

A SOUTHERN TREASURE

okra

In Florida, okra is predominantly grown in Alachua, Columbia, Dade, Jackson, Jefferson and Lake County.

Ookra is commonly used in a number of cuisines including Creole, Cajun, Caribbean, Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern. Eating plenty of fruits and veggies like okra may help reduce the risk of many diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure and some cancers.

Did you know?

- Okra contains fiber and antioxidants that promote heart health. It also contains folates which is an essential nutrient during early pregnancy. Folate is vital for fetus development.
- While fresh okra is widely enjoyed by consumers, a large quantity of it is sold to soup companies.
- Mature okra is used to make rope and paper.
- Okra originated in Africa and was brought to America by African slaves.

Shopping, Preparing and Storing

- Look for pods under four inches long that are free of bruises and are not soft.
- Okra can be kept in the refrigerator for two to three days.
- Blanch okra for two minutes before freezing.

Cooking Tips

- Okra can be boiled, fried or pickled and does especially well with peppers, eggplants, onions and tomatoes.
- When okra is cut, it releases a sticky substance with thickening properties that can be used in soups, gumbos and stews.
- Wait to season your okra when sautéing. If you add salt at the beginning of the cooking process or during, it can result in sticky okra.

OKRA "FRY"

2 cups fresh okra, sliced
¾ tsp olive oil
1/8 tsp salt
1/8 tsp black pepper
non-stick spray as needed



1. In a bowl, combine sliced okra, salt and pepper.
2. Coat a large frying pan with cooking spray.
3. Heat pan over medium heat. Add okra mixture, turning often with a wooden spoon or spatula.
4. Cook until okra is browned, about 10 minutes.
5. Serve with a hot sauce or your favorite relish.



FRUITS

Make most of your choices whole or cut fruit instead of juice.

VEGETABLES

Eat a variety every day. Fresh, canned or frozen.

GRAINS

Make at least half of your grains whole grains.

DAIRY

For adults and children 2 years and older, drink 1 percent low-fat or fat-free milk.

PROTEIN

Choose lean meat, poultry without the skin, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy or nuts.