



Media Script

KENTUCKY OKRA

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Nothing beats fresh Kentucky okra when preparing delicious summer dishes.

Okra grows in an elongated, lantern shape. It is a fuzzy, green-colored, ribbed pod, approximately 2-7 inches in length. This vegetable is more famously known by its rows of tiny seeds and slimy or sticky texture when cut open. Okra is also known as bamia, bindi, bhindi, lady's finger, and gumbo, is a member of the cotton family.

Okra was discovered near Ethiopia during the 12th century B.C. and was cultivated by the ancient Egyptians. This vegetable soon flourished throughout North Africa and the Middle East where the seed pods were consumed cooked and the seeds toasted, ground, and served as a coffee substitute. With the advent of the slave trade, it eventually came to North America and is now commonly grown in the southern United States. You'll now see okra in African, Middle Eastern, Greek, Turkish, Indian, Caribbean, and South American cuisines.

Okra is available in Kentucky June through September. Select pods that are crisp, tender, and small, 2 to 4 inches long. Pods should be free from blemishes. Pods that have passed their prime will have a dull, dry appearance, contain coarse fibers, and taste stringy. Fresh okra should be used the same day that it was purchased or stored in a paper, or perforated plastic bag in the warmest part of the refrigerator for 2-3 days. Do not wash okra pods until ready to use, or they will become slimy.

Okra is a good source of vitamin C, folic acid, and soluble fiber, which helps to lower cholesterol, reducing the risk of heart disease. It contains only 20 calories in a ½ cup serving. Try some fresh okra in this recipe.

Scalloped Okra and Corn

4 cups sliced fresh or frozen okra

4 tablespoons olive oil

1½ cups cooked corn kernels, drained

2 tablespoons whole wheat flour

1 cup skim milk

8 ounces shredded 2% cheddar cheese

1 cup Italian style dry bread crumbs

Directions: **Stir-fry** okra in 2 tablespoons olive oil for 10 minutes.

Place in baking dish alternating layers with drained corn.

Prepare white sauce by heating remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in saucepan over low heat and blending in whole wheat flour.

Cook oil and flour mixture 1 to 2 minutes.

Add skim milk all at once, cooking quickly and stirring constantly until mixture thickens.

Stir in cheese until blended.

Pour mixture over vegetables.

Sprinkle bread crumbs over casserole.

Bake at 350° F for approximately 45 minutes, until casserole is heated through and the crumbs have browned.

Yield: 8, 1 cup servings

Nutrition Analysis: 220 calories; 9 g total fat; 2 g saturated fat; 0 g trans fat; 5 mg cholesterol; 340 mg sodium; 24 g total carbohydrate; 4 g dietary fiber; 7 g sugars; 9 g protein; 20% recommended allowance for vitamin C; 20% recommended allowance for calcium; 8% recommended allowance for iron.

Source: www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov

For more delicious recipes and information using “Kentucky Proud” fruits and vegetables, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service or visit: www.kentuckyproud.com.

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Kentucky Proud Project

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