pepper to taste. (Flour and cornmeal may be mixed together or applied separately, and some recipes use only one or the other). If not mixed, the okra should be coated in flour, and then in the eggs, and then in the cornmeal.) Beat the eggs together in a small bowl. Coat the okra in beaten eggs and then coat in cornmeal/flour mixture. Fry okra in oil over medium heat until golden brown, stirring occasionally. Remove fried okra and drain on a paper towel.

GARLIC ROASTED OKRA

- Okra (amount desired)
- Butter, margarine, or cooking oil
- Garlic powder
- Salt/garlic salt, paprika/pepper, or other desired spices

Preheat oven to 450°F. Rinse okra and pat dry. Trim stems, cut into ½" to ¾" pieces, and place into a medium bowl. In a smaller bowl, mix the paprika, garlic powder, and salt. Then, melt a couple tablespoons of butter, either in the microwave or on the stove. Sprinkle seasoning over okra and pour in the melted butter. Mix well. Transfer the okra to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, in a single layer, and place in the oven. Bake about 15 minutes, until golden brown. Serve with a dash of lemon juice, if desired.